

CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS



people 2024 2026 plan

ACCOUNTABILITY
RESPECT
LEADERSHIP
TEAMWORK





A MESSAGE FROM
**JASON
BURGESS,
CAO**



On behalf of our Senior Leadership Team, I am very excited to share our **People Plan (2024 to 2026)**. Our people are our most valuable asset, and the foundation of the various critical programs and services we provide to our residents and visitors. Creating an organizational culture and workplace of excellence and innovation requires an explicit commitment from leadership.

As you may recall, we conducted an employee engagement survey in 2023 and received some fantastic feedback from all divisions of our organization. Our People Plan will help guide us over the next three years on implementing many goals and initiatives to ensure continuous personal growth and development of all our employees. Our People Plan will also help support the Corporation's Strategic Priorities established by Council.

The People Plan focuses on five (5) Key Pillars which include the following:



**Healthy & Safe
Workplace**



**Service &
Performance
Excellence**



**Attraction
& Retention**



**Engaged
Workforce**



**Learning &
Development**

Our leadership promise is we ensure our people are positioned for success and have the skills, strength, capacity, and resilience to do their best work. This People Plan will require the involvement from all of our staff, managers, and senior leaders to ensure we meet our goals and objectives collectively. I encourage all of you to spend some time reviewing this document and help us put it into action.

Regards,

Jason Burgess
Chief Administrative Officer
City of Niagara Falls

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WHAT IS A PEOPLE PLAN?

The City of Niagara Falls People Plan expresses our commitment to our most important asset – our people.

The plan is a leadership promise which articulates how we will ensure our people are positioned for success. It is designed to create the infrastructure, supports and tools to enable each of us to contribute to our full potential.

The focus of the plan is to enrich the work experience by increasing engagement so that people feel energized coming to work. The People Plan is also an essential enabler of one of our key corporate strategic priorities (Customer Service). It translates our strategic vision and values into our core people processes, policies and practices. Additionally, it will articulate the competencies, behaviours and expectations that exemplify those values.

Ultimately, this People Plan will help facilitate the delivery of the City’s mission, vision, and values by leveraging the various talents of OUR TEAMS.

HOW DOES IT BENEFIT YOU?

A well-structured People Plan offers numerous benefits to employees, improving their overall experience and engagement within the organization. **Some of these key advantages include:**

Clear Career Pathways

This includes defined career progression and development pathways. Employees benefit from understanding potential career growth within the organization, which can boost motivation and job satisfaction.

Improved Training & Development

A structured plan, can better identify training needs and provide targeted development opportunities. This helps employees acquire new skills, advance their careers, and stay competitive in their roles.

Overall, a strategic People Plan not only supports organizational goals but also significantly enhances the employee experience, leading to a more engaged, productive, and satisfied workforce.

Enhanced Communication

People Plans allow regular feedback and communication channels between employees and management. This helps employees stay informed about corporate goals, expectations, and performance, leading to better alignment and job satisfaction.

Recognition & Rewards

A People Plan also includes formal recognition and reward systems which acknowledge and celebrate employee achievements. This can enhance employee morale and reinforce positive behaviors.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

At present, the City of Niagara Falls is faced with some of the following people challenges:

- » Shortage of skilled labor
- » Competitive labor market / compensation / competing interests
- » Technological innovations
- » Changing demographics and focus of employee / workforce needs
- » Increasing regulatory requirements
- » Financial constraints – doing more with less

Our People Plan will help ensure the right number of people with the necessary skills are employed in the right place at the right time. Our plan will also help manage some of the current challenges we are faced with at the City.

The goal is to ensure our People Plan is strategically aligned with our Corporate Priorities so we can deliver a welcoming and consistent customer service experience centred around the people we serve.

