4-H Canada Inclusion Statement Update - Support Document

Why Inclusion
4-H provides youth with the guidance, resources, and opportunities to become contributing members of their community, their country, and the world, by preparing them for the various paths of life and encouraging them to find their sense of self, purpose, and responsibility.

Inclusion is vital in fostering a community where every individual feels welcome. Inclusive environments promote a sense of belonging, contribute to positive feelings, and create supportive spaces where youth can thrive.

The 4-H Pledge, which emphasizes clear thinking, loyalty, service, and better living, emphasizes the importance of developing youth leaders who are deeply connected to and care about their local communities. Through inclusion, we nurture a caring community and help shape future generations to be considerate and active members of society.

Definitions
The Government of Canada's Interdepartmental Terminology Committee on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion developed a Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology.[1] This guide provides the following definitions.

- **Diversity** – The variety of identities found within an organization, group or society. Diversity is expressed through factors such as culture, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, language, education, ability, family status or socioeconomic status.
- **Equity** – The principle of considering people's unique experiences and differing situations, and ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. Equity aims to eliminate disparities and disproportions that are rooted in historical and contemporary injustices and oppression.
- **Inclusion** – The practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where people feel welcomed, respected and valued, and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement. This practice involves changing the environment by removing barriers so that each person has equal access to opportunities and resources and can achieve their full potential.

4-H Values that Support Inclusion
Creating welcoming spaces for all youth where the well-being of members and leaders is a top priority has always been a top concern for 4-H Canada. These values are reflected in both our Positive Youth Development (PYD) Framework and approach to working with youth, as well as our Youth Safety Policies.

The PYD framework highlights the importance of creating an inclusive environment where every young person feels a sense of belonging. This includes fostering a safe, welcoming space where diversity is

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[1] Government of Canada. "Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology". Government of Canada, https://www.noslangues-ourlanguages.gc.ca/en/publications/equite-diversite-inclusion-equity-diversity-inclusion-eng. Accessed Dec. 4, 2024.

respected and celebrated. By encouraging youth voice, 4-H in Canada ensures that programs and initiatives are reflective of the diverse needs and aspirations of its members.

4-H Canada's Code of Conduct, Youth Safety Policies, and Incident Reporting Procedures all play crucial roles in supporting an inclusive environment by establishing clear expectations for behaviour, and ensuring that all youth members, as well as the adult volunteers, and staff who support them, understand what is considered respectful and appropriate. These guidelines promote an environment where harassment, discrimination, and bullying are not tolerated, protecting all youth from harmful behaviours. They encourage youth to feel comfortable reporting any inappropriate behaviour, knowing that the organization takes their safety seriously.

These policy documents support a culture of respect and acceptance, encouraging youth from all backgrounds to join and feel welcomed. The procedures provide clear steps for reporting and addressing any incidents of misconduct or discrimination, ensuring that all 4-H members know their rights and the actions to take if they experience or witness any inappropriate behaviour. Establishing clear behaviour expectations and ensuring consistent adult supervision through the Code of Conduct and the Rule of Two, significantly contribute to creating safe, respectful, and welcoming spaces for all youth, regardless of their background and identity, and ensure that all issues are promptly and fairly addressed.

Definition of Discrimination

Understanding how discrimination is defined is important as it provides us with helpful lenses through which we can examine our programs and activities. The definition of discrimination can also help inform our communications within and outside the 4-H community.

Canadian Human Rights Commission defines discrimination as "an action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons such as their race, age or disability. These reasons, also called grounds, are protected under the Canadian Human Rights Act."[2]

The Commission further explains that the grounds for discrimination include:

- Race
- National or Ethnic Origin
- Colour
- Religion
- Age
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity or Expression
- Marital Status
- Family Status
- Disability
- Genetic Characteristics
- A conviction for which a pardon has been granted or a record suspended [2]

Understanding Inclusion - Reflection Exercise

Most people have experienced the feeling of being out of place or like they don't belong. Take some time to reflect on your personal experience and write down your answers to these reflection questions.

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[2] Canadian Human Rights Commission. "What is Discrimination." Canadian Human Rights Commission. https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/about-human-rights/what-discrimination Accessed Dec. 6, 2024

Learn To Do By Doing

- Reflect on the experience where you felt like you didn't belong. Ask yourself, what caused you to feel this way?
- Think of an experience where you have felt like you belonged. What about this experience was different?
- What do you personally need to feel secure and included in the community with others?

4-H Canada's Positive Youth Development (PYD) Formula holds safe, fun and inclusive environments at its center, highlighting the importance of inclusion and belonging in allowing youth to become positive, caring and contributing leaders. One of the first questions youth ask themselves when they begin thinking about or trying a new activity is, "Will I fit in?" Youth frame this question around all aspects of their identity. Research has found that these types of questions can pose a barrier, keeping youth from joining programs.[3] Ensuring inclusion, as a key feature in the design of high-quality programs, allows youth to grow and develop along their personal trajectory following personal interests and abilities.

It is the responsibility of the 4-H movement in Canada to ask and consider how we can enhance our organizational and everyday practices to create and foster systems, communities, and practices of inclusion. Inclusion is a topic rich with many dimensions. The information provided within this document should be considered a beginning rather than a destination on an inclusion journey.

Structural Inclusion

Inclusion does not happen just at the interpersonal level. An organization's structures and systems help create the foundational elements of inclusive practice. Structures and systems often seem like abstract and far-away concepts, which have little impact on an individual's or organization's everyday actions. However, club, district, and regional policies, and how programming is conducted, act as the structure supporting 4-H's daily function and operations. Reflecting on how 4-H Canada's policies and organizational practices support or perhaps hinder inclusion, is an important step toward creating and sustaining inclusive structures.

