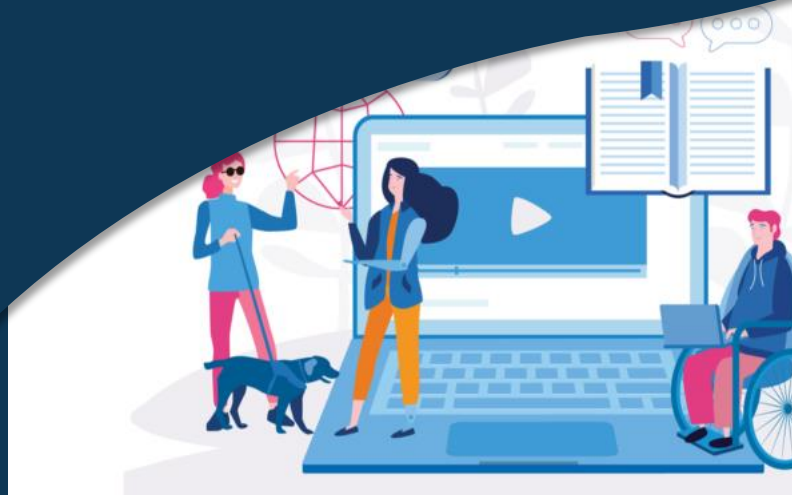


Equity In Service Delivery

- Importance of equity in public service delivery
- Governmental equity promotion
- Building equity via equitable data
- Equitable service delivery
- Digital equity



JOINT COUNCILS' EXECUTIVE MONTHLY REPORT

Developed by the Research Committee
September 2022

1. Importance of equity in public service delivery

One way to define justice or fairness is equity. To account for varying circumstances and the resulting need for assistance from the government, "equity" means that each individual should be treated uniquely by public policy. Equity and equality in results are frequently linked. Inequity and inequality affecting the use and delivery of public services are commonly seen as systemic issues requiring a complex solution. To create a more equitable future, government leaders are urged to confront inequities throughout their whole institutions and beyond.

Inequities in government services, programs, contracting, and the workforce are often the result of decades of rules, programs, policies, and practices that failed to account for unique obstacles encountered by systematically disadvantaged communities. To enhance the lives of all Canadians, it is essential that public service delivery agencies address these inequities faced by equity-seeking and equity-deserving communities.

Many provinces and cities are engaged in their own efforts to advance equity and reduce disparities in access to public services. Several jurisdictions, including Ontario, British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Nunavut, have taken steps to ensure equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine, allocating extra supplies and prioritizing eligibility for disproportionately affected areas, many with large minority populations.

Other jurisdictions, including cities and municipalities, have taken a variety of measures to advance greater equity, from reducing racial disparities within the courts to improving health treatment for underserved communities.

Why Is This Report Important?

Recent studies on the subject of customer experience in government have indicated that interactions between different demographic groups and the public sector are varied. Long-standing and complex causes of inequity in the use of public sector services are complex and encompass more than just the client experience. However, focusing on customer experience is one method that government institutions could begin to narrow the equality gap.

Assessing customer journeys from the perspective of how different user groups experience such customer journeys can help in identifying significant equity gaps. This review identifies the factors and circumstances that contribute to inequity. Ethnic minority users of employment services in one province, for example, place a disproportionate amount of emphasis on workforce reintegration, yet these users report receiving less than favorable quality of service and less useful information than the average survey respondent.

These findings can inform the redesign of customer journeys and the prioritization of activities to better serve historically disadvantaged and underserved communities. In areas where governments do not directly administer services, governments should look into ways to manage and collaborate with service providers to promote equitable transformation.

What is Covered in this Executive Report?

This report includes the following:

- Importance of equity in public service delivery
- Governmental equity promotion
- Building equity via equitable data
- Equitable service delivery
- Digital equity

2. Governmental equity promotion

There are various ways to achieve equity within and through government.

The government equity activation model developed by Deloitte, for instance, demonstrates how government entities may promote equity both inside and outside of their own agencies. It is organized around the following three key realms of influence that fall within the purview of government agencies:

- (1) Workforce, emphasizing participation in the public sector;
- (2) Vendor ecosystems with an emphasis on public procurement;
- (3) Communities and society, including service provision, legislation, and policy;

Government also plays a role in ecosystem stewardship, by supporting public-private ecosystems within each of these domains.

