College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario

Prepared for: CRPO Council and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group (DEIWG)
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Prepared by: Decibel DEI Consulting on behalf of the CRPO's DEIWG

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group Report to Council: DEIWG Recommendations on Transition to a Standing DEI Committee

PURPOSE

This report presents the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group's (DEIWG) recommendations on the proposed transition from the current Working Group model to a standing DEI Committee embedded within CRPO's internal governance structure. It draws on input gathered across facilitated sessions on January 20, May 19, and July 21, 2026, including real-time Mentimeter responses, breakout group discussions, and verbal report-backs.

The DEIWG developed these recommendations through a deliberate, member-led process, and offers them to Council as substantive input into a decision that remains Council's to make. The shape, terms of reference, and operational design of the incoming structure will be informed by further consultation involving Council, staff, and the DEIWG.

COUNCIL CONTEXT

This recommendations report is being provided to Council in the context of CRPO's active governance modernization. Notably, the Draft Strategic Plan 2027–2030 and the Draft Strategic Implementation and Governance Roadmap identify equity, accessibility and cultural safety as Foundational Commitments integrated throughout modernization and name the establishment of a standing DEI Committee as a near-term priority. The DEIWG's recommendations are offered in that spirit: as substantive input into a decision that both advances Council's strategic direction and reflects the Working Group's accumulated expertise.

DEIWG BACKGROUND

The following section provides a historical overview of the DEIWG's tenure, leading to today.

As a first step, and prior to the DEIWG's establishment, CRPO convened a Proto Group in 2022 to develop the membership and recruitment approach for what would become the Working Group. The Proto Group was composed of diverse equity-denied practitioners and members of the public, deliberately kept separate from Council to ensure objectivity in designing the new body. Its recommendations shaped the DEIWG's foundational terms, and the DEIWG was established shortly thereafter, with a mandate to provide equity-centred advice to CRPO Council and Committees.

Over three terms, DEIWG members provided policy advice that has had lasting effect. Their work supported enhancements to recruitment processes, including the development of an objective appointment matrix, and informed policy review and development that attends to the impact of CRPO's work on equity-denied registrants and members of the public. This includes two equity-based professional practice standards currently in development that will support the delivery of ethical, competent psychotherapy care to vulnerable Ontarians. Members also contributed to increased diversity across CRPO's committees, the advancement of self-identification data collection and measurement, and advisory input that directly informed the development and adoption of CRPO's DEI Framework in May 2025.

This work was made possible by CRPO's sustained investment in DEI governance, including dedicated resources, staff support, and the willingness of Council and leadership to invest in an innovative model of DEI governance. The DEIWG's contributions built on that foundation.

The question of what comes next has been live since at least January 2026, when DEIWG members were provided with a transition proposal and were invited to provide early input. This proposal was a reflection of the DEI Framework's Leadership Root: it describes an advisory structure that could, over time, evolve into a standing collaborative body tasked with providing strategic DEI guidance across all levels of CRPO governance. The proposed transition is the direct expression of that vision.

Council reviewed preliminary input from the DEIWG at its June 10, 2026, meeting, confirmed support for continuing discussions, and identified the October 1, 2026, Council meeting as the point at which it would consider next steps as part of the consideration of broad strategic direction for the College's work over the next three years.

DEIWG ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The DEIWG has engaged with the transition question across three sessions in 2026, each structured to gather genuine member input.

January 20, 2026, DEIWG Meeting. The DEIWG began an initial discussion on how the Working Group will know when its work is complete, and what indicators would signal that DEI goals are sufficiently embedded in the organization. This question, raised by members, set the frame for subsequent sessions.

May 19, 2026, DEIWG Meeting. A formal presentation on the proposal was introduced, including indicators of readiness, a proposed transition model, and discussion topics. Members participated in a Mentimeter-facilitated session and breakout discussions organized around three questions: what has been learned through the DEIWG model that should inform the new structure; what work remains unfinished and how should it be carried through; and what could go wrong and how do we guard against it. At the close of the session, members submitted direct messages for Council, reproduced below. Initial reactions across the group ranged from cautiously optimistic to uncertain, with some support and some concern. The session identified four areas requiring further discussion: pace, structure and membership, tokenism, and accountability.

What DEIWG Members Want Council to Know

At the close of the May 19 session, members were asked to submit one message for Council. Their responses are reproduced here without paraphrase, as they were offered directly for Council's consideration:

- "DEI work is not done."
- "We have a VAST amount of DEI knowledge in this group that has influenced the direction of CRPO these past few years."
- "Their reaction to our proposal shows their understanding and commitment to EDI as a concept to be continued in the CRPO."
- "DEI work is ongoing."
- "DEI progress can easily be lost if we do not maintain our commitment to it."
- "The pace is critical for DEI's survival. Accountability, responsibility and implementation processes need to be timely."
- "Build on what's already working."
- "Don't stop taking the medicine because you feel better."