OUR HUMAN RESOURCES TEAM

Our Human Resources team provides a variety of services and management direction in support of City employees. More specifically, our department focuses on effective and strategic Human Resources Management as it impacts on all of our client services which includes the following:

- » Senior Management, Supervisory and other Non-Union Employees
- » Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE, Local 133)
- » Niagara Falls Professional Fire Fighters Association (N.F.P.F.F.A.)
- » Niagara Falls Volunteer Fire Fighters
- » City Council
- » Crossing Guards
- » Retired Employees
- » Niagara Falls Library
- » Life Guards & Summer Students



The City currently employs approximately 580 permanent full-time employees with a seasonal temporary workforce of an additional 300+ employees, which fluctuates depending upon operational requirements.

The City also has over 100 volunteer fire fighters and is responsible for managing over 300 retirees. In total, the City’s human resources team provides key HR services to over 1200 people through all its client services groups.

Our departmental functions cover a vast array of people services which includes the following:

- » Employee Services
- » Labour Relations
- » Recruitment and Talent Acquisition
- » Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- » Organizational Development
- » Health, Safety and Wellness
- » Policy Development
- » Compensation and Employee Benefits
- » Learning and Development
- » Performance Management
- » Coaching and Mentoring
- » Collective Bargaining

OUR CORPORATE VALUES

The Corporation of the City of Niagara Falls is committed to enhancing the quality of life and service to its customers through a corporate culture that embraces and rewards our core values of:

- » Accountability
- » Teamwork
- » Leadership
- » Respect

We believe people are our most important resource and essential in striving for the Corporation’s mission and common goal of excellence in customer service. Our City Council, staff, and volunteers are committed to working together and demonstrating the highest standards of service and individual conduct.

Our corporate values are critical to our success and essential to the way we work. Our shared values are the guiding principles for the organization.

We are committed to developing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace and community by recognizing, celebrating, and embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Through this recognition, our organization will achieve excellence in serving the community and through employment practices.

Our corporate values will influence the way the organization works, how staff and customers are treated, and how people work with each other, inside and outside the organization.



- Accountability**
- » We are personally responsible for our own decisions, actions, and behaviours.
 - » We are accountable for accomplishing quality work in a timely manner.
 - » We recognize the importance of achieving positive results and continuously strive for excellence in the delivery of service to our customers.
 - » We are committed to managing the public resources entrusted to us in an efficient and effective manner.
 - » We display integrity through open and transparent decision-making and action consistent with policy.



- Teamwork**
- » We value positive, effective working relationships with our internal and external customers.
 - » We understand that innovation, creativity, and good decision making are best achieved through teamwork.
 - » We collaborate and support one another as team members across departmental boundaries to meet common goals.
 - » We value a working culture that supports a safe, clean, healthy and productive work environment.
 - » We value honesty and integrity and expect everyone to treat each other with respect.



- Leadership**
- » We value empowerment and initiative, and support one another to identify opportunities, solve problems, and respond to challenges.
 - » We communicate and share information often, openly, and honestly.
 - » We understand the role we play, at all times, as ambassadors for the City.
 - » We continuously examine, adapt and improve the service we provide to our customers.
 - » We encourage and support staff in accessing learning and development opportunities to continuously develop, improve, and upgrade their knowledge and skills.



- Respect**
- » We have relationships between Council, staff, and volunteers that are open and respectful.
 - » We engage in active listening and allow the opinions of others to be heard.
 - » We believe gossip is often negative, hurtful, and counter-productive to the workplace.
 - » We do not label people, bully, or tolerate any workplace harassment or discrimination, and we use appropriate language in the workplace.
 - » We do not harbour resentment, jealousy, guilt, or bitterness towards others.
 - » We value positive and timely conflict resolution, but recognize that healthy disagreement can lead to constructive and innovative outcomes.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

— FOR OUR PEOPLE PLAN

GATHERING DATA

An essential first step in building our People Plan was gathering data from various sectors within our organization to gain valuable insights into the needs, preferences, and behaviors of our workforce.

