

# 2023/2026 BLUEPRINT



ALGONQUIN  
COLLEGE

## Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility

in the Algonquin College Work Environment

**ALGONQUIN**  
COLLEGE

Inclusion, Diversity,  
Equity & Accessibility

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Algonquin College campuses (Ottawa, Pembroke and Perth) are located on the traditional unceded, unsurrendered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin People.

The Algonquin People have inhabited and cared for these lands long before today. We take this time to show our gratitude and respect to them, and to the land for all that it provides us: trees to give shade, water and food to sustain us, and paths to connect us. As a post-secondary institution, we embrace the responsibility to help ensure that the next generations of land stewards are respectful and grateful for the bounty of this land on which we all live, work, play, and study.

We commit to continue to explore and make meaningful contributions to the Calls to Action that result from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.



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# MESSAGES FROM LEADERSHIP



“It has been my goal to help make Algonquin College a highly diverse and inclusive institution. I am inspired when I reflect on the good progress we have made, yet I know we have more work to do. To that end, I am committed to seeing us continue to make significant strides along this journey together. You have told us that this work is important to you. To achieve our goals, we want to be able to welcome people from around the world and all parts of society. And we know that the IDEA of Algonquin – its Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility – is crucial for us to be able to thrive into the future.”

**- Claude Brulé, CEO & President**



“This second edition of the College’s Blueprint is an important one – recognizing that IDEA has been a critical underpinning of our success as an employer of choice thus far, we have elevated Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility to the highest organizational plan – Algonquin College’s strategic plan. I believe we must deliver on a work environment which is inclusive and equitable. This is absolutely fundamental if we strive to most effectively tap into the incredible strengths of our employee community. I’m proud to share with you all our roadmap for pulling together, working as a team, and achieving our vision for a more caring, respectful work environment, and, ultimately, culture of inclusion. Thank you for joining me on this journey.”

**- Diane McCutcheon, VP Human Resources**

# DEFINITIONS<sup>1</sup>

## **INCLUSION**

Means intentionally creating a sense of belonging where all employees are recognized and valued for their uniqueness; and collectively promoting a working environment where individuals can be their authentic selves.

## **DIVERSITY**

Means recognizing that we are all unique and bring with us varied experiences, perspectives and approaches to the work environment.

## **EQUITY**

Means treating individuals and groups fairly, not necessarily equally or the same; recognizing that there are barriers to employment, participation, access and inclusion in the work environment. The principle of equity acknowledges that systemic barriers exist and action is needed to address historical imbalances.

## **ACCESSIBILITY<sup>2</sup>**

Means the intentional inclusive design of products, devices, services, and environments for people who experience disabilities. Algonquin College is committed to ensuring that all people are provided with a barrier-free environment that affords them independence and, where they are treated with dignity.

# Living the IDEA of Algonquin; Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable, & Accessible.

1. Human Resources Policy, "HR 24 Inclusion & Diversity," (Algonquin College, 2020), <https://www.algonquincollege.com/policies/files/2020/12/HR24.pdf>

2. Algonquin college Multi-Year Accessibility Plan January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2026, (Algonquin College, 2022), <https://www.algonquincollege.com/accessibility-resources/files/2022/10/Algonquin-College-2022-2026-AODA-Multiyear-Plan-Accessibility-Plan.pdf>



# THANK YOU

***Thank you to the following individuals who helped inform and shape this Blueprint.***

To the hundreds of employees who offered input, thoughts and engaged in the [community dialogue](#) sessions. And thank you to:

- Alem Legesse - Professor, School of Advanced Technology
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# INTRODUCTION

The College's strong commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) is emphasized in our [2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#), where goal three states we will “create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive work environment.” This strategic importance and the IDEA principles were evident throughout the steps used to develop this Blueprint. Consultations with the College's senior leaders articulated the key linkages between this effort and the College's success. Priorities for investment were further defined through research on best practices, an assessment of our practices compared to well-accepted benchmarks, and fact-finding interviews with other Colleges recognized for their achievements. Detailed tactics were inspired through the experiences and voices of hundreds of our employees, which were captured through survey results, a 5-week online community dialogue, engagement events, consultation with our unions, and the insights of the [Inclusion & Diversity Circle](#). This 2022-2026 Blueprint lays out our resulting plan.




