Current State Report

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI-B)

January 30, 2025

Brant Community Healthcare System

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Dear BCHS Workforce,

We are excited to share with you the Executive Summary of our current state report on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI-B) at Brant Community Healthcare System (BCHS). Kindly note that this report is a snapshot of where we were before we began our DEI-B journey and therefore does not accurately reflect the incredible progress we have already undertaken to address some of the valuable insights that were discovered throughout this development of this report. Since the data collection that took place between August 2023 to September 2024, our relationship to our DEI-B commitment has greatly improved and yet, we recognize that there are still areas where we can grow.

We intentionally chose to emphasize Belonging alongside our commitments to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, setting us apart from the standard approach. In short, belonging makes DEI initiatives more meaningful because it ensures that inclusion isn't just a checkbox —it's a lived experience. When individuals feel they truly belong, they can show up as their authentic selves, leading to deeper engagement, stronger connections, and a more cohesive team. Belonging fosters connection, trust, and a sense of security among staff and the community we serve. It's what turns diversity and inclusion into a culture that empowers people to feel fully seen, heard, and valued in our workplace.

In addition to compiling this report, we have made some meaningful changes (see page 12) through our "Celebrate, Educate, and Engage" model, which have strengthened connections with staff and the community. Beyond this, we know that this report discusses systemic challenges and changes that need to happen, and in alignment with our strategic plan and DEI-B vision, we are committed to addressing these challenges to encourage lasting change. We recognize that more work lies ahead, and we are excited about continuing this journey. This marks a significant milestone in our ongoing DEI-B efforts, and we are proud of the work accomplished through the collaboration of employees, organizational leadership, professional staff, volunteers, Patient Family Advisors (PFA), and community representatives.

The findings from this report, gathered from over 600 employees, will help guide our next steps and shape the development of our DEI-B Roadmap. We look forward to sharing more in-depth details with you soon and engaging in meaningful conversations to drive positive change. The journey toward a fully inclusive workplace is ongoing, and we are committed to continuous improvement.

Thank you for your dedication to making BCHS a more inclusive, respectful, and supportive organization. We are excited about the road ahead and the positive impact we will continue to create together.

Warm regards,

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Background and Context

Reflecting on the past year's journey in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI-B) initiatives at BCHS, this current state report encapsulates our progress and challenges in fostering an inclusive workplace culture. Through comprehensive data collection, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and community insights, we've gained valuable perspectives that shape our organizational approach towards DEI-B.

Summary

This report provides an overview of BCHS's current state regarding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI-B). It features insights from a comprehensive survey of 663 employees, representing 33% of our workforce, marking one of our largest engagement efforts.

The quantitative survey data reveals a diverse demographic landscape with significant linguistic and ethnic variety. While most respondents value DEI-B, there is a lack of leadership awareness, indicating a need for improved communication and action.

Additionally, over 100 hours of qualitative data were gathered through leadership interviews, focus groups, and one-on-one employee interviews.

These insights highlight the strategic importance of inclusivity, psychological safety, and integrating DEI-B into our organizational culture. Leadership challenges and aspirations reflect a commitment to ongoing improvement.

Focus groups and community interviews further underscore the need for diverse leadership, enhanced DEI-B training, and psychologically safe environments. Addressing systemic issues and microaggressions remains crucial for fostering a respectful and inclusive workplace culture.

This report will guide BCHS's DEI-B priorities, and the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Key Behavioral Insights (KBIs) aligned with the Ontario Health DEI Framework, aiming to close perception gaps and strengthen leadership commitment to create a valued and empowered workplace.

Key Activities and Deliverables to Date

Leader Meetings

Jurisdictional Scan

Leadership Interviews

Document Review

DEI-B Survey

Focus Groups

Community Interviews

DEI-B Framework

Recommendations

Current State Report ★

In Progress

DEI-B Implementation Roadmap

DEI-B Training

Data Collection and Strategy

Data analysis methods to build engagement and collect information on BCHS's current state for this report.

Understanding Current State

1

PRELIMINARY INTRODUCTION MEETING WITH LEADERS

2

DEI-B SURVEY

Description: The DEI-B Survey gathers staff insights on equity, diversity, and inclusion, informing interview questions and inclusive culture behaviors.

