RIWC DEI Employer Toolkit: Strategy for Building Inclusive Workplaces

RIVERDALE IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S CENTRE

Empowering Inclusion in the Workforce

Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre (RIWC) created a community-based DEI Leadership Strategy to promote economic inclusion for newcomers, racialized, and gender-diverse individuals in Toronto's labour market.

Supported by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), the initiative used a lived-experience approach through 10 roundtable discussions in spring 2025 with racialized women, 2SLGBTQI+, and BIPOC workers to identify policy gaps and hiring biases affecting underrepresented communities.

Insights from these roundtables directly informed the creation of the RIWC DEI Employer Toolkit, a suite of tools that help small and medium-sized employers build inclusive, equitable, and compliant workplaces.

Why Social Inclusion in the Workplace Matters?

- **Retention & Performance:** Inclusive employers see up to **22%** lower turnover and significantly higher productivity. According to Deloitte, inclusive workplaces are **2.3x** more likely to meet or exceed financial targets and **8x** more likely to achieve better business outcomes.
- **Engagement & Employee Morale:** Workplaces that prioritize health and well-being have higher morale, creativity, and retention.
- **Trust & Transparency:** Pay equity, mentorship, and fair evaluation systems increase employee confidence and internal mobility.
- **Expanded Talent Pipelines:** Partnering with community networks opens access to diverse, skilled candidates while addressing labour shortages.
- **Resilience & Compliance:** Inclusive practices not only strengthen culture but also position SMEs for AODA 2025 and Pay Transparency Act 2026 compliance. McKinsey data show companies with diverse leadership are **36%** more profitable than their peers, underscoring that inclusion drives competitiveness and growth.

Deloitte (2019). The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths. McKinsey & Company (2023). Diversity Matters Even More: The Case for Inclusive Leadership.

Key Gaps in Social Inclusion Policies (including DEI, accessibility, equity and belonging)

- Commitments often sound strong but lack clear goals, timelines, or accountability.
- Hiring is prioritized, while retention, mentorship, and equitable pay receive less focus.
- Overlapping identities (such as race, gender, disability, or newcomer status) create compounding barriers that are rarely addressed in policy.
- Bias persists through "Canadian experience" requirements, automated screening tools, or "culture fit" preferences that limit access for qualified applicants.
- Leadership teams frequently lack diverse representation, reducing visible role models for inclusion.
- Accessibility and accommodation policies are often misunderstood or inconsistently applied, limiting full participation and reinforcing stigma.

Employer Toolkit for Social Inclusion

RIVERDALE IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S CENTRE

RIWC's Employer Toolkit provides small and medium-sized enterprises with FREE online tools that work together to assess, strengthen, and sustain inclusive workplace practices. It helps employers improve compliance, attract and retain diverse talent, and build measurable equity and accountability across their organization.

DEI Self-Audit Tool
A practical tool that helps employers measure and improve their inclusion and equity practices. It uses a simple 1–5 scale across three pillars: Compliance & Policy, Inclusion & Culture, and Leadership & Accountability. The tool supports small and medium-sized employers to identify strengths, close gaps, and link directly to the Self-Directed DEI Training Tool for ongoing learning.

Self-Directed DEI Training Tool
A flexible learning resource for individuals and teams. It features short, focused modules on topics like inclusion, intersectionality, psychological safety, and bias awareness. Each module includes real examples, reflection prompts, and practical activities that help build everyday habits for inclusive leadership and communication.

Inclusive Hiring Guide
A step-by-step guide to help employers make recruitment and onboarding more fair and accessible. It includes practical templates, outreach ideas, and examples of inclusive language that expand access to diverse talent. The guide also provides tips on pay transparency, accessible job postings, and bias-free screening to meet compliance standards while building stronger, more representative teams.

Appendix & Resources
The Appendix and References compiles key legislation, best practices, and tools to support DEI implementation. It connects employers to Canadian compliance frameworks and resources that sustain long-term inclusion.

Prepared by Candace Sidoruk for the Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre (RIWC), 2025.

Key Gaps in Social Inclusion Policies (continued)

- Language supports and plain-language communication practices are rarely embedded into workplace systems.
- Inadequate accommodations, accessibility, or language supports that limit full participation.
- Few organizations collect or analyze DEI data to measure progress and identify where change is needed.
- Complaint and investigation procedures for discrimination or microaggressions are often unclear or underused.
- DEI training is typically one-time rather than continuous, reducing accountability for sustained culture change.

For more information:
victoriaogley@riverdalehub.ca
Visit our www.riwc.ca/dei-toolkit

This project was made possible with support from:

Women and Gender Equality Canada