

Inclusive Hiring Program**Report Purpose**

To provide information to Council on the potential for Strathcona County to introduce an inclusive hiring program for individuals with disabilities.

Recommendation

THAT Administration implement the consultation plan, as set out in the March 27, 2018 Human Resources report, regarding the potential development of an inclusive hiring program for individuals with disabilities and report back to Council by the end of quarter one of 2019.

Council History

March 27, 2018 – Council approved - THAT the March 27, 2018 Inclusive Hiring Report be postponed to the April 10, 2018 Council meeting, to allow Administration to bring forward an alternative recommendation on development of an inclusive hiring policy.

July 4, 2017 – Council approved “THAT administration provide a report to Council, by the end of the first quarter of 2018, on the potential for Strathcona County to introduce an inclusive hiring program that would enhance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and that the report include a plan for consultation with key stakeholders and other municipalities that have undertaken similar programs.”

April 25, 2017 – Council approved “THAT Strathcona County join the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination; and that Administration prepare a plan, for Council’s consideration by September 12, 2017, which sets out actions that could be taken in support of the “10 Common Commitments” along with any resource requirements.”

Strategic Plan Priority Areas**Economy: N/A**

Governance: Inclusive hiring programs focus on enhancing employment opportunities for under-represented groups and can build and foster cooperative partnerships with related community groups and enhance information sharing and cooperation with neighbouring municipalities.

Social: Inclusive hiring programs help build strong communities by finding meaningful employment for individuals who have barriers to enter the workforce through traditional recruitment methods. Inclusive employment eases social disparities and promotes a sense of belonging.

Culture: Inclusive hiring programs promote diversity and inclusivity in the community by engaging community partners and strengthening people’s sense of pride for Strathcona County.

Environment: N/A**Other Impacts**

Policy: SER-005-004 Social Inclusion policy

Legislative/Legal: N/A

Interdepartmental: Intergovernmental Affairs, Family & Community Services; Recreation, Parks & Culture; Transit; Utilities; Legislative & Legal Services; Facility Services

Alternative Option

THAT this report be referred back to Administration to complete the broader policy work related to diversity and inclusion and report to Council by the third quarter of 2019 with the priority initiatives needed to achieve the outcomes within the policy (which may include a targeted inclusive hiring program for individuals with disabilities).

Summary

Diversity and inclusion are broad concepts gaining more prevalence due to increased societal awareness and commitments through groups such as the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD), of which Strathcona County is a member. Inclusive hiring is one area of programming within this broader context.

- Diversity refers to the variety of similarities and differences among people, including but not limited to: gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic difference, appearance, disability, mental health, education, etc.
- Inclusion is a dynamic state of operating in which diversity is leveraged to create a fair, healthy, and high-performing organization. An inclusive environment ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all and enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, engaged, motivated, and valued, for who they are and for their contributions toward organizational goals.

The CCMARD consists of cities interested in sharing their experiences to improve their policies against racism, discrimination, exclusion and intolerance. The plan sets out 10 common commitments, one of which is to “provide equal opportunities as a municipal employer, service provider and contractor.” As a result of the CCMARD, Administration is in the early stages of establishing an internal diversity and inclusion team which includes Human Resources.

There are other actions underway that relate to diversity and inclusion within the County:

- The review and update of the Social Inclusion Policy is planned and would likely provide the broader framework within which an inclusive hiring program would fit.
- Council has recently provided direction to establish three new Council Committees to focus on seniors, youth and accessibility.
- Strathcona County is hosting the 2021 Alberta Special Olympics Summer Games.

Inclusive hiring (generally) is a comprehensive approach to ensure that hiring practices are free from systemic barriers to ensure the broadest possible participation in the workforce by all individuals. It may include targeted recruitment programs aimed at specific groups such as individuals with intellectual or physical disabilities; newcomers to Canada; indigenous people; youth; and/or the LGBTQ2S+ community. Programs may focus solely on eliminating systemic barriers; may include designing or adapting jobs to enable targeted groups to be hired; or may provide targeted internship or work experience programs.

There has been active interest from community organizations and individuals to partner with Strathcona County to connect Albertans with disabilities to meaningful employment within the organization, mainly focused on individuals with intellectual disabilities. Inquiries have been handled on a case by case basis at the department level and there is no formal tracking of requests. There are a few individuals with intellectual disabilities working for Strathcona County part-time through contracts with community agencies or on an individual basis; two individuals are directly employed by the County; and one department has partnered with a local high school to provide a work experience placement. It is recognized that individuals with disabilities face specific challenges in obtaining meaningful work that enables them to achieve their full potential in the workplace.

A number of other Alberta public sector organizations have inclusive hiring programs. For example:

- The City of Edmonton established a Diversity Recruitment team that develops, delivers and maintains recruitment programs focused on diversifying the workforce. The team has implemented the *Abilities @ Work* program that focuses on offering employment opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities through partnerships with community organizations.
Other diversity recruitment programs and initiatives focus on aboriginal peoples, newcomers to Canada and students and youth.
- The City of St. Albert implemented an Inclusive Hiring program that partners with community organizations to provide meaningful work experiences to people with long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning disabilities.
- The Ministry of Community and Social Services advertised an internship program for people with disabilities in October 2017. The internship offers twenty 12-month positions in a variety of areas and includes a partnership with community organizations that specialize in disability employment services.

Consultation Plan

An inclusive hiring program targeted at individuals with disabilities would provide clarity about the role the County will play, what supports are available and how to access them. The development and implementation of a program requires further consultation with comparable organizations as well as engagement of key stakeholders (internal and external) to seek input and feedback regarding key program elements and considerations. The consultation plan would include the following and be finalized in conjunction with an external consultant:

- Internal Engagement:
 - Engage departments to review current practices of hiring people with disabilities.
 - Assess organizational readiness and confirm education, training and support requirements.
 - Connect the program to the broader diversity and inclusion policy work underway with the CCMARD and the review of the Social Inclusion Policy.
- Jurisdictional Research:
 - Consult with other public sector organizations regarding program design, challenges, benefits realized, best practices and key learnings.
- Public Engagement with Community Stakeholders:
 - Engage key community groups, such as Goodwill, Robin Hood Association, council advisory committees, educational institutions, etc. who have a keen interest in an inclusive hiring program for individuals with disabilities.
 - Engage individuals with disabilities to ensure their aspirations and needs are considered.
 - Gather input regarding the key elements and options for design and delivery of an effective program.

The 2018 budget includes funding to execute the proposed consultation and engagement process. It is anticipated that the process will take approximately six months following the acquisition of an external consultant.

Communication Plan

Human Resources to collaborate with departments to implement the consultation plan.

Enclosure

- 1 Inclusive Hiring Program Presentation