Purpose: Foster inclusivity, identify areas for improvement, and shape strategies for equity and inclusivity promotion.

How many: 663 participants organization-wide.

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DOCUMENT REVIEW

Description: The analysis involves examining data and documents, with a particular focus on HR data trends and comprehensive documentation review.

Purpose: The gathered data will provide essential insights and recommendations for the development of the BCHS.

How many: The analysis requested approximately 49 documents, of which 18 were received.

Reinforcing Findings & Exploring Gaps

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FOCUS GROUPS, ONLINE FORMS AND 1-1 STAFF INTERVIEWS

Description: Focus Groups at BCHS: 1 Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), 1 Indigenous, and 1 open to all staff, professional staff, and volunteers.

Supplement with 1-on-1 interviews due to lower attendance in some focus groups. Also provided an online form that ensured anonymity for participants.

Purpose: Gather employee sentiment and insights from the DEI-B Survey to deepen understanding of perspectives on DEI-B within the organization.

How many: More than 20 staff were consulted for this phase.

Understanding Current & Desired Future State

5

JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

Description: Scanning 6 comparable organizations to gather relevant insights.

Purpose: Identifying successful strategies to enhance our Framework and deliverables.

How many: 6

6

LEADER & COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

Leadership Interviews Description: Conducting 31 interviews to inform the DEI-B Framework and Roadmap, aiming to enhance leadership effectiveness for equity and diversity.

Community Interviews Description: Conducting 5 interviews to gauge health equity progress for the DEI-B Framework and Roadmap.

Purpose: Gather community insights for advancing inclusivity and diversity.

How many: 36

Current State Findings - Key Themes

Summarized key findings based on DEI-B survey Data, leadership interviews, focus groups, staff interviews, and community insight.

These five themes are derived from the DEI-B Survey Data, Leadership Interviews, Focus Groups, staff interviews, and community insights. They collectively illuminate the organizational culture of BCHS concerning DEI-B.

Perception Disparities and Communication Challenges

There is a notable gap between different segments of the workforce regarding the prioritization and communication of DEI-B initiatives. While a majority of the overall workforce sees DEI-B as strategic, diverse individuals perceive less commitment and clarity from leadership. Bridging this gap is crucial for fostering unity and shared understanding across the organization.

Inclusive Organizational Culture and Psychological Safety

Employees, especially from diverse backgrounds, face challenges in feeling accepted and valued within the organization. Concerns over psychological safety hinder open discussions about DEI-B issues. Cultivating a truly inclusive culture requires addressing these barriers and creating safe spaces where all employees feel respected and supported.

Leadership Championing and Training Needs

There is a clear need for leadership to actively champion DEI-B efforts and more diversity in leadership roles are needed to effectively respond to DEI-B challenges. Comprehensive training programs are crucial in equipping leaders with the necessary skills to foster inclusivity and effectively manage diversity-related issues within their teams, with a focus on holding leaders accountable for driving meaningful change.

Support Structures and Actionable Srategies

Employees at all levels seek practical DEI-B training and support with a strategy that addresses microaggressions, bias, and discrimination, with an aim to create cultural safety for patients. Clear metrics for accountability and enhanced support for those affected are crucial for fostering an inclusive workplace culture.

Addressing Systemic Issues and Microaggressions

The organization grapples with systemic racism and privilege, resulting in frequent microaggressions against employees, healthcare providers, and patients. Some healthcare providers in our organization have raised concerns about experiencing microaggressions from patients, which can impact their well-being and ability to provide the best care. Addressing these issues necessitates comprehensive education, awareness, and systemic reforms to create a respectful and supportive environment for everyone.

Desired Future State and What Success Looks Like

Integrated findings from a jurisdictional scan, systemic review, surveys, leadership interviews, focus groups, individual staff interviews, and community interviews.

These five future state themes aim to lead BCHS towards a more inclusive and supportive environment, integrating DEI-B principles into organizational culture, leadership practices, accountability measures, and community engagement.

Unified Vision and Commitment to DEI-B

Establishing a cohesive organizational vision and commitment to DEI-B by aligning perceptions across the workforce. This involves bridging gaps in understanding (e.g., addressing disparities between overall workforce and diverse individuals) through improved communication and visible leadership support, fostering a shared approach to DEI-B initiatives.