## OUR PROGRESS & OUR CURRENT STATE

In the three years since we developed the inaugural Algonquin College Inclusion & Diversity Blueprint, much has been achieved. Actions that we committed to in 2019 have been put into place and have yielded many positive results.

For example,

We have strengthened **our ability to consult with employees** – we have engaged our workforce in understanding our challenges and creating meaningful solutions – through our first Inclusive *Climate Survey*, our 2022 online community dialogue, the [Inclusion & Diversity Circle](#), and several other engagement events. This input shapes our work to continue building the inclusiveness of our systems and processes.

Leaders have the tools now to **assess and build their competencies** for creating an inclusive and diverse environment – in the classroom and the work environment, in their hiring processes, and in their decision-making. The tools focus on intercultural competence, emotional intelligence for inclusive behaviours, and ongoing learning and development. Our commitment to workforce data collection is helping us to make evidence-based decisions and commit to meaningful actions such as those in this new Blueprint.



We have consistently held **a range of learning events to help our employees** engage in self-reflection and develop practical skills and behaviours for an inclusive work environment. These well-received efforts have included: our series of Inclusion Infusions; workshops on being an Ethical Upstander, on disrupting anti-Asian racism and on understanding Gender & Sexual Diversity; events focused on Indigenous awareness; and many others. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, our commitment to learning provided 3,200 learning touch points in the 2021-2022 year alone – opportunities for sharing insights, expanding awareness and inspiring action.

With these and other actions, we have **a strong foundation to build on** as we move forward into the next three years.

## BENCHMARKING

One step in building an evidence-based plan for progress in Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) is an uncompromising assessment of the College’s current practices. A comparison to best practices helps identify priorities for action. Importantly, it also strengthens accountability for progress, by providing a ‘measuring stick’ that we can use to gauge our progress.

The College chose to use the Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) – a highly regarded approach widely used across many sectors, including higher education. The GDEIB provides 275 benchmarks in 15 categories. Five possible levels of achievement reflect an organization’s current state and give direction for further progress.

For each of the relevant categories for the Blueprint, the process owners at Algonquin College and IDEA experts met to review current practices and agree on a consensus

rating. Confirming evidence was available through the guidance of the [Inclusion & Diversity Circle](#), consultations with our unions, and the various inputs of our employees.

The results were informative. Our key **strengths** include:

- Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) are strategically integrated within the College’s plans.
- Staff benefits and compensation are inclusive, equitable and modern.
- IDEA capacity building (communications & training) is frequent and well received.

The assessment flagged that an important **area of opportunity** is to update our structured processes (such as hiring, retention & career advancement, and procurement) to be much more intentionally and systematically inclusive.