This included the establishment of **corporate-wide focus groups for input, third-party consultants reviewing policies/processes, employee engagement surveys as well as a thorough review of various corporate data/metrics.**

Cross Departmental Focus Groups

An ad-hoc group was established to assist with identifying a checklist of Key Talent Implications. This group consisted of a cross section of staff (12) from all divisions of the organization, who provided key input on our Talent Implications Checklist.



Third-Party Consultation

A third-party consultant reviewed key HR Corporate Policies and Practices from a lens of DEI to ensure legislative compliance (ex. Ontario Human Rights Code, AODA etc), with factors such as anti-racism, anti-discrimination, accessibility, as well as recruitment and hiring processes.



People Framework

A specific framework and People Plan tool was used (developed by McLean & Company) to build out a People Plan that aligns to our organization's strategic plan and organizational values.



Employee Engagement Survey

An Employee Engagement survey identified three priorities for improvement: customer service, career advancement, employee recognition. The survey also identified three areas of strength to continue building upon including: employee empowerment, workplace culture, and DEI.



Workforce Metrics

A review of key metrics was undertaken to assess turnover rates, vacancy rates, demographic data, grievances, labor relations, skill set gaps, health & safety data, learning and development, to understand the organization's current state and areas for improvement.



UNDERSTANDING OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The approach taken in developing our People Plan was comprehensive and founded in understanding what is important to our employees, our leaders, and our organization. Both our employees and leaders are at the centre of our People Plan.

Through this process, we engaged our employees (at all levels, non-union and unionized), as well as our senior leaders to share insights on their thoughts and experiences working at the City.

To improve employee feedback and engagement, and to facilitate a better workplace environment, the City of Niagara Falls conducted an employee engagement survey in 2023. The Employee Engagement Survey and its results were administered by a third-party organizational consulting firm, who specialize in facilitating and analyzing employee engagement surveys in both the private and public sector.

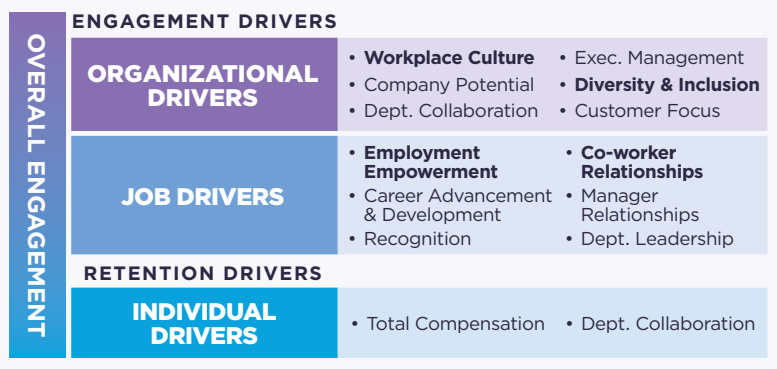
What did we learn?

Compared to other municipalities and public sector agencies, the City scored excellent results in the following areas:

1. Employee Empowerment

2. Workplace Cultures
3. Diversity and Inclusion

4. Co-worker Relationships



The survey also indicated the following data as it relates to Employee Satisfaction:

I am very committed to this organization.	81%
Taking everything into account, I like my job.	80%
Taking everything into account, I like working at this organization.	74%

Employee engagement goes beyond employee satisfaction. Engaged employees are ones who feel energized, passionate, and dedicated to the organization. They are highly involved with their work and the organization. Satisfied employees feel comfortable and are generally happy their needs are being met.

Overall, the results of our employee engagement survey indicate employee engagement is at a very good range. Over 54% are fully engaged with an additional 28% almost fully engaged. A remaining 10% were disengaged and an additional 7.5% percent were indifferent.

Over 80% of employees like their jobs and are committed to this organization.