These messages were gathered at the beginning of the deliberative process. They reflect the DEIWG's core commitments, and those commitments held through to the closing vote in July. The recommendations in the next section are their more structured expression.

June 10, 2026, Council Strategic Planning Meeting. Council members, at the June 10 session, offered parallel input when asked what was most important to them as they considered the proposal. Their responses emphasized true integration, real impact tied to public protection and fairness, the need for members of the new structure to be competent regulators, the importance of ongoing communication, and concrete accountability. Several raised questions about how equity-denied expertise would be embedded, how power dynamics within committees would be managed, and how intersectionality and demographic diversity would be measured over time. These concerns and the DEIWG's recommendations below are well-aligned.

July 21, 2026, DEIWG Meeting. The session was structured specifically to work through each of the four concerns members had identified in May. For each concern, the facilitator

presented current thinking, gathered real-time Mentimeter input, and opened the floor. At the close of the session, members indicated their position on moving forward. A majority were in full support. The remaining members supported the direction while noting they still have concerns. No member indicated they were not ready to proceed, and no member was opposed. The concerns raised by members who indicated conditional support are reflected throughout the recommendations below.

September 15, 2026, DEIWG Meeting. The final member review session was structured to gather input on the draft report before its submission to Council. Members participated in a Mentimeter-facilitated session covering four questions: the appropriate pace of transition; the proposed structure and membership design; the report's treatment of tokenism; and accountability mechanisms. Members' responses on pace and structure were aligned with the report's approach. Members' responses to tokenism and accountability produced further input, which has been incorporated into the recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations draw directly from member input across all four sessions. They are offered not as a prescriptive design specification but as the substantive foundations the incoming structure and Council should build from.

Like the DEI Framework, these recommendations function as a root system. They are interconnected and mutually reinforcing: selection criteria support meaningful membership; a clear mandate gives members real work to do; adequate resourcing allows that work to happen; and accountability ensures findings reach Council and inform decisions. These recommendations are designed to hold together, because the DEIWG's experience demonstrated that they must.

1. Pace and Transition Process

Members were clear that their concern about pace was about ensuring accountability and design quality keep up with structural change, not about slowing the process. The DEIWG recommends:

- A clear transition plan with defined milestones is confirmed and communicated to the DEIWG, including the membership selection process and the date on which the new structure becomes operational.
- Council's feedback and any updates on next steps are reported back to DEIWG members at the November 2026 meeting.

2. Structure and Membership

Member input on structure and membership was the most substantive area of response across both facilitated sessions.

- **Designation.** The body should be formally designated as a standing committee, not a working group. Members were explicit on this point: being called a working group signals temporariness, and that is not the intent. Permanence of designation

matters especially at a moment when many organisations are stepping back from DEI commitments.

- **Cross-committee connection.** CRPO has prior experience with bodies that draw membership from across existing committees to connect expertise that would otherwise remain siloed. The standing DEI Committee offers a similar opportunity: members embedded in their respective committees and connected to each other, creating a network of DEI capacity across the governance structure.
- **Membership criteria.** Membership should reflect the breadth of equity-denied identities currently represented within the DEIWG, with selection assessing experience, knowledge, skills, and lived experience across multiple intersecting identities, not demographic representation alone. The selection process must be rigorous, transparent, and clearly documented. Lived experience is a non-negotiable criterion, to be assessed substantively and distinctly from demographic representation; both expertise and lived experience are required and are not interchangeable.
- **Composition review.** Membership should be reviewed annually, with a clear mechanism for refreshing composition when it no longer reflects appropriate diversity.
- **Influence.** The structure should work bidirectionally: not only receiving and responding to work referred from committees, but also proactively raising DEI considerations within committee deliberations. This is what distinguishes a genuinely embedded structure from an advisory body operating at a distance from committee work.
- **Meeting frequency.** The structure should meet often enough to sustain meaningful DEI focus, with provisions for additional meetings when specific issues require it.
- **Adaptability.** The structure should be designed with sufficient flexibility to respond to emerging issues and evolve as CRPO's organisational context changes. Rigidity in the terms of reference or operational design risks constraining the structure's effectiveness over time.
- **Continuity of expertise.** Terms of reference should address whether current DEIWG members who are also committee members may be eligible for appointment to the incoming structure, to preserve institutional knowledge built across three terms of the Working Group. The DEIWG recommends that terms of reference address each of the above.

3. Guarding Against Tokenism

Members indicated that tokenism is a significant concern and suggested that this report describe its dynamics in order to add further context the below recommendations.

