

# Equitable Faculty Hiring at Vancouver Community College

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# Acknowledgements



This guide was developed on the traditional and unceded territories of the  $x^w m \theta k^w \acute{a} y \acute{a} m$  (Musqueam),  $S k w \acute{x} w \acute{u} 7 m e s h$  (Squamish), and  $s \acute{a} l i l w \acute{a} t \acute{a} \acute{t}$  (Tseil-Waututh) peoples who have been stewards of this land since time immemorial. Its creation stems, in part, out of a desire to welcome more First Nations, Metis, and Inuit faculty members to Vancouver Community College. I hope this guide will spark meaningful conversations that inspire actions rooted in respect, accountability, and the co-creation of just futures.

I would also like to thank all the people who contributed their research, ideas, experiences, and critiques of this project. Special thanks go to Tanny Marks, Arbiter of Student Issues, whose advocacy for employment equity was the catalyst for this guide. Tanny's support, from initial research to final product, was invaluable. I also extend my gratitude to Rachel Warick from VCC's Partnership Development Office. Her extensive knowledge of best practices in inclusive employment and her thoughtful, thorough feedback greatly enriched this guide.

# UNDERSTANDING EQUITABLE HIRING

# What is Employment Equity and Equitable Hiring?



“Gaps in representation and pay for marginalized groups remain stubbornly high, and year after year employment is the most litigated area of discrimination at the BC Human Rights Tribunal.” –[BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner](#)

**Employment equity** refers to removing barriers that prevent marginalized groups from fully participating in the workforce.

These barriers often arise when people assume that ‘fair treatment’ means ‘treating everyone the same.’ In reality, fair treatment requires accommodations to ensure equal opportunities for participation and success.

The spaces we work in have been shaped over time, both intentionally and unintentionally, by biases. These biases tend to be invisible until we examine how they affect those excluded from shaping our workplace’s norms and practices. Biases in the workplace can significantly influence who gets recruited, retained, and promoted.

This discrimination is usually unintentional and can be reinforced by simply continuing old habits. For example, hiring through employees’ personal networks often leads to a workforce where most people have similar backgrounds and experiences. Not only is this unfair, but it can erase the advantages diversity brings, which will be outlined in the following pages.

This guide focuses on creating equitable hiring practices, a crucial aspect of employment equity. Equitable hiring does not mean compromising on qualifications or hiring unqualified individuals for the sake of diversity. Instead, **equitable hiring** is the practice of creating fair and inclusive hiring processes that remove barriers, provide accommodations, and ensure all candidates, including those from marginalized groups, have an equal opportunity to compete for a role. It involves critically examining what defines the “best candidate” for the job and designing inclusive processes to find them.

This guide provides strategies for faculty to think critically about the ‘best candidate’ in the context of your department and to design a process to find that candidate in a fair and inclusive way.

**Please note:** This is a supplementary resource on equitable hiring for faculty, not a definitive guide on all aspects of the VCC hiring process. Please consult the [VCCFA Collective Agreement](#) and VCC People Services for complete details on hiring procedures at Vancouver Community College.

# Why Do Equitable Hiring Practices Matter?



Equitable hiring practices help create a more diverse workforce. A diverse workforce's composition is reflective of the range of racial backgrounds, genders, ages, religions, abilities, economic backgrounds, sexual orientations and other differences we see in our communities.

**A diverse workforce at VCC can lead to:**

- **More students & increased student confidence.** When current and prospective students see relatable employees, they feel that their experiences and needs will be better understood.<sup>12</sup>
- **A positive impact on VCC's reputation.** The public tend to have positive opinions about organizations that prioritize staff diversity.<sup>3</sup>
- **More job applicants.** Many people seeking new jobs, especially those who have experienced past workplace discrimination, look for organizations with diverse employee representation, which widens the talent pool for employers.<sup>4</sup>
- **More innovation and creativity.** Employees have an opportunity to learn from those who are different from them, and from those who may have valuable

skills, expertise, and experience that has previously been excluded. Staff feel more welcome to bring up new ideas and perspectives.<sup>5</sup>

- **More accessible and inclusive College practices right from the start.** Having diverse employees leads to diverse teaching, learning, research, and community engagement methods.<sup>6</sup> This helps eliminate the need for accommodations or retrofitting. For example, hire a **neurodiverse** educator and soon course assessments may become suitable for a variety of diverse learners without the need for individual disability accommodations.

