

THE DATA FOR EQUITY STRATEGY

Goal

The goal of the Data for Equity Strategy is to support the collection of socio-demographic data and use of disaggregated data¹ to:

- Inform program planning, policy development and service delivery that is inclusive of and responsive to the needs of all Torontonians, particularly Indigenous², Black and equity-seeking groups³
- Support equitable, evidence-based and accountable decision-making

Objectives

1. **To collect consistent, high quality socio-demographic data** (such as race, gender and disability) on a voluntary basis⁴ from Toronto residents and service users within City programs, services, needs assessments and public consultations that are comparable to other data sets.
2. **To analyze, report and use City program, service, needs assessment, program evaluation and public consultation data that is broken down by socio-demographic groups** to assess equity impacts and inform service planning, delivery and policy development.
3. **To use existing population-level data**⁵ that provides information about all Toronto residents and is broken down by socio-demographic groups to inform service planning, delivery and policy development.

¹ Disaggregated data refers to large data sets that are broken down into smaller units. In the Data for Equity Strategy, disaggregated data refers to data that is broken down and examined by socio-demographic groups such as Indigenous communities, gender identities, racialized groups and neighbourhoods.

² For the purposes of the Data for Equity Strategy, the term "Indigenous" is reflective of the many nations that exist within First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

³ Equity-seeking groups refer to communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society because of barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination, and actively seek social justice and reparation.

⁴ It is that recognized many City programs must collect socio-demographic data in different ways to meet the requirements of other levels of government and to determine program eligibility. This data may be mandatory for program eligibility purposes and may also vary in the data being collected.

⁵ Population-level data provides information about all Toronto residents or specific groups of residents (e.g. children, seniors and low income people). This includes population-level census data, administrative, income, education and health datasets and survey data.

Supporting transparent, evidence-informed decision-making

Ultimately, the Data for Equity Strategy will support an accountable, transparent, equitable and evidence-informed municipal service system that:

- Provides excellent service and advances equity and inclusion
- Has a strong ability and commitment to measure, monitor and report on progress towards addressing equity priorities, prosperity goals, inequities in service access and inequitable outcomes
- Is capable of and committed to using evidence and considering equity as part of regular planning and decision making at the City-wide and program level
- Has earned public trust and confidence that the City cares about people experiencing inequities, built through its demonstrated commitment to appropriately collect, report and use data to identify and address inequities

Guiding Principles: The City's Responsibilities

The Data for Equity Strategy reflects and adheres to the following five key principles:

1. Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights
2. Privacy and Security
3. Open Data
4. Indigenous Data Governance⁶
5. Black Communities and Data Governance⁷

The Data for Equity Guiding Principles outline the City of Toronto's responsibilities when collecting socio-demographic data and using disaggregated data. The Data for Equity principles are aligned with the City of Toronto's Working Principles for Digital Infrastructure.

⁶ The Indigenous Data Governance principle was developed in collaboration with the City of Toronto Indigenous Affairs Office and informed by community engagement. Pending approval of the Data for Equity Strategy, a First Nations, Inuit and Métis Data and Research Circle will be established and this Circle will inform the co-development of revisions and enhancements to the Data for Equity Guidelines, working with the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee, community partners and City staff.

⁷ The Black Communities and Data Governance principle was developed in collaboration with the City of Toronto Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit and informed by community engagement. Currently Black communities, leaders and researchers are developing Black data governance principles and frameworks in the community. The City will monitor developments, engage with community and revise the Data for Equity Guidelines to reflect these principles and frameworks.

1. Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights

The collection of socio-demographic data and the analysis, reporting and use of disaggregated data will:

- Inform services, operations and outcomes that create and sustain equity, inclusion, accessibility and human rights
- Be used to respond to the needs of Indigenous, Black and equity-seeking groups
- Support the identification of barriers, service needs, differential treatment and systemic inequities in order to improve the lives of people facing inequities
- Align with and support existing City of Toronto equity strategies and initiatives, including the [Access to City Services for Undocumented Torontonians](#) policy

2. Privacy and Security

The collection of socio-demographic data, and the analysis and reporting of disaggregated data must be conducted in a way that:

- Protects the privacy of individuals at all times, complying with legislative requirements and the guidance for privacy and fair information management provided by the City Clerk's Office, Corporate Information Management Services
- Incorporates privacy protection into all stages of project design, data collection, storage, use and disposal
- Includes appropriate safeguards to keep personal information secure from theft, breaches and hacks
- Considers "community privacy" and the potential for data to perpetuate stereotypes or stigmatize groups of people

3. Open Data

When appropriate, anonymized datasets including disaggregated data will:

- Be released to the public in accordance with the [Open Data Policy](#) and the [Open Data Master Plan](#) in as complete a form as possible while complying with the City's legal obligations to protect personal privacy and other relevant restrictions
- Be made available to the public in a timely fashion to facilitate evidence-informed decision making about City programs, policies and services
- Be made available to anyone to use under the terms and conditions of the [Open Data Licence](#), with no requirement for registration, no exclusive control, and no license or usage fees