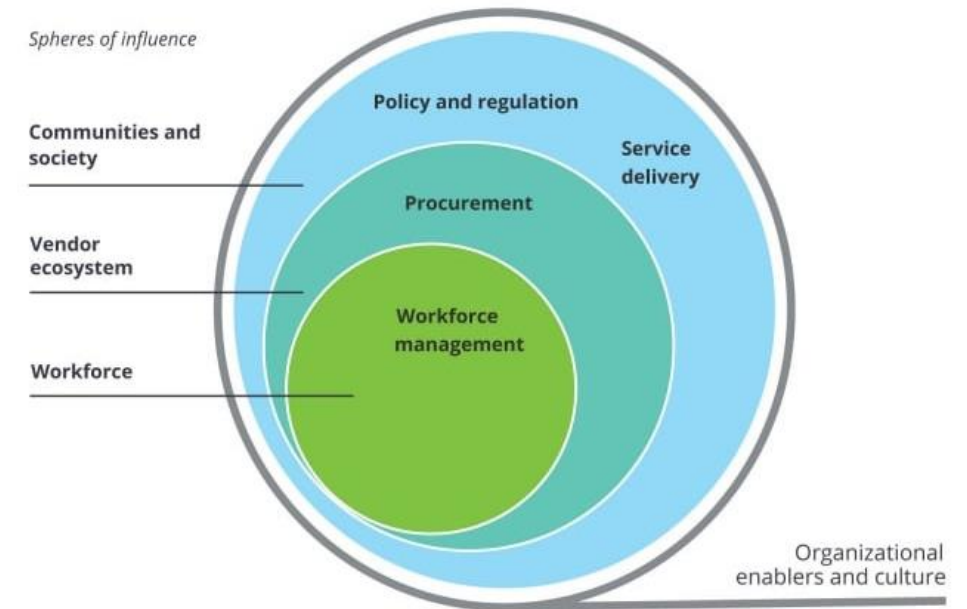
Each of these three spheres has a number of activators, which are important areas of activity and regular decisions through which the government may exert its influence to promote equity. Agencies can take particular initiatives to pursue equity within each activator.

Organizational enablers are necessary in all of these realms of influence in order to promote accountability and support organisational initiatives. Leadership, governance, resource management, legal, risk and compliance, data and analytics, infrastructure, workspace, and technology are a few of them.

Efforts to promote equity may be unsuccessful without these components.

From the full inclusion and intersectionality perspectives, it is important to ensure the completeness of the data collection and assessment processes. Below are some of the factors that contribute to an organization's culture and its development:

Government organizations can activate equity within and outside their own agencies across three spheres of influence



3. Building equity via equitable data

Various governments employ a variety of methods to promote equity within their own systems. As the most recent example, in the United States, the President's 2022 Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities was issued to promote racial equity and underserved community support. As such, in April 2022, the U.S. Federal Government initiated a government-wide initiative to implement the idea of equity at the federal level. In that project, the dedicated Equitable Data Working Group promoted the concept of equitable data to gather precise statistical indicators of population well-being, as well as insight into who can and cannot access government programs and whether benefits and services are reaching underserved and underrepresented communities. The Working Group presented the following practices that aim to promote equitable data vision via various policy proposals:

- 1. Galvanize Diverse Partnerships Across Levels of Government and the Diverse Communities.** Durable, equitable data infrastructure needs encouraging relationships across all levels of government and with a wide network of external groups to solve specific issues of mutual significance and interest.
- 2. Invest in the human capital necessary for equity assessment.** Government agencies should have the appropriate statistical, data science, and assessment capabilities to provide evidence-based policies. Such knowledge is essential for programmes doing equity evaluations, but many departments don't always have the capacity to perform such work. Building this capability would require significant resources.
- 3. Make Disaggregated Data the Norm while Protecting Privacy.** For historically underprivileged populations to be empowered by government data, surveys, and equity evaluations, the federal data system should facilitate disaggregation directly or through statistical estimates at all times.

4. Be Accountable to the Public. Providing tools to civil society groups and communities to analyse and display federal data and record government progress toward equal outcomes is vital for public accountability and credibility. Such technologies should satisfy citizens' data analysis abilities and resources to facilitate community engagement in government equity efforts. The government should encourage platforms and partnerships that help the public obtain valuable data regarding community well-being and services provided to them.

5. Catalyze Existing Federal Government Infrastructure to Leverage Underused Data. Federal programmes should interact with respective statistics agencies at all levels, who have the knowledge and instruments to develop disaggregated estimates of programme participation without disclosing personal information. Policy support for legal and logistical arrangements for productive interagency data-sharing partnerships can help avoid previous barriers and address underutilization of current data by providing timely and safe access to disaggregated data for equity evaluation.



