



All Together

An Action Plan
for Diversity and Inclusion
in the Public Service

2019-2024

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All Together: An Action Plan for Diversity and Inclusion in the Public Service
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Message from the Public Service Commissioner

Nova Scotia is a great place to live, work, and learn. It's also a diverse and vibrant community of people from all backgrounds, abilities, and ways of life.

This is why the Government of Nova Scotia, as one of the largest employers in the province, is leading the way to ensure we have an equally diverse and inclusive public service.

A diverse, inclusive public service ensures equity seeking groups—including Indigenous people, African Nova Scotians, persons with disabilities, and other under-represented groups—are genuinely included, celebrated, and given opportunities to succeed. It is a public service that is welcoming, culturally competent, and free of discrimination; one that serves in a way that respects and includes the many cultures and communities of this province.

Genuine inclusion means all public servants feel safe and valued when they come to work, so they are comfortable giving their best to the people of Nova Scotia. It helps offset our shrinking labour force and makes us stronger. Organizations with diverse and inclusive workplaces attract and retain a skilled, dynamic, and diverse workforce and benefit from a range of perspectives and experiences.

We will perform better as a public service by being more engaged, more innovative in our approaches to problem solving, more aware of citizens' needs, and more flexible in our response to those needs.

Our efforts are gaining recognition. In 2018 and 2019, the Nova Scotia Government was recognized as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers. We are proud of this progress, which is a direct result of the amount of work that has been done by employees, stakeholders, and partners.

We also acknowledge we still have work to do, and this will be reflected in the new strategy that will take us to new levels of leadership in diversity and inclusion.

Laura Lee Langley

Public Service Commissioner

Building on Raising the Bar

In 2014, the Nova Scotia Government developed *Raising the Bar: A Strategy to Increase Diversity and Inclusion in the Public Service (2014–2018)*. This four-year strategy was the first of its kind for the Government of Nova Scotia and was a collaborative effort that included employees, stakeholders, and partners across the public service and beyond.

The strategy set a new standard for diversity and inclusion in the Nova Scotia public service. Highlights include:

- establishing a new director of Corporate Diversity and Inclusion
- becoming the first public service to implement guidelines to support transgender and gender-variant employees
- adding psychological health and safety to the Workplace Health and Safety Policy and creating the Office of Workplace Mental Health, the first of its kind in Canada
- implementing a Diverse Hiring Panel program
- implementing the 2015 Treaty Education memorandum of understanding
- creating the Positive Spaces program, a network of allies to support LGBTIQ+ employees

Raising the Bar built the foundation for the next phase of work and was also a learning experience. Feedback from stakeholders pointed out that leadership accountability and the ability to measure results need to be stronger factors in the next iteration of the strategy. The Auditor General also recommended that the updated strategy include

- implementation and evaluation plans
- a plan to collect and analyze data to assess whether the new strategy is achieving its objectives
- policy that ensures compliance
- a plan to communicate and promote the strategy to all staff

There is growing evidence that ties diversity and inclusion to better business practices. As an employer with a focus on providing quality services to our changing demographic, the Nova Scotia Public Service needs to ensure that we have the best knowledge and understanding of what Nova Scotians need.

In addition, creativity and innovation are major drivers in how efficient our public sector is in delivering services to the public. Diverse perspectives break us out of “group think” and allow for a layering of perspectives. A clear commitment towards diversity is necessary if the Nova Scotia Public Service wants to attract and retain top talent, improve the employee experience, and deliver the best possible services to all Nova Scotians.

The PSC also explored the best practices in diversity and inclusion in other Canadian provinces and territories, as well as at some of the leading private sector organizations.

The PSC conducted interjurisdictional scans to capture current and best practices across Canada. Accountability, education and training, evaluation, leadership development, and barrier identification were consistently the top areas of focus in both the private and public sector regarding diversity and inclusion planning. As well, the Office of the Auditor General highlighted the need for a process to evaluate the new diversity and inclusion strategy.

