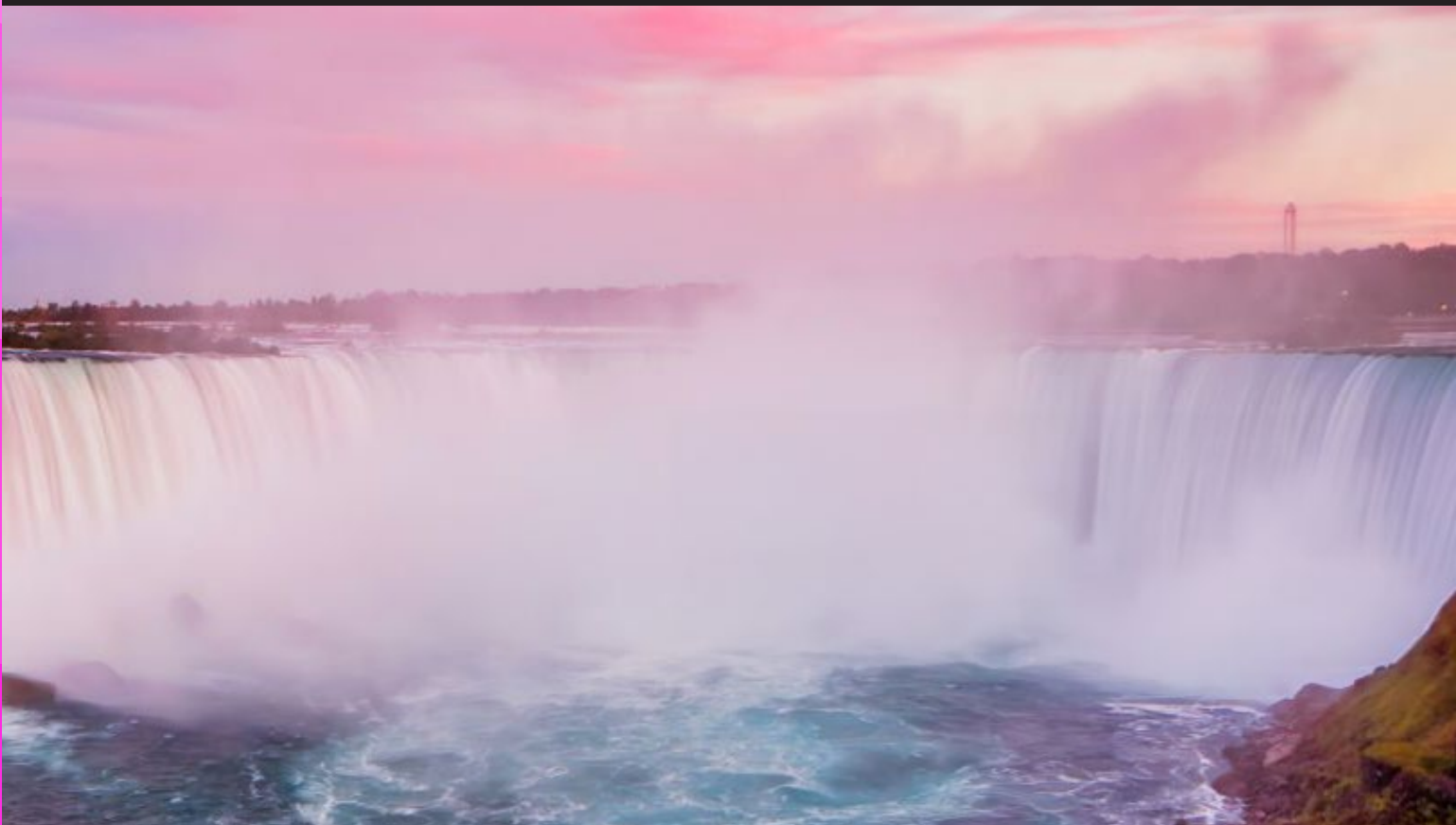


Guide

Health Equity Assessment: Resources and Best Practices Guide

For the Niagara Ontario Health Team
-Équipe Santé Ontario-Niagara (NOHT-ÉSON)





Housed within the Ted Rogers School of Management, the Diversity Institute (DI) has over 100 diverse researchers focused on advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion. We work with organizations across sectors to develop customized strategies, programming, and resources to promote new, interdisciplinary knowledge and practice about diversity with respect to gender, race/ethnicity, Indigenous Peoples, abilities, and sexual orientation. Using an ecological model of change, our action-oriented, evidence-based approach drives social innovation across sectors.

DI engages in research and programming with more than 200 partners in for-profit, non-profit, and public-sector organizations to understand the strategic importance of diversity and inclusion within their respective sectors and to develop customized strategies and tools to harness inclusion as a driver for success. DI leads a number of large multi-stakeholder programs for the Future Skills Centre, the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, and the 50 – 30 Challenge.



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Report, Assessment Tool, and Progress Tracker
attached separately.



Health Equity Assessment: Resources and Best Practices Guide

The following recommendations and resources were compiled to support the NOHT-ÉSON in addressing health equity gaps that organizations identify through applying the Health Equity Assessment Tool. The recommendations have been tailored to the needs expressed through NOHT-ÉSON Working Group consultations and deep dive interviews and are aligned with the areas assessed through the Tool.

Best practice recommendations have been developed from various sources, including resources currently used by individual organizations within the NOHT-ÉSON and their partners to build on and complement their lessons and successes. Through a comprehensive review of academic, government, and industry sources working toward health equity in similar contexts, the Diversity Institute (DI) has compiled and developed tools and examples that the NOHT-ÉSON can use to address these recommendations. The list includes resources such as policy templates, implementation and evaluation guides, trackers and checklists, up-to-date terminology, and additional resources and research on the barriers and needs identified for the various populations served.



