Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy and 2022-25 Action Plan

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Message from the Champion

When asked to take on the role of ATSCC Champion for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), I took a moment to gather my thoughts around what it meant for me personally and professionally, as a member of an equity-seeking group and as an executive in the public service.

My own journey has included some challenges. I have worked very hard to be where I am today, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to influence the culture towards a truly diverse and inclusive workplace.

Beyond the training course

We must embrace the concept of equity, diversity and inclusion and participate in its advancement on a daily basis both in our personal lives and in the workplace.

I know that the personal and professional barriers and obstacles faced by many of our colleagues have shaped their experience and perspective. Many have been required to do more than is reasonable to reach merely adequate lifestyles.

With this in mind, we cannot always lean on people from equity seeking groups to do the analytical and emotional work of deconstructing, explaining and providing solutions for structural inequities and systems that already oppress them. This is work that we each need to do for ourselves. It requires effort and then it requires action and commitment.

What can you do?

- Taking courses on unconscious bias or a seminar on equity, diversity and inclusion is an important first step.
- A key concept in moving forward is developing an awareness that just because we cannot see something, doesn't mean that it's not happening. We must learn to allow space for the experiences of others.
- We must also remain vigilant, as expressions of personal and systemic bias and racism surface in the smallest actions. They can also surface with acts of omission. The experience or lack of acknowledgement of significant historical and current cultural markers and events that impact our colleagues can be devastating for those impacted.
- Learning about our various privileges is critical to understanding our blind spots. The actions of holding space for and learning more about others can be uncomfortable but necessary work.

With information comes responsibility

True change in our work culture must begin with dialogue and awareness and it takes shape with actions. As public servants and as responsible colleagues, we must take concrete measures to bring equity, fairness and justice for all in our organization.

The ATSSC EDI Strategy and 2022-2025 Action Plan was built around the six objectives identified by the EDI Committee. These six pillars complement one another, and true progress can only happen by working collaboratively on these six fronts simultaneously.

I am optimistic about the future. I see a profound desire to change across all levels of the public service: from our government leaders to the Clerk of the Privy Council, and from our Chief Administrator to the numerous people who have worked and provided feedback on this important document.

Everyone's contribution to our goals is important. Let's transform our desire for changes into action and build a truly equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace.

Anab Ahmed
Executive Director, Secretariat to the Social Security Tribunal of Canada
ATSSC Champion for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Introduction

At the ATSSC, and across the Government of Canada, there is an increased emphasis on equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI) and ensuring safe and supportive work environments. In 2021, the Clerk of the Privy Council released the [Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service](#), calling on Deputy Heads to remove systemic racism from federal institutions by appointing, sponsoring, supporting and recruiting Indigenous, Black and other racialized employees. The Call to Action was followed by a request for letters on the implementation of the Call to Action (see the [ATSSC's letter](#)).

However, the ATSSC is committed to the creation of a culture of inclusion because it is the right thing to do. We must ensure that people have equitable opportunities to strive, perform and succeed in this organization. Ensuring diversity throughout the organization makes us stronger and better at delivering services for Canadians.

To support EDI, the ATSSC has created an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, headed by the Champion of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Additionally, the organization has developed a [Diversity in the Workplace](#) intranet section, featuring a Diversity Accreditation Program, the 2021-2022 Diversity and Inclusion Workplan, a course catalogue and a subscription to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

Initiatives such as blind recruiting and diverse selection boards have been rolled out to reduce potential biases and barriers in recruiting, and mandatory training on unconscious biases in recruitment practices has been provided to managers.

The ATSSC has also introduced the [Policy on Harassment and Violence Prevention in the Workplace](#) in response to strengthened regulations that ensure all workers are protected from harassment and violence in federally regulated workplaces. Additionally, the ATSSC has launched a [Talent Management Strategy](#) to help the organization retain, attract and develop a professional workforce that can meet their career goals within the ATSSC.

What is equity, diversity, and inclusion?