Building an Inclusive and Empowering Workplace Culture

Creating an inclusive organizational culture where every employee feels valued and empowered. This entails addressing and reducing instances of prejudice, bias, and microaggressions in the workplace, ensuring a respectful environment that supports the diverse backgrounds and identities of all staff members.

Leadership Excellence in DEI-B

Enhancing leadership diversity and competence through comprehensive training and support. This includes equipping leaders with the skills and knowledge to effectively champion DEI-B efforts, navigate challenges, and promote inclusive practices throughout the organization.

Accountability through Metrics and Action

Implementing clear metrics and actionable plans to track progress and hold stakeholders accountable for DEI-B outcomes. By establishing structured frameworks for reflection and improvement, BCHS can ensure continuous advancement in fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace.

Community-Centric Engagement

Strengthening relationships with diverse communities beyond surface-level engagement, acknowledging their unique perspectives and needs. This involves proactive efforts to understand and address community concerns, reflecting demographic shifts and enhancing BCHS's relevance and impact in the broader community.

Keep, Stop, and Start Traits Analysis

KEEP TRAITS

Differences in Emphasis:

- Full Respondents: Emphasize Patient-Centered Care and Accountability.
- Diverse Individuals: Also, value Patient-Centered Care and Accountability, with added focus on Cultural Sensitivity and Professional Development.

Significance:

- Inclusive Culture: Diverse individuals advocate strongly for Diversity and Inclusion, crucial for a supportive workplace.
- Enhancing Collaboration: Integrating diverse perspectives fosters innovation and improves organizational performance.

STOP TRAITS

Differences in Emphasis:

- Diverse Respondents: Highlight concerns such as Cultural Insensitivity, Discriminatory Practices, Racism, and Unequal Career Growth Opportunities.

Significance of Inclusion:

- Diverse individuals express higher concerns about Cultural Insensitivity, Discriminatory Practices, and Racism.
- Need for Advocacy and Fairness: Issues like Health Inequity, Lack of Advocacy for Fairness, and Unacknowledged Bias are pronounced among diverse respondents.

Significance:

- Diversity in Concerns: Indicates varied priorities within the organization, particularly regarding inclusivity and fairness.
- Organizational Impact: Addressing these differences fosters a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.

START TRAITS

Differences in Emphasis:

- Diverse respondents prioritize Diversity and Inclusion as top concerns for an inclusive workplace.
- They also value Collaborative Teamwork, Patient-Centered Care, and Cultural Sensitivity.
- Professional Development is recognized as important, albeit with slightly less emphasis among diverse individuals.

Significance:

- Diversity in Priorities: Highlights varying perspectives within the organization, particularly on inclusion and cultural sensitivity.
- Organizational Impact: Addressing these differences improves overall workplace satisfaction and cohesion.

*This data was collected during August 2023 - Sept. 2024.

Systemic Analysis and Document Review for DEI-B Initiatives

After review, 18 out of 49 relevant documents at BCHS highlighted strengths and areas for improvement in DEI-B efforts. While initial commitments are evident in documents like the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan and Human Resource (HR) policies, gaps were found in the Leaders Handbook, inconsistent recruitment materials, and lack of escalation procedures for DEI-B concerns.

To address these, BCHS can focus on enhancing seven key DEI-B competencies: Inclusive Culture, Talent Management, Business Strategy, Wellbeing, Leadership, External Relationships, and Review/Measurement. Key recommendations include aligning policies with DEI-B goals, strengthening feedback mechanisms, and integrating DEI-B training into onboarding.

These actions can help BCHS create a more inclusive culture and improve DEI-B outcomes.

Jurisdictional Scan and Industry Best Practices

This report summarizes key findings from a jurisdictional scan of DEI-B initiatives across six organizations: Unity Health, Health Canada, Hamilton Health Sciences, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Scotiabank, and Adobe. The scan identified best practices that BCHS can adopt to enhance visibility, accountability, and inclusivity.

KEY INSIGHTS INCLUDE:

Strategic Planning and Accountability:
Leading organizations have clear DEI-B goals and communicate them publicly, improving visibility and attracting diverse talent.