1.0 Leadership and Governance

Setting the tone for organizational culture starts from the top. A commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices and health equity goals must be integrated at the levels of senior management, leadership, and governance in order for substantive, meaningful, and long-lasting changes to take place.

This section provides recommendations and best practice resources that can help support diversity and inclusion at these senior levels. Included are tools that support a commitment to inclusive and representative organizations, strategic planning frameworks, and the integration of health equity goals and knowledge. Specific subsections include: Diverse Board and Leadership Team, Health Equity Knowledge Priority, and Governance and Strategic Planning.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
Diverse Board and Leadership Team		
1.1	Is the Board of Directors or Governing Body diverse?	<p>Fellowship Programs can help to build a diverse Leadership Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The American Hospital Association¹ recommends creating targeted fellowship programs to identify and select candidates for C-suite positions, particularly to select candidates from under-represented groups (e.g., women, racialized individuals). Health care organizations can follow this model and create fellowships that prepare future leaders representing diverse groups. <p>NRC Health’s Governance Institute² has developed a toolkit for health care boards and executives to build more diverse boards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The toolkit includes strategies and tactics to increase board diversity, as well as examples of health care organizations that implemented these strategies.
1.2	Is the Senior Leadership Team diverse?	<p>Having an action-oriented strategy for diverse representation on the Senior Leadership Team can help achieve diversity goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ontario Public Service³ (OPS) has an Inclusion & Diversity Blueprint, which acts as a roadmap to achieving a diverse leadership team that reflects the composition of the OPS workforce. The Blueprint provides a set of concrete goals, clearly defining the desired end results. Organizations can use this resource as a guide for achieving a diverse leadership team.
1.3	Does the organization have a process to identify and recruit a diverse Board of Directors or Governing Body?	<p>Identifying diverse groups for open positions can be accomplished through strategies such as creating diverse selection committees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The American Hospital Association⁴ recommends identifying diverse groups for any open job position. It includes examples from the Greenville Health System in South Carolina, which created a diverse selection committee to select diverse candidates for leadership positions. Due to this practice, 70% of leadership appointments were from under-represented groups, and 50% of leadership appointments identified as racialized.
1.4	Does the organization have a process to identify and recruit a diverse Senior Leadership Team?	<p>Achieving diversity in the Senior Leadership Team can be done by having specific, quantifiable goals and a plan of action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations can sign up for the Government of Canada’s⁵ 50 – 30 Challenge, a voluntary code that asks that organizations fulfill or aspire to the following two goals: gender parity (i.e., 50% women and/or non-binary people) and significant representation (30%) of other equity-deserving groups on Canadian boards and/or in senior leadership positions.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
Health Equity Knowledge Priority		
1.5	Is health equity knowledge a requirement for applicants to the Board of Directors or Governing Body?	<p>Applicants to the Board of Directors or Governing Body can be objectively assessed based on specific skills and expertise targets, such as health equity knowledge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations can use a skills-diversity matrix for recruitment to the Board of Directors or Governing Body. • Ontario Health Teams⁶ mandates that recruitment for Boards of Directors should be based on a skills/experience/diversity matrix that is annually reviewed and revised based on strategic directions of the organization. <p>Health care providers should understand the many dimensions of diversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Fraser Health Authority⁷ mandates that care providers educate themselves about the different sets of cultural values and how they interact. Care providers should also learn to recognize the diversity that exists within and across groups to avoid biases and stereotyping.
1.6	Is health equity knowledge a requirement for applicants to leadership and management roles?	<p>Diversity should be embedded as an attribute to be considered for leadership and management roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lambton Public Health⁸ has developed both a framework and an assessment tool that contains a checklist designed to assess individual capacity for health equity actions. The required attributes include a set of cultural values and work ethics; professional background; skills and experiences; and knowledge of EDI-related issues that the community is facing. <p>Organizations should seek applicants from under-represented groups and encourage them to apply for open positions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health⁹ (NCCDH) is an example of an organization that actively seeks applications from individuals from under-represented groups (e.g., women, Black people, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and racialized groups).
1.7	Do leaders participate in regular training and development to improve their understanding of health equity?	<p>There are many great online training courses that leaders can participate in to improve their understanding and knowledge of health equity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NCCDH¹⁰ and Public Health Ontario have an online health equity course that offers introductory material in a self-directed and easily accessible online format. The free online introductory course helps public health staff and managers develop knowledge, skills, and competencies to support action on health equity. • Public Health Training for Equitable Systems Change¹¹ (PHESC) has a compilation of various health equity training resources, which include health equity overall, cultural safety, foundational standards, and more. • The Alliance for Healthier Communities offers Governing for Health Equity Training that is specific to health care providers.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
1.8	Do all members on the Board of Directors or Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team receive training to increase awareness of Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous history?	<p>Online training courses, videos, podcasts, and many other resources can be used to educate members on the Board of Directors or Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team about Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous history.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government of Canada's¹² Indigenous Learning Series offers many resources to help increase cultural skills and awareness of issues related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples in Canada. These include courses, a mobile app, job aids, podcasts, videos, and more. • Humber College's¹³ Four Seasons of Reconciliation is a three-hour, 10-module online course that is designed to educate learners about Truth and Reconciliation and contains resources to help people learn about the historical and current context of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. • Reconciliation Education¹⁴ has online courses and films that provide a comprehensive, customized anti-racist education in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. <p>There are several external partners, either specific to Niagara or targeted to the health care industry, that also offer Indigenous cultural or history training and resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San'Yas¹⁵ Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program or Bystander to Ally Training. • Indigenous Works Training¹⁶ <p>NOHT-ÉSON member Home and Community Care Support Services (HNHB) LHIN offers an integrated Indigenous Health Network (IHN).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IHN is made up of different health and social service providers across Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand, Brant, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and Six Nations of the Grand River. • The IHN¹⁷ provides resources for better understanding of Indigenous culture and history and access to partners.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
Governance and Strategic Planning		
1.9	Are explicit health equity goals and policies in place in the strategic plan?	<p>Having measurable, quantitative health equity goals is important and can be communicated in the strategic plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health¹⁸ (CAMH) has a clear health equity statement that is prominently displayed on the organization’s website. Their statement reads: “Health equity is a principle CAMH is striving for. We are committed to placing diversity, equity and inclusion at the centre of our work.” • Among its initiatives are an anti-Black racism strategy¹⁹ with clear targets and measurable goals. <p>Action-oriented health equity goals can be placed in the strategic plan to help clearly define pathways to success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, Women’s College Hospital²⁰ (WCH) developed a Health Equity Plan in 2016. The plan states that it “applies an overall vision and reflects an ambitious four-year health equity strategy, building on our significant strengths and addressing new opportunities for growth and impact on health care as a human right. The process of developing this plan required an extensive look at the roles that Women’s College Hospital can play in advancing health equity – through the policies, programs and practices of our organization, the greater health system and through ongoing collaboration with our health and community sector partners.”
1.10	Is there an Equity Committee or lead personnel responsible for health equity within the organization?	<p>An Equity Committee can help reinforce health equity initiatives within an organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of British Columbia²¹ provides a comprehensive guide for starting diversity and inclusion committees. While the resource is written for the university context, most of the content is applicable for other organizations as well. • There are also opportunities to create employee resource groups, perhaps across NOHT-ÉSON, to support peer-to-peer learning and strategies.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
1.11	Do leaders proactively communicate the importance of health equity inside and outside the organization?	<p>Internal and external communications may be utilized by leaders to address the importance of health equity for the organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations can integrate health equity in mission, vision, and values statements. This demonstrates the commitment by the Senior Leadership Teams. Likewise, this enables internal and external communications on the changes needed to embed diversity and inclusion into programs, policies, and services to improve the health of priority populations. <u>Lambton Public Health</u>²² has developed an organizational checklist that identifies these needs and suggests core elements to taking effective equity action. <p>Focus on engagement with community stakeholders. Communication with community stakeholders outside the organization opens up further opportunities to ensure health equity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Lambton Public Health</u>²³ mandates that community stakeholders be engaged in the decision-making process for bringing changes to program or service delivery in order to promote health equity.