Equity is about ensuring equitable conditions to allow people to strive, contribute and achieve success given their own needs and limitations.

Diversity is about what makes us different from others. It is the variety of cultures, age, gender, sexual identity and orientation, languages, race, religion, background, perspectives, etc. of people that are part of a given group or society.

Inclusion is about ensuring that people are heard and that their diverse perspectives are included in conversations, decisions, orientations, initiatives, programs and policies.

This work has laid the foundation for a more profound transformation of how the ATSSC approaches diversity. With the support of Human Resources, the ATSSC EDI Committee has developed the 2022-2025 EDI Action Plan (see [Annex A: EDI Action Plan](#)), which focuses on six key objectives and sets new commitments to address the following remaining or new areas of focus:

1. Leadership: Lead by example by showing empathy, humility and keeping an open mind.

2. A safe workplace: People must feel safe, supported and heard for change to happen.

3. Representation: Increasing diversity at all levels of the organization by going beyond employment equity representation numbers: it is about people.

4. Awareness: Inform, equip and train employees and managers to increase awareness and understanding.

5. Service to the public: Provide advice, guidance and support on accessible, equitable and inclusive access to justice for all Canadians.

6. Implementing the ATSSC Accessibility Action Plan.

Vision

The ATSSC strives to be an equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace where all employees have a voice and opportunities to contribute to equitable and inclusive access to justice for all Canadians.

Guiding Principles

Nothing about us without us

This Strategy and Action Plan was developed in collaboration with members of the ATSSC EDI Committee, Communications and Human Resources. The concept of **"Nothing about us without us"** guided the discussions and development of the approaches and concepts found in this document and should factor into any future programs, policies or initiatives that are developed and implemented at the ATSSC.

Furthermore, seven engagement sessions were held with employees and managers to ensure this strategy reflects their perspectives and focuses where it should. More than 150 employees took the time to participate, reinforcing that equity, diversity and inclusion matter and are important to our workforce.

EDI are a shared and common responsibility

The ATSSC recognizes that equity, diversity and inclusion are values that should drive how we work, interact, deliver on our mandate and how we serve Canadians. **Each ATSSC employee at every level** of the organization plays an important role in helping the ATSSC reach these goals.

While strong leadership is key to our success, every employee has the responsibility to listen, to speak up and to recognize their own biases and privileges and work towards greater inclusion. It is only by working together that we can become a truly inclusive workforce.

People are at the centre of our work towards EDI

EDI is about people and what they bring to the table. It is about creating a space where people can be their authentic self, have a voice and be heard. It is about making time and space for listening to the lived experiences of others and remaining open to new ideas and perspectives. It is not simply about reaching numbers or checking boxes; it is about tangible actions that will make a difference for employees and drive true change.

We are representative of the people we serve

Canada is a diverse country in every way starting with its geography and cultures. To be effective public servants, we must **commit to serving all Canadians.** This can only be achieved by ensuring diversity within our workforce. Different perspectives are required from all levels of our organization— not just from employment equity groups—to ensure our policies, procedures, initiatives, and decisions are equitable and inclusive.

To achieve our EDI objectives, each executive, manager, and employee must work collaboratively to make decisions that will allow the ATSSC to foster a work environment where diversity is considered and valued.

Objectives

Objective 1—Leadership: Lead by example by showing empathy, humility and keeping an open mind

Change begins at the top with leaders who lead by example. This sets the tone for an inclusive organization. It will be essential that ATSSC leaders bring up equity, diversity and inclusion at every opportunity, making it a priority. Leaders should be transparent and commit to giving people the opportunity to speak up and be heard without fear of reprisals or criticisms.

Actions will focus on the following elements:

- Building accountability for EDI efforts into Performance Management and for talent management consideration
- Raising awareness around the notion of privilege
- Focusing on the importance of behavioral skills in ATSSC hiring practices
- Building in cultural awareness competency in statement of merit criteria
- Aiming for continuous learning on EDI matters

Objective 2—A safe workplace: Create a safer and inclusive workplace where everyone has a place

Just as there is a common understanding and commitment towards supporting employees' health and well-being, ensuring a safe workplace for all is a priority.

