



INTERNAL



action plan

Oxford County's commitment to
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

2024-2025



OCTOBER 2023



Oxford's DEI Task Force is comprised of staff members from across various departments within the County, each of whom has a strong passion for DEI work.

Introduction

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion -- *Fostering a culture where everyone is welcomed, valued, and celebrated*—is identified as a value in Oxford County's new Strategic Plan.

In support of the County's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as a fundamental principle, an internal DEI Committee was established in July 2021. This internal committee comprised 16 staff members from various departments within the County, each drawing on relevant personal experiences with DEI and a strong passion for this work. This group continues to meet to ensure effective coordination, planning, and rollout of DEI initiatives across the organization.

To date, the committee has coordinated a number of learning opportunities, including a focus on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and the use of gender pronouns. It has also curated a calendar of DEI awareness days and brought attention to many events, such as Black History Month, International Women's Day and Pride Month, and their role in increasing public awareness and understanding.

A key milestone identified in Goal 3.3 of the Strategic Plan, which aims to attract, retain, and engage staff, is the development of an Internal DEI Action Plan. This document is a pledge that our organization will continue to address diversity, equity and inclusion strategically.

VISION

DEI is at the core of who we are, and we work diligently to promote a sense of belonging and inclusion for all County employees. Oxford County aims to create a work environment and culture where diversity, equity and inclusion are not only reflected and valued but embedded in policy and practice.



SCOPE

This DEI Action Plan applies to Oxford County as an organization.



Definitions

DIVERSITY refers to each individual person who brings with them a various set of skills, perspectives, work and life experiences, and conditions, as well as religious and cultural beliefs, expressions, sexual orientation, and many other unique attributes.

EQUITY refers to the quality of being fair and impartial. It involves treating every person according to their needs.

INCLUSION refers to creating environments where any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to participate fully.

UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUP (URG) refers to a group of people whose representation within a given subgroup of society is lower than its representation in the general population. Because of systemic discrimination, people from this group face barriers that prevent them from having the same access to the resources and opportunities available to other members of society, which are necessary to attain just outcomes. Groups generally considered under-represented include women, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, members of LGBTQ2+ communities, and racialized groups.



Priorities

Through consultation with the internal DEI Task Force and using evidence-informed best practices, the following priorities were developed.

Priority 1: A diverse workforce

Implement various best practices and inclusive strategies to eliminate barriers in recruitment, hiring and promotion processes and make strides toward diversifying our workforce.

STRATEGIC ACTION	TIMELINE
1.1 Complete a workforce survey to understand the diversity of our current workforce.	2024
1.2 Create a strategy to expand the diverse candidate pool by enhancing community connections with under-represented groups (URGs) and attracting individuals from URGs through focused recruiting efforts.	2024
1.3 Develop a self-identification survey for all applicants and pilot as part of the County's recruitment process.	2024
1.4 Review and assess whether there are current barriers to professional development opportunities for staff.	2024-2025
1.5 Seek staff feedback: Incorporate DEI and accessibility-related questions into a new employee feedback form to be completed approximately six months after hire. Explore the most effective ways to gather DEI-related feedback from all staff, such as employee engagement surveys, online feedback forms, and other means.	2024-2025 Ongoing

Priority 2: An inclusive workplace

All staff feel heard, respected, and valued by their colleagues and leadership.

STRATEGIC ACTION	TIMELINE
2.1 Review applicable County policies to ensure the employment and workplace practices are fair, equitable, and inclusive, with consideration for the best practices under the proposed DEI Guide/Handbook.	2024-2025
2.2 Consider incorporating a DEI impacts section into Council Reports to ensure consistency with the DEI component of the County's Strategic Plan.	2024
2.3 Consider DEI and accessibility needs in the design or re-design of County spaces, such as reflection rooms.	Ongoing
2.4 Continue to look at ways to create an inclusive workplace, such as safe space stickers and an annual DEI calendar.	Ongoing
2.5 Review current policies and practices that address patron/customer behaviour, such as Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace Policy, to ensure adequate measures are in place so staff feel respected when dealing with the public and that there are tools and resolution procedures in place to address incidents if they occur.	2024

Priority 3: Increased understanding through education & awareness

Provide knowledge, skills and learning opportunities for all staff to increase their understanding of DEI.

STRATEGIC ACTION	TIMELINE
3.1 Determine education gaps related to DEI and provide mandatory DEI education and training for all staff.	2024 and Ongoing
3.2 Provide mandatory education and training specific to the extended and senior management teams and those moving into a leadership role.	2024
3.3 Provide role and job-specific mandatory training, e.g., unconscious bias training, for human resources and leadership staff participating in the recruitment process.	2024
3.4 Review new employee orientation and onboarding processes to ensure education and awareness about diversity, equity, and inclusion are onboarding requirements.	2024
3.5 Recognize staff who advance DEI initiatives through formal recognition programs, such as introducing a new award of excellence category for staff who advance DEI-specific initiatives.	2024
3.6 Develop a DEI Best Practices Handbook/Guide for staff, respecting best practices and general knowledge of DEI.	2024

Priority 4: Inclusive and accessible internal communications

Staff feel represented and included in Oxford County's communication and initiatives.

STRATEGIC ACTION	TIMELINE
4.1 Develop an internal DEI website with links to DEI-related training, resources, information, and toolkits.	2024-2025
4.2 Ensure equitable and inclusive access to County communications, including the addition of QR codes, printed materials, and other methods, as appropriate.	Ongoing
4.3 Ensure any internal information and/or communication complies with the AODA.	Ongoing
4.4 Ensure any visual or written portrayals of individuals or groups are inclusive, written in plain language, and portray positive and inclusive images.	Ongoing
4.5 Introduction of Google translator on the County's website.	2024
4.6 Investigate the feasibility of developing a multi-lingual database for staff.	2024