Key Priority Areas for Improvement and Focus

While employees are satisfied with their co-worker relations, workplace culture, and empowerment they have in the organization, the survey also indicated areas for improvement and focus. These areas include the following:



3RD-PARTY AUDIT ON POLICIES

Throughout 2022 and 2023, Human Resources engaged the professional consulting services of a 3rd party who are one of the only management consulting firms who address inequities in organizations for all historically marginalized groups. This consulting firm helps organizations make system-wide improvements to their policies, procedures, and practices to achieve equity and safe places for all.

In doing so, they work with employers to transform workplaces at the root. They help break systemic and attitudinal barriers to inclusion through the assessment and audit of workplace systems, policies, processes, and practices; make recommendations for improvement which address inequalities; and provide training to address people’s conscious and unconscious biases and behaviours.

They also specialize in compliance in the areas of human rights, accessibility, workplace violence, and occupational health and safety.

The consultant conducted a review of key Human Resources policies and practices through the lens of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This review included; Payroll, Recruitment, Labour Relations, Health & Safety, Health & Benefits, and various Accessibility & Human Rights related policies.

Some of the key deliverables provided by the consultant during this project included the following:

- » Review the legal and regulatory framework the City operates under (The Act, Regulations, By-laws, Minimum Standards, Policy documents etc.).
- » Critically examine policies, standards, practices, and decisions across the City’s Human Resources program area with an intersectional DEI lens.
- » Review HR Metrics to determine data collection needs for the corporate employee engagement survey.
- » Provide pre-survey advice and guidance to develop draft survey questions for the employee engagement survey.
- » Review data collected from demographic and perception survey to create a baseline for the organization and identify how staff may be experiencing the workplace.
- » Examine how structural, attitudinal, and language barriers play a role in preventing stake-holders from meaningfully interacting with the City.
- » Provide the City with next steps and recommendations toward advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.



STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

The Strategic Plan and the People Plan are intricately connected through our goals and actions. While the Strategic Plan sets the direction of the City, the People Plan ensures that we have the right talent and culture to navigate towards these objectives.

Strategic Plan Pillars

Sustainability
FINANCIAL, SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL

Economic Diversification and Growth

Customer Service



OBJECTIVES

- » Embrace innovative technology and processes to efficiently meet customer needs, fostering greater engagement with the City.
- » Ensure the City is inclusive and accessible for customers across all services. Establish policies and practices that enable respectful, fair, and equitable treatment.
- » Build and maintain customer trust through addressing customer requests and responsive communication.
- » Foster a culture of collaboration within internal departments for a consistent customer service experience.
- » Engage with customers to understand their needs, expectations, and preferences.

ACTIONS

- » Establish a three-year people plan to become an Employer of Choice and implement strategies and initiatives to attract, develop, and retain top talent.

The alignment between the Strategic Plan and the People Plan, ensures that our goals are not only met but exceeded, with both our employees and customers benefitting from a more engaging, responsive, and effective organization.

KEY PILLARS OF OUR PEOPLE PLAN

Our People Plan will focus HR Resources in prioritized areas to align with organizational goals. It will also support and maintain a healthy, safe, and positive work environment for our people. And, it will improve employee engagement, enhance performance, and help attract and retain top talent.

Within our 2024 – 2026 People Plan, we aim to support our employees’ health and well-being, providing the experiences and resources needed to grow careers, and offer the flexibility required for our employees to be their best, at home and work. Our Plan incorporates the principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, interlinked through our five Key Pillars, to ensure our workplace is welcoming and inclusive for everyone.

Our employees are critical to our organization and the overall success of both our Strategic Priorities and our People Plan. This plan will serve as a framework for the supports, resources, programs and experiences our employees need to be and do their best in serving the residents and visitors of Niagara Falls.

A key component of our People Plan will be measuring its success through various benchmarks and metrics over the next three (3) years. Through a detailed consultation process with our consultant, we have established specific criteria to benchmark the success of our People Plan which are noted within success measures of each pillar.