People must feel they are heard. Creating a "safe space" culture and implementing mechanisms or forums where people can speak up is essential. The organization must be proactive and seek out employees' perspectives by generating opportunities for meaningful consultation and co-creation.

Actions will focus on the following elements:

- Implementing accessibility measures allowing everyone to participate in discussions and forums
- Creating exchange forums, multi-level working groups
- Consulting with equity-seeking groups

- Adopting inclusive writing practices
- Incorporating Gender-Based Analysis (GBA)+ practices in developing and implementing programs and policies
- Adopting practices that value and embrace our linguistic duality

Objective 3—Increasing diversity at all levels of the organization by going beyond employment equity representation numbers: it is about people

Representation is not just about numbers—it is about seeing oneself in the organization and knowing that there are opportunities to grow and learn no matter who you are and to which group you belong. Representation is about bringing people with different perspectives into the ATSSC and ensuring that their voices matter.

An example of this is ensuring diversity in leadership positions, for two main reasons: First, it shows those from diverse backgrounds that the ATSSC promotes members of equity-seeking groups. Second, in their role of leaders, members of equity-seeking groups will have the opportunity to influence the culture in a more profound way—they can speak up about their experiences to both inspire others and to bring awareness to their journey and challenges. This makes them highly influential agents of change.

However, the ATSSC is making a commitment that by fiscal year 2023-2024, there will be no representation gaps at the organizational level and is aiming to increase the representation in EX and LC positions by the end 2025 by at least one point.

Actions will focus on the following elements:

- Adopting inclusive hiring practices and informing managers and HR professionals
- Promoting self-identification
- Adding additional EDI components to Talent Management and Career Development programs
- Establishing a mentorship initiative
- Promoting and using federal hiring programs, pools and inventories for equity-seeking groups
- Providing language training
- Changing the hiring outreach strategy
- Aiming to go above representation numbers than those currently expected in EX and EX-minus-one positions to significantly impact the culture of the organization

Objective 4—Awareness: Inform, equip and train employees and managers to increase awareness and understanding

Awareness is the best tool to create an inclusive, diverse and equitable workplace and workforce. Understanding the experiences and journeys of others is the most efficient way to grow individually and as an organization. It will be critical to continue the dialogue on anti-racism held at the All-Staff Event on ATSSC Beyond 2020 in February 2022, and to increase the number of events, learning activities and exchange sessions between employees. This also includes training on diversity, accessibility and cultural awareness.

Actions will focus on the following elements:

- Support for managers to hold EDI dialogues with their teams

- Quarterly learning events

- Diversity learning pathway

- Promotion of training, tools and readings

- Promotion of the EDI Committee by welcoming new members and opening up opportunities to attend meetings

- Encouraging courageous conversations from employees on their life experiences as a member of an equity or equity-seeking group

Objective 5—Service to the public: Providing advice, guidance and support on accessible, equitable and inclusive access to justice for all Canadians

It is the ATSSC's mandate to support tribunals, and to offer them services and guidance. We must ensure that our advice is aligned with the objectives set in this strategy, on the following elements in particular:

- Challenges and benefits of virtual access in remote communities

- Accessibility measures within the tribunals and during mediations and hearings

- Usage of inclusive writing principles in communication with the public

- Official languages

Objective 6—Implementing the ATSSC Accessibility Action Plan

The ATSSC Accessibility Action Plan will be introduced in December 2022. While it has a specific focus, accessibility speaks to equity, diversity and inclusion and the EDI Committee will play a role in the Action Plan's promotion and implementation. Anticipated work will include a focus on:

- Accessibility in communications

- Accessibility passport

- Increasing awareness around accommodation needs for candidates and employees

Monitoring and reporting

Progress on the three-year EDI Action Plan will be measured yearly and reported on quarterly in the ATSSC Operational Plan. Human Resources will take the lead in the monitoring and reporting on progress, supported by the EDI Committee and the Champion of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Success will be measured through Public Service Employee Survey results, internal pulse surveys, quantitative and qualitative analysis, employment equity and data on mobility, and learning plan analysis.