**An equitable hiring process also helps create more fair and inclusive workplaces. There are many benefits of a fair and inclusive workplace:**

- **Absences are less common** when workplaces have flexible policies and processes that account for different life circumstances.<sup>7 8</sup>
- **Staff are more productive and fulfilled** when they feel safe, accepted, and able to “bring their whole selves to work.”<sup>9 10</sup>
- **Staff communicate and collaborate better** when workplaces take steps to gather employee feedback to prevent discrimination.<sup>11 12</sup>
- **Staff are more likely to stay** with an employer longer-term when workplaces are adaptable to diverse experiences.<sup>13 14</sup>

**Equitable hiring helps redress past inequities in an organization’s workforce.** Like many organizations, VCC hiring practices, whether intentionally or unintentionally, may have included:

- implicit biases and assumptions within hiring committees,
- prioritizing ‘fit’ over diversity within departments,
- overvaluing or devaluing credentials based on where and how they were obtained, and

- narrow job descriptions rooted in traditional notions of excellence that reinforce privilege and discrimination.

These practices can result in a less diverse pool of candidates, making some areas of the college more homogeneous. As a result, qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds may have been overlooked as the “best candidate” or, in some cases, excluded from applying or being considered for an interview.

Equitable hiring is essential to fulfilling VCC's commitments to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, as expressed in VCC's:

- [Government Mandate Letters](#)
- [Strategic Innovation Plan](#)
- Academic Plan
- [Accessibility Plan](#)
- [Mental Health & Wellbeing Framework](#), and
- Institutional Learning Outcomes.

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# Who is the "Best Candidate for the Job"?



At VCC, departments create a set of Area Hiring Criteria for each program. It may be tempting to set overly narrow criteria to pinpoint candidates who precisely match your picture of “the ideal candidate.” While this approach might keep the applicant pool small, making it quicker and easier to identify a candidate, overly narrow criteria can:

- Favour candidates who resemble current faculty or fit into dominant cultural norms
- Overlook candidates with transferrable skills, such as those with interdisciplinary expertise or those who took non-traditional career paths
- Discourage strong candidates from applying because they don’t perfectly match the narrow criteria.

## To find the best candidate for the job:

### 1. Focus on Essential Qualifications

- Highlight the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the role.
- Avoid idealized or overly narrow qualifications that may limit the candidate pool unnecessarily.
- Consider which qualifications could be marked as “preferred” rather than “required.”
- Value alignment with VCC’s commitments to creating accessible, culturally responsive programs for diverse learners :
  - VCC’s Strategic Innovation Plan pledges to “review and renew curricula and teaching practices for greater inclusion of diverse ways of knowing and being” and “reflect and respect Indigenous knowledge, culture, and history in academic planning and delivery.”
  - VCC’s Academic Plan 2022-2025 Goal 1.1 is to “retain and maintain sufficient qualified and appropriate Indigenous leadership, knowledge holders, and allies to direct and support the process of Indigenization.”
  - VCC’s Academic Plan 2022-2025 Goal 2.1 is to “retain and maintain leaders, planners, and doers to direct and support the process of ensuring justice, equity, diversity & inclusion within the College.

### 2. Recognize Equivalent Qualifications

- Use language like: “Or an equivalent combination of education, training, paid employment, volunteer experience, and lived experience.”
- When assessing applications, value non-traditional pathways to qualifications.
- Value volunteer work that aligns with the role. Recognize that systemic barriers may have limited paid work opportunities for some individuals, such as people with disabilities.

- Value **lived experience** that aligns with the role, such as firsthand knowledge of barriers faced by marginalized groups or insights into historically underserved communities. (Note: Do not ask about personal characteristics protected by law, such as age, race, gender, or disability in the application or interview. Do aim to create a space where candidates feel comfortable disclosing lived experience and relevant equity dimensions voluntarily.)
- Value **on-the-job training** that contributes relevant skills or perspectives.
- Value **professional development** that contributes relevant skills or perspectives.
- Value a wider range of **relevant formal academic credentials**. For example: Is a Masters degree the only way to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for the role? What other certifications might be just as valuable?