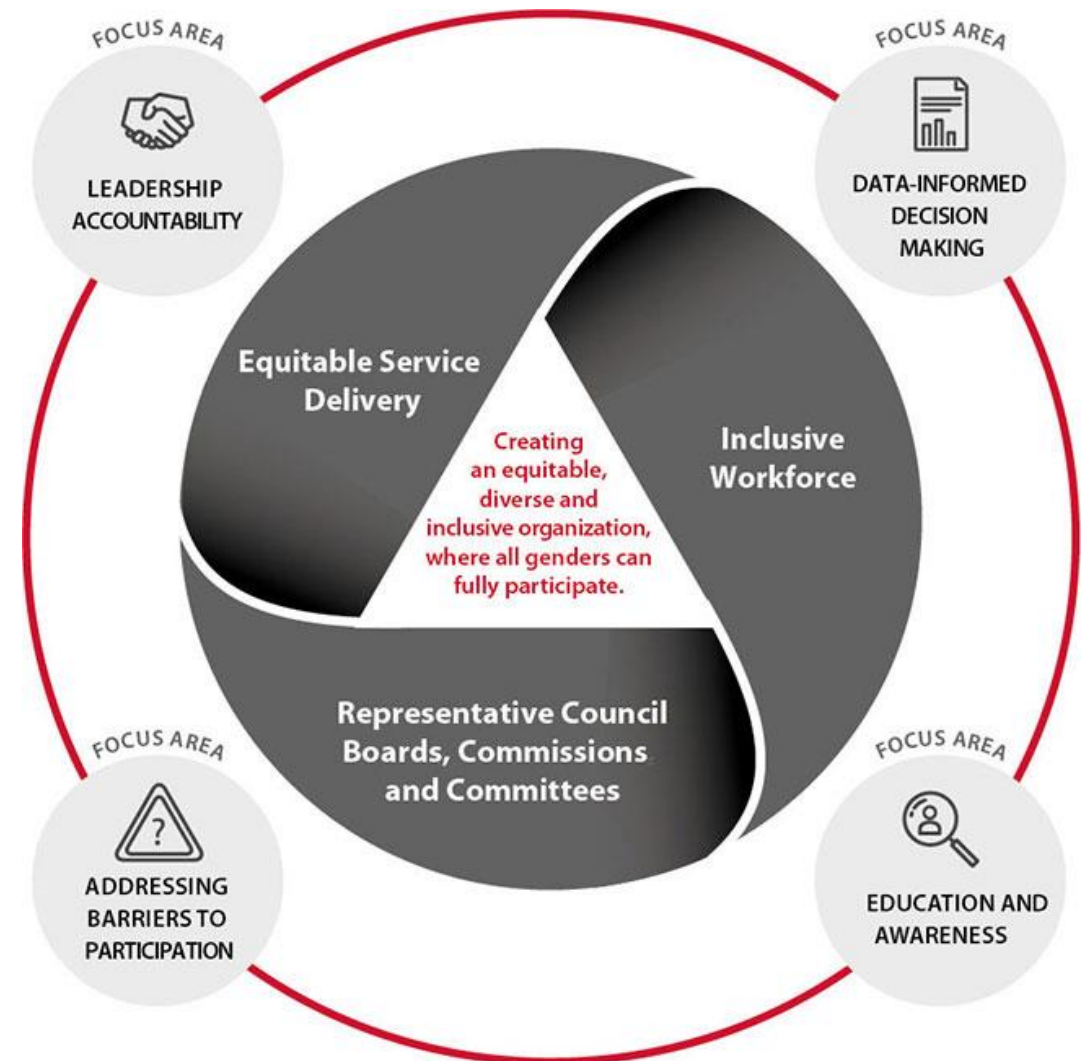
4. Equitable service delivery

Within service delivery, government agencies could ensure equitable outcomes for citizens most impacted by systemic exclusion who would receive the necessary help, thereby benefiting society as a whole.

