



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Action Plan 2023–2027

Executive Summary



Niagara  Region

Acknowledgements

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Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land has a rich history of First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today.

Special thanks to the following individuals who supported community engagement, data collection, and review of documents:

Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Working Group: Pam Abeysekara, Doran Anzolin, Katie Desharnais, Jacqueline Gates, Kate Harold, Shilini Hemalal, Andrew Korchok, Jodie Middleton, Steve Murphy, Tyler Neal, Mike Ogunlaja, Tania Saha, Jeffrey Sinclair, Janine Tessmer, Matthew Trennum, Jacalyn Winger, Shelby VanderEnde

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee

(DEIAC): Sabrina Hill (Chair), Liz Hay (Vice Chair), Cindilee Ecker-Flagg, Bri Irvine, Eldean Ivri, Ken Kawall, Rene Nand, Ather Shabbar, Emily Spanton, Yuexin Wang, Councillor George Darte, Councillor Laura Ip

Thank you to all the community organizations and members that participated in the various engagement opportunities.

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Citation: Niagara Region Corporate Strategy and Innovation (2022). Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Action Plan 2023–2027. June 2022. Thorold, Ontario.

Executive Summary

Young Child in Front
of Niagara Falls



Many individuals in Niagara face barriers and exclusion due to their race, immigrant status, disability, religion, gender, sexuality, and age, among other factors. Individuals have unique and overlapping identities. These intersecting aspects of identity result in some people experiencing more discrimination than others in areas such as health care, employment, and housing.

Niagara Region recognizes its important role in addressing these barriers both as an employer and as a service provider. The Region is aware that reducing barriers for Regional employees involves ensuring that its workforce reflects the current diversity within Niagara. The aim is for employees to experience a work environment that is accepting, respectful, and inclusive, where they are able to perform their jobs safely and effectively.

The Region acknowledges its important role as a municipality in leading diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) work in Niagara, alongside the local area municipalities (LAMs). The Region is committed to co-ordinating with local community organizations to ensure that services offered in Niagara are inclusive, welcoming, and free from discrimination.

Niagara Region and the 12 LAMs joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities in 2020. The first Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan has been developed through research and collaboration with many staff and community members, including the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee.

This includes a vision, mission, scope, guiding principles, focus areas, goals, actions, key performance indicators, and timelines. Niagara Region staff conducted 28 focus groups with 110 staff members and 82 community members, a staff survey with 1,670 completed surveys, and a community survey with 1,599 surveys analyzed. This report details the finalized Action Plan items.

- **Vision:** Niagara region is welcoming and inclusive, where diversity and equity are reflected and valued
- **Mission:** The people of Niagara advance equity; build welcoming, inclusive communities and workplaces, while eliminating barriers and forms of discrimination
- **Scope:** This project includes Niagara Region as an organization, the LAMs, and the Niagara region as a geographic entity and community

There are six guiding principles that are the foundation of this work: accountability, collaboration, community expertise, evidence informed, humility, and transparency.

