

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 10, 2021

SUBJECT: GBA+ Training for Municipal Staff

ORIGIN

April 26, 2021 Executive Standing Committee motion (item 12.2.1):

MOVED by Councillor Blackburn and seconded by Councillor Russell.

THAT the Executive Standing Committee request a staff report regarding the implementation of the Federal Government's Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) free, self-paced training for all current and future staff members of the Halifax Regional Municipality as part of the employee training.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39, subsection 34(1) provides:

The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council.

Administrative Order 2019-004-GOV, the *Women's Advisory Committee Administrative Order*, section 6 provides:

The Committee shall advise Council, through the Executive Standing Committee, on matters related to women as follows:

...

(d) provide information and resources about women's gender-based issues to Council, including the use of Gender-Based Analysis Plus and

(e) advise and make recommendations about strategies designed to achieve the objectives of the Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Executive Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Add the Federal Government's Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) training program to the elective course offerings within the Corporate Training Catalogue; and
2. Promote participation in this course to all employees in leadership roles and those involved in policy and program development.

BACKGROUND

On November 26, 2019, Regional Council approved Administrative Order 2019-004-GOV to establish the Women's Advisory Committee in order to support the creation of a gender inclusive Municipality. The Committee reports to the Executive Standing Committee. The purpose of the Women's Advisory Committee is to advise the Municipality of the impact that Municipal policies, programs, and services may have on women. Members of the Women's Advisory Committee participated in the Government of Canada's free, self-paced GBA+ training course¹ and subsequently recommended to the Executive Standing Committee that a staff report be requested addressing if this training course should be implemented as part of the training required for all Municipal employees.

Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is an analytical process used by multiple levels of government in order to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, services, programs and initiatives. The process involves examining disaggregated data and reflecting on social, economic and cultural norms and biases related to gender. The "plus" also acknowledges that this process goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences.

The Government of Canada developed GBA in 1995. In 2011, the Federal Status of Women rebranded to "Gender Based Analysis Plus" (GBA+) in recognition of the need to include identities and social locations beyond sex and gender in the process. In 2016, the Government of Canada began implementing the GBA+ process across all departments which included changes to the Employment Insurance Maternity and Parental Benefits program. To support the use of this process, the Government of Canada created an online, free training course which is designed as a basic introduction to GBA+. The objectives of the course are to:

- Define the key concepts of GBA+
- Recognize how various identity factors can influence the experience of federal government initiatives
- Learn to identify how GBA+ can enhance the responsiveness, effectiveness and outcomes of federal government initiatives
- Apply some foundational GBA+ concepts and processes.

Based on a scan of other medium to large sized municipalities across Canada, including the Cities of Edmonton, Calgary, Montréal, and Ottawa,² it was found that these municipalities have implemented GBA+ training in different ways. Such as offering the training as an elective course to specialized workshops for employees, and mandatory completion of the Federal GBA+ online course for employees in specific roles

¹ [Women and Gender Equality Canada's Gender Based Analysis Training Course](#)

² City of Ottawa's: [Women and Gender Equity Strategy](#).

such as leadership, communications, program and policy development.³

DISCUSSION

The use of GBA+ aligns with the Municipality's commitment to evidence-based decision making and the goal set out in the Diversity and Inclusion Framework to "identify and addresses systemic barriers in our practices, policies, procedures and programs so that HRM can capitalize on the strengths and talents of our community." GBA+ offers a tool for Municipal employees to expand their understanding and increase their capacity to respond to the needs of people with diverse identities beyond gender, including but not limited to: ability, age, ethnicity, geography, immigration status, income, language, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Examples of outcomes related to municipal employees taking the GBA+ training and using the process can be found in the City of Edmonton. In 2021, they reported⁴ achieving several key results such as:

- Integration of GBA+ components in hiring and recruitment processes
- Expanded gender self-identification options for questionnaires designed to engage residents
- Inclusion of GBA+ guiding principles in communications such as corporate brand guidelines (e.g. approach to photography, inclusive language and colour blind testing)
- GBA+ pilot projects (e.g. Safe Mobility Strategy) with teams across the organization supported by a Corporate Equity Specialist

From 2016 to 2018, the Municipality participated in the *Diverse Voices for Change Project* which aimed to strengthen the role of women in local government.⁵ One critical learning from this project was the use of GBA+ as a process that helps municipal employees to understand the complex and interconnected barriers that prevent individuals from underrepresented, underserved and marginalized groups from participating in and benefiting from municipal services. For example, a man of African descent who is a refugee living in Halifax may experience attitudinal and linguistic barriers related to his language abilities, immigration status and racial identity which could impact his experience of Municipal services.

