



Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality



2015 - 2018





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FOREWORD

Under the auspices of its new board, the Equal Opportunity Commission has completed its first strategic planning exercise which is envisaged to take us up to 2018. In so doing I wish to acknowledge all the preliminary work that had been completed by the previous board and which formed the platform upon which the current plan was built.

Strategic planning is an organisation's process of defining its strategy or direction and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy.

In this seventh year of its existence and marking the milestone of its move to Chaguanas, it is an exercise that has not come a moment too soon.

The EOC regards its work towards the elimination of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago, in keeping with its several mandates which are established legislation, as a sacred task and one that is vital in nation building in a relatively young plural society. We have also identified an important goal for the period of this Strategic Plan to achieve autonomy.

On my own behalf I wish to thank my fellow Commissioners for their sterling efforts in bringing the exercise to completion, plan for the future and to maximise our efficiency and effectiveness. On behalf of the Board I would like to express sincere appreciation for the insightful and hard work of Management and staff.



Lynette Seebaran Suite
Chairman

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The Equal Opportunity Commission (hereinafter referred to as the “EOC” or “Commission”) is a public body that was created in accordance with the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act, Chapter 22:03 [Act No.69 of 2000 as amended by Act No. 5 of 2001] (‘the Act’) for the purpose of exercising the jurisdiction conferred upon it by that Act. The EOC is guided in its mandate by the terms and provisions of the Act. The Act seeks, *among other things, to prohibit certain kinds of discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different status.*

In the pursuit of this, the Commission is mandated by section 27(1):

- a) To work towards the elimination of discrimination;
- b) To promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status generally;
- c) To keep under review the working of the Act and any relevant law and, when required or otherwise thinks it necessary, to draw up and submit proposals for amending them;
- d) To receive, investigate and, as far as possible, conciliate allegations of discrimination;
- e) To develop, conduct and foster research and educational programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status;
- f) To prepare and publish appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination and
- g) To do any other thing conducive or incidental to the carrying out of its functions.

The Act applies to:

- (a) Discrimination in relation to employment, education, the provision of goods and services and the provision of accommodation, if the discrimination is:
 - (i) discrimination on the ground of status as defined in section 5; or
 - (ii) discrimination by victimisation as defined in section 6;

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

(b) Offensive Behaviour referred to in section 7.

The status grounds that are protected are:

- Sex
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Origin (including geographic origin)
- Religion
- Marital Status
- Disability

The Equal Opportunity Act applies to persons/institutions/corporations in both public and private sectors and therefore the EOC can investigate complaints made against public and private bodies.

The EOC was established in 2008 with the appointment of five (5) Commissioners but became operational in 2010. During the period 2008 to 2010 much time was spent on getting the Commission fully operational to serve the needs of the public. The major works undertaken over the period included finding suitable accommodation, recruiting staff, developing systems and procedures and the relevant forms to carry out the function of receiving and investigating complaints.

Over the period 2010 to 2014 the EOC focused on public education/awareness, development of various publications and established a website to inform and educate the public about the EOC. The Commission continued to receive, investigate, and as far as possible conciliate complaints. Several unresolved matters have been referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal.

In order to realise its full mandate, the Commission developed its first three year Strategic Plan 2015-2018. This plan provides a proactive framework of reference to operationalise its mandate and guide the Commission in achieving its envisaged goals. The document provides a statement of intent by the Commission on how it wants to address crucial issues of discrimination in the country over the coming three (3) years. It sets out the fundamental principles, the strategic goals and objectives and the action plan to move the EOC from its current situation in 2015, to its desired position by 2018.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

In establishing how we will achieve the envisaged goals, we sought to employ a process of consultation with Staff and Commissioners. Part of the process included an environmental scan, Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural and Technological (PEST) and an organisational assessment, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), which helped the EOC assess both the challenges and opportunities it is likely to face over the next three (3) years. Emerging from this exercise was the goals and objectives reflected in this strategic plan. The plan creates a common vision for both Commissioners and Staff. It establishes a high level of understanding regarding the direction in which the organisation is moving, whilst also directing the operational components. Some of the strategic objectives will require partnerships with and the collaboration of other organisations including non-government organisations, civil society and other government departments.

