

NFTA DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION STRATEGIC PLAN



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Message from the Executive Director

I am pleased to share with you Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's Strategic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan. This blueprint increases our current initiatives and provides us with a clear and focused path for strategic equity, diversity and inclusion at the Authority that will guide us in establishing and maintaining a skilled, talented, and dedicated workforce while providing outstanding customer service.

The Authority is committed to diversity at every level. Our commitment to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace leads to greater creativity and problem solving and new ways of providing service. Our promise to supplier diversity aids the economic growth in the Buffalo Niagara Region. Our pledge to community outreach helps us best engage the communities in which we serve.

This plan outlines target areas, action items and performance indicators that are in line with who we are as an organization. As the Executive Director, I believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion make the Authority more effective in carrying out its true vision and mission.

The Authority is an organization built on mutual respect and understanding and one that values diversity. Therefore, with this plan, we are continuing our pledge to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Sincerely,



Kimberley A. Minkel
Executive Director



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Who We Are

The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority is a diversified and synergistic organization, energized by over 1,600 dedicated men and women, serving Buffalo Niagara through cost-effective, quality transportation services every day.

Mission

- Ensure the optimal generation, use and allocation of resources in providing the highest quality of services.
- Support the effective coordination and partnership with public and private entities in continuously improving transportation services to promote regional growth.
- Promote a positive image as the gateway to the Buffalo Niagara Region.
- Maximize the use of proven technology in the effective and efficient provision of transportation services.
- Maintain a highly motivated, skilled and innovative workforce.

Values

- We are dedicated to serving our customers and our community.
- We are an organization built on mutual respect and understanding.
- We value an inclusive work environment that supports and fosters a diverse, empowered workforce and supplier base.
- We operate with integrity and high ethical standards.
- We encourage the professional development and growth of our staff.
- We promote teamwork and collaboration throughout the Authority.
- We adhere to high standards of performance and accountability.
- We are committed to our health, safety and environmental responsibilities.

How We Define Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity: Diversity is defined by who we are as individuals. The NFTA recognizes that its strength comes from the dedication, experience, talents, and perspectives of every employee. Diversity encompasses the range of similarities and differences everyone brings to the workplace, including but not limited to national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, or family structures.

Equity: Equity refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality. Equality means providing the same to all; whereas, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances.

Inclusion: Inclusion is the process of creating a working culture and environment that recognizes, appreciates, and effectively utilizes the talents, skills, and perspectives of every employee; uses employee skills to achieve the Authority's mission; connects each employee to the organization; and encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness.



Definition of Terms/Acronyms

Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE): for-profit small business concerns where socially and economically disadvantaged individuals own at least a 51% interest, control management and daily business operations and whose personal net worth cannot exceed 1.32 million dollars ACDBE's are like DBE's but specifically for airport concessions, including rental car companies (49 CFR 23).

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications and access to state and local government programs and services (www.dol.gov).

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE): for-profit small business concerns where socially and economically disadvantaged individuals own at least a 51% interest, control management and daily business operations and whose personal net worth cannot exceed 1.32 million dollars (49 CFR 26).

Environmental Justice (EJ): is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, national origin, or educational level with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies (Executive Order 12898).

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Chief Diversity Officer: an internal official that has the essential function of ensuring that the Authority does not discriminate against employees based on sex, race, gender, origin or other legally protected groups (FTA C 4704.1A).

Good Faith Efforts (GFE): documentation that a bidder/offeror has explored all options available to meet the DBE, ACDBE or MWBE goal to the maximum extent possible (49 CFR 26 & New York State Executive Law Article 15-A).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer + (LGBTQ+): is an acronym that collectively refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community (Human Rights Campaign Glossary of Terms).

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): requires agencies to assess and address the needs of otherwise eligible persons seeking access to federally conducted programs and activities who, due to limited English proficiency, cannot fully and equally participate in or benefit from those programs and activities (Executive Order 13166).

Minority Business Enterprise (MBE): a business enterprise in which at least 51% is owned, operated and controlled by citizens or permanent resident aliens who meet the ethnic definition: Black, Hispanic American or Latin American, Asian -Pacific, Asian Indian Subcontinent, Native American or Alaskan Native and whose personal net worth cannot exceed 3.5 million dollars (New York State Executive Law Article 15-A).

Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB): one or more service-disabled veterans, with a service connected- disability of 10% or greater, must own at least 51% of the business enterprise. The service-disabled veteran owner(s) must have (and exercise) authority to control independently the day-to-day business decisions; business must qualify as a small business under the New York State program; the enterprise has no more than 300 employees and has a significant business presence in the state but is not dominant in its field and the company must have a significant business presence in New York State (New York State Executive Law Article 17-B).

Title VI: protects people from discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance (Executive Order 12898).