*From the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner*

#### **Special programs can help lower barriers for marginalized groups**

“It is not discriminatory under the Human Rights Code for employers to create employment equity programs to improve conditions for marginalized groups. For example, you may give preference in hiring and promotion decisions to applicants from disadvantaged groups.

Employers with an initiative aiming to lower barriers for marginalized groups may seek a “special program” designation from B.C.’s Human Rights Commissioner. Any program or activity granted this designation cannot be found to contravene the Code.”

► Visit [BCOHRC's website to learn more about special programs](#) and consult with VCC’s People Services.

# CONDUCTING AN EQUITABLE HIRING PROCESS

# The Job Posting



## 1. Consider Revising your Area Hiring Criteria

- The job posting is generated by People Services based on your program’s Area Hiring Criteria.
- After reviewing the section on [“Who is the Best Candidate for The Job?”](#) you may wish to revise your Area Hiring Criteria.
- The process for doing so is outlined in the [Collective Agreement](#), Appendix II, Part B, page 109. The key points are to focus on essential qualifications and to recognize equivalent qualifications.

## 2. Communicate Inclusivity Through Goals and Metrics

- People Services has developed the following statement, which appears on all VCC job postings: “At VCC, we respect and celebrate our differences, and are committed to the work of decolonization, accessibility, and inclusivity for all. Be a part of creating an inclusive community that provides equitable opportunities for Indigenous and diverse representation, participation, and success for everyone. We value lived experience and encourage applications from members of all groups experiencing barriers to equity. Come join the VCC community as we shape the future together.”
- Some organizations include diversity goals and metrics in their job postings. Information about VCC’s diversity goals and metrics are not yet available. You can help change this by advocating for the the collection of more demographic data, followed by the creation of goals to address underrepresentation.

## 3. Share the Posting Widely

- The posting will be shared on careers.vcc.ca. Promote your posting through social media with hashtags like #InclusiveWorkplace.
- Share the posting widely by email, especially to people with diverse networks.
- Share the job posting with community organizations that work with marginalized groups to ensure the opportunity reaches diverse audiences.

# Challenging our Biases



Our brains rely on mental shortcuts to process the overwhelming amount of information we encounter daily. While helpful, these shortcuts can lead to biases—unconscious preferences or judgments that are often unfair and not based on objective reasoning. Everyone has biases, but they can result in mistakes in reasoning, evaluation, and decision-making.

In the hiring process, biases can lead to discriminatory practices. As a result, we have a legal and ethical responsibility to identify and control for biases when evaluating candidates. Here are some common types of biases to watch for:

## Cloning (Affinity Bias)

- Unconsciously favouring people with similar attributes or backgrounds as ourselves.
- Undervaluing unfamiliar approaches or experiences.
- Expecting candidates to resemble the person being replaced.

## Snap Judgements

- Making judgments about a candidate without sufficient evidence.
- Dismissing a candidate for minor reasons.

## “Good Fit” Bias

- Defining “fit” based on personal comfort or cultural familiarity, which can hinder diversity.
- Prioritizing familiarity over the ability to meet the role’s needs.

## Negative Stereotypes

- Assuming incompetence in historically underrepresented groups (e.g., women, Indigenous people, Black people, people of color, 2SLGBTQ individuals, people with disabilities, older employees, newcomers).
- Requiring individuals from these groups to repeatedly prove their competence.

## Positive Stereotypes

- Assuming competence or overlooking flaws in candidates from dominant groups (e.g., white, wealthy, male, highly credentialed).

## Prescriptive Stereotypes

- Expecting different workplace behaviour based on social identities. For example:
  - women are often expected to be mild-mannered team players, but this may be optional for men.
  - assertive and direct behaviour may be seen favourable for some groups and interpreted as difficult, abrasive, or tactless behaviour for other groups.

- 2SLGBTQ employees may be stereotyped as too masculine or too feminine, which is irrelevant to the ability to do a job.