2.0 Organizational Values and Culture

Organizational culture is determined by the values and goals that leaders set up and communicate to employees. In order to foster inclusive, representative, and healthy organizations and plan for success, specific policies and procedures must be established.

Such policies can help outline organizational values and commit to measurable goals, such as supporting health equity for equity-deserving and underserved groups. Other policies can help address systemic racism and discrimination, support equitable and bias-free hiring practices, and aid in the recruitment and retention of employees from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous Peoples and those from Francophone communities. This section provides resources and best practices that may be applied to the following subsections: Organizational Policy, Employee Recruitment and Selection, Employee Equity and Well-Being, and Training and Engagement.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
Organizational Policy		
2.1	Does the organization have a health equity policy that outlines internal values and expectations?	<p>Commitments to advancing health equity are most effective when put into specific policies and actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The World Health Organization²⁴ (WHO) has a Health Equity Policy Tool that acts as a framework for advancing health equity in organizations. Policy actions in multiple areas are identified and recommendations are provided to implement policies and reduce health inequities.
2.2	Does the organization have a policy that actively addresses systemic discrimination and racism and protects the safety of employees?	<p>Specific policies addressing systemic discrimination and the intolerance of racism can be implemented in an organization to help advance health equity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ontario Human Rights Commission²⁵ (OHRC) has a guideline titled <i>A policy primer: Guide to developing human rights policies and procedures</i> for anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies, programs, and procedures. The document outlines the importance of a “complete strategy” that includes a specific plan for removing barriers, complaints procedures, and education and training programs. The Canadian Human Rights Commission²⁶ provides an anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy template. This comprehensive resource document helps identify actions and behaviour that may undermine someone’s identity or cultural background and destabilize organizational harmony.



