
Subject: People Plan Update

Report to: Corporate Services Committee

Report date: Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Recommendations

1. That Report HR 2-2024 People Plan Update **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- In 2021, in support of the implementation of the 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan, the Region embarked on a journey to update and refresh our People Plan.
- Our 2023-2026 People Plan, attached as Appendix 1, was launched in 2023 and is anchored by four themes – Top Talent, Strong Leaders, Flexible Workplaces, and Healthy & Well Employees & Workplaces.
- The four themes were identified through employee and leadership input, validated against prior feedback from various employee surveys, and balanced against best practice research.
- Recognizing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion's significance across all four themes, DE&I has been integrated throughout the People Plan.
- Our employees are critical to our organization – they are the foundation of the services and programs that we provide to our community.
- Our People Plan serves as a framework for the supports, resources, programs and experiences our employees need to be and do their best for the Region's residents, and to enable Council's Strategic Priorities and the Corporate Business Plan.

Financial Considerations

Costs for deliverables that occurred in 2023 were accommodated in the Council approved budget, and the planned deliverables for 2024 have been accommodated within the Council approved 2024 Budget. The 2024 approved budget amount totalled \$232,500 for various program deliverables.

Costs to implement deliverables in 2025 will be included in the 2025 budget submission to Regional Council for their approval.

Analysis

In 2021, the Region embarked on a journey to update our People Plan. Since we launched our last Plan in 2016, there has been significant change in our organization from our work practices and experiences to the structure of our organization and teams, expansion of services and the new faces we continue to welcome.

Through our 2023-2026 People Plan, our aim is to connect and support our employees' health and well-being, providing the experiences and resources needed to grow careers, and offer the flexibility required for our employees to be their best, at home and work. This plan incorporates the principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, woven through the four themes, to ensure our workplace is welcoming and inclusive for everyone; working to eliminate barriers and discrimination. Our employees are critical to our organization – they are the foundation of the services and programs that we provide to our community. Our People Plan serves as a framework for the supports, resources, programs and experiences our employees need to be and do their best for the residents of Niagara.

Our approach to developing our People Plan was comprehensive and founded in understanding what's important to our employees, our leaders and our organization. The People Plan was developed over four phases – needs gathering, draft of a framework, employee engagement, and roll-out initiation.

Our employees and leaders are at the centre of our People Plan, as such they are at the heart of how we developed our Plan. We invited our employees and leaders to share insights on their thoughts and experiences working at the Region - and they embraced the opportunity.

We were truly fortunate to receive insightful and candid feedback through over 900 connections with our team members:

- 610 Survey responses
- 150 Virtual whiteboard participants
- 47 People concept campaign submissions
- 15 One to one interviews with senior leaders
- 12 Leader participants of non-headquarter focus groups
- 87 Long-term care whiteboard participants

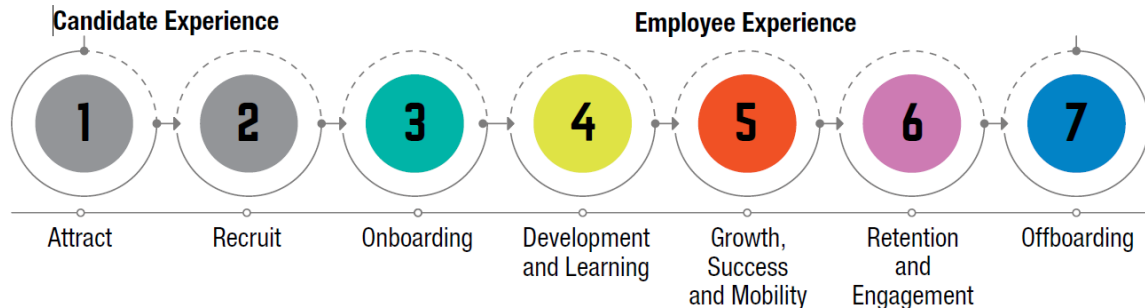
The information received from our team has informed and shaped our People Plan.

