

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2025 Progress Report

May 13, 2026

Introduction

The Niagara Region's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2023–2027 was developed jointly by Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion staff, the DEI Advisory Committee, Regional employees, and community members. 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 the implementation of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan, staff have committed to providing 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.envivio.com/dashboard/niagararegion101) (<https://performance.envivio.com/dashboard/niagararegion101>).

As of December 2025, the Plan has a 54 per cent completion rate. Of the 44 action items, 17 are completed, 12 are progressing, and 15 are upcoming. Five action items were completed in 2025. This report includes a selection of action items linked to each focus area, including those which were completed or made progress in 2025.

A mid-plan review took place in 2025, which involved gathering feedback from 143 community members at 11 Niagara Region facilities and 37 Niagara Region employees in six focus groups. The purpose of the review was to assess the progress of the DEI Action Plan, identify what is working well, what gaps remain, and receive feedback from staff and community members for 2026 priorities.





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.

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

Status: On Track

The content has been drafted and is being reviewed by over 50 staff from across the Region who contributed to its creation. The content is being transferred to an electronic resource guide. This will help Niagara Region staff integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into their daily work.

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

Status: Completed

Three Niagara DEI Community of Practice meetings were held in 2025, hosted by Welland YMCA, the City of Port Colborne, and the DSBN in St. Catharines. There are currently 127 members representing 87 organizations participating in the Community of Practice.

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

Status: Completed

The Inclusion Charter for the Niagara DEI Community of Practice was finalized and distributed to members. The document, now titled Guiding Intentions, establishes a clear foundation and framework for participation and collaboration.

Increase engagement opportunities between Councillors and diverse community groups.

Status: Completed

Councillors received information and invitations to multiple events organized in partnership with local community organizations. This included flag ceremonies, awareness events, and a candlelight vigil.

Performance Measure:

Action AE2: In 2024, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Relations team organized six events where Councillors were invited to engage with diverse community groups.





Focus Area B: Increased Understanding and Humility Through Learning

Providing knowledge, skills, and learning opportunities for staff, Councillors, 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

The second year of diversity, equity, and inclusion training included mandatory e-modules for all staff on Inclusive Interactions. The module focused on inclusive communication, respectful use of language, and how to recognize and respond to microaggressions. It supports an inclusive culture through courageous conversations, psychological safety and allyship.

Implement inclusive leadership development.

Status: On Track

People Leaders participated in one-hour training sessions on Inclusive Interactions. In 2025, total completion was 89 per cent (354 out of 400). Sixty-nine new leaders participated in Inclusive Leaders training through the Leader's Edge program.

Support community events with advisory committees on DEI topics

Status: Completed

Four community events were planned in collaboration with community partners and advisory committees on DEI Topics. The topics included Pride, Accessibility, and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.

Niagara Local Immigration Partnership provided training to 182 community members and Niagara Region staff on trauma-informed practices and 112 community members and Niagara Region staff on Training Active Bystanders.

Performance Measure:

Action BI2: At the end of 2025, 72 per cent of all active staff (2,765 out of 3,862) had completed the Inclusive Interactions e-modules including 340 (84 per cent) of active People Leaders and 2,425 (70 per cent) of non-People Leaders. Deadline for completion was March 31, 2026.





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.

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

Status: Completed

Results from the 2024 Employee Engagement Survey, including staff demographics, were included in the 2024 DEI Action Plan Progress Report provided to Niagara Region Council in April 2025, and updated on the DEI Dashboard. This will continue to be updated with upcoming surveys.



Facilitators from YMCA for community education on creating inclusive workplaces for newcomers.

Provide learning opportunities for community organizations regarding DEI recruitment, hiring, and promotion best practices

Status: On Track

A learning series for community organizations on Inclusive Recruitment and Hiring was launched in December 2025, with final sessions being facilitated in January 2026. Four sets of facilitators provided training on Anti-Black Racism, creating inclusive workplaces for newcomers, Disability Education 101, and Neuro-Inclusive Recruitment and Management.

Performance Measure:

Action CE3: There were 32 participants from 22 organizations in Niagara who attended four training sessions on Inclusive Recruitment and Hiring in December 2025.





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.

Report on periodic community DEI surveys that include evaluating the impact of Niagara Region programs and services

Status: On Track

In 2025, a community survey was conducted to assess the success and challenges of the DEI Action Plan. The purpose of the review was to assess the progress of the DEI Action Plan, identify what is working well, what gaps remain, and receive feedback from staff and community members for 2026 priorities.

Performance Measure:

Action DE1: 143 community members at 11 Niagara Region facilities completed the 2025 Community Survey on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.



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.

Review Niagara Region policies and procedures using the DEI handbook.

Status: Upcoming

Resources for reviewing policies and procedures using DEI principles will be completed in 2026. A selection of policies will be reviewed using the resources.





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

From the 2025 Calendar of Significant Dates, 12 monthly summaries were shared with Niagara Region employees describing 243 significant dates. An additional 41 posts highlighted 44 spotlight dates throughout the year. These posts are shared with the Local Area Municipalities monthly to use in their communications.

Ensure diverse staff are recognized.

Status: Completed

The “Stories of Diversity” series continued. In 2025, six employees were highlighted, showcasing individual stories as well as innovative diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the organization.

Ensure all Niagara Region communication platforms are inclusive and accessible.

Status: On Track

Ensuring all Niagara Region communication platforms are inclusive and accessible is part of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. Work began in 2025 with developing a new Niagara Region website. The website is currently in progress and will include audits from various accessibility-related professionals to ensure accessibility, according to AODA.

Performance Measure:

Action FI2: In 2025, the monthly summaries had 2,055 total views with an average of 171 views per monthly summary and 3,335 total views for the spotlight date posts with an average of 104 views per post on Vine.