Community Engagement:
Meaningful outreach through social media, storytelling, and events highlights the importance of cultural acknowledgment and community involvement.

Commitment to DEI-B Principles:
A strong focus on transparency and regular progress updates demonstrates accountability.

Training and Development:
Effective DEI-B training programs emphasize accessibility and collaboration, contributing to organizational success.
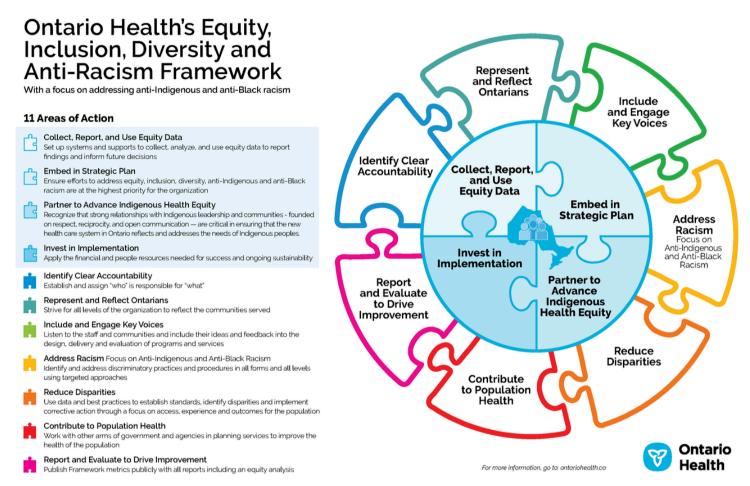
Proactive Anti-Discrimination:
Organizations take a solutions-oriented approach to addressing discrimination, fostering inclusive environments.

These findings underscore DEI-B's role in enhancing community engagement, driving organizational growth, and fostering a more inclusive work environment.

Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, & Anti-Racism Framework

Ontario Health's (OH) "Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, and Anti-Racism Framework" emphasizes its mandatory adoption and the requirement to update OH on the 2023-2024 SAA Local Obligations. It highlights the need to develop key performance indicators (KPIs).

Ontario Health's Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Anti-Racism Framework

With a focus on addressing anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism

11 Areas of Action

Collect, Report, and Use Equity Data
Set up systems and supports to collect, analyze, and use equity data to report findings and inform future decisions

Embed in Strategic Plan
Ensure efforts to address equity, inclusion, diversity, anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism are at the highest priority for the organization

Partner to Advance Indigenous Health Equity
Recognize that strong relationships with Indigenous leadership and communities - founded on respect, reciprocity, and open communication — are critical in ensuring that the new health care system in Ontario reflects and addresses the needs of Indigenous peoples.

Invest in Implementation
Apply the financial and people resources needed for success and ongoing sustainability

Identify Clear Accountability
Establish and assign "who" is responsible for "what"

Represent and Reflect Ontarians
Strive for all levels of the organization to reflect the communities served

Include and Engage Key Voices
Listen to the staff and communities and include their ideas and feedback into the design, delivery and evaluation of programs and services

Address Racism Focus on Anti-Indigenous and Anti-Black Racism
Identify and address discriminatory practices and procedures in all forms and all levels using targeted approaches

Reduce Disparities
Use data and best practices to establish standards, identify disparities and implement corrective action through a focus on access, experience and outcomes for the population

Contribute to Population Health
Work with other arms of government and agencies in planning services to improve the health of the population

Report and Evaluate to Drive Improvement
Publish Framework metrics publicly with all reports including an equity analysis

For more information, go to: ontariohealth.ca

To supplement this framework, we have created a maturity grid that evaluates the 11 Areas of Action as it relates to organizational effectiveness on a scale from Level 1 (baseline awareness) to Level 4 (highest performing teams).

Red (1)	Yellow Level 1 (2)	Yellow Level 2 (3)	Green (4)
Lowest Maturity --→ **Highest Maturity**			
Baseline Awareness	Meaningful Change	Recognized Role Models	Highest Performing Teams

Organizations often begin their journey at Levels 1-2, focusing on assessing their current state and planning for improvement.