In addition to engaging our employees to gain an understanding of current and future requirements relative to our workforce, qualitative and quantitative data was gathered and analyzed from a number of sources in an effort to create a balanced and informed understanding of our employees' work experience, as well as key organizational drivers and requirements. Other sources were reviewed and analyzed for relevant data and insights, which included the following:

- 2019 Niagara Region Engagement Survey
- 2020 Niagara Region COVID-19 Employee Experience Survey
- One-on-one interviews with senior leadership to understand employee opportunities and challenges now and into the future, as it relates to organizational, departmental and divisional requirements
- Focus groups with leaders of employees who work at locations outside of Region Headquarters to understand their experiences
- Voluntary, virtual focus groups with employees throughout the organization to understand their experiences at the Region and what's important to them and their career
- Virtual focus group with members of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team to provide input into the People Plan
- In-person focus groups at the Region's long-term care homes
- Niagara Region employee data and external best practice reviews
- Niagara Region Strategic Plan 2019-2022
- Human Resources Best Practices Guidebook: How to Increase Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment, Hiring, and Promotion
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

The information gathered across our channels identified key priorities (programs, services, supports and areas of focus) for our employees and leaders, and was distilled and sorted into an employee lifecycle as follows:

Our employee lifecycle model:



Our 2023 - 2026 People Plan is anchored in four themes that reflect the requirements of our employees, leaders and organization:

1. Top talent

Niagara Region attracts, selects and grows strong talented employees who align with our values and enable our community-driven mission.

2. Strong leaders

Niagara Region is guided by inclusive leaders that are driven to grow and support their employees, recognize achievements and create employee connections to work priorities and strategic drivers.

3. Flexible workplaces

Niagara Region is an employee-centric organization where our policies, procedures and practices are supportive of engaging in the best possible solution for our employees, service delivery and our community.

4. Healthy and well employees and workplaces

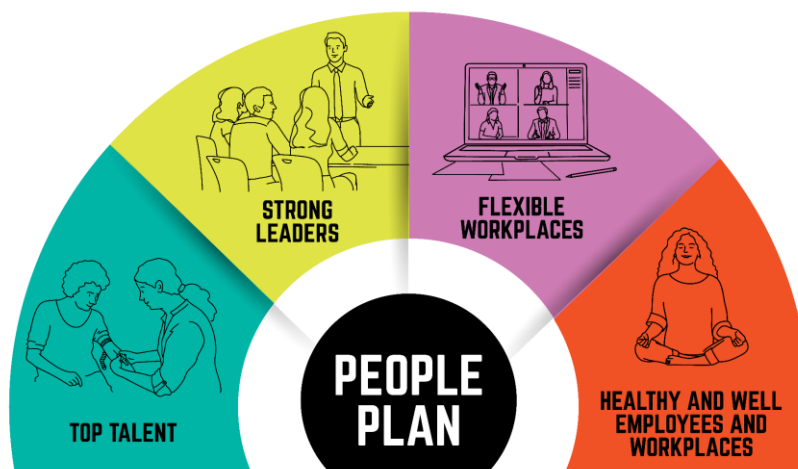
Niagara Region creates and supports psychologically healthy and safe workplaces and overall positive health and well-being for employees.

The Plan model also identifies key drivers; making this the employee-centric plan it aspires to be. Recognizing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion's significance across all four themes, it has intentionally been integrated throughout the plan rather than separating it as a distinct theme. Quite simply, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion needs to be a part of everything we say and do at the Region and to this end, is throughout the plan.

Fundamental to the plan is the interdependencies of the four themes. No one theme can be successful without the others. We require flexibility in our policies, practices and approach to enable change in the four themes. Health and wellness is dependant in part on workplace environments and flexibility and is also very connected to the strength of our leadership team. Our employees must feel supported and have strong leaders to identify their key strengths and support their professional and/or career growth. When engaging in feedback and input with our employees, regardless of the topic, we would hear "...and our leader..." connecting their perceived role of their leader or leadership team in enabling the stated requirement.

