



# Supporting Inclusive Communities

## MODULE 7C: DIVERSITY & LEAGUE PROGRAMMING

Over the past two weeks we've been exploring what inclusion of diversity looks like within the Community League Movement. This week, we cap off our journey on this topic by delving into League programs.

In a Community League setting a program can take many forms: an in-person or online gathering, service, a fitness class, a group, a newsletter, or even an awareness campaign. Whatever form your programs take, they all represent an opportunity to engage as a community in an intentional way. Also to an extent, what your League chooses to focus its time, energy, resources, and infrastructure on, indicates what your League values most in your community.



Community members undoubtedly take signals from where you put your energy and resources and will use their observations to decide if they feel that they are welcome to participate (or not) and if they feel that they can trust you with their time and presence. Very likely you want all of your residents to feel that they have a seat at the table and are welcome any time. However unintentional, barriers to this can exist. To further illustrate this point, please watch this short video [\*What is the Hidden Curriculum?\* \(3:45\)](#) by Sylvia Van Meerten and consider the following questions:

- What are the unspoken rules or standards of your community / Community League that influence how people behave towards one another? Knowing this, what could you do to help people feel more comfortable interacting in your community?
- What are common questions or points of confusion that you hear from new connections or others who are unfamiliar with the activities of your League?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where someone was eager to get involved but then their enthusiasm abruptly stopped? Do you know what happened?

# TOOLS FOR PROGRAMMING THAT REFLECTS THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

When your League introduces new programming, policies or initiatives do you consider how it will impact the lived experiences of the various identities that your members belong to? Tools like the [Race Equity Impact Assessment](#) or [GBA+](#) can help your League understand how a proposed action or decision can impact different identity groups in your community. With some strategic planning, your programming (and all your work, really) can be designed in a way to maximize your reach in your community and communicate your intentions that all are welcome. Here are a list of some resources and strategies that you may find helpful when developing inclusive policies and practices are as follows:

- Commit to a yearly review of your programming activities and consider how much time, money, and space you allocate to where. Where are resources scarce and in what areas are people spoiled for choice? You may wish to use [this Critical Thinking Cheatsheet infographic](#) to help you examine how best to redistribute resources (i.e., things like volunteer hours, facility space, and funding)
- The City of Edmonton's [Art of Inclusion document](#) contains insights on how they have used GBA+ to articulate their process for inclusion, and details their Inclusion Action Plan (p 28-36)
- The Centre for Global Inclusion has articulated [a series of Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarks](#)
- The John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights offers a whole suite [of training and workshops](#), including several specific to "Developing a Culture of Inclusion." They also have a section dedicated to [resources](#).
- The EFCL has put together [Creating More LGBTQ+ Inclusive Programs. A Resource](#)



# STRATEGIES TO TWEAK CURRENT PROGRAMMING TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE

Below is a list of ideas and strategies that Leagues have shared with us and that we've brainstormed from the work other organizations are doing that you can use to support your programming in being welcoming, applicable, and appealing to more of your neighbours.



- On registration forms or instructions for attending make a point to ask “**Is there anything we can do to help you participate?**”
  - You’ll be surprised what people decide to check in with you about and these are often very easy to help with (i.e. “I can only attend this online meeting by phone - will it still be worth it for me?” or “I have a sore knee and I am wondering if there is a place to sit and rest in the community garden if I need to” or “is it okay if I leave temporarily to go and pray and then come back?”)



- For events where you are providing food, **make an effort to offer a variety of options** (i.e. BBQs are awesome and including some veggie burgers and halal hot dogs shouldn’t involve much more time for shopping or expense, nor present too much difficulty for cooking them).



- Make sure that **participation costs are explained thoroughly** and aim to run free or low cost activities whenever possible. Offer people a way to check in and discuss options if fees are a barrier for them.



- Try to structure events to have **drop-in attendance** so that people with limited time or a challenging schedule can still participate without needing to commit to a lengthy attendance.

- Make sure you **communicate the value of your event or program** within the context of your Community League. Recall from last week that the Community League movement is unique to Edmonton, so many newcomers in the neighbourhood may not know what it is.

- One way to do this is to focus on the quality of your interactions. While event attendance should always factor into your cost-benefit analysis, the number of attendees isn’t necessarily or likely the best indicator of a successful event. What was the qualitative experience of attendees? Did it spark conversations or new connections? Would you consider it to have been a rich opportunity for interaction?



# CONTINUED: STRATEGIES TO TWEAK CURRENT PROGRAMMING TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE

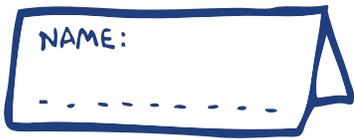
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- Create opportunities for members of different identities and groups to **share identify and share their experiences**. Cultural days are a great way for various ethnic communities in your League to share a bit about their ethnic traditions and showcase their heritage. A virtual cooking class led by a League member showcasing how to make a dish from their heritage could be a popular opportunity!



- Use “partner” when meeting people and asking about their significant other. This will signal to people that you are aware that families are diverse and that you want people to feel comfortable and welcome.



- At events, make an effort to remember names and work at pronouncing them correctly. Another way to create an inclusive environment is to ask people for their pronouns when they introduce themselves.

## Module Reflection

This wraps up our module on diversity, but the learnings have just began. Given that every neighbourhood and community is different, further engagement with this topic may be needed so that you can ensure your Community League is meeting the needs of the community it is embedded in.

Questions for thought:

- Out of the strategies presented in this document, which ones can your League implement today to create a more inclusive environment for all?
- After going through these three modules on diversity, do you feel like you are in a better position to expand your League's outreach to underrepresented members of your community? If not, what areas would you be interested in learning more about?