On a biannual basis, the Champion on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, in collaboration with the Director of HR, will provide updates on progress to the ATSSC Resources Sub-Committee and

propose changes, reviews or additions to the 2022-2025 EDI Action Plan to ensure it continues to reflect the perspectives of employees, management and the organizational context.

Annex A: 2022-2025 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Objective 1—Leadership: Lead by example by showing empathy, humility and keeping an open mind

Activities	Responsibility	Collaborators	Timeline
1. Build accountability towards EDI efforts and results by including it in performance and talent management review committees for executives and senior leaders and ensuring clear and concrete performance indicators are included in performance agreements.	HR	Chief Administrator-Deputy Chief Administrator CA-DCA	Year 1
2. Include a mandatory cultural awareness competency in the statement of merit criteria for management and leadership positions.	HR		Year 2
3. Provide professional development on behavioral skills and self-awareness.	HR		Year 2
4. Develop an EDI work commitment/objectives for supervisors and managers.	EDI Committee	HR	Year 2
5. Evaluate senior managers through 360-degree evaluations.	HR	Consultant	Year 3

Objective 2—A safe workplace: Create a safe and inclusive workplace where everyone has a place

Activities	Responsibility	Collaborators	Timeline
1. Use GBA+ analysis in implementing new policies, procedures, and tools to minimize barriers or unconscious biases.	HR/comms		Ongoing
2. Inform employees and managers of the guidelines for accommodation of employees' workplaces or tools.	HR		Ongoing
3. Provide support and tools to ensure that new employees are equipped, informed, and included quickly within their team and the organization.	HR/IT		Ongoing
4. Promote formal mechanisms on disclosing of information concerning wrongdoing in the workplace.	HR	Comms	Ongoing
5. Consult equity-seeking groups' members in the development of policies, programs, and initiatives.	Organization	Senior management	Ongoing
6. Communicate to employees about the tools available to help them. Implement accessible and inclusive correspondence practices.	EDI Committee	Comms - HR	Year 1
7. Encourage participation of equity-seeking groups' members in the various organizational working groups and committees.	Senior management		Year 1
8. In the context of a hybrid workplace, ensure that employees have a flexible and adaptable work environment and have access to the right tools.	HR/IT	Accommodations	Year 1-2
9. Develop and implement employee exit survey, which should include diversity-related elements.	HR	Secretariats	Year 2
10. Conduct a review of existing people management-related policies, procedures, and tools in place in the organization to identify whether any obstacles and biases exist and provide recommendations to reduce or eliminate them.	HR/EDI Committee	Various stakeholders	Year 2-3

Objective 3— Increasing diversity at all levels of the organisation by going beyond employment equity representation numbers: it is about people.

Activities	Responsibility	Collaborators	Timeline
1. Include an organisational need statement in all advertised processes.	HR	Senior management	Ongoing
2. Restrict area of selection for pools, inventories and selection processes when there is a representation gap.	HR	Senior management	Ongoing
3. Put in place the means to ensure that selection processes are fair and inclusive from the development of the Statement of Merit Criteria to the selection of the candidate.	HR		Year 1
4. Launch the new self-identification questionnaire and encourage employees to complete it by outlining its importance.	TBS-HR	Comms/EDI Committee	Year 1
5. Review the Career and Talent Management Program to identify any obstacles and barriers and work towards eliminating them or minimizing them as much as possible.	HR	EDI Committee	Year 1
6. Develop and launch tools for hiring managers on inclusive hiring.	HR	Comms	Year 1
7. Promote diverse hiring programs, pools, inventories, and talent pipelines for members of equity-seeking groups.	HR	Comms	Year 1
8. Promote employment opportunities in official languages minority communities.	HR	Secretariats	Year 1
9. Provide training to all HR professionals on accessibility, equity, diversity, and inclusion so that they can better advise their clients on inclusion, systemic barriers, and unconscious biases.	HR		Year 1
10. Establish collaboration with associations whose mandates are relevant to equity-seeking groups to reach out to diverse groups in activities such as recruitment.	HR		Year 2
11. Develop and launch a candidate/employee survey to assess the candidate experience and onboarding as it pertains to accessibility, equity, diversity, and inclusion during and after the selection process.	HR	Comms	Year 2