Tokenism is a structural risk that can cause real harm, and the incoming internal body should be designed to prevent it. It occurs when individuals from equity-denied communities are included in structures or processes in a manner that creates the

appearance of diversity without substantive representation or influence. In governance contexts, tokenism can manifest through selection processes that prioritise demographic visibility over expertise, through structures that position individuals as sole representatives of their communities, and through norms that place disproportionate labour on members with equity-denied identities. Designing against tokenism requires intentionality in how the structure is composed, how work is distributed, and how accountability for DEI is shared.

Thus, members of the internal structure should be appointed as contributors of DEI expertise, not only as representatives of particular communities. One member put it plainly: being called to speak on issues as an individual is challenging, and the structure should be designed so that no one has to navigate that alone.

The DEIWG recommends that terms of reference and operational design address the following:

- No individual should be positioned as the sole representative of any equity-denied community. Selection should assess substantive DEI knowledge and lived experience across multiple intersecting identities, not demographic representation alone.
- The selection process itself is a site of tokenism risk. Selection processes and appointment decisions should be documented, transparent, and subject to review to ensure they are not reproducing the representational dynamics the structure is designed to prevent.
- Diversity of perspective within identity groups is worth recognising explicitly. The structure would benefit from an approach that does not assume members sharing an identity share a perspective.
- Shared responsibility for DEI across all committee members, not only those formally designated to the structure, would help ensure the work does not rest on too few shoulders. Ongoing DEI learning for all committee members supports this practice of shared responsibility.
- The structure should be empowered to raise DEI considerations proactively in committee work, not only to respond when items are referred to it.
- Formal peer support mechanisms, including a co-chair model adopted by the DEIWG or equivalent anchor role, would help ensure members are not navigating difficult conversations without backup.
- Where individual members of the structure sit on other committees, a mechanism for collective reporting back to Council would help ensure DEI positions are carried forward as a shared view rather than resting on one or two people to represent the group.

4. Accountability

Research presented to Council in June 2026 confirmed that the structure of a governing body shapes whether DEI outcomes persist or recede. CRPO already has that

infrastructure, which includes the College Performance Measurement Framework (CPMF) and Council Key Performance Indicators. DEIWG Members recommended building on what exists rather than creating parallel processes. Their input was practical: they named specific mechanisms, not only principles. The recommendations below are designed to make accountability real and visible, building on the infrastructure Council has already endorsed.

The DEIWG recommends:

- Regular public reporting on whether CRPO is meeting its DEI commitments, building on existing CPMF reporting. Members suggested accessible formats such as web updates or short video communications that make accountability visible to registrants and the public, not only within governance.
- A clear process for raising DEI concerns within committee work, so that members who flag an issue are not also solely responsible for resolving it.
- Transparency about the manner in which concerns are addressed. When a DEI concern is raised, those who raised it should be able to know how it is being handled and by whom, so that accountability processes are visible and issues are not quietly set aside.
- Ongoing internal reflection within the structure on whether its own practices are equitable, including whether it risks reproducing the inequities it is designed to address.
- Feedback mechanisms that reach beyond the structure's own members to gather input from the communities CRPO is mandated to serve.
- A design presumption of ongoing change: equity issues arise continuously, and the structure should be built to be proactive rather than reactive, with processes that can flex as new concerns emerge rather than being limited to a fixed mandate.
- Explicit monitoring for tokenism-related harms within the structure itself, including whether members from equity-denied communities are bearing disproportionate interpretive or advocacy labour, whether composition reflects appropriate diversity over time, and whether the selection process is being applied equitably.
- The incoming structure should be encouraged to develop an accountability framework as one of its first substantive tasks, drawing on these principles and on the existing CPMF infrastructure.

It is also worth noting that the four recommendation areas above are not independent. Like roots interacting, these recommendations support and sustain each other: a paced transition plan produces a strong and intentional structure; a deliberately designed structure with clear membership criteria is better positioned to guard against tokenism; and real, visible accountability sustains all three over time. Where these elements are addressed together, the structure stands stronger. Where any one is left unattended, the others bear greater risk.

PROPOSED WORKING PLAN

The following table is offered as a suggested sequence of next steps for Council's consideration.

Recommended action	Suggested timing
DEIWG met to review the draft report and gather final member feedback. Input from this session has been incorporated into the recommendations as presented in this report.	September 15, 2026
Council considers direction to proceed with transition planning and communicates this to the DEIWG	October 1, 2026
DEIWG to meet and discuss outcomes of Council direction and advice, consider membership selection, and supporting planning,	November 17, 2026
Following Council feedback, executive, staff and consultant to revise draft report based on DEIWG and Council feedback. Implementation of membership and planning processes begins.	November 2026 - January 2027
Operational launch: Internal structure meets with DEIWG to share perspectives and opportunities for moving forward. DEIWG formally concludes.	January - February 2027
The development of the Terms of Reference of the internal structure begins in advance of new fiscal year.	March 31, 2027