4. Indigenous Data Governance

Processes to collect socio-demographic data and analyze and report on disaggregated data will:

- Consider and address the principles of Indigenous data governance and methods of First Nations, Inuit and Métis engagement and guidance in how data

is collected, protected, used and shared. The First Nations principles of OCAP®⁸ (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession) provide a model for the City's approaches to Indigenous data governance

- Engage, connect and build relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis community members, organizations, researchers and partners, to build collaboration and partnerships, and to ensure First Nations, Inuit and Métis input in data collection and use
- Ensure that data is shared with and used to benefit First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and not stigmatize, harm, or negatively impact First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities

5. Black Communities and Data Governance

Processes to collect socio-demographic data and analyze and report on disaggregated data will:

- Use an Anti-Black Racism Analysis as embedded in the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism to guide the creation, implementation and evaluation of any initiative
- Ensure that Black communities are engaged in the City's development, collection, analysis, reporting, and use of data and that disaggregated data is reported to Black communities
- Share data, collaborate and engage with Black communities, experts and organizations to ensure that data supports positive community outcomes and does not stigmatize, harm, or negatively impact Black communities

Implementation Plan for Phase One of Data for Equity Strategy

The Data for Equity Strategy will be implemented in two phases. Phase One will begin when the Data for Equity Unit is created, offering opportunities to learn from experiences in different City programs and contexts. Lessons learned in Phase One will inform the second phase of implementation. Staff will report back to Council in the first quarter of 2023. Phase One includes the following key activities:

1. Data for Equity Unit

The establishment of a Data for Equity Unit within the People and Equity Division will provide needed support to help ensure that socio-demographic data collection and disaggregated data use across City divisions is consistent, appropriate, sensitive and reflective of best practices. This support is particularly needed for projects that have limited resources, capacity or expertise to collect and use disaggregated data. The People and Equity Division is well suited to lead this work as it provides strategic advice, programs and services that support the organization to remove barriers,

⁸OCAP® is a registered trademark of the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC). For more information please see www.FNIGC.ca/OCAP

including systemic barriers impacting Indigenous, Black and equity-seeking residents of the City of Toronto and City employees. The Unit will consist of four full-time staff to lead the implementation of the Data for Equity Strategy, and will actively collaborate with the Indigenous Affairs Office, Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit and other City divisions and units actively working to increase equity in City services and policies to:

- Provide internal consulting services to City divisions on the use and application of the Data for Equity Guidelines, including advising on data findings with recommendations to enhance service equity
- Collaborate on pilot projects to test and learn from the application of the Data for Equity Guidelines in different program contexts
- Provide training and support to staff on collecting socio-demographic data
- Assist pilot projects with data analysis to identify barriers for specific socio-demographic groups and how to address them
- Conduct data analysis to identify trends across all the pilot projects, such as common barriers or inequities for specific socio-demographic groups
- Establish an approach for community guidance to the Data for Equity Strategy implementation to ensure accountability, transparency and responsiveness to diverse community needs
- Develop and implement models for the governance of data led by Indigenous and Black communities
- Design and disseminate corporate-wide resources
- Develop a plan to implement Phase Two

2. Use of Data for Equity Guidelines

Data for Equity Guidelines have been developed to guide the implementation of Phase One of the Data for Equity Strategy and are included as Attachment 7. The guidelines provide guidance to City divisions on why, when and how to collect and manage socio-demographic data in a consistent manner. The guidelines also provide advice on sharing data that is broken down by socio-demographic groups for equity purposes.

3. Pilot Projects

Pilot projects will receive support and resources from the Data for Equity Unit to collect and analyze data appropriately and effectively. These pilot projects will be a key component of Phase One of the Data for Equity Strategy to test and learn from the application of the Data for Equity Guidelines in different program contexts. It is important to note that the pilot projects involve existing programs and will involve data collection that is currently planned or already underway in their respective program areas. The pilot projects will serve as demonstration projects on how to apply the Data for Equity Strategy to City processes. They will provide opportunities to enhance and learn from key processes including training and education, data collection, quality improvement,

analysis and use, generating lessons learned that will inform Phase Two and the broader application of the Data for Equity Strategy across the corporation.

Pilot projects were selected based on potential equity impact, scale, readiness, capacity and commitment to implement and sustain socio-demographic data collection and disaggregated data use. Pilot projects selected for implementation in Phase One include:

- **EarlyON Centres:** Learning from the first phase of Toronto Children's Services' implementation of a standardized client registration system collecting socio-demographic data across EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Toronto. This is a pre-existing project within Toronto Children's Services. Design of this initiative took place from 2019-2020 and implementation is projected for 2021.
- **Ontario Works:** Building on the expanded socio-demographic data now being collected from Ontario Works recipients by Toronto Employment and Social Services by analyzing disaggregated program data and developing staff education to increase data quality. This pilot may include support from the Human Services Integration (HSI) initiative, which integrates client access to Ontario Works with several other social services.
- **COVID-19 Case and Contact Management System:** Toronto Public Health began asking questions on four priority socio-demographic characteristics to people who have a probable or confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 in mid-May 2020 to help understand who is most impacted by COVID-19, determine which groups are at higher risk for COVID-19 and improve COVID-19 services. A larger set of socio-demographic data will be collected for a sample of positive cases since the beginning of COVID-19 through a survey.
- **Funded Community Organization Pilot:** Learning from a pilot project where community organizations funded by Social Development, Finance and Administration's Community Funding Unit, United Way of Greater Toronto and Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network are collecting, analyzing, and reporting standardized demographic data from program participants and service users.