The EOC's three (3) year strategic plan is also aligned with three (3) of the seven (7) interconnected pillars as identified in the National Framework for Sustainable Development;

- I. People-Centred Development
- II. Poverty Eradication and Social Justice
- III. Good Governance

Further, the strategic plan of the EOC is supporting the National Strategic Priorities as listed in the National Framework for Performance 2012-2015 by the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development in the areas of;

- I. Crime and Law and Order
- II. Poverty Reduction and Human Capital Development

Finally, The Board of Commissioners and Staff will review progress on a quarterly basis and update the plan annually as needed. The successful implementation of the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan will result in an institution with a distinct national presence and visibility, delivering on its mandate to the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.



VISION, MISSION & CORE VALUES

VISION STATEMENT

A society which is free from discrimination and prejudice, where human rights and diversity are respected, and there is equal opportunity for all.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Equal Opportunity Commission works towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity through advocacy, public education, research and conciliation of complaints.

CORE VALUES

PASSION – we are committed to what we do, knowing that it makes a difference to the lives of many, and when done right, we can make Trinidad and Tobago better for everyone.

FAIRNESS, JUSTICE AND EQUALITY – Adhere at all times to due process and are impartial in our procedures.

CUSTOMER-CENTRICITY – Sensitive to the needs of our stakeholders and create a positive client experience.

EMPATHY – Seek to understand our publics' situation from their perspective and exercise compassion.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY – Promote respect for people's differences.

TIMELINESS – Deliver our services promptly, in keeping with our commitments, protocols and with a sense of urgency. We are an on-time and pro-active organisation.

LOYALTY – Have a strong feeling of support and allegiance to the EOC and its mission.

INTEGRITY – Operate with honesty, uprightness and honour.

AUTONOMY – Operate independently, in accordance with the law and free from unnecessary external influence.

TEAM COHESIVENESS – Communicate effectively, work together efficiently and focus on the EOC's mission and the things that unite us.

BEST PRACTICE – Consistently adopt methods and technologies (including ICT) which achieve superior results, and keep our practices under review.

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT - Continuously update and improve our knowledge and skills to develop the EOC's human capital.

RECOGNITION AND REWARD – Acknowledge the work and efforts of our team and reward them.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The pre-planning process

The Equal Opportunity Commission's Strategic Plan 2015-2018 is the outcome of a number of processes that begun in January 2015, with a Re-Visioning Retreat which included brainstorming sessions by the Board of Commissioners and staff of the EOC. This process was intended to ensure consensus building and ownership of the plan in its design and implementation process.

Strategic planning sessions

The second step involved a series of strategic planning sessions by members of the Board along with members of Management in February and March 2015. The Vision, Mission and Core Values were reviewed. These meetings set the stage for step three of the planning process which comprised two work sessions of members of the Board and members of Management, during which the organisation's strategic direction was defined. The Management team of the EOC was approached by the Board of Commissioners to provide technical input into the EOC's draft strategic plan.

It should be noted that this strategic plan was formulated using key analytical tools such as SWOT and PEST for an environmental scan. During the period March – April 2015, the management team developed a first draft of the main goals and objectives to be implemented during the stated period. This was subsequently reviewed and approved by the Board of Commissioners.

The fourth step of the planning process involved the formulation of annual departmental work plans taking into account the possible budgetary allocations for the following fiscal year.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS (CONTINUED)

The main steps in the planning process are outlined in the diagram below:



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. To work towards the elimination of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago, in keeping with our statutory mandate as set out in the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03.

- The Equal Opportunity Commission in fulfilling its mandate will focus on building a compelling brand through public awareness of the work of the Commission among local, regional and international stakeholders.
- The Commission, through dialogue with human rights actors in Trinidad and Tobago and abroad, will seek to build strategic relationships which will facilitate a deeper understanding of the impact of regional and international developments on the Commission, and on anti-discrimination law in Trinidad and Tobago.
- The Commission will continue its efforts in pursuing the passage of legislation to amend the Equal Opportunity Act which will enable the Commission to take action against discrimination on the basis of age and gender.
- The Commission will continue its advocacy and outreach activities in order to further its mandate to work towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion equality of opportunity.