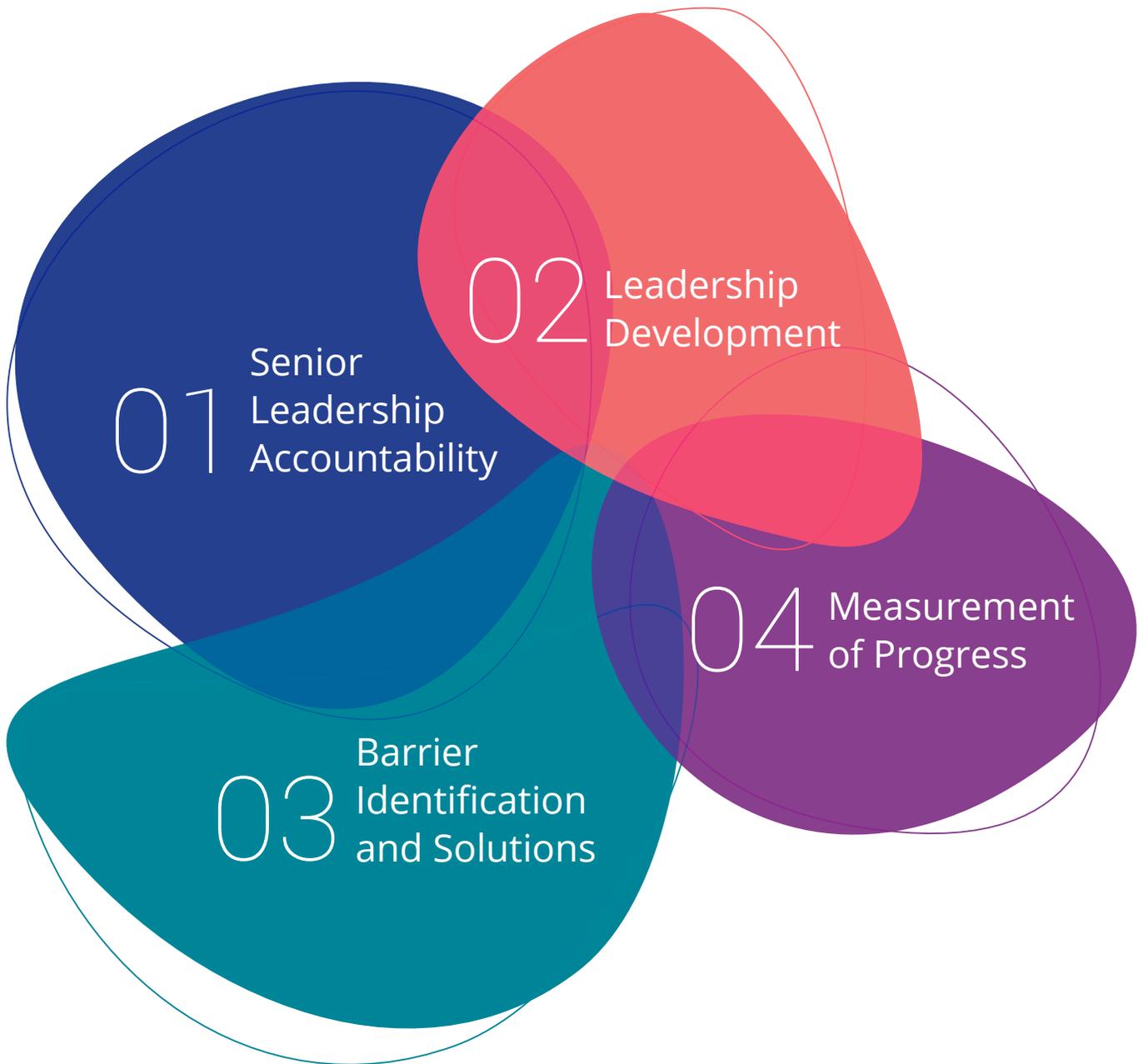
Other notable common practices include creating clear, consistent communication plans; supporting and empowering employee-led diversity councils and committees; developing change management plans to highlight the positive outcomes of change and mitigate backlash; and incorporating diversity and inclusion in the organization’s brand.

Lessons Learned

- There is no one-size-fits-all approach, nor are there any quick fixes: short- and long-term goals are required.
- The business case for the strategy must contain tangible benefits.
- A diversity and inclusion culture shift leads to innovation and creativity.
- Trust needs to be established with underrepresented groups before we collect data and ask for participation in feedback sessions.

Priorities in Action

The results of the stakeholder consultations and feedback, combined with our research into current best practices, led us to a focused diversity and inclusion strategy with four main goals:





Senior Leadership Accountability

"If leaders aren't accountable, they will focus their efforts elsewhere."

Consultation Participant

"We often see an employee as a 'wrong fit' rather than looking at what accommodations would help the employee be the right fit for a job."

Consultation Participant

Support from Senior Leaders is crucial to the success of the strategy. Diversity and Inclusion will be a part of department strategies and Human Resource planning. Leaders will demonstrate their commitment to diversity and inclusion through their actions.