Commitments to advancing health equity are most effective when put into **specific policies and actions**.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
Employee Recruitment and Selection		
2.3	Do individuals involved in hiring processes receive training on bias-free hiring practices?	<p>The starting point is having diversity in the hiring committee itself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For panel interviews, the University of Waterloo²⁷ provides a guide on how to create a diverse selection committee. <p>Bias-free hiring requires understanding the unconscious biases that can be present at any point during the recruitment process. Guidelines and courses on bias-free hiring can help advance equity in the workplace.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring managers should receive training on different forms of biases. When hiring managers are trained specifically on identifying various biases during the interview processes, this leads to increased awareness and understanding of how biases can impact recruitment decisions. This also helps in identifying strategies for minimizing biases and enables health equity for under-represented groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University of Florida²⁸ has a podcast on maximizing leadership potential and cultivating talent that discusses how to identify and avoid biases during the interview processes. Surrey Local Immigration Partnership²⁹ has a culturally-competent screening tool which provides a step-by-step process to identify core competencies to assess candidates through objective assessment. The University of Toronto³⁰ offers approaches to identify and address bias during the selection process. Microsoft³¹ has a course that is designed to train employees to identify their own biases and that provides workplace scenarios through which resource users can learn more about how biases affect their interactions in the workplace.
2.3 <i>Cont.</i>	Do individuals involved in hiring processes receive training on bias-free hiring practices?	<p>Resumes can be screened in a way that prevents bias.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Immigrant Employment Council of BC³² has a resource that provides tips for screening resumes from immigrant candidates. This resource can be extended to promote bias-free hiring of equity-deserving groups. <p>Interviews can be conducted and selection can be made in a way that prevents bias in hiring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nova Scotia Barristers' Society³³ has the <i>Hiring Practices for Equity in Employment: Interviewing Guide</i>. This guide outlines how to engage in unbiased recruitment and selection, recruit diverse candidates, accommodate differences in the hiring process, and more. To mitigate unconscious biases that may stem from interviews, it also contains information about different behaviours, responses, and body language that are often misunderstood Hire for Talent³⁴ has a toolkit that is aimed at conducting successful interviews with persons living with disabilities. The toolkit contains guides on etiquette, selection, and inclusive interviews. This toolkit can be extended to bias-free hiring for all groups.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
2.4	Is there a strategy to recruit people from equity-deserving groups?	<p>Having a specific inclusive hiring strategy for equity-deserving groups is essential to increasing representation in an organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mental Health Commission of Canada³⁵ has a comprehensive resource that contains a self-assessment checklist and offers a detailed strategy to recruit and retain persons with mental disabilities. This guide can be extended and used to recruit other equity-deserving groups as well. • The National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health³⁶ (NCCDH) has developed human resources strategies to hire candidates from equity-deserving groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The resource page highlights how NCCDH screens for candidates from equity-deserving groups (e.g., women, racialized individuals, Indigenous Peoples). The interview questions also assess candidates' understanding of diversity and inclusion. The page includes resources on employment equity practices.
Employee Equity and Well-Being		
2.5	Does the organization provide a safe and welcoming space for Indigenous employees?	<p>An Indigenous Hiring Strategy can help an organization recruit, retain, and welcome Indigenous employees into a positive work environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECO Canada³⁷ has a helpful presentation on best practices for increasing Indigenous representation in workplaces and creating inclusive work environments. Some of these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audit your positions: Is there an opportunity to have an Indigenous position? - Create a recruitment plan: How does the position align with the organizational goals, values, and interview process? - Create an inclusive job description: Use culturally appropriate language, desired characteristics, clear language, and salary information. - Advertise the position: Indigenous recruitment resources, Indigenous media. - Review applicants: Tracking set up for self-identification in the application process. - Schedule interviews: Be culturally sensitive, send preparation questions in advance. - Applicant assessment: Based on qualifications and individual merit. Is any training available? - Onboarding: Clear guidelines and expectations are communicated.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
2.6	Are Francophone employees purposefully involved across multiple processes at the organization?	<p>Involving Francophone employees across the organization can be done by offering professional development support and through inclusive recruitment. For more information on human resources best practices for recruiting and retaining bilingual staff, the Entité² recommends that management and human resources teams complete the following online training tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eQUITY Link³⁸: Health Human Resources Strategy. This online resource provides a framework for recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources in the context of health services for a minority population. • Active Offer³⁹: This training course is available both in English and in French. The goal of this resource is to discuss the importance of the active offer of French-language health services with individuals who work in or study health care or another related field, as well as to promote the important role individuals can play in ensuring ongoing improvement in the active offer of French-language health services. • Cultural and Linguistic Sensitive Care Learning Program⁴⁰: This training was developed by Ontario Health West in response to feedback from providers and to fill a gap pertaining to the availability of training that approaches the delivery of French-language services from the “human perspective” and places Francophone patients at the heart of the provider–patient relationship.



Involving Francophone employees across the organization can be done by offering **professional development support** and through **inclusive recruitment**.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
2.7	Does the organization provide a safe and welcoming space for employees from equity-deserving groups?	<p>A safe and welcoming space for equity-deserving groups is essential, and inclusive work environments include many various key aspects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CEO Health + Safety Leadership Network⁴¹ has a paper that discusses how companies should ensure that they not only employ a diverse workforce, but also take the necessary steps to ensure equitable treatment and fairness, and that every voice is recognized and heard. The paper discusses the roles of leaders in ensuring an inclusive work environment and also examines the business case for diversity and inclusion. It puts a spotlight on Modern Niagara and how their leadership is committed to cultivating a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace. • The CFA Institute⁴² provides 20 actionable items that promote inclusion in an organization. • KPMG⁴³ highlights key indicators that can develop and nurture a good organizational culture. • Great Place to Work and Pride at Work Canada⁴⁴ provide strategies to help organizations establish inclusive working environments, particularly for members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. This resource can be amended to focus on other equity-deserving and under-represented groups. • The 519⁴⁵ has a toolkit for creating a trans-inclusive environment, which consists of a set of infographics on a variety of topics, such as gender-neutral pronouns, allyship, washrooms and change rooms, creating a welcoming environment, and more. Some of the best practices from this resource can be applied and extended to other equity-deserving groups as well.
2.8	Are there accommodations for employees to support them at work?	<p>Accommodations and support for equity-deserving employees is important from the recruitment process to retention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act⁴⁶ (AODA) website lists several best practices for making the hiring process more accessible and providing accommodations during the process. These include, but are not limited to, accessible job postings, distinguishing between essential and nonessential responsibilities, and accessible interviews. <p>An Accessibility Policy is a great way to ensure that equity-deserving groups, such as people living with disabilities, receive the accommodations they need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government of Ontario⁴⁷ has a resource that lists step-by-step instructions for creating an accessibility policy, as required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) of 2005, and also includes accessibility policies and multi-year plan templates for reference.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
2.9	Are leave and flexible work policies extensive and inclusive of diverse employees?	<p>Flexible working arrangements are important for the productivity and well-being of all employees and can take the form of several different initiatives. These types of arrangements can greatly benefit employees from under-represented groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Vancouver⁴⁸ provides a Remote and Flexible Work Toolkit for Employers. The toolkit outlines the benefits of these diverse work arrangements and provides actionable steps to implement different types of work opportunities. Further, this resource provides sample staff survey and program evaluation questionnaires to determine what works best for individual organizations as well as a sample remote and flexible work policy and employee work agreement. This City of Toronto⁴⁹ report explains the rationale for creating floating or flexible holiday structures that can better support employees who observe diverse holidays not included in existing legislation.
2.10	Are equal pay audits conducted to ensure equal pay for work of equal value?	<p>Equal pay assessments and analysis can be done to ensure employees are given their due compensation. Canada has new legislation to support the implementation of pay equity in federally regulated corporations, and Ontario has legislation with which many health care institutions have had to comply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glassdoor⁵⁰ has a report that offers employers a step-by-step guide on how to conduct a technical analysis of the potential pay gap in their organization. <p>There are many online courses and e-learning modules that are helpful educational resources on pay equality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government of New Brunswick⁵¹ offers a Pay Equity Learning Module that covers the essentials of pay equity and how to establish it in an organization.