Another interdependency required for the success of the People Plan is the support, understanding, engagement and ownership of the People Plan by our employees and leaders. The People Plan is about creating an employee-centric workplace that everyone can thrive in. Ultimately, the People Plan is how we choose to engage as individuals in our own development; how we choose to support our peers; how our leaders choose to lead and model inclusive behaviour; as an organization, we intend to support programs and initiatives within it. It is also about the development and interpretation of policies and procedures.

By continuing to support and grow in each of the four theme areas, the Region will foster environments where everyone feels included and can be their best.



TOP TALENT

Where we're going

Niagara Region attracts, selects and grows strong talented employees who align with our values and enable our community-driven mission.

Top Talent grew from the belief of our employees and leaders that skilled employees, who are well suited to their roles, and have meaningful opportunities to grow, is the formula for the achievement of top talent.

Our focus for Top Talent

- Attract the best possible talent to our organization through inclusive and meaningful work, strong leaders and competitive offerings.
- Hire the right people for the right roles, have effective candidate pipelines, engage in succession planning for hard to fill and critical roles; ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion, in our hiring practices, approach and population.
- Grow our employees while in their new, current roles and/or for their future roles.
- Internal movement to provide permanent and temporary career opportunities for our employees; making employee selection and movement into new roles equitable, effective and efficient; maintaining operational stability.
- Retain top talent reducing employee turnover.

The People Plan in Action: What we've started and where we will be by 2027

- Redesigned our Corporate Learning Calendar (2022) to support our employees and leaders' growth - whether in a new, current or future role(s).
- Highlighted the permanence and importance of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in our workplace by establishing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Award of Excellence (2022) and creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion learning plan (2023).
- Non-Union Compensation Review of compensation strategy, policies, practices, external market competitiveness and labour market conditions (2023).
- Encouraging internal movement and top talent retention through the development of a Leadership Exploration Learning Path for Non-leaders (2024), providing classroom and just-in-time learning opportunities for non-leaders to understand the role of a leader and Critical Role and High Potential Stay Interviews (2024).
- Ensuring inclusive attraction and selection practices, so we hire the right people for the right roles, and have effective candidate pipelines (2026).

Our 2027 Targets

- 90 per cent of job offers are accepted by preferred candidates.
- 80 per cent of employees agree they are able to grow and develop at the Region.
- 68 per cent of people leader roles are filled internally.
- 80 per cent of permanent Region employees choose to stay with the Region.
- 30 per cent of applicants identified as 'interview' in permanent roles candidate pools.

STRONG LEADERS

Where we're going

Niagara Region is guided by inclusive leaders that are driven to grow and support their employees, recognize achievements and create employee connections to work priorities and strategic drivers.

Leaders are at the heart of the employee experience. Employees look to their leaders to provide context for work priorities, provide direction on accountabilities, break-down success barriers and to be a partner in their current and future job/career-related goals. Senior leaders rely on our leadership team to drive our organization forward and to ensure the programs and services we deliver are timely, relevant and high quality. Senior leaders also look to our leadership team to create and maintain work environments where our employees want to stay, grow and do their best work. Our managers and supervisors look to their leaders to provide strategic direction and the resources and tools required to be successful.

Our focus for Strong Leaders

- Develop and grow leadership skills to enable employees for success in their current and future role(s).
- Recognize individual employees and teams in ways that are meaningful to them.
- Cultivate and promote inclusive work environments.
- Link work to plan supporting employees in understanding how the work they do supports our residents, community and our organization's priorities.

The People Plan in Action: What we've started and where we will be by 2027

- Establishing a Leadership Objective (2023) as part of leader's annual performance appraisal.
- Setting Leadership Expectations (2023) to assist leaders with linking their work to this plan, and creating clarity in their role as a people leader at the Region.
- Succession and Critical Role Planning (2024) to retain, develop and grow our top talent, while reducing employee turnover.
- Managing Leadership Assessments (2025) to assist our leaders in understanding the impact of their leadership on direct reports, peers and interested parties.