An important tool in identifying what policies and structural steps can be taken to promote inclusion is listening to impacted communities, individuals and groups. Collaborating to identify needs and the steps that can be taken to meet them is a great strategy for positive and productive engagement.

Sometimes, concepts and ideas make more sense when we have specific examples of what they can look like in practice. The examples below are not meant to be an exhaustive list. Instead, please use the examples as points of departure to reflect upon how we, as the 4-H movement in Canada, can embed inclusive policies and actions into our operational and programming activities.

Examples of policies which can be exclusionary at a structural level and that should be avoided include:
- gender-specific dress codes
- scheduling events on days which overlap with significant cultural or religious celebrations,
- requiring multiple years of 4-H involvement for program participation and awards

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[3] Eccles, Jacqueline and Jennifer Gootman, et. al. « Community Programs to Promote Youth Development (2002)" National Academies. https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/10022/community-programs-to-promote-youth-development Accessed Dec. 6, 2024

- the inclusion of religious prayers before events or meals

Fostering a Culture and Community of Inclusion

Inclusion is not just found in an organization's policies and practices but also within our 4-H communities and can be fostered through everyday interactions. As a member of the 4-H community, you bring with you a wealth of experience and knowledge about creating positive communities and supporting positive youth development. Thinking intentionally about how we can take individual and collective action to foster a positive culture of belonging is important.

Consider the following:

- Do you think your definition of inclusion would be the same as someone else's?
- Do you think what you need to feel included is the same as what others need to feel included?

When individuals enter new environments, a variety of factors can help them feel safe or act as barriers to inclusion and belonging. It's important to remember each individual will need different things to feel included. Examples of potential barriers to inclusion include language, ethnicity, age, life experience, economic status, etc.

Tips for Acting Inclusively and Fostering Communities of Belonging

1) Act with humility.
   - We don't need to know everything. Approach inclusion as a process of continual learning. Listening to what others articulate they need is important to ensure we are putting the needs of individuals at the forefront.
2) Inquiring rather than assuming.
   - We all make assumptions. Our brains are built that way. Choosing to ask an individual what they need rather than assume you know how to help, helps others feel seen and valued in their individuality.
3) Engaging in purposeful reflection
   - Whether individually or collectively, take time to reflect on how your community is already fostering belonging and identify areas for future growth.

Creating inclusive communities that promote belonging can seem intimidating, overwhelming or, at times, even instinctive. Don't be afraid to try. Approaching inclusion from a place of intentionality and purpose can help us build stronger 4-H communities and continue to deliver quality programming.

Tips for Inclusion - Concrete Actions That You Can Take

1) Act Purposefully
   - Inclusive and welcoming spaces take time and effort to create. By being intentional with our actions, we can better foster inclusive spaces. An example of acting purposefully could be establishing a way to ensure each member is intentionally welcomed at a 4-H event.
2) Foster Agency
   - Fostering agency is crucial to putting individuals at the center of inclusion. It shows that everyone is capable of making choices for themselves. An example of a fostering agency would

be having individuals introduce themselves, allowing them to share what information they are comfortable with.

3) Model inclusive practice
- We lead with our actions, not just our words. Modelling positive behaviours can make a big difference and set a powerful example for others to follow.

4) Establish positive dialogue
- Unsure of how to be inclusive or how to best support someone? Asking and initiating conversations on inclusion is essential for putting people at the center. You can ask individuals questions like: What is the best way to meet your needs?

5) Collaborate, Change Behaviours, and Apologize if Needed
- We all make mistakes. That's okay. What we have control over is how we react when we make a mistake. Apologizing to impacted individuals and then working together collaboratively to develop a plan to change future behaviours can help turn mistakes into growth opportunities.

Questions to ask ourselves regarding diversity and inclusion[4]

- In what ways do the family or cultural experiences of youth differ, and what implications do these differences have for our program? (How) Could we acknowledge and incorporate those differences as sources of unique strengths that youth bring to our program?
- Can we detect differences in communication styles among youth in our program, and account for those differences in the ways we interact and structure activities?
- What is the relative emphasis on individual versus group achievement? (How) Could we structure our program to incorporate a range of individual and collective activities and goals?
- How much is the history of our program part of the culture of the program? (How) Could we emphasize the values that the history implies rather than the specific history?
- How can we acknowledge and value differences of culture and sexuality among youth in our program?
- (How) Do our programs provide interpersonal support for youth – particularly and explicitly for those who may be marginalized? (Are LGBT, immigrant, ethnic minority, or economically disadvantaged youth present and included?)
- Do we actively confront racism, sexism, and homophobia in our program? Do we foster understanding, awareness, and skills for youth to address prejudice and discrimination in its many forms?

Questions and Additional Resources
If you have questions about the 4-H Canada Inclusion Statement or how to implement and support it in all 4-H programming and with all individuals within 4-H, please start by reaching out to your Provincial 4-H Association for support.

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[4] Russell, Stephen T. & "Diversity and Inclusion in Youth Development: What We Can Learn from Marginalized Young People." Journal of Youth Development. https://jyd.pitt.edu/ojs/jyd/article/view/177 Accessed: Dec. 6, 2024.

Learn To Do By Doing

If you still have questions, please connect with 4-H Canada at program@4-h-canada.ca

You can also consider exploring the following resources.
- Canadian Center for Diversity and Inclusion: https://ccdi.ca/
- Canadian Mental Health Association: https://cmha.ca/
- Kids Help Phone: https://kidshelpphone.ca/ (Resources Around Me section)
- Canadian Human Rights Commission: https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en
- The Canadian Diversity Initiative: https://candiversity.com/

Additional local resources may be available. You can look for books and materials on diversity, equity and inclusion at your local library or search for local groups and organizations focused on the promotion and support of diversity, equity and inclusion.