



Region of Waterloo
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Strategies for Writing Your Equity & Inclusion Commitment Document

A How-To Guide for Child Care Operators and
Other Contracted Service Providers

Updated: January 2026

Children's Services, Region of Waterloo

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Purpose

The goal of this document is to guide you through the development or creation of your Equity & Inclusion Commitment document. Overall, your Equity & Inclusion Commitment will speak to how your organization defines and actively incorporates equity and inclusion in its operations, including interactions with children, families, and staff, professional learning, evaluative processes, curriculum, and pedagogy.

All organizations should consider their responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC), which affirms the legal responsibility of operators and other contracted service providers to recognize the dignity and worth of every person and to provide equal rights and opportunities without discrimination.

Your Equity & Inclusion Commitment document will serve as a guidance document for new and existing staff to establish new norms and ways of being. This document can be used in professional development and mentoring, staff feedback, and coaching conversations. By making this document publicly available on your website and parent guide (applicable only to licensed child care), your organization is also building accountability within the community you serve.



Creating your Commitment

The Equity & Inclusion Commitment is currently in Phase 2; all organizations will complete steps 1 through 6 and have their document complete **by December 2026**.

All organizations that were not part of the pilot cohort will be required to undertake the process of developing or updating an Equity & Inclusion Commitment document. Operators can plan to post their document publicly by **early 2027** on their website and as part of their parent guide (applicable only to licensed child care).

This section outlines **steps 1 to 6** on how to complete this process.

Step 1. Initial Observations and Insights

With members of your staff and/or organization, begin by looking over your current Inclusion Policy (if applicable). What strengths do you observe? Where might there be areas for growth and opportunity?

If your organization does not currently have an Inclusion Policy, consider what other documents or procedures have been put in place. How might you leverage this information to create a comprehensive Equity & Inclusion Commitment document?

Step 2. Brainstorming Current Activities and Initiatives

Create a list of current equity and inclusion activities currently being undertaken in the following seven sections:

- Indigenous Reconciliation*
- Equity
- Diversity
- Participation
- Access
- Supports for Diverse Abilities
- Supporting All Positions

You can include these activities in the *Fillable Template* under each section to acknowledge your ongoing commitments in this area.

**Not applicable to Indigenous-led organizations.*

Step 3. Defining Your Principles

Create an operational definition of what each of the seven sections mean for you as an early years organization. Consider how each definition you create informs the future commitments that you are striving to achieve.

The *Completed Sample Template* provides definition examples for each section.

Step 4. What's Next for your Organization?

Once you have established your definitions, **consider which area(s) you want to focus on for the year** and commit to further action(s) grounded in equity and inclusion. This 'Focus Area' will identify an area to grow within your organization for the year, beyond what is currently underway within your organization.

The *Completed Sample Template* provides commitment examples for each section.

Together, you can begin to generate ideas on how you can strive towards becoming and remaining an equity-informed organization. You may wish to think about how the six pedagogical approaches (from [Ontario's Pedagogy for Early Years, How Does Learning Happen?](#)) inform and guide the Focus Area you will be including in your Equity & Inclusion Commitment document. These pedagogical approaches are useful pathways to support well-being, engagement, expression, and belonging, and are important to consider as you develop your own equity approach.



Provided below is an example of how a commitment in your Focus Area could look if you chose the section of Equity for the year. You can select one specific commitment or multiple commitments across various areas.

We are committed to the following focus area(s) for 2026:

Example: Equity

We are committed to reviewing our internal policies with the lens of equity and inclusion, with the goal of eliminating structural barriers to entry and participation.

You may also consider organizing your commitments into categories. This method may be helpful to identify areas of strength or opportunity, depending which categories you notice have many or fewer commitments.

The following list provides ideas of categories an organization may wish to use:

1. Curriculum
2. Learning Environment and Materials
3. Professional Development
4. Engagement and Ways of Being
5. Operational Practices
6. Family and Child Centred Practice
7. Enrollment
8. Information Accessibility

A list of commitments currently underway could look like this:

| Category | Commitment Examples: Equity |
|---|--|
| <i>Learning Environment and Materials</i> | <i>We incorporate external feedback on learning materials (e.g., hiring an external consultant).</i> |
| <i>Curriculum</i> | <i>We implement a curriculum that supports the foundational principles of equity.</i> |
| <i>Professional Development</i> | <i>Our organization takes active steps to learn about recent best practices in the early years sector and regularly implements new materials.</i> |
| <i>Enrollment</i> | <i>We participate in the Subsidy Access Pilot and are working hard to understand barriers and inequitable processes in our waitlist policies.</i> |
| <i>Enrollment</i> | <i>We implemented a prioritization process for families experiencing crisis.</i> |
| <i>Operational Practices</i> | <i>We are committed to reviewing our internal policies with the lens of equity and inclusion, with the goal of eliminating structural barriers to entry and participation.</i> |

Note: All organizations are welcome to overlap some of these commitments with their Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plans, if applicable.

Step 5. Finalizing Your Commitment

Input your Focus Area, definitions, and current ongoing commitments into the *Fillable Template*, or another format that may work better for your organization.

At this stage, you can also collect and input information for the Accountability Measures for Staff and Families section. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate, in clear terms, how your organization is accountable to the safety and wellbeing of staff and families.

Step 6. Making Your Commitment Document Publicly Available

All organizations will be required to share their Equity & Inclusion Commitment document publicly on their website and through their parent guide (applicable only to licensed child care) by early 2027.

