

Niagara Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community of Practice Guiding Intentions

Statement of Purpose:

We, the members of the Niagara Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community of Practice (DEI COP), are united in our commitment to fostering an environment that is welcoming and inclusive, where diversity is reflected and celebrated, and equity is valued and upheld. We recognize the profound importance of diverse perspectives, experiences, and identities for our organizations, communities, and society at large.

Our purpose is to create supportive and empowering spaces where individuals from all backgrounds can come together to learn, share, and collaborate on initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through education, sharing, networking, collaboration, and support, we strive to advance equity, build welcoming and inclusive communities and workplaces, while eliminating barriers and forms of discrimination.

By coming together as a diverse and inclusive community of practice, we believe that we can collectively create positive and lasting impacts towards a more just and equitable world.

Key Objectives:

1. **Education and Awareness:** We aim to raise awareness and deepen understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues through workshops, seminars, and discussions. By sharing educational resources and opportunities for self-reflection, we empower members to become more informed and empathetic community members and allies.
2. **Best Practice Sharing:** We are committed to sharing best practices, strategies, and resources for creating inclusive environments and addressing systemic barriers. By leveraging the collective wisdom and experiences of our members, we seek to identify effective approaches and tools for advancing diversity and equity initiatives while addressing challenges and barriers in the community.
3. **Collaboration and Networking:** We facilitate collaboration and networking among members to promote cross-sectoral partnerships and exchange of ideas. By connecting individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise, we foster innovation and creativity in our efforts to drive meaningful change.
4. **Support and Community Impact:** We aim to provide a supportive and inclusive space where individuals can share their experiences, challenges, and successes. Through collaboration, peer support, and sharing resources for personal and professional development, we aim to be catalysts for change within our own spheres of influence and increase collective impact in the community.

Guiding Values

- **Inclusive, Brave Spaces:** We aim for meetings to be places where we embrace and respect differences, build understanding of multiple worldviews, accept mistakes, take risks and lean into discomfort, and welcome difficult discussions.
- **Diverse Representation:** We aim for the members of the community of practice to reflect the diversity of our community and cultivate welcoming spaces for people of all backgrounds and identities. We aim to hear the voices of underrepresented groups in Niagara.
- **Open Communication:** We aim to have transparent, open, and regular communication with all practice members.
- **Cultural Humility:** We understand that everyone is the expert of their own experiences. We aim to interact with humility, respect, and curiosity with each other. We embrace critical self-reflection and learning about different people and ways of doing. We aim to challenge power imbalances and develop mutually beneficial partnerships.
- **Embrace Discomfort as Growth:** We view challenging conversations as opportunities for growth, recognizing discomfort as a catalyst for meaningful change and understanding.

Membership

The Niagara DEI COP members represent organizations in Niagara that are interested in advancing DEI within or through their organizations.

This can include community groups or organizations, municipalities, police services, hospitals, school boards, post-secondary institutions, faith-based groups, authorities, or agencies.

New members can join the COP through connecting to the leadership of the DEI COP and complete a membership form. New members shall have agreement from their organization that they agree with this Guiding Intentions document and each member shall agree to the member commitment to support positive interactions during meetings.

Meetings

The Niagara DEI COP aims to meet three to four times per calendar year.

The meetings will be hybrid in nature with both in person and virtual opportunities to join. We will aim for all locations, virtual spaces, and content to be accessible for everyone.

Meetings will be hosted by volunteer organizations throughout Niagara, with the aim of being hosted in different municipalities for each meeting within the year.

Decision Making Process

Decisions impacting the direction of the DEI COP or actions taken by the DEI COP will be made by consensus, with discussion and open conversation of all members present at the applicable meeting.

Leadership

The Niagara DEI COP can be led by a group of volunteers that are members of the DEI COP. Their role is to help plan meetings, organize host locations, communicate with all members, and support avenues to share resources. There can be at least three volunteer leaders, and no more than fifteen. Opportunities to join the leadership group will be offered at the beginning of each calendar year.

Review of the Terms of Reference

The DEI COP aims to review this document annually to ensure it reflects the direction of the group.