

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2024 Progress Report

April 9, 2025



Introduction

The Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team, in collaboration with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee, Regional staff, and community members, developed the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2027. Its vision is a welcoming and inclusive Niagara region where diversity and equity are valued and reflected. The mission is to advance equity, foster welcoming and inclusive communities and workplaces, and eliminate barriers and discrimination. The plan identifies six focus areas based on staff and community consultations.

To ensure Council and the community are updated on implementation of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan, staff have committed to provide annual update reports.

Progress updates can be tracked on a public dashboard launched in 2024, accessible through the [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023 - 2027 Dashboard](https://performance.envisio.com/dashboard/niagararegion101) (<https://performance.envisio.com/dashboard/niagararegion101>).

As of December 2024, the Plan has a 38 per cent completion rate. Of the 44 action items, 12 are completed, 11 are progressing, and 21 are upcoming. Five action items were completed in 2024. This report includes a selection of the action items which were completed or made progress in 2024.





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.

Goal 1.1: Increase per cent of Niagara Region staff who report that they feel heard, respected, and valued by their managers by five per cent.

Create a program that recognizes staff who advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Status: Completed

Thirty-one employees were recognized through the Corporate Employee Recognition Program and Team (CERT) Awards for their contributions to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. This marked the second year of the diversity, equity, and inclusion category within the program.

Develop and distribute a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Handbook.

Status: On Track

Development of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Handbook continues with significant consultation and staff participation throughout the organization. The handbook will help Regional staff integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into their daily work.

Establish and lead a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community of Practice.

Status: Completed

In 2024, three Community of Practice meetings were held. There are currently 123 members representing 87 organizations participating in the Community of Practice.

Create and promote a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Charter.

Status: On Track

The Niagara Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community of Practice (which includes Area Municipalities) is creating an Inclusion Charter to guide the work of the Community of Practice.

Performance Measure:

Goal 1.1: In 2024, 75 per cent of Niagara Region staff report that they feel heard, respected, and valued by their managers (Employee Engagement Survey, 2024).

Target: 84 per cent. **Current:** Trending down.





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.

Goal 2.1: Increase the knowledge, skills, and competencies of staff, Councillors, and volunteers to be equipped to support the diverse population of Niagara by ten per cent.

Deliver diversity, equity, and inclusion learning for all staff and volunteers.

Status: On Track

Completed first full year of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training which included mandatory e-modules for all staff on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fundamentals. At the end of 2024, 80 per cent of all active staff (3,274 out of 4,077) had completed the e-modules, including 348 (87 per cent) of active People Leaders and 2,865 (79 per cent) of non-People Leaders.

Implement inclusive leadership development.

Status: On Track

383 (96 per cent) People Leaders participated in a one-hour in-person training on Inclusive Leadership. This included 45 new leaders who participated in the Leader's Edge program.

Deliver diversity, equity, and inclusion learning for all Councillors.

Status: On Track

Leela MadhavaRau provided Council training in May 2024 on how to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into policy decisions.

Performance Measure:

Goal 2.1: Average 17.6 per cent knowledge growth for People Leaders through Inclusive Leadership sessions (Training session assessments, 2024).

Target: 10 per cent.

Current: Trending up.





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.

Goal 3.1: Use a variety of inclusive strategies to hire, retain, and promote the workforce of Niagara Region to reflect the region's diverse population based on the Canadian Census.

Implement best practices to eliminate barriers in recruitment, hiring, and promotion processes.

Status: On Track

In 2024, the Employee Equity statement was updated on Niagara Region job postings. Training on best practices was included in Inclusive Leadership through the Leader's Edge program.

Monitor, report, and celebrate the diversity of workplace composition.

Status: On Track

Compared to the 2021 Canadian Census, the workforce of Niagara Region is equally or more diverse than the population in Niagara. See appendix A for full tables of the 2024 staff demographic data.

Promote the business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion

Status: Completed

The business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion was communicated through various methods, including staff training sessions, as well as internal and external communications. Three videos were produced to highlight the progress of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan.

Performance Measure:

Goal 3.1: The workforce of Niagara Region is meeting the goal of reflecting the region's diverse population in comparison to the 2021 Census (Employee Engagement Survey, 2024).

Target: 13 per cent racialized, 18 per cent not born in Canada, 5 per cent religious minority.

Current: 14 per cent racialized, 19 per cent not born in Canada, 5 per cent religious minority.





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

Providing evidence-informed best practices and resources to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into Niagara Region programs and services.

Goal 4.1: One hundred per cent of Niagara Region Divisions have incorporated diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into their work.

Improve the process for complaints within Niagara Region programs and services relating to bias or discrimination.

Status: Upcoming

Working towards improving the process for complaints in partnership with the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which was finalized and approved in December 2024.



Focus Area E: Addressing Discrimination

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

Goal 5.1: Increase the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion score for Niagara Region employees by five per cent.

Publish a formal anti-discrimination acknowledgement statement.

Status: On Track

Work has begun to create an anti-discrimination acknowledgement statement, including a discussion at the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee.

Performance Measure:

Goal 5.1: The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Score remained the same at 75 per cent for Niagara Region employees (Employee Engagement Survey, 2024).

Target: 80 per cent.

Current: No change from 2021.





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.

Goal 6.1 Ninety per cent of Niagara Region staff feel represented and included in diversity, equity, and inclusion related communications and initiatives.

Publish a calendar of significant dates.