The Data for Equity Unit will collaborate with divisional pilot projects to support implementation, review staff and service user experiences, interpret data findings and evaluate the successes and challenges to identify implications and lessons learned to inform Phase Two expansion.

4. Community Guidance

To ensure the Data for Equity Strategy is accountable, transparent and responsive to diverse community needs, community involvement and advice is a critical component of the Data for Equity Strategy. As part of Phase One, the Data for Equity Unit will seek

feedback from existing community tables to provide guidance on the implementation of the Data for Equity Strategy. The Unit will also develop and implement approaches for Indigenous and Black data governance in collaboration with the Indigenous Affairs Office and Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit.

Indigenous Data Governance

There is mistrust and fear among Indigenous communities about research and government data collection due to past misuse and harm caused by data, data not being shared, and research not being used to benefit Indigenous communities. It is now widely recognized that data and research initiatives must include Indigenous data governance approaches to ensure First Nations, Inuit and Métis collaboration and leadership in data collection, protection, use and sharing. Initial community consultation to inform the Data for Equity Strategy showed that further engagement and work is needed to develop an appropriate approach that gains the trust and confidence of First Nations, Inuit and Métis community members. To ensure strong engagement from First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders, experts and community members, support must be provided to enable people to participate in consultations.

An Indigenous staff position in the Data for Equity Unit will lead the development of the City of Toronto's Indigenous data governance approach, working closely with Indigenous partners, and working with pilot projects and divisions to apply this model. A key part of this work will be the establishment of a **First Nations, Inuit and Métis Data and Research Circle** to provide support, guidance and advice to City divisions and partners on collecting and using Indigenous data. The Circle will be established with collaboration and advice from the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee. Community engagement and a review of existing models will be conducted to inform the development of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Data and Research Circle and the Indigenous data governance approach. The Indigenous staff position and the Circle will also help to connect City divisions with First Nations, Inuit and Métis community organizations and partners, to collaborate on data and research initiatives and to support the use of the Data for Equity Guidelines and City data by First Nations, Inuit and Métis persons, community organizations and partners.

Black Communities and Data Governance

The Data for Equity Unit will collaborate with the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit (CABR) to ensure that the Black Communities and Data Governance principle and actions are adhered to by pilot projects and City divisions. When needed, the Data for Equity Unit will seek advice from Black community leaders and experts through tables and working groups that provide guidance to CABR, such as the Expert Working Group on Race-based Data and the Partnership and Accountability Circle.

5. Corporate-Wide Resources

Staff will develop new corporate-wide resources, tools and education to support the collection of socio-demographic data and analysis and use of disaggregated data. These will include an online training module, staff presentations and other resources to accompany the Data for Equity Guidelines.

6. Privacy, Information and Technology Activities

Data for Equity guidance will be incorporated into several ongoing City activities in the areas of privacy, information management and technology to help ensure widespread use of and support for the Guidelines through existing City processes. These include:

- Advice provided by the Corporate Information Management Services Forms Unit on how to fulfill privacy and information management requirements when collecting data from residents
- Technology Services' Project Review Team's process which reviews capital investments in technology to identify issues and topics requiring attention
- Technology Services' Client Relationship Management Team which liaises between programs developing new technology and Technology Services staff
- The Digital Infrastructure Plan (DIP) currently in development will modernize and formalize the roles, functions and procedures within which digital infrastructure decisions at the City are made. This will include integration of the five DIP Working Principles into the process to evaluate proposals that are within the digital realm. Equity and Inclusion is the first DIP Working Principle.

Developing Phase Two of the Data for Equity Strategy

During the implementation of Phase One, the Data for Equity Unit will monitor and track the pilot development and implementation process, as well as provide support to other divisions applying the Guidelines. Staff will also continue to engage extensively with divisions to identify opportunities to further promote, support, incorporate, test and demonstrate the application of the Data for Equity Guidelines. Staff will review the experiences and information collected in Phase One and the evaluations conducted of pilot projects to identify implications and lessons learned for applying the Data for Equity Strategy more broadly at the City. Staff will contemplate whether Phase Two will include an expanded number of divisional pilots and whether the Data for Equity Guidelines can be implemented across the corporation.

Using the lessons learned from Phase One, City staff will review and revise the Data for Equity Guidelines as appropriate and develop a plan to implement the second phase of the Data for Equity Strategy.