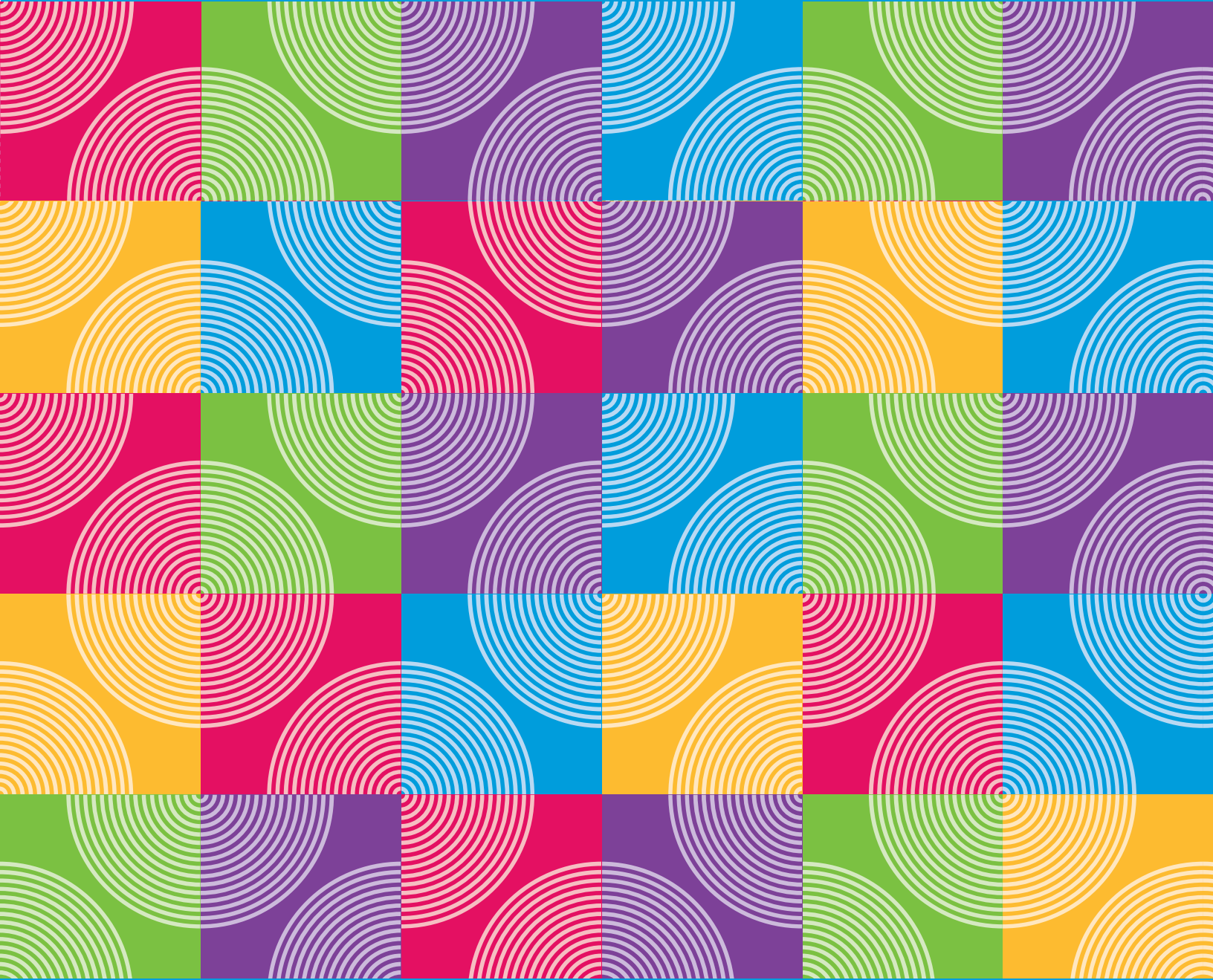


# EPL's Inclusion and Belonging Framework



## What Inclusion and Belonging Means at EPL

EPL commits to building a diverse and inclusive workplace and providing library spaces, programs and services that are respectful, inclusive, relevant, and accessible, and meet the diverse needs of Edmontonians. Inclusion and belonging are foundational to who we are and what we do. EPL is a truly public space where everyone is welcome. A place where everyone belongs.

Belonging doesn't come without inclusion. And inclusion doesn't come without diversity. We strive to create workspaces and public spaces where people feel seen, heard, valued, and connected. Spaces where people can see themselves and be themselves. Places that do not require people to change who they are. We accept and value people who are different from us. We embrace the friction and opportunities that come with this, as we learn to navigate our shared places and spaces.

We see people as unique individuals with innate value. We are curious about and value each other's opinions, views, perspectives, and lived experiences. We focus on understanding other people's points of view, not changing them.