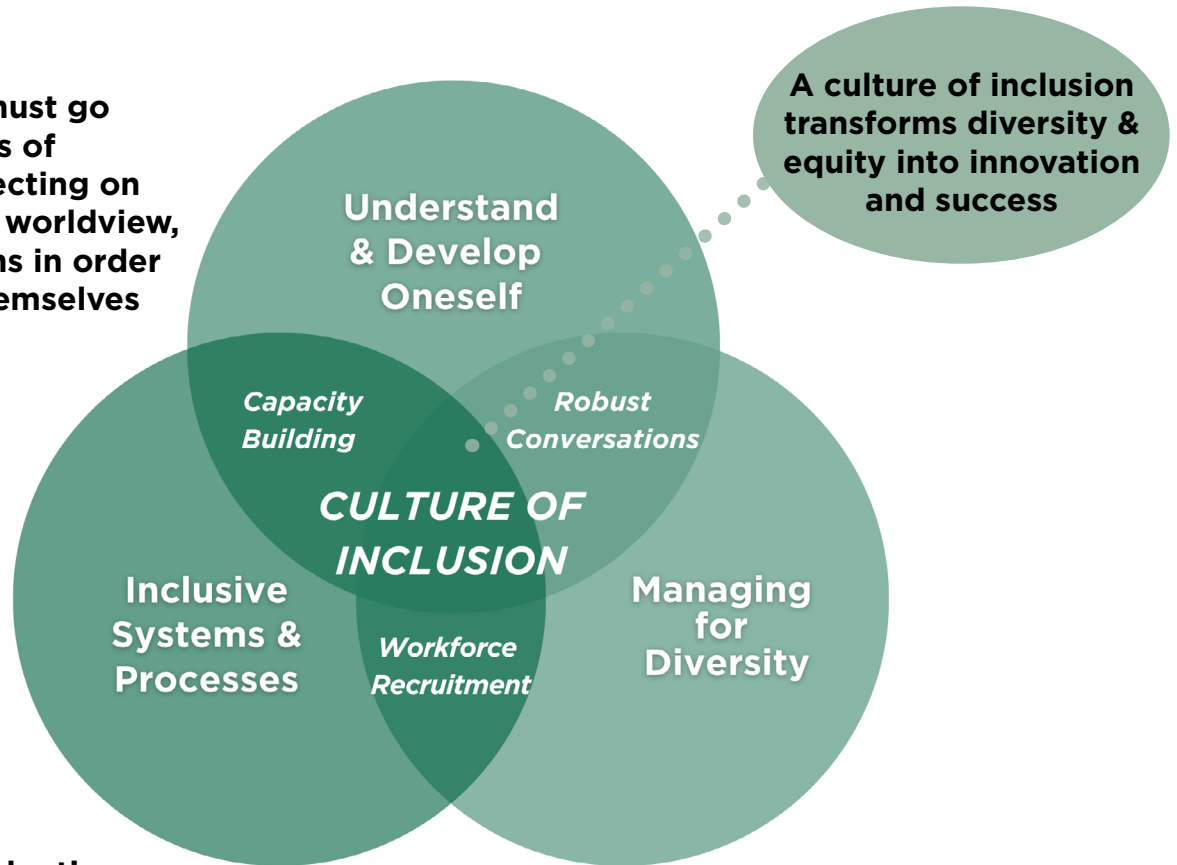
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# The Blueprint

- 1: CAPACITY BUILDING
  - 2: ROBUST CONVERSATIONS
  - 3: WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT
-

# ALGONQUIN'S MODEL FOR CREATING AN INCLUSIVE COLLEGE

Each individual must go through a process of learning and reflecting on their own values, worldview, and cultural norms in order to understand themselves and others.



Examining and adapting our policies, practices or procedures that result in some unequal access and exclusion

Ensuring that people managers have the group leadership and process skills that can facilitate effective, diverse-group functioning.

Our continuing work to achieve the promise of inclusion and diversity will drive progress in three areas: Understanding Oneself, Managing for Diversity, and creating Inclusive Systems and Processes. The tactics within this Blueprint are designed to grow these three capacities at both the individual and organizational levels of Algonquin College.

The refreshed Blueprint is a critical support to the [Algonquin College 2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#) and our [Accessibility Plan](#). It reflects best practices that have been tailored to our College's current strengths and the next steps in our journey. This Blueprint lays out three areas of strategic focus: Capacity Building, Robust Conversations, and Workforce Recruitment. Each focus area has clear tactics and success indicators. Achieving these will help us to realize the benefits of having an inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible College.

# AREA OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

## 1: CAPACITY BUILDING


### **Enhance the ability of our leadership and workforce to thrive in an Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable, & Accessible work environment.**

Ongoing improvements in knowledge and skills are fundamental to continuous improvement in inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility. In this area of strategic focus for the coming three years, we will build on our strong foundation to address some important gaps and evolving needs.