What are equitable outcomes? Such outcomes present a situation when, regardless of ethnicity or race, religion, or other demographic characteristics, all customers have the same ease and degree of access to public services for which they are entitled, and for which customers may have a need. Decisions on project finance allocation are equitable and take into account the requirements and interests of all stakeholders. There are a few steps to accomplish this:

- 1) Recognize the distinctive obstacles faced by systematically oppressed communities.** This includes analyzing data and conducting interviews, focus groups, and other direct encounters to discover social difficulties and the underlying reasons of certain behaviors.
- 2) Create a user experience map to visualize the interactions individuals have with government programs and agencies.** When paired with census and tax data, it may be a valuable tool for studying how individuals respond to government programmed and the challenges and difficulties encountered by the hardest-to-reach individuals and families, especially those with multiple marginalized identities.
- 3) Share data.** Such solutions can be supported by data-sharing agreements across departments and agencies in order to reduce the amount of time constituents must spend filling out forms and exchanging information. A "tell us once" approach improves the user experience and reduces errors.

As an example, the City of Calgary's 2018 equitable service delivery framework recommends new and enhanced strategic actions that build on Calgary's ongoing work to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion.



5. Digital equity

In the last several years, the phrase “digital equity” has become increasingly popular, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digitization of our daily lives and exposed the reality that not everyone can keep up.

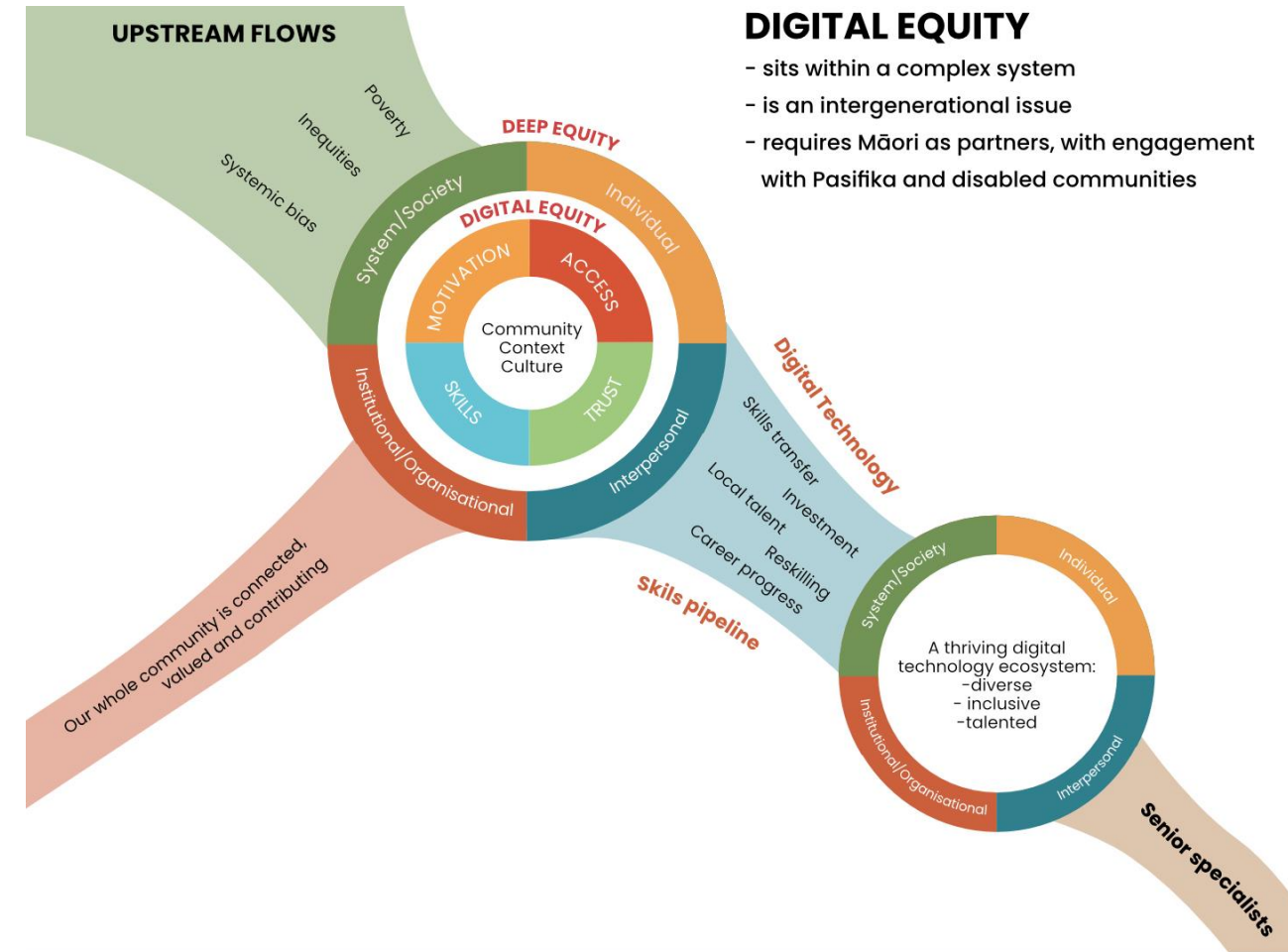
The City of Seattle was among the first to legally define digital equity in 2015, defining it as "a state in which all residents and neighbourhoods have the information technology capacity needed for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services."