Status: Completed

The 2024 Calendar of Significant Events were used to provide monthly summaries of 247 significant dates and 45 individual spotlight dates. In 2024, the monthly summaries had 2,700 total views with an average of 225 views per monthly summary and 4,195 total views for the spotlight date posts with an average of 93 views per post on Vine.

Ensure diverse staff are recognized.

Status: Completed

A “Stories of Diversity” series was launched to highlight the innovative diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the organization and to showcase individual stories. This

included three features on the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership program for foreign-trained nurses, which garnered significant positive feedback from staff.

Support events with community partners to recognize special days and events showcasing diversity.

Status: Completed

Four external events with community partners were organized in 2024. Two staff awareness events were organized. A panel discussion for Black History Month was held in February. A decorating contest and celebration with dancers, drummers, and Indian food took place at the end of October for Diwali. Positive feedback was received from staff and Long Term Care residents about the celebration events held throughout the year.



Appendix A: 2024 Employee Engagement Survey Results

The following data are from the 2024 Niagara Region Employee Engagement Survey. A total of 2,604 responses were received, a 71 per cent response rate.

Table 1: Employee Engagement Survey Results for Race.

Race	Total %	People Leader %	Non People Leader %	2021 Census ¹
White	72%	85%	70%	87%
Racialized (combined calculation of Asian, Black, Latin American, and Middle Eastern)	14%	5%	15%	13%
Prefer not to answer	12%	9%	13%	N/A
Asian (South)	4%	1%	4%	3%
Black	3%	1%	4%	3%
Asian (South East)	3%	1%	4%	1%
Not listed, please describe	2%	2%	2%	N/A
Indigenous	2%	1%	2%	3%
Asian (East)	2%	1%	2%	3%
Latin American	2%	1%	2%	2%
Middle Eastern	1%	1%	1%	1%
Do not know	0%	1%	0%	N/A

Table 2: Employee Engagement Survey Results for Length of Time in Canada.

Length of Time in Canada	Total %	People Leader %	Non People Leader %	2021 Census ¹
I was born in Canada	74%	83%	72%	81%
I was not born in Canada (combined calculation of 0 to more than 10 years)	19%	12%	20%	18%
More than 10 years	13%	12%	13%	14%
Prefer not to answer	7%	4%	8%	N/A
6 to 10 years	3%	0%	3%	1%
0 to 5 years	3%	0%	3%	2%



Table 3: Employee Engagement Survey Results for Disability.

Disability	Total %	People Leader %	Non People Leader %
No chronic health concern or disability	52%	68%	49%
Identifies as having a chronic health concern or disability (combined calculation of all disabilities listed)	27%	19%	28%
Prefer not to answer	20%	12%	21%
Mental health disability [example: bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety]	16%	10%	17%
Physical/chronic illness and/or pain [examples: diabetes, heart condition, kidney disease, lung disease, rheumatoid arthritis]	9%	8%	9%
Learning disability [example: dyslexia]	3%	1%	3%
Not listed, please describe	3%	2%	4%
Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing	2%	1%	2%
Do not know	2%	1%	3%
Addiction (alcohol, drugs, gambling or other)	1%	1%	1%
Blindness or low vision [does not include vision correctable by glasses or contact lenses]	1%	1%	1%
Mobility disability [examples: cane, wheelchair]	1%	0%	1%
Neurologic disorders [example: Parkinson's disease]	1%	0%	1%
Physical, coordination, manual dexterity, or strength [example: handling objects]	1%	1%	1%
Speech and language disability [not caused by hearing loss]	1%	0%	1%
Substance (over)use or dependence	1%	0%	1%
Developmental or cognitive disability [example: Down syndrome]	0%	0%	0%



Table 4: Employee Engagement Survey Results for Religion

Religion	Total %	People Leader %	Non People Leader %	2021 Census ¹
Christian	21%	20%	22%	31%
No religious affiliation	21%	25%	20%	34%
Roman Catholic	19%	23%	19%	29%
Prefer not to answer	16%	10%	17%	N/A
Atheist	6%	6%	5%	N/A
Agnostic	5%	8%	5%	N/A
Religious Minority (Calculated compilation of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Indigenous Spirituality, Jewish)	5%	3%	6%	5%
Not listed, please specify	3%	3%	3%	N/A
Protestant	3%	3%	3%	N/A
Hindu	1%	0%	1%	1%
Muslim	1%	1%	1%	2%
Sikh	1%	0%	1%	1%
Buddhist	1%	1%	1%	1%
Indigenous Spirituality	1%	0%	1%	0%

Table 5: Employee Engagement Survey Results for Sexuality. There is no related Census data available.

Sexuality	Total %	People Leader %	Non People Leader %
Heterosexual or Straight	76%	88%	74%
Prefer not to answer	17%	10%	18%
Number of people who identify as another sexual orientation (Combined calculation of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Two Spirit)	6%	2%	7%
Bisexual	3%	1%	3%
Queer	1%	0%	1%
Do not know	1%	0%	1%
Not listed, please describe	1%	0%	1%
Gay	0%	1%	0%
Lesbian	0%	0%	1%



Table 6: Employee Engagement Survey Results for Gender

Gender	Total %	People Leader %	Non People Leader %	2021 Census¹
Woman	61%	52%	62%	51%
Man	26%	38%	24%	49%
Prefer not to answer	11%	10%	12%	N/A
Gender Diverse (combined calculation of Non-binary, Trans man, Trans woman, Two Spirit)	1%	0%	1%	N/A
Not listed, please describe	1%	0%	1%	N/A

References

1. Statistics Canada. 2022. Census Profile. Niagara Region. 2021 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released October 26, 2022. (www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E)