Employees who participated in the [Inclusive Climate Survey](#) and the online [community dialogue](#) highlighted the critical impact of people leaders – who must consistently demonstrate inclusive behaviours and be role models for others. The data showed that even if an employee experiences negative behaviour from a colleague, they can still feel a sense of belonging if their manager is effective at dealing with put-downs or other

behaviour that is not inclusive. About half (45%) of our survey respondents in Fall 2021 were confident that their manager was effective in this regard. Input from our front-line areas has revealed the challenges of interacting with some clients and members of the public whose behaviours can be inappropriate or hurtful. We have seen evidence that we need to be more consistent and intentional in our equitable inclusion of employees with disabilities.

We are fortunate that the Algonquin College leaders, staff and faculty show such keen interest in growing their awareness and skills. The tactics in this strategic area are designed to complement, not replace, the many successful initiatives that are already in place.



**“All employees and students should participate in diversity training to learn about biases and how to create a safe and inclusive environment for all. Education is key to dismantling biases and creating inclusion.”**

**- Community Dialogue Participant**

# TACTICS

## 1: CAPACITY BUILDING



Encourage all employees to complete the 'Introduction to Inclusion & Diversity at Algonquin College' course; place a particular emphasis on People Leaders who are onboarding new employees.



Create learning program(s) for front-line employees, who may confront discrimination, harassment or micro-aggressions from clients or the public. Provide learning supports to their managers to be active allies.



Train People Leaders on effective and inclusive accommodation processes for employees with disabilities, both visible and invisible.



Expand the resources and tools for defining IDEA competencies required of job candidates. Implement them across the wide range of hiring processes.



Each and every quarter, continue to provide a variety of IDEA support resources, and awareness, learning and engagement activities - ranging from self-reflection and personal growth to pragmatic tools for day-to-day action.

## SUCCESS INDICATORS

- Six trained employee facilitators to deliver the new learning program(s).**
- 100 front-line employees trained and report they feel more equipped to address difficult situations.**
- Participation in events and training maintained at a high level.**
- 75% of employees who participate report they directly benefit from the learning initiatives.**

# AREA OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

## 2: ROBUST CONVERSATIONS

### **Drive change by engaging our workforce in constructive dialogue about inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA).**


One of the three goals in [Algonquin College's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#) is to “create an equitable, diverse and inclusive work environment”. Other critical initiatives include our [Accessibility Plan](#) and our [Indigenous Reconciliation efforts](#). To achieve our goals, these plans must be translated into change, through daily action and intentional behaviour. This is the essence of creating an inclusive climate.

Fostering a readiness for change requires that we be comfortable with discussing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility topics. These conversations are not always easy. There needs to be safe space and openness to share our experiences and perspectives and a willingness to acknowledge those experiences that are different from our own as valid. To support this, we have successfully introduced an [Inclusive Climate Survey](#) and an online community dialogue process.

The [Inclusion & Diversity Circle](#) provides an ongoing guidance; other events and vehicles engage a wide range of our employees. These are important opportunities for our employees to be heard; their voices have helped shape the tactics throughout this Blueprint.

We have seen the value of the evidence-based discussions arising from the findings of the survey and the online dialogue. Having even better information about our workforce will help us to further strengthen our conversations.

The tactics in this strategic focus will foster constructive dialogue about our current realities and our desired changes. This is fundamental to solidifying our shared commitment to action for an inclusive climate and work environment.



**“Source solutions from the groups of people you want to include - Ask queer, bipoc, disabled or other minority groups what THEY need to be represented.”**

**- Community Dialogue Participant**



**“People leaders and administration need to deeply hear their staff in regards to offering a supportive climate and culture”**

**- Community Dialogue Participant**

# TACTICS

## 2. ROBUST CONVERSATIONS



Assemble three additional Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to provide forums for discussion, input to policy development, etc. Craft the groups to meet needs expressed by interested groups with shared identities.