2. To become an autonomous institution.

- The Commission aims to transition into an operationally and financially independent organisation in order to be truly effective in the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity, the Commission has to be a stand-alone body, accountable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago through the Parliament.
- In order for this transition to be seamless, the Commission has identified a process for the said transition which would include benchmarking similar public service transitions; the development

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

of an approved accounting unit and the implementation of organisational changes which may become necessary in the wake of a transition.

- It is hoped that once the necessary mechanisms are put in place, the Commission will be able to complete the transition by 2018.

3. To maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission.

- The Commission believes that we are obligated to deliver excellent and consistent service through a **competent and diverse** team of dedicated professionals.
- The Commission through its re-visioning retreat held at the end of January, 2015 has begun the work necessary in order to create an organisational culture that supports and reflects the **core values** of the Commission.
- The Commission will initiate change management activities to bolster confidence in leadership team and will work towards the refining of policies and procedures that reflect best practice.
- The Commission will also focus on the training and development of its human resources to ensure that we nurture a cadre of professionals who are able to deliver exceptional service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.
- The Commission continues to strive towards developing the organisation into a **technology-driven** entity. Through the new and evolving technologies, the Commission will be able to intensify its outreach and advocacy and to liaise with regional and international organisations through video-conferencing and other enhanced technologies.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

- The Commission will continue to develop and strengthen its **research and monitoring** roles and function through the use of public perception polling, some of which may be done through the use of the new technologies being considered.
- The Commission reiterates its commitment to its critical function of handling public complaints. The Commission will drive the creation of customer-centric **complaints handling** procedure which will ensure excellent and consistent levels of service to all persons who have come seeking redress.

ACTION PLAN — OCTOBER 2015 TO SEPTEMBER 2018

Quarterly Status		Oct 2015-Sept 2016				Oct 2016-Sept 2017				Oct 2017-Sept 2018				Done
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
1.	Goal 1 - To work towards the elimination of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago, in keeping with our statutory mandate as set out in the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03.													
1.1	Map and research other human rights actors in Trinidad and Tobago.													
	- Gather and analyse data using appropriate methods.	√												
	- Consider whether EOC can take leadership role among the organisations.	√												
1.2	Build compelling EOC brand and public awareness of its work among local, regional and international stakeholders.													
	- Identify key stakeholders and build strategic relationships.	√												
	- Engage in discussion with stakeholders to understand local, regional and international issues and developments.				√									
1.3	Host an international conference.													
	- Create a theme, look for sponsors, set up planning committee, find keynote speakers							√						
1.4	Broaden the scope of the Commission's jurisdiction.													
	- Pursue passage of amendments to Equal Opportunity Act to include age, gender, illness etc as status grounds, and to strengthen the Commission's powers.	√												
1.5	Broaden and intensify the Commission's advocacy and outreach activities, further its mandates to work towards the elimination of discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.													
	- Conduct research on what is the public perception on discrimination issues (e.g. race and ethnicity, gender, age); then what role the EOC can play in this discourse.				√									
	- Develop a plan of activities for period October 2015 to September 2016 (e.g. public education, seminars).	√												
	- Implement a schedule of activities.				√									
	- To train and develop resources within the Legal department to become Public Advocates.		√											
1.6	Bring focus to gender issues.													
	- Amendments to Domestic Violence Act.													
	- Develop a plan and implement a schedule of activities.													

