



Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

2018 - 2020

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FOREWORD

The Equal Opportunity Commission (the Commission) developed and implemented its first three-year Strategic Plan (SP) in the year 2015. This Plan established three (3) main Strategic Goals and an Action Plan to meet those goals. Accordingly, in 2017 a National Survey on Public Perception of Equality and Discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago was undertaken. The findings and recommendations of this survey influenced a reassessment of the SP, including an evaluation of the Commission's progress during the period 2015-2017 and revisions to ensure that the work of the Commission remains evidence based.

The Commission has had its fair share of challenges but also significant success in integrating its efforts on priority issues, through increased collaboration, coordination and sharing of information. Progress has been made in a coordinated fashion on various priorities, such as extending our public outreach, preventing and remedying systemic discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment in the workplace, and advancing amendments to existing legislation such as the Equal Opportunity Act and the Domestic Violence Act. There has also been increased collaboration with stakeholders in our programs to ensure consistent positions and coordinated outreach.

The Commission has now revised its Strategic Plan to 2018-2020 to continue its commitment to focus efforts on those activities likely to have deliberate impact in advancing equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination. The main strategic goals remain valid, with some modifications and additions to sharpen its focus and update emerging issues of concern. We have adopted a targeted approach on a common set of priorities, as identified in the Plan, which will reduce the incidence of discriminatory practices.

Our Strategic Plan 2018-2020 is a navigational chart designed to systematically guide the Commission towards attaining its goals of eliminating discrimination and strengthening the human rights agenda in Trinidad and Tobago.

On my own behalf, I wish to thank my fellow Commissioners and the staff of the Commission who worked diligently to meet the implementation objectives of the first SP, and who participated in the process of developing our Strategic Plan 2018-2020.



Lynette Seebaran-Suite
Chairman

INTRODUCTION

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;
- (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 but became operational in 2010. In order to realise its full mandate, the Commission developed its first three-year Strategic Plan 2015-2018. This Plan provided a proactive framework of reference to operationalise its mandate and guide the Commission in achieving its envisaged goals.

The Commission, has so far successfully met most of the targets as outlined under the three main Strategic Goals, however, having now reached more than half way in its implementation, the scope of our Strategic Plan 2015-2018 needed to be re-evaluated to ensure that it remained relevant to the evolving needs of our institution, our stakeholders and the citizenry whom we serve.

Consequently, we have conducted a series of internal discussions and exercises to reassess the purpose of our Commission, analyse the internal and external environments in which we operate and determine our current challenges and opportunities. We also commissioned a National Survey on Public Perception of Equality and Discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago (2017). The survey was conducted at an appropriate time since its findings can be used to inform our future programmatic agenda and identify the priorities that we need to focus on.

The result of these multiple efforts is our Strategic Plan 2018-2020. It builds upon the work we have undertaken over the past two years and upon the achievements we have realized in implementing the first Plan. Essentially, while the Strategic Goals have generally remained the same, the Strategic Plan 2018-2020 also reflects a consensus on the re-alignment of the major areas where we believe the Commission must focus its attention and build on the significant progress already made in meeting the goals for improved service and innovation. Through the revision of its Strategic Plan, the Commission has harmonized the key objectives and the related broad strategies that we expect to pursue over the period 2018-2020, outlining a revised strategic direction on how we intend to achieve these objectives and how we will measure progress of our performance.

Our Strategic Plan 2018-2020 describes what we believe are the key operational, legislative, technological and social trends that will influence the Commission's direction over the next three years. It also highlights the improvements that will be required in our organisation and operations to respond to these trends. Accordingly, while many of the activities from our first Plan will continue, special emphasis will be given to:

- the youth population to help them understand their rights, and to inform the Commission's work on priority areas where youth are most vulnerable to discrimination
- developing social media strategies to expand our reach into communities
- establishing collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders to promote awareness on discrimination and human rights

- exploring opportunities to collaborate with other research agencies to strengthen data sharing capabilities and evidence based research
- exploring opportunities for more targeted information to promote awareness about discrimination and human rights and available complaints mechanisms.
- strengthening our human resource capabilities by investing in professional development for staff, and develop a strategic asset and IT plan to inform future investment in technology

Finally, the Board of Commissioners and staff will consult widely and listen to the views of our partners and critics, both in terms of understanding how we should best direct our efforts and in relation to our methods and approach to fulfilling our mandate. The implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2020 will result in a progressive national institution as we continue to engage in a productive discourse about equality and human rights in Trinidad and Tobago and our role in the development of a society based on dignity, respect and fair opportunity.