Although it was developed by the Federal Government of Canada, the GBA+ training program is suitable for a wide range of public sector employees and members of all three levels of government. The online training program includes five modules that take approximately three to five hours complete. Individuals have the option to participate in three additional modules. The course includes video, graphic and written material as well as exercises to assess knowledge. Character profiles and case studies support individuals in applying the GBA+ concepts and processes. Upon successful completion of the final evaluation, individuals are issued a dated certificate from Women and Gender Equality Canada.

The course takes measures to be accessible to different learning styles and abilities (e.g. people with low vision, visual or learning impairments) by incorporating interactive learning activities and providing transcripts for all imbedded videos. However, even with these measures in place, the course would not be accessible to all Municipal employees. The course is only available in an online format and not all employees have access to a computer or the internet during their work shift. Additionally, the course content requires a level of reading comprehension and analysis that is not required for all positions within the municipal workforce. Depending on individual learning styles and abilities, the course may take longer than the estimated three to five hours to complete and may require specific and individualized accommodations to make it accessible to all Municipal participants. The Municipality is committed to providing accommodations to reduce accessibility barriers for employees related to training. When the Municipality procures training from external vendors, it considers equity and accessibility as one of the submission requirements of the Request for Supplier Qualifications (RFSQ). As this course is administered by the Federal Government and not the Municipality, the Corporate Training division of People, Communications

³ For more information see Attachment "Jurisdictional Scan of Municipal GBA+ Training"

⁴ City of Edmonton Executive Committee Report "[Implementation and Impacts of Gender-based Analysis Plus – Update](#)", January 18, 2021.

⁵ [Halifax Regional Council, November 13, 2018 – Item 13.1](#) .

and IT (PCIT) would not have the freedom to adjust the course in order to provide the same accommodations that are offered for Municipally administered training.

The Municipality defines mandatory training as the training that is essential for safe and efficient work operations. The goal of mandatory training is to reduce organizational risks while complying with policies and legislative requirements. In January 2020, PCIT (formerly known as Human Resources) responded to concerns from the organization that the current volume of mandatory training put a strain on the operational requirements of Business Units by updating the mandatory training lists for both employees and leaders. The changes reinforced the importance of the training programs deemed as mandatory while ensuring that legislative requirements are met. The changes also placed leaders in a position to consider and decide which elective training programs are essential for their teams, in addition to the mandatory programs. These changes pose a significant decrease in the Corporate mandatory training requirements for all employees while continuing to provide a variety of elective options for employee/learner development. Directors and Executive Directors may assign training courses to their individual teams and Business Units as they deem appropriate. As the Federal GBA+ training program is free and easily accessible online, any Director or Executive Director that identifies this training as appropriate for their employees would be able to assign the course and collect proof of completion in the form of the online certificate that is issued once the final course evaluation is completed.

Considering the recent efforts to reduce mandatory training and the alignment of the GBA+ training course with specific roles and positions, it is recommended that the course be added to the Corporate Training Catalogue by September 1, 2021 and promoted as an elective training offering. Promoting the course could include the development of a communications plan which identifies the best ways to invite participation. Corporate Communications in collaboration with PCIT, The Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO would lead the launch of GBA+ training in alignment with Gender Equity Week which takes place during the last week of September. Taking a multi-channel approach would help to maximize the use of internal communications tools to increase awareness and understanding, and influence behaviour encouraging target audiences to participate in GBA+ training. Beyond the launch period, promotion of GBA+ training would continue to be included as part of ongoing promotion of corporate training offerings.