ACTION PLAN (CONTINUED)

Quarterly Status		Oct 2015-Sept 2016				Oct 2016-Sept 2017				Oct 2017-Sept 2018				Done
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2.	To become an autonomous institution.													
2.1	<i>Become an operationally independent Commission.</i>													
	- Research how local Public Sector organizations have transitioned to autonomous model, and develop an appropriate methodology.			√										
	- Develop an approved accounting unit.							√						
	- Consider and implement any necessary organisational changes and any necessary recommendations for amendments to EOA.										√			
3.	To maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission.													
3.1	<i>Create an organisational culture that reflects the core values.</i>													
	- Initiate change management activities to rebuild confidence in leadership team.		√				√				√			
	- Create an Internal Communications program to support organisational transformation.	√												
3.2	<i>Deliver excellent and consistent service through a competent and diverse team of dedicated professionals.</i>													
	- Develop or revise, and implement Human Resource (HR) policies and procedures in line with best HR practice.		√				√				√			
	- Publish (internally) a staff policy manual.			√										
	- Develop and implement a comprehensive training and development plan for EOC staff for 2015-16.	√												
	- Develop and implement a comprehensive training and development plan for EOC staff for 2016-17.					√								
	- Develop and implement a comprehensive training and development plan for EOC staff for 2017-18.									√				
	- Develop and implement Performance Management and Appraisal System (PMAS)	√												
	- Develop and implement a Human Resource Information System (HRIS) - Decide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ whether an enterprise wide solution or an independent system, and ◦ what sort of system given staff size and requirements. 							√						

ACTION PLAN (CONTINUED)

Quarterly Status		Oct 2015-Sept 2016				Oct 2016-Sept 2017				Oct 2017-Sept 2018				Done
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
3.3	Effectively source and manage financial resources, in keeping with financial regulations.													
	- Coordinate submissions of draft estimates annually and submit to the Ministry.		√				√				√			
	- Secure releases in a timely manner to facilitate expenditure needs and issue payments when required.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	- Establish and maintain a Vote Book at the EOC.						√							
	- Provide up-to-date and accurate financial information at the EOC.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	- Effectively provide administrative services.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
3.4	Properly manage the facilities while ensuring adherence to health and safety regulations.													
	- Develop and implement a health and safety policy, in keeping with the OSH Act.			√										
	- Effectively manage the outsourced services, such as janitorial and security, ensuring that service agreements are complied with and revise these agreements as necessary.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	- Communicate maintenance needs to other stakeholders, such as the landlord or Property and Real Estate Division and coordinate related services.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
3.5	Convert the EOC into a technology-driven entity.													
	- Re-engineer the ICT architecture using cloud-based solution.	√												
	- Procure and implement collaborative portal for seamless data integration (intranet).	√												
	- Constantly review and update website.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	- Explore communications technology to enhance interaction with public e.g. WebEx, Skype.	√												
3.6	Redefine the role and key results areas for Communications functions.													
	- Develop communications plan targeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Internal and External stakeholders 	√												

ACTION PLAN (CONTINUED)

Quarterly Status	Oct 2015-Sept 2016				Oct 2016-Sept 2017				Oct 2017-Sept 2018				Done
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
3.7 Strengthen research and monitoring roles and function.													
- Develop agenda and targets for research for the periods - ◦ Fiscal year Oct 2015 to Sept 2016	√												
◦ Fiscal Year Oct 2016 to Sept 2017					√								
◦ Fiscal Year Oct 2017 to Sept 2018									√				
- To publish 3 quarterly research papers/articles on the EOC's website	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
3.8 To create a customer-centric complaints handling procedure.													
- Examine and reform complaints process and case management system (manual) in line with best practice.		√											
- Procure and implement a complaints data management system.											√		

	Green: On target to achieve by year end based on actual quarterly results and benchmarks.
	Yellow: Though not on target, not of concern.
	Red: Not on target and of concern.

MONITORING MECHANISM

The Equal Opportunity Commission Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018 will be monitored periodically at various stages to ensure that the goals which have been outlined are achieved within the specified timeframes. The Management Staff will keep their departmental work plans updated with the progress of the projects under their supervision and will be conducting internal performance reviews of their staff performance. Quarterly reviews of the work plans will be done by Management, alongside bi-annual reporting to the Board of Commissioners. There would also be an annual tactical review of the Strategic Plan 2015-2018.



Equal Opportunity Commission

Promoting Equality

The Equal Opportunity Commission

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