
Subject: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023 Progress Report

Report To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, April 10, 2024

Recommendations

1. That Report PDS 12-2024 **BE RECEIVED** for information; and
2. That this report **BE CIRCULATED** to the Local Area Municipalities for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update on the progress of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2027, based on the commitment in Report CAO 12-2022 when the Plan was approved by Regional Council.
- This plan is essential to reaching the Equitable Region Council Strategic Priority to provide opportunities for a safe and inclusive Niagara to ensure the Region is inclusive, welcoming, and free of discrimination.
- As of December 2023, the Plan has a 25 per cent completion rate. Of the 44 action items, seven are completed, 15 are progressing, and 22 are upcoming.

Financial Considerations

Costs for the deliverables that occurred in 2023 were accommodated in the Council approved budget. The planned activities described in this report are within the Council approved 2024 budget.

Analysis

Background

The Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team developed the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2027 in collaboration with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee, Regional staff, and community members. The plan was approved by Regional Council in September 2022, with the commitment to provide annual progress reports. The plan aims for a Niagara region that is welcoming and inclusive, where diversity and equity is reflected and valued. The mission of the plan is that the people of Niagara advance equity; building welcoming, inclusive communities and workplaces, while eliminating barriers and forms of discrimination. There are six

focus areas identified through staff and community consultation. We are currently working on a public facing dashboard that will include up to date information about the progress of the plan.

Focus Area A: Inclusive Workplace Culture, Leadership, and Accountability

Enabling an organization where leaders are accountable and provide an environment where staff and community members feel heard and respected.

- First year of new category of Corporate Employee Recognition Program and Team (CERT) Awards recognized 20 employees who demonstrated contributions to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion of all people.
- Facilitated first Niagara Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community of Practice meeting with 62 community members participating and 96 indicating interest in the group. Meetings will be held quarterly in 2024.
- Completed the Niagara Seat at the Table project which worked with women and gender diverse potential municipal candidates and elected officials to address systemic barriers to running for and holding office.
- Currently developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Handbook that will help Regional staff integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into their daily work. Chapters under development include Being a People Leader, Inclusive Communication, and Inclusive Workplace Culture.

Focus Area B: Increased Understanding and Humility Through Learning

Providing knowledge, skills, and learning opportunities for staff, Councillors, volunteers, and community members to increase their ability to understand and use Diversity Equity, and Inclusion principles and demonstrate cultural humility.

- In 2023, 1,272 non-People Leaders and 61 People Leaders in Long Term Care completed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fundamentals e-modules and 44 new leaders completed the Inclusive Leaders course through the Leader's Edge program.
- Learning curriculum for staff, Councillors, and volunteers has been developed, with the rollout of the first set of trainings to go to all staff and Councillors in 2024.

Focus Area C: Diverse Workforce Reflective of Niagara's Community

Using evidence informed best practices to recruit, hire, retain, and promote a more diverse workforce.

- Supported Human Resources with the development of the new People Plan, the development of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion related interview questions document and an Employee Equity Statement.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion related questions were added to the new staff survey, with 65 per cent of new staff recognizing their recruitment panel had diverse representation in 2022, and 67 per cent in 2023.
- An employee engagement survey will be administered in 2024 to gather up to date information about staff demographics and satisfaction, including updated feedback on the progress of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Focus Area D: Programs and Services Meet the Needs of Everyone

Providing evidence-informed best practices and resources to incorporate DEI principles into Niagara Region programs and services.

- Action items in this Focus Area have not yet started, as they mainly rely on the completion of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Handbook.
- Collaborating with the Accessibility team in 2024 on community engagement to inform items in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan, such as improving the procedure for providing accommodations for programs and services.

Focus Area E: Addressing Discrimination

Reviewing and revising policies and processes, in partnership with diverse communities, to address and reduce discrimination experienced in Niagara.

- Consultation has begun on how to incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion impacts as part of reports to Council and Corporate Leadership Team, with the completion of this action expected in 2024.
- Collaboration is planned with the Niagara Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community of Practice to support Town Hall dialogues with diverse communities on discrimination issues that will lead to the creation of at least one Community Action Table to address issues raised.

Focus Area F: Inclusive Communication

Providing clear, inclusive, representative communication for staff and community members to showcase significant dates, provide key information, and recognize leaders that advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

- Promoted awareness of significant dates through the development of monthly summaries; posts for 51 spotlight dates that highlight important cultural, religious, and diverse events. In 2022, 33 posts about spotlight dates had a total of 2,341 views, while in 2023, 46 posts about spotlight dates had a total of 5,298 views. In 2022, the monthly summaries had an average of 187 views, while in 2023, the monthly summaries had an average of 234 views.
- Organized four flag ceremonies honouring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit, Pride Month, Orange Shirt Day, and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.
- The 2024 Calendar of Significant Dates and 2024 Calendar of Spotlight Dates can be downloaded from the Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion webpage.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team will continue to work with community partners to support community events and host awareness events to recognize diversity in Niagara.

Alternatives Reviewed

No alternatives were reviewed.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2027 supports Regional Council's Strategic Priorities through providing guidance for the strategic lens of Diversity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenous reconciliation. The Action Plan is one of the actions contributing to the priority of an Equitable Region through providing opportunities for a safe and inclusive Niagara by listening and responding to our community needs and planning for future growth, and ensuring the Region is inclusive, welcoming, and free of discrimination.

Other Pertinent Reports

- [CAO 14-2019](#) - Actions & Resources to Join the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities
- [CAO 12-2022](#) – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2027

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