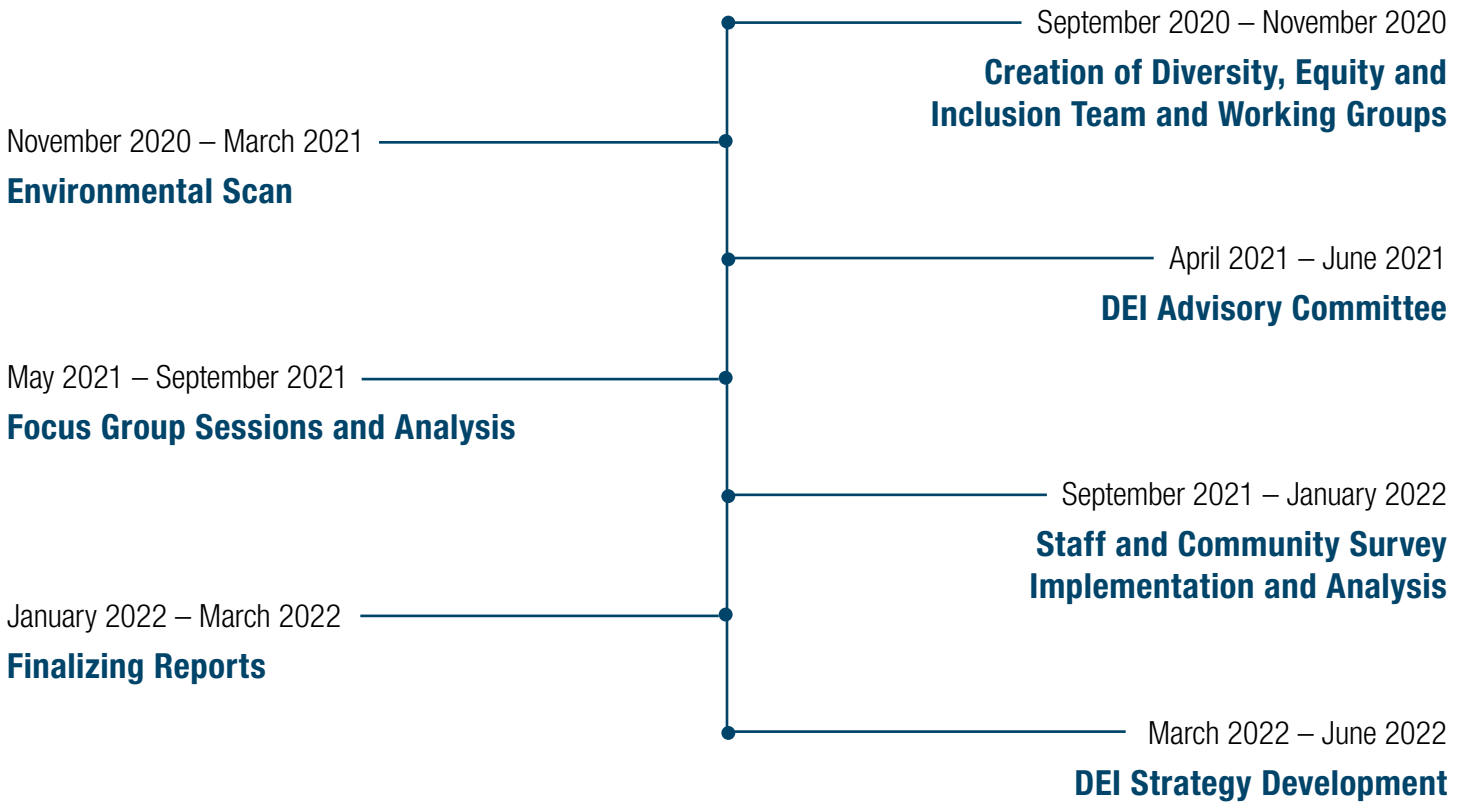
Six focus areas have been identified for the plan.

- A.** Inclusive workplace culture, leadership, and accountability
- B.** Increased understanding through education
- C.** Diverse workforce reflective of Niagara community
- D.** Programs and services meet the needs of everyone
- E.** Addressing discrimination
- F.** Inclusive communication

There are six internal goals, six external goals, 22 internal actions, 21 external actions, all corresponding with the six focus areas. Reports will be provided annually, with a mid-term review in 2025.

This plan is a living document that should be discussed, evaluated, and adapted to meet the needs of diverse staff and community members. For more information on details within this summary, please review the full DEI Action Plan and the associated research reports.

DEI Action Plan Process and Timeline



12 Dimensions of Diversity

Diversity includes many differences, similarities, and layers between people. There are endless dimensions of diversity that can be used to group people. To support the research for the DEI Action Plan, 12 dimensions of diversity were identified. These dimensions were used to identify community organizations and community members to include in focus groups and survey outreach activities.

Indigenous	Ethnocultural	New Immigrants
People with Disabilities	Older Adults	People with Low Income
Youth	Gender	Faith
People Experiencing Homelessness	Francophone	2SLGBTQIA+



Key Findings

Discrimination in Niagara

The top five types of discrimination experienced by community survey participants as prohibited under the Ontario Human Rights Code were: gender (41 per cent); age (30 per cent); mental health (25 per cent); ethnicity (24 per cent); and ability/disability (23 per cent).