Our 2027 Targets

- Overall employee rating of 85 per cent or better on strength of leadership team.
- 80 per cent of employees feel recognized by their leadership team.
- 85 per cent of employees agree that their immediate manager creates an inclusive work environment where they feel heard, respected and valued.
- 90 per cent of employees understand how their work makes a difference.

FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE

Where we're going

The Region is an employee-centric organization where our policies, procedures and practices are supportive of engaging in the best possible solution for our employees, service delivery and our community.

The Region has over 3,500 employees working in our many, diverse programs and services. We recognize that our employees have different work arrangements, different skill sets and different accountabilities. Our employees have different work experiences and different life experiences. We are an organization of individuals.

Our focus for a Flexible Workplace

Work-life balance where employees are able to establish and maintain a reasonable balance between the demands of their working and personal lives.

Policy and procedures that are aligned to the principles of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and support flexible workplace practices in all areas of the People Plan.

The People Plan in Action: What we've started and where we will be by 2027

- Work-life Balance Program Review (2023-24) to define what work-life balance means at the Region and to better understand the existing options and opportunities for our employees in different parts of our organization.
- Engagement Survey (2024) to ensure we are continuously seeking and gathering feedback and input from our employees about what's important to them and our organization.

Our 2027 Target

- 75 per cent of employees agree that they have a work-life balance.

HEALTHY AND WELL EMPLOYEES AND WORKPLACES

Where we're going

The Region creates and supports psychologically healthy and safe workplaces and overall positive health and well-being for employees.

The theme of Healthy and Well Employees and Workplaces acknowledges that health and wellness extends beyond safety on the job. While on the job safety is critical and will always be a priority; overall physical and mental health requires equal consideration and prioritization as a key issue for our organization. The theme of Healthy and Well Employees and Workplaces is inclusive of programs and services provided, organizational support, policies and procedures and most importantly, the ownership and commitment of staff and leaders to foster and sustain healthy and well work environments.

Our focus for Health and Well Employees and Workplaces

- Benefits that are inclusive and support overall health and wellness.
- Supportive Leadership that are inclusive and support overall health, wellness and lifestyle, and their role in the overall health and wellness of employees in the workplace.
- Access to Mental Health Resources that are supportive of health and wellness in the workplace – where employees understand the resources available and are comfortable accessing them.

The People Plan in Action: What we've started and where we will be by 2027

- Non-Union Benefit review (2023) to provide our employees with benefits that are inclusive and support their overall health and wellness.
- Establishing a Healthy and Well Employee Working Group (2024) of employees from across the organization to continue to contribute input and feedback on health and wellness at the Region.
- Delivering mandatory Mental Health Training for Leaders (2025) and providing access to Mental Health Resources that are supportive of health and wellness in the workplace – where employees understand the resources available and are comfortable accessing them.

Our 2027 Targets

- 80 per cent of employees agree that their leadership team supports their overall health and wellbeing.
- 80 per cent of employees are aware of the mental health resources available to them.
- 80 per cent of employees are satisfied with the mental health resources available to them.
- 80 per cent of employees agree their benefits package support their overall health and wellness and are satisfied with the mental health resources available to them.

Alternatives Reviewed

An alternative considered was to delay the refresh or update of our People Plan, however this was not consistent the former and now current Council Strategic Priorities.

Further, the Region is in a competitive candidate attraction and employee retention environment. There is a battle for talent and the Region needs to remain competitive to ensure it attracts and retains the most qualified staff to deliver the services our residents rely on.

It is considered a best practice to have a People Plan; an employee centric approach that is supportive of employee health, wellbeing, career and performance development. A People Plan is instrumental in creating cohesion between other corporate programs; creating a clear, attractive corporate brand to aid attraction of top talent and internally sets a standard for leadership and people practices that drive engagement, development and retention. The Plan will drive the employee life cycle experience.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The updated People Plan will support Council's Strategic Priority of Effective Region Objective 1.4: Invest and support a skilled and aligned workforce at Niagara Region.

Other Pertinent Reports

HR 3-2024 Non Union Compensation Review Update

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Appendices

Appendix 1: One Team People Plan 2023-2026