Flexible working arrangements are important for the productivity and well-being of all employees and can take the form of several different initiatives.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
Training and Engagement		
2.11	Do all employees receive training on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)?	<p>Training on EDI can be done in many different ways. There are webinars, formal courses, and self-paced training on EDI in general, as well as on specific topics such as microaggressions or AODA compliance. Many organizations have mandatory requirements as part of their onboarding practices.</p> <p>For example, the Diversity Institute (DI) offers workshops on many topics, including Introduction to EDI, Unconscious Bias, Anti-Black/Asian/Indigenous Discrimination, and Systemic Approach to EDI. DI also provides training and workshops that are tailored to address more specific organizational needs. Tools available to support training include the Privilege Checklist, the Micropedia on Microaggressions,⁵² and other curated tools, such as the Harvard Implicit Bias Test.⁵³</p> <p>There are also advanced programs in gender-based analysis plus (GBA+).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government of Canada⁵⁴ provides an overview of GBA+, explaining how diverse individuals may experience policies, procedures, and initiatives. • Women and Gender Equality Canada⁵⁵ (WAGE) provides a GBA+ training course.
2.12	Do all employees receive training to increase awareness of Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous history?	<p>There are many training options in Canada to increase awareness of Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous history (e.g., online courses and in-person workshops).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Awareness Canada,⁵⁶ a 100% Indigenous-created and -owned organization, offers online Indigenous Awareness Training and in-person workshops. They assist organizations and individuals to learn about Canada's Indigenous history and aim to help non-Indigenous Canadians and Indigenous Peoples move toward reconciliation. <p>There are several external partners, either specific to Niagara or targeted to the health care industry, that also offer training and resources on Indigenous culture or history, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San'Yas⁵⁷ Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program or Bystander to Ally Training • Indigenous Works Training⁵⁸ <p>The Indigenous Health Network⁵⁹ (IHN) is a collective of 37 Indigenous organizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IHN is made up of different health and social service providers across Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand, Brant, Mississauga of the Credit First Nation, and Six Nations of the Grand River. • The IHN provides resources for better understanding Indigenous culture and history as well as access to partners.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
2.13	Does the organization act as an ally and support employees to demonstrate allyship?	<p>Allyship can come in many forms, and it is important for employers and employees alike to show support and be allies to equity-deserving groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women of Color for Progress⁶⁰ has a guide that covers how those who are not women of colour can support women of colour as allies. The guide has a list of the dos and don'ts of allyship. • The Montreal Indigenous Community Network⁶¹ has an Indigenous Ally Toolkit, which provides information for non-Indigenous people who wish to be good allies, including terminology, dos and don'ts, and a list of things that should not be said. • San'Yas⁶² Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program offers advanced Bystander to Ally training, which bridges the gap in knowledge to raise awareness for the barriers to health equity faced by Indigenous communities. • Catalyst⁶³ has an initiative called Men Advocating Real Change (MARC) that encourages men to advocate for gender equity through research-based, experiential learning.



3.0 Programs and Service Delivery

The tone that an organization strikes at the leadership level and through its values and culture also impacts clients through program and service delivery. Health equity goals and EDI practices must be prioritized in the design and delivery of programs and services in order to support equity-deserving and underserved populations.