Implementation:

- Senior leaders will establish measurable strategic objectives for their departments, report on their progress toward those objectives, and be held accountable for diversity and inclusion in their departments.
- Such initiatives will be evaluated against a set of internationally recognized standards that allow leaders and their organizations to measure and monitor progress toward their diversity and inclusion goals.
- Deputy Ministers will have diversity and inclusion included in their mandate letters.

01

Senior
Leadership
Accountability

Leadership Development

“While it’s good to improve the diversity capacity of senior leaders, we need to see diverse leaders in the positions of power, making decisions.” Consultation Participant

Leaders at all levels must reflect the diversity of their workforce and the population the organization serves, and be culturally competent—meaning they work to build understanding between people, are respectful and open to different cultural perspectives, and are aware of their own worldview and inherent biases.

Implementation:

- Departments will set hiring goals for leadership positions and follow an established process for designating positions.
- To help develop diversified leadership talent, departments will also work closely with unions to designate positions when opportunities arise.
- Guidelines will be developed to help hiring managers effectively recruit and hire more Indigenous and African Nova Scotians.
- Leaders will receive training to build cultural competence.
- Leaders will demonstrate an understanding of current diversity and inclusion tools and initiatives such as the Employment Equity Policy and guidelines developed to support equity seeking employees.



Leadership
Development 02

03

Barrier Identification and Solutions



Barrier Identification and Solutions

"Systemic barriers can be invisible to those they don't affect." Consultation Participant

Barriers can be both tangible and invisible. Also, they can affect achieving diversity and inclusion in hiring and advancement, especially into leadership positions. Furthermore, diverse communities and groups experience barriers in different ways. Removing barriers does not mean lowering standards or expectations of performance—it means removing the barriers that prevent employees from achieving goals and finding success.

Implementation:

- The PSC will support departments in the Employment Systems Review process.
- Consultation with communities and partner groups about the barriers they face will be integral to the process.

Measurement of Progress

"[We need to] measure the progress of desired outcomes and not just the implementation of the strategy." Consultation Participant

We will ensure accurate measurement of our progress toward our goals and celebrate successes when we reach them. While measurement is identified as its own priority, it is really a component of the other three goals in that it supports accountability, progress, and transparency.

Recognizing effort is also important. There will be times when benchmarks can't be reached, however demonstrating efforts made to achieve benchmarks will be considered measurable progress and an opportunity to recalibrate goals.

Implementation:

- The PSC will work with Departments to promote participation in the How's Work Going employee engagement and Count Yourself In workforce demographic surveys.
- The Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks' (GDIB) tiered evaluation standards will also be used to measure progress. The GDIB will measure organizational culture, feelings of inclusion, and other areas that can be difficult to assess using only quantitative methods.
- Departments will engage in periodic pulse checks to assess the progress and impact of initiatives and activities.

04 Measurement of Progress



Supporting Departments

The PSC actively supports departments in developing their own strategic diversity and inclusion plans to achieve these goals. The PSC provides consultation with department leaders in the following phases.

Phase One: Current State Assessment

- Provide department leaders with an assessment of their current D&I state.
- Review Count Yourself In results for current HR opportunities by way of retirement data, and other strategy updates.

Phase Two: Goal Setting

- A goal setting workshop to establish specific hiring goals to address gaps in representation of equity-seeking groups.
- Each department will put forward a cross-section of leadership to present opportunities within their department. Areas of opportunity may include upcoming retirements, new hires and leadership development opportunities for current employees.
- Results from this workshop will be proposed to senior leadership to incorporate into their departmental HR, business and employment equity plans. Plans will be department driven and supported by senior leadership.

Phase Three: Implementation and Action Planning

Diversity and Inclusion Senior Consultants work alongside departments to support them in developing their diversity and inclusion implementation plans.



All Together

Supported by Deputy Ministers, the new strategy will continue to be linked to our public service values of respect, integrity, diversity, accountability and public good.

What will success look like?

- Diversity and inclusion is embedded in departmental business plans and HR plans as a fundamental part of the department's and organization's culture.
- Leaders are involved with diversity and inclusion planning and implementation. They publicly support D&I initiatives and goals.
- Human resource plans are equitable and accessible to equity-seeking groups in their service delivery and planning.
- Measurement of diversity and inclusion success extends beyond quantitative data collection. Evaluation results will be made public in the annual Moving Towards Equity report.
- Policies, guidelines, and services encompass the needs of all equity-seeking groups from the outset.

The Nova Scotia Public Service is committed to improving life for our employees and the Nova Scotians we serve. Together, we can remove barriers, move forward, right historical wrongs, and affect real change.