HEALTHY & SAFE
WORKPLACE

SERVICE &
PERFORMANCE
EXCELLENCE

ATTRACTION &
RETENTION

ENGAGED
WORKFORCE

LEARNING &
DEVELOPMENT



OUR PEOPLE PLAN PILLARS

Establishing clear goals, outcomes, priorities, and success measures is crucial for the effectiveness of our People Plan. These elements provide direction, allow for resources to be efficiently allocated, and offer a framework for evaluating progress, ensuring a focused and dynamic approach to nurturing our key pillars.

FOSTERING A HEALTHY & SAFE WORKPLACE

GOAL

Promote and sustain an organization that values a healthy and safe workplace.

OUTCOME

Creating a workplace that is healthy and safe, and one that will reduce and prevent workplace injuries and illness.

PRIORITIES

- » Create specific training activities for health, safety, and wellness.
- » Develop a crisis response plan for City facilities.
- » Adopt flexible work arrangements to ensure a healthy work-life balance.
- » Identify key positions for Physical Demands Analysis and modified work opportunities.

SUCCESS MEASURES

We will monitor the average number of sick days per year, track WSIB lost-time injuries, and calculate the cost per employee for WSIB claims.

CULTIVATING SERVICE & PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

GOAL

Commit to enhancing service through teamwork, innovation, and continuous quality improvement.

OUTCOME

Improved departmental customer service awareness and effectiveness as well as enhanced performance management.

PRIORITIES

- » Fully implement all necessary HR Functions into the new ERP system.
- » Establish a committee to review the performance appraisal process and provide recommendations for enhancement.
- » Full integration of our online performance management process with learning management plans.

SUCCESS MEASURES

We will monitor total grievances filed per year among all union groups as well as the time it takes to resolve those grievances. We will track and compare employee engagement levels.

ATTRACTING & RETAINING TOP TALENT

GOAL

Recruit and motivate a talented workforce to meet the current and future business needs.

OUTCOME

Attract and retain top talent for all vacancies and become an employer of choice.

PRIORITIES

- » Aim to develop key partnerships to help fill challenging vacancies.
- » Focus on developing internal staff for certain promotions and advancements.
- » Develop a total rewards system.
- » Pursue becoming an employer of choice through Canada's Top 100 Employers.

SUCCESS MEASURES

We will monitor the average time to fill vacancies (internal/external), the total number of job postings (internal/external), and the total number of internal promotions and advancements. We will also track and monitor employee turnover rates and other related metrics.

SUSTAINING AN ENGAGED WORKPLACE CULTURE

GOAL

Support and empower our people to promote a collaborative, respectful and inclusive environment.

OUTCOME

Ensure a collaborative, inclusive and respectful workforce.

PRIORITIES

- » Develop a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy.
- » Coordinate awareness campaigns for respect in the workplace, and mental health and wellbeing.
- » Facilitate the coordination of follow-up employee engagement surveys.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Track employee engagement scores, monitor the total number of formal complaints received, review the average length of service of employees as well as examine employee assistance program (EAP) utilization rates.

ADVANCE LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

GOAL

Champion life-long learning and career growth to meet the needs of our workforce.

OUTCOME

Develop a formal learning and development strategy that embraces new technologies and innovative learning.

PRIORITIES

- » Focus on integrating learning and corporate training into the new ERP system.
- » Conduct a corporate needs analysis on learning and development and establish formal leadership competencies and coaching framework.
- » Further development and integration of leadership opportunities for staff at all levels.

SUCCESS MEASURES

Track total cost on learning and development, monitor average money spent on employees, number of courses completed annually by employees.

KEY WORKPLAN TIMELINES

In order to achieve desired outcomes of our People Plan, it is important as an organization, we have specific targeted initiatives and projects over the period of 2024 - 2026.

