

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan 2024-2025 Update

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Human Resources

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council receive Report HR 2024-03 entitled “Internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2025 Update” as information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to update County Council on the progress made on the County’s internal DEI Action Plan for 2024 to 2025 (Attachment 1) and next steps in the implementation of this plan.
- The plan was first presented to Council on November 8, 2023 and since that time progress has been made in a number of key areas.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

Implementation work has been underway on several of the strategic actions outlined in the plan, with all strategic actions to be advanced over the coming years.

Financial Impact

The recommendation contained in this report has no financial impact. Any strategic actions that require financial resources, have been and/or will be proposed through our annual budget and business plan process.

Communications




The Strategic Communication and Engagement team has and continues to support roll out of any initiatives advanced under the plan.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendation in this report supports the following strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
		Goal 3.3 – Attract, retain and engage staff

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

DISCUSSION

Background

The County’s 2023-2026 Strategic Plan identified DEI as a value and specifically references Goal 3.3, as developing and implementing an internal DEI framework and action plan. In addition, diversity, equity and inclusion has become a key priority for all progressive organizations. As a result, in 2023 Oxford County developed an internal DEI Action Plan, which outlines our organizational commitment to several strategic actions under 4 key priorities – a diverse workforce, an inclusive workplace, increased understanding through education and awareness, and inclusive and accessible internal communications.

Comments

The following tables outline each strategic action and provides an update on progress made to date.

Priority 1: A Diverse Workforce

Implement a variety of best practices and inclusive strategies to eliminate barriers in recruitment, hiring and promotion processes and make strides towards diversifying our workforce.

Strategic Action	Update
1.1 Complete a workforce survey to understand the diversity of our current workforce.	Survey currently being finalized and will be conducted by the end of 2024.
1.2 Create a strategy to expand the diverse candidate pool, such as enhancing community connections with under-represented groups (URG's) and attract individuals from URG's through focused recruiting efforts.	Outreach will occur through Safe and Well Newsletter, encouraging URG's and stakeholders to sign up for job posting e-alerts.
1.3 Develop a self-identification survey for all applicants and pilot as part of the County's recruitment process.	Experiencing challenges with our current recruitment process and system. On hold for future consideration.
1.4 Review and assess whether there are current barriers to professional development opportunities for staff.	Question to be included in future employee survey. This is an ongoing consideration as we develop and implement new professional development programs.
<p>1.5 Seek staff feedback:</p> <p>Incorporate DEI and accessibility-related questions into a new employee feedback form to be completed approximately six months after hire.</p> <p>Explore the most effective ways to gather DEI related feedback from all staff, such as through employee engagement surveys, online DEI feedback form, and other means.</p>	<p>DEI and accessibility-related questions have been incorporated into a new employee feedback form which is completed at regular intervals following hire date.</p> <p>Implementation of corporate DEI feedback form.</p>

Priority 2: An Inclusive Workplace

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

Strategic Action	Update
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.	Ongoing as policies come up for review and updating.
2.2 Consider incorporating a DEI impacts section into Council Reports to ensure consistency with the DEI component of the County's Strategic Plan.	Currently being considered.
2.3 Consider DEI and accessibility needs in the design or re-design of County spaces, such as reflection rooms.	A reflection room has been initiated for OCAB but is not complete. Additional efforts required to more formally incorporate accessibility into the design and re-design of County spaces. A draft of Oxford County's Accessibility Assessment Checklist has been created.
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.	Complete. Updates made to policy in early 2024.

Priority 3: Increased Understanding Through Education and Awareness

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

Strategic Action	Update
3.1 Determine education gaps related to DEI and provide mandatory DEI education and training for all staff.	Budget for all staff training being proposed through 2025 budget process.
3.2 Provide mandatory education and training, specific to the extended and senior management teams and those moving into a leadership role.	Conscious inclusion training specific to our extended and senior management teams took place on October 3, 2024.
3.3 Role and job specific mandatory training, for example unconscious bias training for human resources and leadership staff who participate in the recruitment process.	Part of training referenced above. Additional training to be considered in future.
3.4 Review new employee orientation and onboarding processes and ensure diversity, equity and inclusion education and awareness is included as an onboarding requirement.	New employee orientation has been updated to include DEI education and awareness and will be further refined following all staff education in 2025.
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.	Complete. A new Awards of Excellent category has been added and we received 4 nominations in this category for our 2023 awards.
3.6 Develop a DEI Best Practices Handbook/Guide for staff, respecting best practices and general knowledge of DEI.	DEI Officer currently finalizing a Human Resources DEI Best Practices Handbook for roll out by end of 2024. Exploring additional options for staff resources.

Priority 4: Inclusive and Accessible Internal Communications

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

Strategic Action	Update
4.1 Develop an internal DEI website with links to DEI-related training, resources, information, and toolkits.	Currently brainstorming ideas for the most effective way to implement this.
4.2 Ensure equitable and inclusive access to County communications, including the addition of QR codes, printed materials, and other methods, as appropriate.	QR codes included being included in all printed material.
4.3 Ensure any internal information and/or communication complies with the AODA.	Exploring feasibility of current intranet system and its ability to manage AODA requirements. Connections This Week will be AODA compliant this month.
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 and occurring regularly.
4.5 Introduction of Google translator on the County's website.	Complete.
4.6 Investigate the feasibility of developing a multilingual database for staff.	Explored feasibility of a multilingual database for all staff; however, with the various locations and hybrid work arrangements, concluded this was not a feasible option. However, exploring the addition of an iPad at customer service to assist in translation services with customers at OCAB. Woodingford Lodge has implemented a multilingual database for staff to be relied on in communicating with residents.

CONCLUSIONS

Progress has been made in implementing the strategic actions outlined in our internal DEI action plan; however, there is still much work to be done. As this work continues, we are optimistic continued implementation of this plan will positively impact our ability to attract, retain, and engage staff.

SIGNATURES

Departmental Approval:

Original signed by Amy Smith

Amy Smith
Director of Human Resources

Approved for submission:

Original signed by Benjamin Addley

Benjamin R. Addley
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 - Internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2025, October 23, 2024