This mirrors the results from BCHS' initial phase, where progress has been made, yet recognizing there is still considerable opportunity for growth. These findings serve as a crucial benchmark, guiding the ongoing development and deeper integration of DEI-B principles into the organization's values, practices, and actions.

As part of this process, we have carefully analysed the 11 Areas of Action within the OH framework, evaluated them through a scorecard, and provided recommendations to address both behavioural and systemic challenges. These actions are directly aligned with the 7 core competencies and their sub-competencies that underpin effective DEI-B plans.

Each core competency—whether it's cultivating an inclusive culture, fostering equitable talent management, or ensuring leadership accountability—has been thoroughly examined to ensure we are advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEI-B) in every aspect of the organization.

By linking our recommendations to these competencies, we are not only addressing immediate needs but also creating long-term, sustainable change. This alignment ensures that DEI-B is woven into the fabric of BCHS, providing a clear and actionable roadmap to build a more inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for all employees and communities we serve.

Core Competencies of DEI-B

Inclusive Culture

1a. Policies and practices.

1b. Communication and transparency.

1c. Creating an environment where all employees feel valued, respected and included.

Talent Management

2a. Talent attraction and retention.

2b. Recruitment and selection processes.

2c. Performance management and development.

Business Development & Strategy

3a. DEI-B strategy and planning.

3b. Bias mitigation.

3c. Business case for DEI-B.

People Support & Wellbeing

4a. Feedback mechanisms.

4b. Mental health and wellbeing initiatives.

4c. Flexible working arrangements.

4d. Accessibility and accommodations.

4e. Support for caring responsibilities.

Leadership & Engagement

5a. Commitment and accountability.

5b. Visibility and messaging.

5c. Inclusive leadership development.

5d. Senior leadership scrutiny.

External Relationships & Impact

6a. Community engagement and corporate social responsibility.

6b. Supplier diversity and partnerships.

6c. Industry insights and compliance.

6d. Human rights and social justice.

Review Measurements & Benchmarks

7a. Pay equity and fairness.

7b. Data analysis and benchmarking.

7c. Continuous review and improvement.
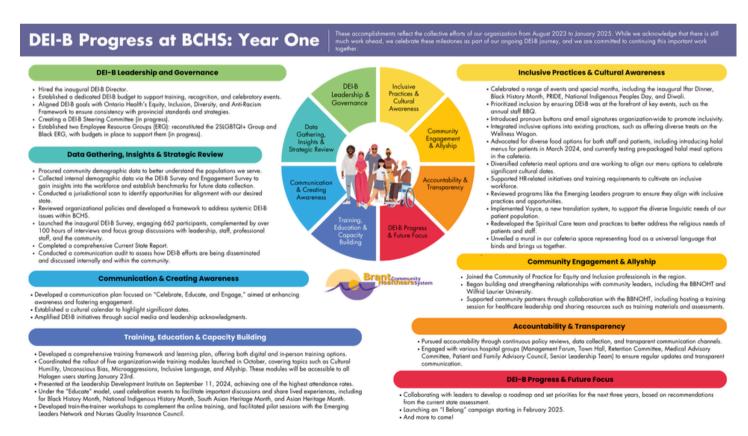
7d. Impact measurement and reporting.

Next Steps

The journey to workplace inclusivity is an ongoing effort to integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEI-B) throughout the organization. Equity is not a one-time achievement but an ongoing commitment that must remain at the forefront of all we do.

To date, the organization has completed our current state assessment and applied the OH Framework along with the core competencies to produce recommendations for improvement.

The next step is to develop a comprehensive DEI-B Roadmap to guide future actions and milestones. This process began with a visioning session with senior leadership to review the findings and align recommendations with the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

In the next phase, from February to March 2025, our focus will be on transforming these findings into actionable strategies, which will be shared with leadership and the broader workforce. Training and implementation are already underway, including online learning modules on key DEI-B topics such as understanding bias, microaggressions, and allyship. These efforts will be complemented by in-person training sessions and specialized programs to further support the online modules.

*Visit **www.bchsys.org/DEI-B** to view the milestone wheel in full-scale.*

DEI-B initiatives will evolve through feedback and a commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable workplace, where all individuals feel valued and empowered.