Gender: “So many landlords will not rent to males and it makes it impossible to find an affordable place to live! Every time I find something in my budget the ad specifically states “females only” super discriminatory, especially when they would have rented to me prior to my transition but now won’t because I present as male? I’m the same person, gender doesn’t determine how good of a tenant you are.”

– Community member

Age: “The discrimination against seniors is incredible. I’ve been told ‘I am just an old person, go home’ ... told I am entitled, go to [the] back of line. I’ve been told to get off the road, I am going the speed limit.”

– Community member

Ability/disability: “The discrimination that I have experienced are related to access. I have had trouble getting into stores, older shops in the area because they are small and do not accommodate a person with physical disabilities or uses a wheelchair.”

– Community member

Brock University Students



The top five types of discrimination witnessed by community survey participants as prohibited under the Ontario Human Rights Code were: ethnicity (60 per cent); mental health (48 per cent); race (47 per cent); ability/disability (47 per cent); and gender (42 per cent).

Ethnicity: “I feel like people who have lived here for a while are very intolerant and treat newcomers and especially [ethnically] diverse people badly.”

– Community member

Mental health: “When people have mental health problems which you can’t always see and employees or employers should be educated to not discriminate against them.”

– Community member

Race: “I live in Niagara-on-the-Lake – I have witnessed multiple incidents of harassment and abuse towards seasonal farm workers, actors from the Shaw (whom people in town have assumed do not “belong” there).”

– Community member

Twenty-four per cent of survey participants added that they experienced discrimination related to their “vaccination status”. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission¹, vaccination status alone does not meet the definition of discrimination prohibited under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2021). OHRC Policy statement on COVID-19 vaccine mandates and proof of vaccine certificates.



Focus Areas

Father and Daughter Playing Together on their Driveway



Through consultations and discussions, six priority areas were identified.



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

Current Success: Eighteen per cent of Niagara's 45 largest employers had clear DEI plans available, with clear DEI-related goals, while 38 per cent mentioned DEI on their external facing websites

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

External Goal: Increase per cent of community members that feel they are reflected and heard by locally elected officials by 20 per cent



Focus Area B

Increased understanding and humility through learning

Providing knowledge, skills, and opportunities for staff, Councillors, volunteers, and community members to increase their ability to understand and use DEI principles and demonstrate cultural humility

Current Success: Multiple community organizations provide DEI-related training to their employees or community members

Internal Goal: Increase the knowledge, skills, and competencies of staff, Councillors, and volunteers to be equipped to support the diverse population of Niagara by 10 per cent

External Goal: Increase the knowledge, skills, and competencies of training participants in the community regarding DEI and cultural humility by 10 per cent



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

Current Success: Completion of a Human Resources Best Practices Guidebook: How to Increase Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment, Hiring, and Promotion

Internal Goal: 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

External Goal: Increase percentage of people that believe employers in Niagara do a good job of attracting, retaining, and promoting people of diverse backgrounds to leadership positions by 20 per cent



Focus Areas

All Hands In,
Symbolizing Teamwork



Through consultations and discussions, six priority areas were identified.



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

Current Success: There are 10 DEI-related advisory committees to Council that include people with lived experience who are consulted for input on some programs and services at Niagara Region and four of the 12 LAMs

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

External Goal: At least 70 per cent of program participants believe that the Niagara Region programs and services are meeting their needs



Focus Area E

Addressing discrimination

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

Current Success: Niagara Region Police Service established a DEI Unit, that investigates all police reports involving discrimination

Internal Goal: Increase the DEI score for Niagara Region employees by five per cent

External Goal: Decrease the per cent of people that experience discrimination in Niagara by 20 per cent



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 DEI

Current Success: Niagara Local Immigration Partnership Anti-Racism campaigns are positive examples of inclusive communication

Internal Goal: Ninety per cent of Niagara Region staff feel represented and included in DEI-related communications and initiatives

External Goal: Eighty per cent of Niagara Region's communication platforms are inclusive and accessible for all community members





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June 2022