## Elitist Thinking

- Favouring candidates from elite schools
- Favouring candidates with credentials from North America or Western Europe.
- Downgrading candidates based on appearance or mannerisms.

## Horns and Halos

- Allowing one weakness to unfairly influence an overall negative evaluation (horns).
- Allowing one strength to unfairly influence an overall positive evaluation (halos).

Before starting the interview process, take time to reflect on these biases. If you notice a bias in your thinking, ask yourself:

- Where did this thought come from?
- Is it fair?
- What impact could acting on this bias have?

Through ongoing learning, reflection, and intentional action, we can challenge these biases and create a more equitable hiring process.

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# Screening Applications



## 1. Engage Multiple Screeners:

- Have at least two people independently review applications to reduce individual bias and ensure consistency.

## 2. Use Pre-Determined Criteria:

- Base evaluations on the selection criteria outlined in the job posting.
- Consider diverse qualifications, including non-traditional pathways such as lived experience or volunteer work.
- Do not overlook applicants who have gaps in their employment history due to reasons such as caregiving responsibilities or medical leave.

### 3. Standardize the Process:

- Spend an ample amount of time reviewing each application (eg. twenty minutes per application).
- Use a scoring rubric or evaluation matrix to objectively compare candidates. For guidance, [refer to this template](#).
- Screeners should document their evaluations and decisions for transparency and compliance.

### 4. Select Candidates for Interview:

- Interview all candidates who meet the selection criteria. If you have more candidates who meet the criteria than you can feasibly interview, base decisions on the scoring rubric.

### 5. Build Trust Through Transparent Communication

- Inform candidates promptly of delays in processing applications.
- Provide follow-up feedback to all applicants, not just those who advance to the next stage. Ensure feedback is specific and constructive.

# Taking a Relational Approach



Hiring practices can be placed on a spectrum between transactional and relational approaches.

In a **transactional** approach, interactions are seen as deals where each person gets what they need, with less focus on building a deeper relationship. Transactional approaches are often anonymous, impersonal, and overly formal.

In a **relational** approach, interactions are intended to build strong, long-term connections based on trust, respect, and mutual care, prioritizing the relationship over short-term goals. Relational approaches emphasize personal connection, cooperation, and clear communication.

Taking a relational approach does not mean forming personal relationships or allowing them to influence hiring decisions. Instead, it means treating candidates with dignity and respect while fostering mutual understanding. This involves showing how the candidate's skills and experience align with the position's needs and how the role meets their expectations.

## To take a relational approach:

- Reflect on the burden the hiring process places on candidates. Acknowledge the time, energy, and capacity they expend.
- Set a tone of welcome and appreciation throughout the process.
- Favor genuine conversations over automated responses.
- Strive to build trust and reduce power imbalances.
- Consider candidates' needs, preferences, and comfort levels.
- Respect each candidate's dignity, time, and effort.
- Accommodate **neurodiversity** by recognizing different communication styles and interaction methods.
- Evaluate recruitment requirements (e.g., tests or tasks). Are they necessary? Could they be modified to reduce anxiety and preserve dignity?
- Invite candidates to provide feedback and check in regularly to ensure their comfort throughout the process.

Plan communication activities thoughtfully, ensuring candidates feel informed and valued at every stage. By creating a reciprocal and respectful atmosphere, a relational approach helps build trust and fosters a positive candidate experience.

# Setting Up the Interview



## 1. Offer Accommodations:

- Include all available accommodations in the interview invitation and encourage candidates to request additional accommodations as needed. Examples include:
  - Virtual interviews via Zoom (with cameras off) or by phone.
  - Casual dress for the interview.
  - Scheduled breaks during the interview.
  - Use of sensory aids or personal materials.
- Be flexible around scheduling. Candidates may be managing many work, family, and community responsibilities.

## 2. Ensure Panel Diversity:

- Assemble an interview panel that reflects diversity in culture, abilities, credentials, gender identities, and perspectives.
- Include team members beyond faculty, such as administrative or support staff, to provide a broader view of the workplace.

## 3. Review Biases Before the Interview Starts:

- Before and after each interview, review the [list of biases](#) to challenge your assumptions and ensure fair evaluations.