In particular, NOHT-ÉSON members must evaluate programs and services to ensure that they reach and support Indigenous Peoples and Francophone communities. This section provides tools and resources to ensure program and service evaluation considers Indigenous Peoples and cultures, Francophone culture and French language, linguistic minorities and newcomers, accessibility concerns, and care for members of 2SLGBTQ+ groups. Many of the resources included are specific to Niagara, and some are already being successfully implemented by NOHT-ÉSON members. Overall, these best practice resources address the following subsections: Services Access and Specialized Programming, Partnership and Community Engagement, and External Marketing and Communications.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
Service Access and Specialized Programming		
3.1	Does the organization work with Indigenous partners to offer targeted programs for Indigenous Peoples?	<p>As per the scope of the NOHT-ÉSON, all members commit to developing meaningful, sustainable partnerships with Indigenous organizations and communities toward ensuring that Indigenous communities have access to programs and services that meet their needs.</p> <p>One approach is to partner with Indigenous organizations and open your space to them for them to deliver Indigenous services. This increases the geographic area in which Indigenous-specific health services are offered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOHT-ÉSON member Quest Community Health Center partners with the Aboriginal Health Centre⁶⁴ to host the Aboriginal Patient Navigation program in their space. This program bridges the gap between Indigenous Peoples, health services, and supports.
3.2	Does the organization provide an inclusive care environment for Indigenous patients?	<p>It is important the health care organizations create safe and culturally appropriate spaces for Indigenous community members.</p> <p>One way to do this is through staff training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several organizations provide Indigenous Cultural Safety Training courses or other types of Indigenous knowledge and history programming. • San'Yas⁶⁵ provides an Indigenous Cultural Safety Training program that is specific to health care. <p>Another way to do this is by developing Indigenous partnerships. This allows an organization to make referrals that can best support and respect the individual.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several Indigenous organizations in Niagara have the capacity for health care and social service, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aboriginal Health Centre⁶⁶ - Niagara Regional Native Centre⁶⁷ - Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre⁶⁸ - Niagara Chapter - Native Women Inc.⁶⁹

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.3	Does the organization deliver its programs and services in French?	<p>Offering programs and services in French improves the experience and accessibility for Francophone communities accessing health service. This can eliminate delays in accessing care and receiving a diagnosis/treatment.</p> <p>Resources are available for French-language health services planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entité² provides expertise and meaningful data on the socio-demographic profile of Francophone communities, supports efforts to engage with the Francophone community, and can assist in the planning, design, delivery, and evaluation of French-language services. • The Réseau Franco-Santé du Sud de l'Ontario (RFSSO)⁷⁰ is a non-profit organization that contributes to the development of French-language health services in Central Southwestern Ontario through targeted collaborations and its knowledge and analysis of trends in the health system. • The Community of Practice Website⁷¹ offers a wealth of resources to support organizations in the implementation of French-language health services. This toolbox is an extension of the HNHB and WW French Language Health Services Community of Practice (FLS CoP), and its purpose is to support health service providers in improving the delivery of French-language services. It provides resources on topics such as active offer, French-language services best practices, navigation for Francophone clients and bilingual human resources recruitment and retention. • The Active Offer of French Training⁷² is a free online training resource available in French or English, geared toward individuals studying or working in a health care profession. • The Government of Manitoba⁷³ applies the term “active offer” to denote “a set of measures taken by designated public bodies to ensure that French language services are evident, readily available, and publicized, and that the quality of these services is comparable to that of services offered in English.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This resource provides examples to consider when creating accessible French programs and services, such as considering the structure and delivery format of all documents. • The eQUITY Link Platform⁷⁴ is a resource site for health service providers to assess, design, and build their French-language capacity in a health care setting. Any organization can benefit from this resource and use it to assess the status of its French-language services offer, identify next steps through recommended strategies, and develop a personalized action plan. eQUITY Link is easily adapted and integrated at any level of progress in the implementation of the French language service offer and is supported by strategies, practical advice, and proven resources.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.3 <i>Cont.</i>	Does the organization deliver its programs and services in French?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Provincial Translation Network⁷⁵ is a translation network of the Ontario Ministry of Health that provides translation services to Ontario health service providers that have been designated under the French Language Services Act (FLSA) or identified to plan and deliver services in French. • The RISE Brief #25⁷⁶ presents Ontario’s French-language health planning entities and how they can support Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) as a health system partner. In addition, RISE has hosted two webinars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RISE - Lunchtime Webinar: Engaging and Improving Care for Francophone Communities⁷⁷ - RISE - Supporting OHTs to Meet Their Requirements Under the French Language Services Act: The Active Offer of French Language Health Services Online Training⁷⁸ <p>In order to facilitate access to programs and services for Francophone clients, organizations should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identify that they provide programs, services, and/or client support in French. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entité⁷⁹ offers several strategies to support this initiative, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrating a bilingual greeting to signal that French is spoken within the organization. For example, greeting clients with “Hello, Bonjour.” ▪ Identify the French speakers in the organization. This may be done through signage when entering the building, employees wearing pins/tags that indicate the languages they speak, or announcements on the organization’s website that clearly indicate that French-language support and services are available. - Entité⁸⁰ further suggests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrating a bilingual answering machine/voice message and making bilingual business cards available for French speaking staff. • Be aware of the needs of Francophone communities and also know the local and provincial health care resources available to Francophone clients in order to provide appropriate information or make referrals.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.4	Are all materials accessible in French?	<p>Making all materials accessible in French bridges gaps in the knowledge and availability of resources for Francophone clients.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Translation Network is funded by the Ministry of Health and is an invaluable resource in providing a variety of supports to designated, identified, and non-identified LHIN-funded providers. They use vetted translators who are well-versed in client-facing health-related documents and use appropriate language accordingly. Some services are available at no cost. Please refer to the documents below for more information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Translation Network Guidelines⁸¹ - Document Eligibility Criteria⁸² - Request for Service Form⁸³ • For more information, contact Louise Baillargeon, Translation Network Manager: Louise.Baillargeon@niagarahealth.on.ca Santé Niagara/Niagara Health 905 378-4647 ext. 32313 • Provider-specific information for French-language health care resources and programs/services can be accessed through Le Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario.⁸⁴