Objective 4—Awareness: Inform, equip and train employees and managers to increase awareness and understanding

Activities	Responsibility	Collaborators	Timeline
1. Promote the EDI Committee to recruit new members and encourage people to attend meetings.	EDI Committee	Comms	Ongoing
2. Invite people who are part of a designated group to speak about their lived experience at organizational meetings or in any other platform.	EDI Committee	Comms	Ongoing
3. Raise organizational awareness to the culture and reality of equity-seeking groups by organizing or promoting events and learning activities.	EDI committee	Comms	Ongoing
4. Set up a calendar of activities (experience sharing, conferences, tips and tricks) to inform and sensitize employees and keep the subject present throughout the year.	EDI committee	Comms	Ongoing
5. Promote relevant training, workshops and activities that exist within the federal public service or externally.	EDI Committee		Ongoing
6. Ensure that managers and service providers understand and respect employees' language of choice.	HR	Senior leaders	Ongoing
7. Make sure employees understand and respect clients' language of choice and practice the active offer of service.	HR		Ongoing
8. Communicate definitions of terms associated with equity, diversity, and inclusion within ATSSC and share it so that everyone has the same understanding and is working towards the same goal.	HR/EDI Committee	Comms	Year 1
9. Develop, provide, and promote toolkit for managers to support them in creating space for discussion and exchange on EDI and to increase their awareness on this topic.	HR	EDI Committee/ Comms	Year 1
10. Develop and implement the Diversity Learning Path for all employees (replacing the current Diversity Accreditation Program).	HR		Year 1
11. Require mandatory EDI training (six hours for employees and eight hours for managers) per year and include it in the Learning Plan.	HR		Year 1
12. Provide training to all supervisors and managers on unconscious bias and inclusive hiring beyond the mandatory training (H205).	HR	Consultant	Year 1

Objective 5—Service to the public: Provide advice, guidance and support on accessible, equitable and inclusive access to justice for all Canadians

Activities	Responsibility	Collaborators	Timeline
1. Ensure that all information is published in both official languages simultaneously.	HR - Secretariats		Ongoing
2. Share and present ATSSC's EDI Strategy and Action Plan with tribunal chairpersons.	HR - Secretariats		Year 1
3. Share, present or promote EDI initiatives with tribunal chairpersons.	HR - Secretariats		Year 1
4. Raise awareness of the importance of using inclusive writing and accessible format in our communications with the public.	Comms/ Secretariat		Year 1
5. Develop an action plan for each of the tribunal secretariats describing measures to be implemented to ensure that advice, guidance and support services provided to the tribunals are aligned with the ATSSC EDI Strategy and Action Plan.	Executive Directors		Year 1
6. Share our learnings about equity-seeking groups, including, but not limited to, the four employment equity groups, LGBTQ2+, and religious or linguistic minority groups with tribunals. This will raise awareness on best available practices to better support the ATSSC's mandate to provide access to justice to all Canadians in a timely and efficient manner by providing services that are accessible and culturally appropriate.	EDI Committee		Year 2
7. Ensure that the ATSSC Accessibility Plan is shared with the tribunals so that they can accommodate any events organized by the tribunal, whether they are held in person or by videoconference / teleconference.	Accessibility Committee / EDI Committee		Year 2