Conduct an equity census to more fully understand our workforce population and provide an information base for meaningful conversations and action. Develop cascading plans to close any gaps and to ensure our population reflects the diversity of the population and the communities we serve.



Maintain the successful momentum of the Inclusion & Diversity Circle and the Accessibility Committee.



Leverage ongoing IDEA events related to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility to foster robust conversations and model a safe space.

## SUCCESS INDICATORS

- 80% participation in the equity census; employees demonstrate comfort with self-identification of their demographic characteristics.**
- Three new Employee Resource Groups established and supported; a total of at least 12 sessions held.**
- Safe space principles consistently reflected in Algonquin College IDEA engagement sessions.**

# AREA OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

## 3: WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

### Enhance the College's ability to attract and recruit diverse talent

Through the disruption experienced during the past few years, we have realized more than ever that our future will bring different challenges than those Algonquin College has successfully overcome in the past. Among the key drivers for change are new groups of students with different expectations, partner industries with rapidly shifting needs, and our commitment to Indigenization. A diverse qualified workforce - who can reflect the full range of age, gender, race, culture, differently abled, and so on - will be critical to bringing the required perspectives and creating the needed innovation. With thousands of employees, Algonquin College has hundreds of opportunities each year to identify, attract and retain talented individuals with a range of diverse characteristics.

As part of preparing this refreshed Blueprint, many of the College's practices were assessed against a set of external comparators - including the well-regarded set of Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB). Employee recruitment was identified as a practice gap compared to these benchmarks. Our well-intentioned efforts are nonetheless vulnerable to yielding less-than-ideal outcomes. We need transparent and consistent systems and processes implemented by decision makers who are supported with awareness and training. Recruitment, retention and development of the best available talent is a critical priority for the College.


This strategic focus contains tactics that will solidify our staffing practices with our HR professionals, managers and all members of hiring panels. Successful results will be achieved through a combination of evidence-based planning, frank reviews of our practices, and change-producing tools and workshops.



**“Traditional recruitment strategies limit the candidates we attract - lack of training on bias affects who we choose to hire.**

**Both limit diversity.”**

**- Community Dialogue Participant**



**“Bias training for hiring committees. Sub-consciously, we all can succumb to bias. Recognizing that is important and this needs to be mandatory training for all people involved in hiring.**

**- Community Dialogue Participant**

## TACTICS



Use the results of the equity census to develop a robust evidence-based plan for closing gaps in representation. Strengthen recruitment and staffing outcomes by embedding inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA) principles into clear and fair policies and practices.



Partner actively with organizations to create mutually beneficial relationships that will increase the number of qualified candidates from under-represented populations. Hold targeted employee recruitment events focused on under-represented populations, informed by equity data.



Provide bias awareness training for all hiring panel members prior to participating in competitions. Introduce 'learning together' approaches to solidify new practices.