Since then, the public conversation has continued to transition from equality to equity, acknowledging that various groups encounter distinct hurdles and, thus, demand distinct solutions. Broadband access and the skills necessary to interact with digital technology at the level of the individual have dominated the scope of digital equity. There have been repeated requests to broaden the scope of digital equality to encompass other concepts, such as a digital ecosystem – comprising regulations, business practises, and norms – that would support the success of all individuals and organisations in the digital world.

Greater digital equity for Canada's people and institutions will have profoundly positive effects. It will make economic development more egalitarian and just, strengthen resilience against future crises, and promote international competitiveness.

Sources: [Deloitte](#), [National League of Cities](#), [Governing.com](#), [Government Technology](#)

The graphic below presents a model of the key dimensions through which technology leaders can advance digital equity in their organizations and communities.



Digital equality also strengthens the nation's influence on the global digital landscape. Canada will be able to lead the world in terms of fair growth if its economy rewards inclusive innovation, digital investment and upskilling, and data protection.



For Further Reading

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- Wooldridge, Blue, and Susan Gooden. "The epic of social equity: Evolution, essence, and emergence." *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 31, no. 2 (2009): 222-234.

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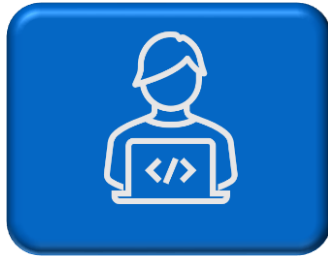
1. Importance of accessibility in Canada
2. Disaggregated data collection in support of accessibility
3. Implications of data collection for governmental accessibility efforts
4. Privacy considerations
5. Accessible Canada Act: implications for service delivery



Trends in the Daily Newsletter



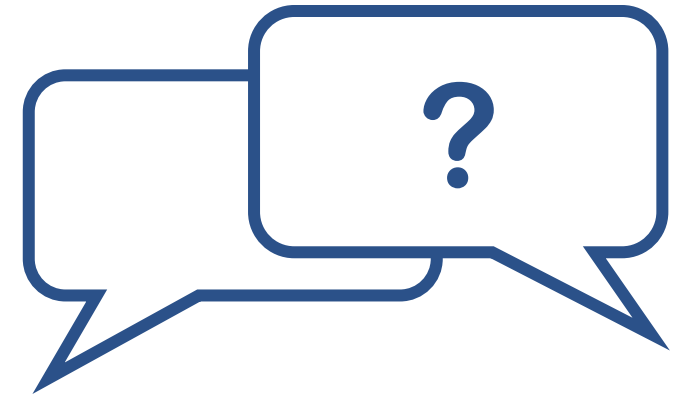
Over a dozen advocacy agencies from Waterloo region and Wellington County joined 230 others from across the province in signing an open letter to the Ford Government this week, written by the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) that calls on Premier Doug Ford [to raise the rates of OW and ODSP to meet the cost of living](#). Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Programs (ODSP) have been stagnant since 2018. A single person can receive up to \$1,169 a month on ODSP and \$733 on Ontario Works. Across Ontario, more than 500,000 individuals or families count on ODSP for part or all of their income, with 12,852 of them in Waterloo region.



The Estonian government has called on tech experts from around the world to help develop its artificial intelligence-based virtual assistant, Bürokratt. In what Estonia is calling [a world first for the public sector](#), Bürokratt will allow citizens to apply for benefits, make payments, register a birth, file taxes, renew a passport and access other government services through Siri-like voice-based interaction. It will offer personalised information based on the user's data and will proactively contact citizens to remind them that an action is required ahead of time.



A cross-agency group released a report and simulation tool on how the government can address identity fraud in government programs. The Joint Financial Management Improvement Program [report](#) identifies trade-off considerations for different identity solutions and frameworks, and it comes with a [simulation tool from the Government Accountability Office](#) to show how decisions about identity verification affect government programs in ways that extend beyond fraud levels alone. This report comes as the government is grappling with an increase in identity theft. Improper payments — which include identity theft and other types of incorrect payments — shot up by at least \$75 billion between fiscal year 2020 and 2021.



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