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 – we adhere at all times to due process and are impartial in our procedures.

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

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

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY – we promote respect for people's differences.

TIMELINESS – we 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 – we have a strong feeling of support and allegiance to the EOC and its mission.

INTEGRITY – we operate with honesty, uprightness and honour.

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

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

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

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

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

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Equal Opportunity Commission's Strategic Plan 2018-2020 is the outcome of a number of processes that began in October 2017, which facilitated consensus and ownership in its design and implementation process. A review of the achievements of the Commission was undertaken as the first step. This was followed by the adoption of the recommendations that were identified in the National Survey, resulting in a reassessment of the Commission's work and an evaluation of its progress for the period of the first Strategic Plan (2015-2017). This allowed the Commission to formulate where we were at, what prevented certain action items from being achieved and how the Commission could better deliver its services while moving forward with its mandate.

The Board of Commissioners and management of the EOC continued the re visioning process by updating the SWOT and PEST analytical instruments to conduct an environmental scan due to the rapid changes taking place both in the internal and external environments that will have an impact on the working of the organisation. Proposed initiatives were then developed which resulted in the Strategic Action Plan 2018-2020. The previous Strategic Goals remained the same with a variation in Goal Two (2). The Strategic Plan 2018-2020 was subsequently reviewed and approved by the Board of Commissioners. The process was completed by February 2018 and involved the formulation of annual Unit work plans for the period 2018-2020.

The main steps in the re visioning 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 Chap 22:03.

- The Equal Opportunity Commission in fulfilling its mandate will continue to 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, has been seeking to build strategic relationships to 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 and other relevant laws which will enable the Commission to take action against discrimination on the basis of age, gender and other pertinent areas.

- 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 the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) for Trinidad and Tobago.

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

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 re-visioning exercises, strategic planning, team building, training and re-training activities has been taking steps to create an *organisational culture* that supports and reflects the *core values* of the Commission.
- The Commission will continue to engage in change management activities to maintain confidence in the leadership team and work towards the refining of policies and procedures that reflect best practice.
- The Commission will continue to 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 enhanced technologies.

- The Commission will continue to develop and strengthen its ***research and monitoring*** roles and function through the use of public perception polling and feedback mechanisms, 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 periodically review the ***complaints handling and conciliation procedures*** to ensure customer-centric and consistent levels of service to all persons who have come seeking redress.

	Drivers - Units to take Ownership	2018				2019				2020				Status	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
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.														
	Analyse results of survey on public perception on discrimination issues (e.g. race and ethnicity, gender, age) and apply findings to activities	Research, BOC	*												
	Develop and implement a plan of activities	Corp Comm, Legal	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
	Continue developing resources within the Legal and Communications units to become Public Advocates.	Legal, Corp Comm													
	Increase presence on Social Media (Source/recruit digital content management and graphic art services)	HR, Corp Comm, IT, Research													
1.6	Bring focus to gender issues.														
	Pursue amendments to Domestic Violence Act with the Attorney General.	Chairman, Team		*		*	*		*	*	*		*	*	
	Develop an annual plan and implement a schedule of activities.	Chairman, Team	*			*	*		*	*			*	*	

		Drivers - Units to take Ownership	2018				2019				2020				Status
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Goal 2: To become the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) for Trinidad and Tobago															
2.1	Become an autonomous/operationally independent Commission similar to the Integrity Commission or Ombudsman.														
	Continue to pursue autonomy as part of the recommendations for amendments to the EOA.	Committee	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
	Create a Sub-Accounting Unit (prior to gaining autonomy) to allow for better control over allocations and expenditure and vote book management (this would involve additional positions to provide for the necessary checks and balances such as a Clerk I and an Accountant I and approval will need to be sought from PMCD and Cabinet)	Administration, CEO, HR, Chairman, Vice Chairman				*	*								
	Pursue petty cash facility	Administration, CEO	*												
	Seek approval from PMCD and Cabinet for (1) restructuring (to include content management, graphics etc) and (2) renewal of contract positions	Committee				*	*				*	*			

MONITORING MECHANISM

The Equal Opportunity Commission's Strategic Plan 2018-2020 will be monitored through quarterly reviews of each Unit's work plans to ensure that targets and goals are met within specified timeframes. The monitoring mechanism will also include annual reporting to the Board of Commissioners and an evaluation will be done each year during the period.