## 4. Create a Comfortable Environment:

- Opt for sensory-friendly spaces with comfortable seating, scent-free policies, and natural lighting.
- Arrange seating in a round setup to avoid an “us versus you” dynamic. Allow candidates to choose where to sit.

## 5. Set the Tone:

- Foster a welcoming environment that communicates respect and appreciation for the candidate.
- Reframe the process as a mutual exploration to gauge alignment between the department’s goals and the candidate’s skills and aspirations, rather than focusing solely on “measuring up.”
- Shift from “What can you do for us?” to also asking, “How can we support your needs and ensure the position is accessible and sustainable for you?”

## 6. Introduce the Panel:

- Share panelists' names and roles with the candidate in advance.
- Encourage panelists to introduce themselves at the start of the interview and, if they choose, share pronouns and relevant equity dimensions.

## 7. Encourage a Two-Way Dialogue:

- Invite candidates to think of the interview as an opportunity to evaluate the organization.
- Create a safe space for candidates to ask questions by crafting prompts like, "What else would you like to know about working here?"

## 8. Communication and Support:

- Clearly communicate the interview process and timeline.
- Follow up with candidates promptly, providing feedback to all applicants, not just those who advance.

# The Questions



## 1. Use Pre-Determined Questions:

Base questions on the hiring criteria. Ask all candidates the same set of pre-determined questions based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the role. Follow-up questions and conversational engagement are welcome, provided they remain aligned with the original purpose.

## 2. Provide Questions in Advance:

Sharing interview questions ahead of time helps reduce anxiety and allows candidates to prepare thoughtful responses. This ensures the interview focuses on the candidate's understanding of the role and qualifications, rather than their ability to think on the spot. For example, you could share the questions a week in advance, the evening before, or 30 minutes before the interview.

### 3. Incorporate Real-Life Scenarios:

Behavioral interview questions can be enhanced by providing real-life scenarios for candidates to consider before the interview. This allows for a practical evaluation of how they might approach challenges or tasks in the role. (See [examples of behavioural interview questions](#)). You can minimize the issue of applicants finding canned responses from the web by providing the scenarios 20 minutes before the interview.

### 4. Allow Notes:

Let candidates know they are welcome to refer to prepared notes during the interview. This fosters an environment where candidates can focus on demonstrating their competencies rather than managing nerves.

# Compensation



There is an emerging practice of compensating candidates—either through honoraria or reimbursements— for their participation in the interview process. This practice is more common in non-profit and technology sectors than post-secondary institutions. It is nonetheless worth noting because attending interviews may require time off from work, childcare, and travel costs – all of which may pose barriers to participation for marginalized people.

In the current post-secondary landscape, this endeavour would need to be organized by faculty, as opposed to an initiative through VCC's People Services. Perhaps departments could collaborate on an application to the Strategic Innovation and Enhancement Fund for this purpose, or explore whether this is an equity initiative the faculty association might administer.

There are three types of compensation to consider:

## **1. Honoraria**

Consider paying candidates an honorarium for the time they spend preparing for and attending interviews. Developing a framework for offering honoraria would demonstrate respect for candidates' time and effort.

## **2. Compensation for Work Products**

If candidates are required to prepare a presentation, lesson plan, or other work product, consider paying them for their preparation time. This is especially important for candidates who may face systemic barriers, such as limited access to technology, working multiple jobs, or managing disabilities that require significant energy. Paying candidates for their work validates the resources they invest in the hiring process and levels the playing field.

## **3. Reimbursement of Travel Costs**

Ensure candidates are not financially burdened by the interview process. Offer to cover bus fares, parking costs, or other travel expenses (in advance or on the day of the interview) to eliminate out-of-pocket expenses.

# Making a Decision



## 1. Use a Standardized Rubric:

Score candidates using a pre-determined interview rubric to ensure evaluations are objective and based solely on job-relevant criteria. For transparency, consider offering the rubric to candidates after the successful hire has been made. For guidance, [refer to this template](#).

## 2. Provide Feedback:

Offer a debrief meeting to unsuccessful candidates to share constructive feedback on how they could strengthen their application for future

opportunities. When detailed feedback is not feasible, provide general insights on common strengths and areas for improvement.