In consultation with Senior Leadership, our HR Team will be focussing on the following initiatives and projects over the next three (3) years:

PRIORITIES	FUNCTION	2024				2025				2026			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
HEALTH & SAFETY													
Create 3 - 5 additional training activities for health, safety and wellness.	Health & Safety												
Develop a crisis response plan for 1 - 2 facilities.	Health & Safety												
Create database of modified work opportunities for early RTW and 3 - 5 PDA's.	Health & Safety												
SERVICE & PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE													
Full implementation of all necessary HR Functions into the new ERP system.	HRIS												
Establish committee to review performance appraisal process and provide recommendations for enhancement.	Performance Management												
Integration of online performance management process with learning management plans.	Performance Management												
ATTRACTION & RETENTION													
Develop shared service agreements and partnerships to help fill challenging vacancies.	Talent Acquisition												
Compensation review (salary and benefits), to enhance total rewards (including WFH, Sabbaticals, Job Sharing).	Total Rewards												
Complete formal application to become certified employer of choice.	Talent Acquisition												
Develop formal career and succession management plan.	Organizational Development												
ENGAGED WORKFORCE													
Develop a formalized DEI Strategy.	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion												
Coordinate awareness campaign for respect and corporate values in the workplace.	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion												
Facilitate follow-up employee engagement survey to benchmark against 2022 survey.	Organizational Development												
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT													
Integrate learning and corporate training into ERP.	HRIS												
Conduct corporate training needs analysis.	Learning & Development												
Develop leadership competencies and coaching framework.	Organizational Development												

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Throughout the next three (3) years, our HR Team is very excited to implement various corporate initiatives and projects as part of our 2024 - 2026 People Plan. A solid People Plan will help our organization improve performance and navigate transformation. This plan will also help to develop and enhance our employees' skills and abilities.

Implementation of our various initiatives and projects, will help us achieve many positive outcomes which will have a long-lasting impact. Some of the key expected outcomes we anticipate occurring as a result of our People Plan include the following:

01. A healthy and safe workplace.

02. Reduced workplace injuries and lost time claims.
03. Improved customer service awareness and effectiveness.

04. Enhanced performance management.
05. Attract & retain top talent for all vacancies.

06. Become an Employer of Choice.
07. Ensure a collaborative and respectful workplace.

08. Improved employee engagement scores.
09. Integrate corporate training into ERP.

10. Developed leadership competencies.



CONCLUSION

The 2024 - 2026 People Plan is our framework for people practices at the City of Niagara Falls. The success of this Plan is largely dependent on the support of our organization in shaping policies and procedures, providing required resources, and completion of the various key priorities and projects identified. Success of this People Plan will also be driven by our strong leaders.

We look to our talented and committed management team at the City to join us in bringing this Plan to life and adopting the key pillars and themes into their leadership practice. We also will be relying on our employees (OUR TEAM), to take ownership of this Plan. A common challenge with a multi-year plan, like our People Plan, is keeping it alive over time.

Regular internal communications and social media highlights will feature aspects of the Plan, such as employee recognition, or sharing our value proposition. Within this document, we have provided insights into key projects and initiatives which will drive our Plan forward. We have also identified how we will track and measure our success.

An important aspect of driving this Plan forward will come from employee input. We will continue to seek regular feedback and perspectives through employee engagement, focus groups, pulse surveys, as well as other outreach methods to understand the impact and effectiveness of our People Plan.

Our work to sustain this Plan will be supported and guided through the integration of consulting with leading edge HR experts, analysis of various research and data, as well as through building relationships and creating policies which enable strategic planning, decisions, and operational accountabilities. In addition, efforts will be supported through effective workforce planning that aims to strengthen our leadership team and people design (including internal and external talent attraction and identification practices).

On behalf of our Senior Leadership Team, we would like to extend a very big thank you to all of our employees, consultants, and leaders who took part in this process and provided extremely valuable input in developing our first ever People Plan. Your feedback, insight and commitment to this project is truly appreciated.



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