The purpose of this framework is to capture and describe how EPL thinks about and approaches inclusion and belonging. It provides common terminology, definitions, guiding principles, and a unified approach, amplifying and coordinating the work that is already being done. Informed by our values, it provides the context and lens for how EPL understands, lives, and practices inclusion and belonging internally with each other and externally with our customers and partners.

It is utilized to actively identify and address systemic barriers in our programs and services, policies, processes, and procedures for both our staff and customers to provide equitable access to opportunities to participate, contribute, and thrive.

EPL commits to:

1. Fostering an environment of understanding, respect, and inclusion for our staff, customers, and communities.
2. Working with staff and communities in a manner that prioritizes dignity, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
3. Applying our Community Led Service Philosophy framework to create services and spaces that diverse communities identify as respectful, inclusive, relevant, and accessible.

The Inclusion and Belonging Framework is not an action plan. It is a conceptual model that grounds and guides EPL's inclusion and belonging work. Specific goals and action plans will flow from it.



## Our Guiding Principles

EPL's Inclusion and Belonging Framework is informed by our Values and the following Guiding Principles:

**Shared Responsibility** – Inclusion doesn't just happen. We must work at it. Meaningful commitment from everyone is essential. Each of us has the power and responsibility to influence how others experience our workplace and spaces.

**Unconditional Positive Regard** – We accept people for who they are, without judgement, and regardless of their circumstances. We engage with care, compassion, and empathy. We support each person while upholding clear expectations of behaviour, to ensure a positive, inclusive environment for all.

**Intellectual Freedom** – We encourage people to take responsibility for their own ideas and values, while respecting the right of others to make free choices and have different opinions. We support every individual's right to seek and receive information from all points of view. We seek to create an environment where everyone can learn from each other, challenge assumptions, and engage in respectful dialogue.

**Transparent** – We continuously assess the experiences of our staff, our customers, and the communities we serve. We are transparent about where we are and the progress we have made. We make our commitments public and report on our progress.

**Embedded** – Inclusion and belonging are embedded in how we think, learn and work. They are integrated and part of our systems, policies, and practices.

**Iterative and Evolving** – This is a long-term journey with no single or direct path. We do not have all the answers, there is no one right approach, and unique circumstances may require unique actions. We will continuously learn, create, and adjust our approaches based on feedback and new knowledge.

## Definitions

### Accessibility

All individuals, regardless of circumstance, can access services, spaces, and opportunities without barriers.

### Belonging

An individual's sense of acceptance.

### Diversity

The range of human difference, experiences, and perspectives, and how that is represented in the work environment, our public spaces, and programs and services.

### Equity

Fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement to allow everyone to grow and thrive.

### Inclusion

Ensuring that all individuals are welcomed, supported, respected, and valued, and that barriers to participation and contribution are removed.



## Our Inclusion and Belonging Framework

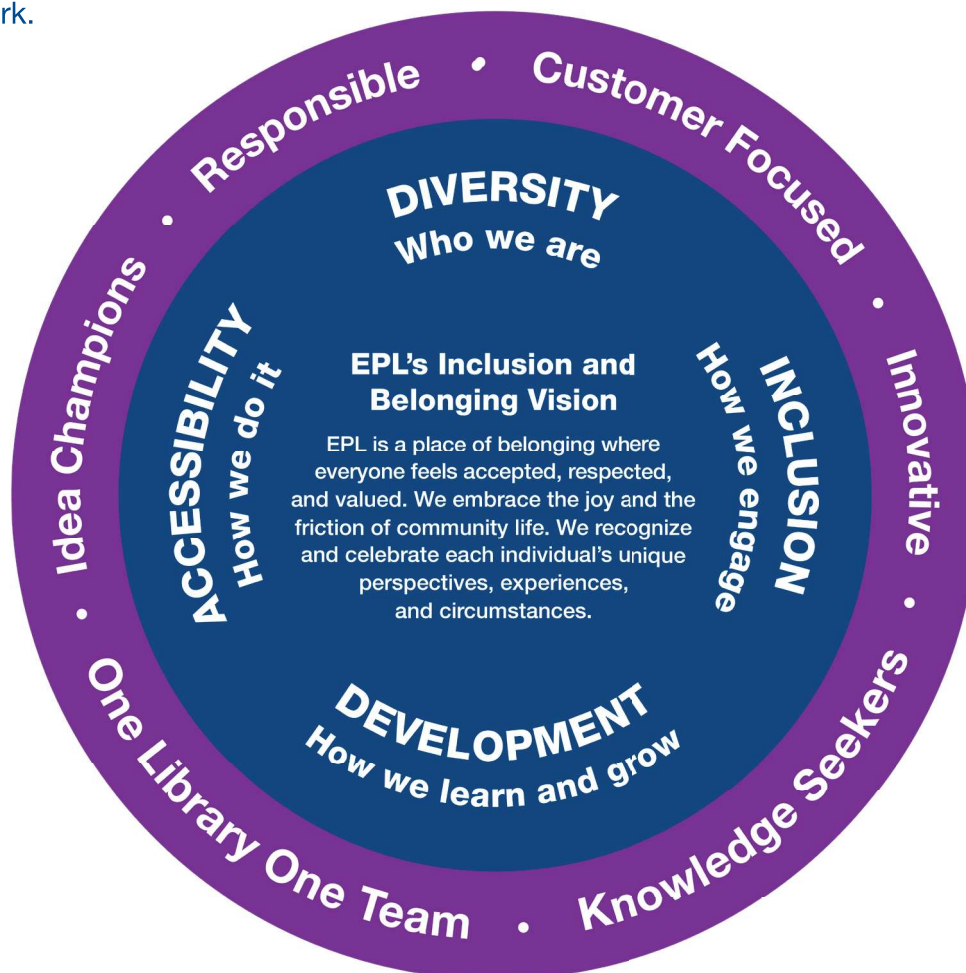
Our Inclusion and Belonging Vision is at the centre of our Inclusion and Belonging Framework.