Engagement Strategies

This list of engagement strategies has been compiled to provide examples of how each organization may undertake engagement during the writing of their Equity and Inclusion Commitment Document. This list is comprised of recommendations made by the Advisory Group based on their experiences during the pilot phase. This is a non-exhaustive list of engagement strategies; we encourage each team to consider a variety of ways to engage with key stakeholders throughout this process.

Remember: Take this process one step at a time. It's important to meet people where they are so they feel invited and welcomed to come on this journey together.

Engaging All Positions

Across all levels of engagement, the Advisory Group recommended in-person engagement over virtual meetings or online surveys due to the rich nature of in-person engagements.

- **Have opportunities for 'passive' engagement.** Some of this work is reflective and people may need time to consider how certain information aligns with their day-to-day. For example: print out the pie chart and place it with sticky notes in a place that is accessible to the group you are seeking engagement from (i.e. front door for parents, lunch room for staff).
- **Determine who your champions are within this work** (leaders, parents, front line staff). Ask for their support in gathering feedback and mentoring, coaching, modeling contributions to these conversations.
- **Review how equity and inclusion is already considered in your current practices and policies.** *Are there items already defined? Do you have identified action items? If yes, are these the ones that you want moving forward or are revisions needed?*
- **Utilize existing internal or external resources and expertise**, such as equity specialists, or Indigenous consultants, to build on existing knowledge.
- **Share the workload across your organization.** For example: have each classroom team come together to define one pillar and bring those definitions back to the wider group to build from.
- **Ongoing engagement** with all positions supports investment in the process and the end product, including accountability to any actions items that have been outlined.
- **Establish a working group with representation from all positions** (board, staff and families).

Engaging Leaders

- **Conversations need to begin at the leader level.** Determine where leaders sit in their readiness to move equity and inclusion work forward. *Are they reflective? Are they ready to learn? Ready to act?*
- **Position the work so that there are clear guidelines of the behaviours and actions that are supported by your organization** and that even if a team member is not yet ready to learn or ready to act, they are still expected to align how they show up to work with the organization's expectations.

Engaging Staff

- **Empower staff to think positively about this process.** Start by thinking about what they are already doing that supports your Equity and Inclusion Commitment Document, celebrate this and build on this momentum. *What are you already doing? How are our actions bringing your closer to this value in your program?*
- **Continue this strengths-based perspective when discussing challenges.** *What can we start doing or what barriers are stopping us from aligning with this value in our program? What could we do to further align with this?*
- **Make the work doable and use existing meeting structures.** For example: ask an exit question at the end of staff meetings and have everyone send through a couple of lines in response to the question or set aside time at each staff meeting to work through the pillars.

Engaging Families

- **Personalized communication** can support stronger engagement over broad call outs. For example: send out a tailored message via your organization's app asking for parent feedback on your updated land acknowledgement.
- **Embed updates in newsletters**, and have newsletters available in different formats, physically handing out newsletters can be an opportunity for educators to touch base about any feedback.

Tool: Initial Check List and Reflection

Purpose:

This initial check list and reflection tool was developed in response to operator requests for an overarching guideline of the steps to completing their Equity & Inclusion Commitment Document. This is an optional tool that may be used to help facilitate reflection on the processes undertaken in developing each unique Equity & Inclusion Commitment.

Directions:

1. The list of “Components” summarizes what is required to include within your document. This list can help to review that you have completed each of these components.
2. We encourage you and your team (either individually, collectively, or both) to reflect upon the processes undertaken in completing your Equity & Inclusion Commitment Document. These reflections may help support conversations within your organization or with Early Years Analysts.

| Components | Completed |
|---|-----------|
| Our documents includes at least one focus area for the year | |
| Our document includes an introductory statement which describes our overall approach related to Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion | |
| We have included definitions of each of the sections | |
| We have included a summary of actions underway in each of the sections | |
| We have included a description of ‘Accountability Measures’ at the end of the document | |
| Our completed plan has been posted on our website and referenced in our Parent Handbook (if applicable). | |

Reflection: What are some of the strengths of your team and community that have been highlighted during the process of writing your Equity & Inclusion Commitment Document? What challenges have you faced? How might you do things differently in the future?

Tool: Considerations for Continuous Reflection

Purpose: This reflection tool was developed in response to operator requests for guidance to encourage continuous reflection and maintenance of their ‘living’ Equity & Inclusion Commitment Document each year. These optional prompts have been developed to support your team’s reflective practices and may be used to guide some of your organization’s thinking or support ongoing conversations with Early Years Analysts.

Directions: We encourage you and your team to reflect upon each of the “Processes” listed below that underpin the maintenance of your Equity & Inclusion Commitment Document. Reflections may be done individually, collectively, or both. These reflections may provide an opportunity for your team to celebrate your accomplishments and consider ways to continue growing on your equity and inclusion journey.

Please note: this is not an exhaustive list of reflection prompts, we encourage you and your team to consider a variety of ways to reflect upon your growth that will happen throughout this process.

| Processes | Accomplishments/ strengths | Challenges/areas for future development |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| We work towards achieving our focus area in partnership with all positions in our organization and community. | | |
| We engage with key stakeholders and members of our community (for example staff, parents, caregivers) to inform and maintain our Equity & Inclusion Commitment Document. | | |
| We collaboratively define and actively reflect upon each of the pillars within the context of our service. | | |
| We use relevant resources to inform our organizational practices and evolving equity and inclusion commitments. | | |

Contact

For additional questions, please speak to your Early Years Analyst.

To connect with a Children's Services manager, please contact Kristen Bustamante (Manager, System Plan, Access, and Inclusion) at kbustamante@regionofwaterloo.ca, or Kim Sangüesa (Manager, Partnerships, Quality, and Accountability) at ksanguesa@regionofwaterloo.ca.