If the decision is made for the Federal GBA+ training course to be mandatory for employees, it will be important to clearly identify the roles within each Business Unit to which the training would be most appropriate and beneficial. For example, Edmonton's City Council passed a motion in 2017 that the Federal GBA+ training was required for senior leaders in the Administration and City Councillors by the end of 2018. Edmonton Council also directed staff in role-specific positions, predominantly in the areas of research, policy and program development, human resources and communication to participate in additional training on GBA+.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Federal GBA+ online training course is free; however, it takes approximately three to five hours to complete. The financial implications are determined by the number employees who either choose or are directed to take the course in relation to their hourly salary.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this Report. The risks considered are Low.

If specific employees are directed to take the course and require accommodations that are not possible through the Federal Government's website, the Municipality may not be able to adequately fulfill its commitment to make corporate training accessible. People, Communications and IT and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO will accommodate requests for support as much as possible within their

capacity.

The risks considered for the alternative rate Moderate due to the potential for reputational damage if employees do not demonstrate a commitment to expanding their understanding of the diverse needs of residents. This risk could be mitigated by messaging with regards to why the Federal Government's GBA+ course was not identified as an appropriate training tool for staff.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The Executive Standing Committee may recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to mandate the Federal Government's GBA+ training course for employees in leadership roles, those involved in program and policy development, and specific staff within the People, Communications and IT business unit.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Jurisdictional Scan of Municipal GBA+ Training

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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Jurisdictional Scan of Municipal GBA+ Training

HRM staff conducted a jurisdictional scan of municipalities across Canada to gather information and evidence about how Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) training is offered to municipal employees.

City of Calgary

In 2018, the City of Calgary hosted a GBA+ Learning Initiative where information and practices were shared amongst staff and recommendations used to inform the development of the Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. A year later, in 2019, the Strategy was approved by Council. It is important to note that while the City of Calgary does not recommend GBA+ as mandatory training it does adopt GBA+ as a strategic action that is “embedded into business practices and organizational culture” and promoted as an educational tool to support the implementation of the strategy as well as “inclusive leadership.”¹

City of Edmonton

In March 2017, Edmonton’s City Council passed motion CR4189 to implement mandatory GBA+ e-learning training for senior leaders in the Administration and City Councillors by the end of 2018. Edmonton’s training used the federal government’s existing e-learning tool. Furthermore, Edmonton Council directed staff in role-specific positions, predominantly in the areas of research, policy and program development, human resources and communication to participate in additional training on GBA+ which is in-depth and customized to the City of Edmonton.²

City of Montréal

The City of Montréal has long been considered a leader in advancing gender equality. In 2008, Montréal adopted a gender equity policy called *Promotion of equal involvement of women and men in the Montréal Community* which highlighted the use of GBA as a practical tool to mainstream gender equality in municipal processes.³ In Montréal *Le Conseil des Montréalaises* acts as an advisory board to elected officials. The board uses an intersectional feminist approach to analyze the issues facing women in the city. According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, one of the key results of this board is that gender-based and intersectional analysis is encouraged for Montréal staff.⁴

City of Ottawa

In 2018, the City of Ottawa hosted a non-mandatory GBA+ Forum to discuss strategies to strengthen capacity, share results and best practices. The forum was a two-day event which featured keynote speakers, breakout sessions and panel discussion with thought-leaders and experts in the field of GBA+. In 2021, Ottawa launched the *Women and Gender Equity Strategy (2021-2025)* which takes a multi-pronged/holistic approach to awareness raising and training and gender equity. This approach includes a variety of actions such as gender-based violence awareness campaigns, specialized workshops for leaders, incorporating equity and inclusion lens training into the mandatory new employee orientation, as well “providing education to City staff to deepen understanding on Indigenous women and how to apply an Indigenous gender-based analysis to policy/program development.”⁵

¹ [City of Calgary’s Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy \(2019\)](#)

² [City of Edmonton’s Report on Gender Based Analysis Plus \(2017\)](#)

³ [City of Montreal’s Promoting the Equal Involvement of Women and Men in the Montréal Community Report \(2008\)](#), page 13.

⁴ [Federation of Canadian Municipalities’: Diverse Voices: Tools and Practices to Support All Women](#), page 28.

⁵ [City of Ottawa’s Women and Gender Equity Strategy \(2021\)](#)