*EPL is a place of belonging where everyone feels accepted, respected, and valued. We embrace the friction of community life. We recognize and value each individual's unique perspectives, experiences, and circumstances.*

It is what we are working to achieve, the future that we want to create when we successfully integrate and implement our framework.

The four (4) components (Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Development) are the levers we will use on our journey to achieve our Inclusion and Belonging Vision. Each component will have multiple goals and action plans identified that we will commit to implementing, monitoring, and reporting on.

These components are enshrined in and supported by our [Values](#).



## Diversity – “Who We Are”

We strive to reflect the make-up of the communities we serve. We recognize, value, and leverage different perspectives, ideas, and experiences.

Diversity at EPL represents the mosaic and tapestry of unique individuals who comprise EPL’s staff, customers, and communities. We all have layers of identity that make us unique. It is about how we express who we are and how we experience the world.

EPL takes a broad view of diversity and uses the Layers and Dimensions of Diversity model (Appendix 1) to show what makes each individual unique. Diversity is about descriptive categories such as race, ability, sexual orientation, gender, and language. It also includes understanding, valuing, and utilizing different views, ideas, life experiences, skills, and knowledge. We are more than the sum of our parts.

The Layers and Dimensions of Diversity will be incorporated into policies, processes, practices, and tools to form the foundation for measuring and reporting the progress of our inclusion and belonging commitments.



## Inclusion – “How We Engage”

We are welcoming, respectful, and accepting. We embrace differences with empathy and curiosity. We look for opportunities to create meaningful connections. We listen to learn.

Inclusion at EPL is about creating an environment of belonging where people feel seen, heard, valued, and connected. A place that doesn't require people to change who they are. We accept and value people who are different from us.

Inclusion refers to how we interact and communicate with each other. Inclusion is an act. We create inclusion at EPL through our actions and behaviours, both at an individual and team level. We define and articulate what inclusive behaviours look like and hold ourselves accountable to live and role model them.



## **Accessibility – “How We Do It”**

People are treated fairly and have access to equitable opportunities to participate, contribute, and thrive according to their circumstances. We implement programs and services, policies, and practices that advance access, equity and respect.

Accessibility at EPL is about ensuring that individuals are treated fairly and have access to opportunities to participate and contribute. It is about taking intentional and deliberate action to identify and remove systemic, group, and individual barriers to access and participation. This includes policies, processes, practices, and tools to ensure an equitable foundation for staff and customers.

## **Development – “How We Learn and Grow”**

We provide learning opportunities for people to develop the skills to engage and work inclusively.

We equip people with the skills to work and engage in a respectful and inclusive manner. We build their capacity to navigate the friction and complexity of public life and shared spaces.

We embrace and build people’s capacity to be comfortable being uncomfortable and to approach our communities without judgment. We teach people to respond and not react. We are comfortable talking to people who are different from us. We ask questions with an open heart from a place of curiosity and not judgment. We focus on understanding other people’s perspectives and points of view, not changing them.

We recognize we always have more to learn, and approach learning as a gift.

# APPENDIX

## Appendix 1 – Layers and Dimensions of Diversity

### Dimensions of Diversity:

Human beings are diverse and have different traits, backgrounds, and abilities. The graphic on the next page shows the complexity of the various dimensions through which all of us process stimuli and information. These dimensions drive our own thoughts and behaviours and the assumptions we make about others.

#### Individual

This is the core of who we are and includes our likes, dislikes, values, beliefs, and the way we prefer to interact with people. Personality is shaped early in life and is both influenced by, and influences, the other three layers throughout your lifetime.

#### Core Dimensions

These include characteristics we don't generally have control over. They are usually our first impressions of others and are often used to make judgements and assumptions. The dimensions in this layer form the core of many diversity efforts.



## Secondary Dimensions

These include aspects of our lives we have more control over. These can change over time and be either visible or hidden to others. This layer often influences who we develop friendships with and what we do for work.

## Organizational Dimensions

This layer defines your identity within the workplace.