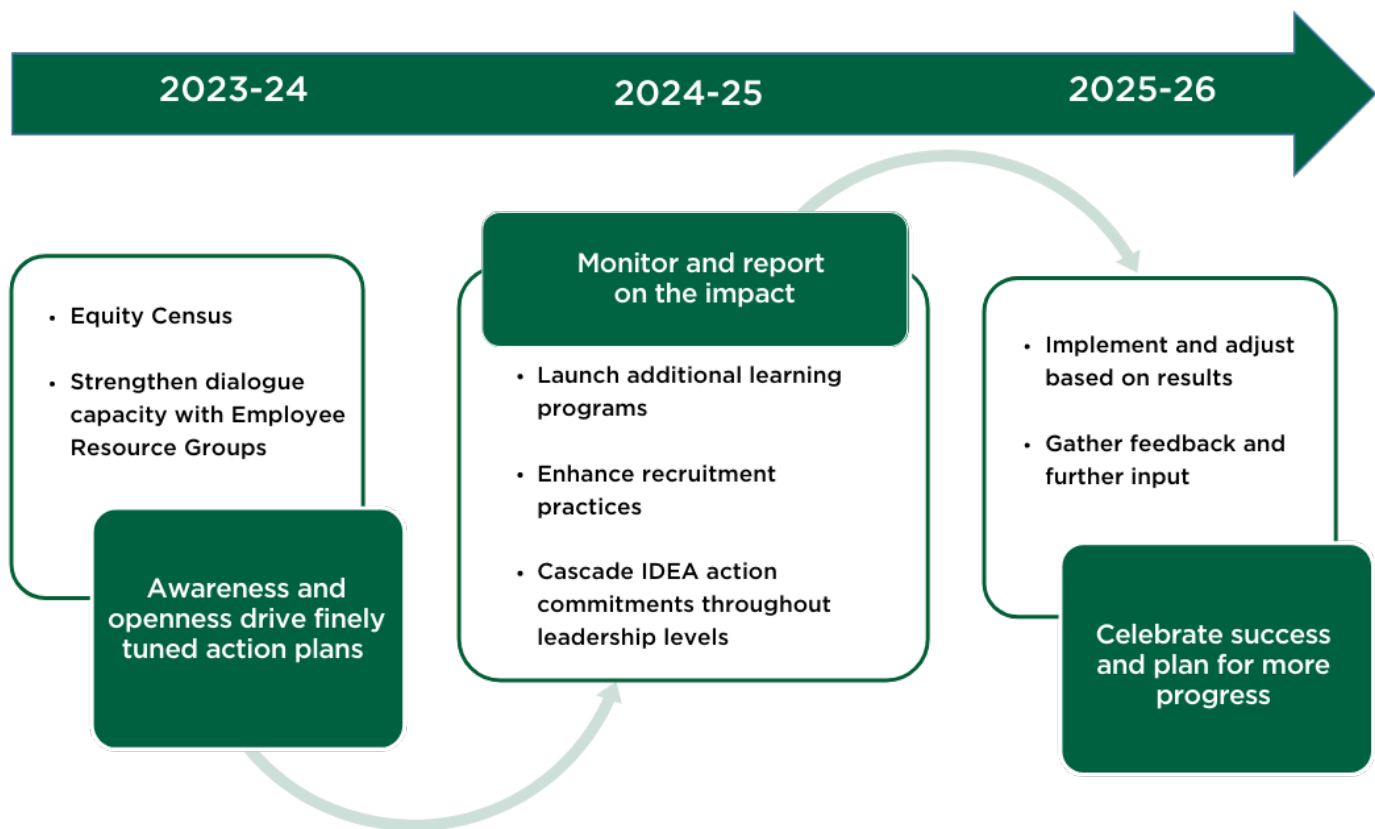
Pilot the ability to capture self-identification data from applicants and new hires; develop a reporting dashboard for monitoring results and taking action.

## SUCCESS INDICATORS

- Hiring systems being more positively assessed against external practices, reaching the Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) level of 'proactive' (3 on the 5-point scale).**
- Successfully hosting two recruitment event(s) which attract hundreds of equity-deserving candidates with good qualifications.**



# FITTING IT ALL TOGETHER DESIGNING AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE



This “Blueprint” is a plan which encapsulates our vision for the design and build of an inclusive future for all college employees. By 2026, we aspire to see an Algonquin College where:

- Our workforce reflects the world around us. If there are still gaps, we are working diligently to close them.
- Our people are proud and confident in their individual identities and trusting enough to identify themselves.
- Any of our employees who see hurtful interactions in our work environment, as well as those who experience them, have the comfort and skills to take action and be an influence for positive change.
- Our people management processes are rapidly becoming best in class.
- Our work climate reflects our thirst for knowledge and skill-building. An active IDEA program of events, resources, and networks prompts us to challenge ourselves and learn together in safe spaces.

From 2022 until 2026, we will use the building blocks of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility to construct an Algonquin College welcoming for people of all backgrounds and characteristics. This Blueprint is only the design; it will take the actions and commitment of all of us to succeed with the building effort.