Making all materials accessible in French bridges gaps in the knowledge and availability of resources for Francophone clients.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.5	Does the organization offer programs and services that are accessible to linguistic minorities (i.e., other than French)?	<p>The increasingly diverse communities of Niagara require service providers to offer programs and services that are accessible to linguistic minorities.</p> <p>Offering accessible services will improve access and equity for these groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government of Canada⁸⁵ provides a report on the role of language barriers in accessing health care and offers strategies to help organizations eliminate these barriers, including hiring diverse and multilingual staff who can support program/service delivery in multiple languages or accessing designated interpreters. • Organizations can also create partnerships within the community and can refer clients to these partners for services or use their language expertise to access translation and/or interpretation services. For example, the Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre⁸⁶ caters to different ethno-cultural and newcomer communities; their organization frequently provides translation support for clients accessing services in the community. <p>Other resources on making programs and services accessible include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The handbook from the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario⁸⁷ on designing websites that are accessible by everyone. • The Remote Interpretation Ontario⁸⁸ (RIO) Network is a non-profit organization offering high-quality, 24/7 access to phone and video interpretation, which can support members of linguistic minority communities. • One strategy is to utilize universal learning design (UDL). CAST⁸⁹ provides UDL guidelines.



The increasingly diverse communities of Niagara require service providers to offer programs and services that are accessible to linguistic minorities.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.6	Are care providers diverse and representative of the community that they serve?	<p>It is important for care providers to both reflect the diverse community they serve and understand the specific needs of diverse clients.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Joint Commission⁹⁰ published a resource on <i>Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This resource includes a checklist that care providers can use to evaluate their services and understand if they cater to the needs of diverse populations. NOHT-ÉSON can ask their care providers to use this checklist to evaluate their programs and services. • Organizations can ask care providers to self-assess their competence in serving diverse communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Fraser Health Authority⁹¹ provides a competence standard self-assessment that care providers can use to evaluate their programs and services. NOHT-ÉSON can ask their care providers to self-assess whether their programs are culturally diverse and meet the needs of diverse populations. • NOHT-ÉSON members can create an action plan to increase the diversity of care providers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Health Research and Educational Trust⁹² has developed an action plan to increase supplier diversity in health care. The plan includes actionable steps and case studies to highlight how health care organizations have increased their supplier diversity. The resource includes interventions implemented, results achieved, and lessons learned. These success stories can be used as examples to develop strategies to increase the diversity of care providers. • Organizations can also create a program to identify care providers that serve equity-deserving groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Mayo Clinic⁹³ has created a Supplier Diversity Program to engage organizations that are owned by equity-deserving groups (e.g., women, racialized owners). Mayo Clinic requests its suppliers to complete their profile and include diversity certificates and classifications.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.7	Do programs and services effectively support the needs of diverse clients?	<p>Diverse groups have distinct needs that may not be met through existing programs and services. One way to provide more targeted programs and services is to assess the needs of clients and evaluate existing programs and services based on those needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Health Services⁹⁴ provides a guide to understanding different population health needs in a community. <p>Organizations can develop a community engagement plan to understand the needs of diverse communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Saskatoon Health Region⁹⁵ published a guide for community engagement for health care organizations. The guide defines essential elements of community engagement and outlines a model for effective community engagement. It also highlights core and accessory skills that enable effective conversations with community members. The guide also includes an engagement planning cycle, which NOHT-ÉSON can use as an example. <p>NOHT-ÉSON can use the World Health Organization's⁹⁶ community engagement resource page to determine their community engagement strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resource page defines community engagement and provides a range of community engagement options. The page also includes a list of questions to determine whether community engagement is appropriate and how to successfully improve community engagement. <p>The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care⁹⁷ has created a Health Equity Guideline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guideline identifies several practices to develop effective community inclusion and engagement strategies that incorporate the needs of diverse communities. It identifies strategies that engage priority populations, particularly when serving under-represented groups. • The guide also recommends identifying organizations and individuals that represent diverse communities, who can provide consultation on those communities' needs. Further, it is important to include strategies to report back the findings of community engagement to diverse communities and partners. <p>Organizations can create data-driven programs and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's College Hospital⁹⁸ developed a health equity plan that highlights the importance of collecting data on inequalities and developing appropriate programs and services. The plan includes priorities, approaches, and focus areas to improve community engagement and create programs and services that meet the needs of diverse communities.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.7 <i>Cont.</i>	Do programs and services effectively support the needs of diverse clients?	<p>To effectively support clients with diverse needs, organizations may make navigating programs and services easier by clearly identifying the diverse language support that is available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identify in which languages clients may access programs, services, and/or client support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entité⁹⁹ offers several strategies to support the integration of French language which apply to the integration of other languages. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For example, identify the languages spoken in the organization through signage when entering the physical space, employees wearing pins/tags that indicate the languages they speak, or announcements on the organization’s website that clearly indicate the diverse language support that may be available.
Partnerships and Community Engagement		
3.8	Does the organization consult with Indigenous communities to ensure all programs and services meet their needs, interests, and experiences?	<p>An Indigenous engagement framework can help the organization consult with and include equity-deserving groups in the programs and services developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care¹⁰⁰ has published a guide to engaging and building relationships with Indigenous communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The guide provides strategies and insights to develop approaches to consult and build relationships with Indigenous communities. The guide specifically highlights the importance of considering the local culture and demographics of Indigenous communities. It calls for developing a shared delivery of health care services and creating informal agreements to outline the service delivery.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.9	Are partnerships or referral mechanisms in place to ensure equity-deserving and underserved clients have access to services that are not directly provided by the organization?	<p>Partnerships and referrals are an important way through which equity-deserving and underserved clients can access a wide array of programs and services. To best serve diverse communities, a comprehensive resource guide of available programs and services in the region is recommended. Below is a list of organizations in Niagara offering health, social care, and community services to distinct groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and resources for Indigenous communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Niagara Regional Native Centre¹⁰¹ - Fort Erie Native Friendship Circle¹⁰² - Niagara Chapter - Native Women Inc¹⁰³ - Aboriginal Health Centre¹⁰⁴ • Services and resources for Francophone communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foyer Richelieu Welland¹⁰⁵ (virtual) - Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara¹⁰⁶ - Le Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario¹⁰⁷ (Provider-specific information for French-language resources) - ABC Communautaire¹⁰⁸ - CERF Niagara¹⁰⁹ - Solidarité des Femmes Immigrantes Francophones du Niagara (SOFIFRAN)¹¹⁰ - La maison de la culture Francophone du Niagara¹¹¹ - Bonjour Niagara¹¹² - Entité 4¹¹³ (Planification Des Services de Santé en Français-Planning Health Services in French) - OTN¹¹⁴ - French Language Services (This resource connects French-speaking clients to virtual care across the province. Of note: the resource compiles French-language health care service providers across the province.) • Services and resources for immigrants and refugees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre¹¹⁵ - Remote Interpretation Ontario (RIO) Network¹¹⁶ - Solidarité des Femmes Immigrantes Francophones du Niagara (SOFIFRAN)¹¹⁷ - Positive Living Niagara¹¹⁸