### **3. Communicate Promptly:**

Keep candidates informed about timelines and promptly communicate any delays in the selection process. Clear communication fosters trust and respect.

### **4. Rethink Reference Checks:**

Use reference checks primarily to confirm a candidate's previous experience (i.e. that they worked/volunteered at a given location and time). Recognize that diverse candidates may have faced discrimination in past workplaces. Allow candidates to choose references beyond their most recent supervisors, such as community leaders, volunteer supervisors, or colleagues, to provide a more comprehensive view of their skills. Notify candidates before contacting references to ensure transparency and avoid potential risks. In workplaces where the candidate is already known by others in the organization, do not do informal reference checks, as these can bias for or against an applicant. Candidates should be able to choose who they want to be contacted as a reference.

### **5. Follow-Up with All Candidates:**

Inform all candidates about the outcome of the interview process, not just those selected for the role. When possible, provide substantive feedback on what worked well and areas for improvement during the interview.

### **6. Gather Feedback to Improve:**

Administer an anonymous survey to all candidates to gather insights on the interview process. Use the results to identify strengths and areas for adjustment in future hiring practices.

# Afterword

“Welcome to feeling like you belong. Because you really do.”

This VCC tagline, seen on posters and billboards, invites students from all backgrounds to join our campus community. This guide illustrates how we can extend this same message of belonging through our employee recruitment practices. By removing unjust barriers, reflecting on our biases, and reimagining who we see as “the best candidate for the job,” we can create a hiring process that is accessible, equitable, and welcoming to diverse candidates.

Equitable hiring strategies are a vital first step toward achieving employment equity, but they are not the only step. Equally important is fostering an environment where historically marginalized employees are supported, empowered, and offered opportunities for growth and development. Retention and advancement are essential components of equity, and they require intentionality and commitment.

By strengthening our practices in hiring, retention, and advancement, we can create a truly inclusive environment where every employee feels valued, supported, and inspired to thrive. Together, we can build a workplace that reflects and celebrates the diversity of our community.





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# Recommended Resources

British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. (n.d.). *Hiring and promotion: An equity lens*. Retrieved from [https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/Infosheet\\_hiring-and-promotion.pdf](https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/Infosheet_hiring-and-promotion.pdf)

- An infosheet defining equitable hiring, employer's legal responsibilities, gaps in workplace representation, obstacles to equity, and promising practices for equitable hiring.

University of Toronto. (n.d.). "Hiring for equity." Experiential Learning Modules. Retrieved from [https://experientialmodules.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/articulate\\_uploads/Hiring/index.html#/](https://experientialmodules.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/articulate_uploads/Hiring/index.html#/)

- A free online training module in which you will reflect on recruitment barriers and recognize how to build an inclusive and equitable hiring process.

University of Waterloo. (October 2020). *Equitable recruitment and selection toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://uwaterloo.ca/equity-diversity-inclusion-anti-racism/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/equitable-recruitment-selection-toolkit-final-lr.pdf>

- A comprehensive toolkit with sample scoring rubrics on pages 41-45 and sample equity-themed interview questions on page 49.

# Relevant Legislation

Equitable hiring practices in British Columbia are supported by a framework of legislation designed to uphold human rights, promote accessibility, combat racism, and affirm the rights of Indigenous Peoples. These laws provide both the legal foundation and the ethical imperative for creating inclusive, respectful, and equitable workplaces.

The following legislation is particularly relevant to faculty hiring processes in British Columbia:

- [BC Human Rights Code](#): Prohibits discrimination in employment and other areas, ensuring equal opportunity for all individuals regardless of race, gender, disability, and other protected characteristics.
- [Accessible British Columbia Act](#): Promotes accessibility by removing barriers that prevent full and equal participation for people with disabilities.
- [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#): Affirms the rights of Indigenous Peoples in alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and commits to reconciliation through legislative and policy changes.
- [Anti-Racism Data Act](#): Supports the collection and use of data to identify and address systemic racism, promoting equity for racialized groups.
- [Anti-Racism Act](#): Provides a framework for dismantling systemic racism and advancing racial equity in all aspects of society, including employment.