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.9	Are partnerships or referral mechanisms in place to ensure equity-deserving and underserved clients have access to services that are not directly provided by the organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and resources for 2SLGBTQ+ groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pride Niagara¹¹⁹ - Connect-Clinic¹²⁰ (Telehealth trans care) - Senior Pride Network Niagara¹²¹ - Positive Living Niagara¹²² - OUTNiagara¹²³ • Services and resources for women: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women in Niagara Council¹²⁴ - Solidarité des Femmes Immigrantes Francophones du Niagara (SOFIFRAN)¹²⁵ • Services and resources for all communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - United Way Niagara¹²⁶ - Wipe Out Poverty in Niagara¹²⁷ - Hospice Palliative Care Ontario (HPCO)¹²⁸ - Positive Living Niagara¹²⁹ - Hamilton Good Body Feel¹³⁰ - Alliance for Healthier Communities¹³¹
3.10	Does the organization consult with equity-deserving groups to develop programs and services that meet their needs, interests, and experiences?	<p>A community engagement framework can help the organization consult with and include equity-deserving groups in the programs and services developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health¹³² (CAMH) offers a Community Engagement Framework. This guide situates community engagement as central to the strategic plan of the organization and provides insights to other healthcare entities on initiatives and planning that are community focused and intended to strengthen partnerships as well as expand service provision through “quality, accountability, and equity.”¹³³ There are also tools provided in the Appendix. • The Simon Fraser University’s Morris J. Vosk Centre for Dialogue¹³⁴ has published <i>Equity in Public Engagement: A Guide for Practitioners</i>, which discusses and proposes eight principles to guide the equitable inclusion of diverse voices when planning and implementing public engagement initiatives that will eventually inform decision-making processes.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
External Marketing and Communications		
3.11	Does the organization communicate the importance of health equity in its marketing, promotion, and program communications?	<p>It is important to communicate organizational values such as commitment to health equity. This can better encourage members of equity-deserving communities and underserved clients to access programs and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention¹³⁵ (CDC) provides a guide titled <i>Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication</i>. This resource is meant for health care practitioners to ensure all equity-deserving groups are considered in organizational communications. • The Champlain Community Health Centre Network¹³⁶ has published a report titled <i>Resources, Principles, and the Practice of Health Equity</i>. This comprehensive guide provides training resources and tools to help health care providers effectively communicate the importance of health to the community, increase awareness about inclusive health practices, and reach diverse populations. It includes resources, tools, and case studies to understand and provide culturally competent health care that meets the needs of equity-deserving groups.
3.12	Are inclusive language and images used in all communications and promotional material?	<p>Organizations should check for inclusive language and images in all promotional material to ensure that the company's diverse goals are represented in external communications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Canadian Race Relations Foundation¹³⁷ provides a list of questions for content creators, editors, and senior managers to ensure that the language used in materials is inclusive. Organizations can use and extend this checklist to eliminate stereotypes about diverse groups from their publications.
Research and Evaluation		
3.13	Are regular evaluations of programs and services conducted to ensure they meet the goals of health equity?	<p>Ongoing evaluation of programs and services is necessary to ensure that healthy equity goals are met and to identify any gaps in service and opportunities to better support diverse communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of British Columbia¹³⁸ (UBC) has a resource titled <i>UBC Indigenous Strategic Plan: Sample Performance Measurement Framework</i>, which demonstrates how organizations can measure their progress with Indigenous organizations. This includes making goals, identifying specific actions to achieve the goals, and identifying the outputs, outcomes, and performance measures to achieve those goals. This may be applied to evaluating programs and services to ensure health equity goals are met.

#	Questions	Best Practice Resources
3.14	Do client intake forms include self-reported demographic data?	<p>Self-reported demographic data is important in both client intake forms and employee engagement surveys, as they provide a voice to diverse members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toronto Health Equity¹³⁹ provides a guide to demographic data collection in health care settings to measure and support health equity.• The Mississauga Ontario Health Team¹⁴⁰ has published a report on population health data. The report includes socioeconomic and self-reported health data. The report includes different data sources for collecting health care data.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The NOHT-ÉSON can use this as an example for collecting demographic data and combine it with other sources of health care data to create a baseline.

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