Unified Certification Program (UCP): allows applicants for the DBE program to apply only once for a DBE certification that will be honored by all recipients in the state. NFTA is one of four certifying agencies/partners in New York State and responsible for DBE certification in WNY. Other certifying partners include, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), New York State Department of Transportation and Port Authority of New York & New Jersey. Of the four certifying agencies/partners only two conduct certifications for ACDBE- NFTA and Port Authority of New York & New Jersey.

Women Business Enterprise (WBE): a business enterprise in which at least 51% percent is owned, operated and controlled by citizens or permanent resident aliens who are women and whose personal net worth cannot exceed 3.5 million dollars (New York State Executive Law Article 15-A).

Waiver: a request by the contractor to set aside or modify the goal participation of certified minority and women-owned business enterprises in the performance of State contracts (New York State Executive Law Article 15-A). Note: MWBE waivers are approved by Empire State Development not NFTA. However, SDVOB waivers are approved by NFTA only after good faith efforts have been provided.





Strategies

1. Develop programs and processes for NFTA to leverage diversity and inclusion which will optimize workforce readiness, enhance employee engagement, increase supplier diversity and enable a diverse and inclusive workplace.
2. Develop programs and processes to maximize Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MWBE), Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)/Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) and Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB) participation. This will include expanding upon our strict enforcement of participation goals, targeted outreach and education efforts, and timely certification of DBE/ACDBE applications.
3. Develop programs and processes that further enhance our compliance with Title VI/Environmental Justice (EJ) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP), Title VII Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
4. Develop programs and processes to ensure that strategically targeted outreach efforts are conducted to solicit and engage the community regarding the Authority's decisions and activities relating to service delivery.
5. Maintain a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council who will work alongside the EEO Office monitoring and analyzing NFTA policies, programs and processes to ensure that all agency decisions, practices, and procedures are fair and equitable and in compliance with State/Federal regulations.

Target Areas

Target I: Employment

- Hiring/ Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) goals
- Staff Development and Training

Target II: Supplier Diversity

- Minority/Women Business Enterprise (MWBE)
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)/Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE)
- Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB)

Target III: Community Outreach and Compliance

- Title VI/ Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Environmental Justice
- Title VII Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)
- Annual Diversity & Inclusion training (Discrimination, Harassment, including sexual harassment, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Americans with Disabilities Act)
- Community Outreach and Engagement

Target I: Employment

Hiring and Equal Employment Opportunity Goals

NFTA is committed to providing equal access and opportunity in the provision of services and equal employment opportunity for all employees and applicants for employment regardless of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, alienage, citizenship, ancestry, gender, genetic disposition or carrier status, sexual orientation, marital status, liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States, arrest/conviction record, or disability. All personnel share in the responsibility to ensure compliance with the NFTA's Equal Opportunity Policy.

Goal

Position NFTA as the premier employer in the Buffalo Niagara Region by attracting, developing and retaining the best and brightest talent. Implement training programs and expand recruitment efforts that will encompass a diverse workforce representative of the communities we serve with an emphasis on underrepresented groups as well as qualified individuals with disabilities and veterans.

Objective

Sustain a work environment that retains the best and brightest talent by identifying and addressing workplace policies, processes, practices, and behaviors that act as barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ensure the NFTA's employment processes reach and appeal to a diverse and highly qualified pool of candidates.



Action Items

- Use workforce analyses to advise managers and recruitment staff on the following: individual, group and organizational patterns; trends of recruitment and hiring relative to our hiring community.
- Formalize recruiting procedures to ensure consistency and comprehensive outreach to diverse populations.
- Enlist recruitment teams for career fairs and outreach events that represent the various occupations and the diversity of talent that the NFTA seeks to attract.
- Ensure the recruitment teams are skilled at interviewing candidates across all dimensions of diversity and who are trained to recognize and disregard cultural bias.
- Conduct a pay equity analysis of all non-represented roles to ensure equitable pay across the organization.
- EEO office in conjunction with Human Resources will perform routine audits on administered pre-employment tests ensuring they are validated and do not have an adverse impact on any group.
- Establish a procedure to ensure, to the extent possible, interview panels are appropriately diverse.
- Use a variety of tools such as: print, social media, job boards and other vehicles that target demographically diverse audiences.
- Broaden associations with local diverse professional organizations including those that serve veterans and persons with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ persons that can provide opportunities to source potential applicants (e.g. internship and or apprentice programs).

Target I Performance Indicators (Hiring and Equal Employment Opportunity Goals)

- Semi-annually, report to Executive Director on the status of workforce analyses including workforce demographics and where underrepresentation exists and the overall progress toward EEO goals.
- Semi-annually, the EEO Officer and/or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council will meet with Business Center Directors to discuss potential hiring needs and diversity needs of each Business Center.
- Hiring and EEO information will be reported to the Board of Commissioners annually.
- Whenever practical the EEO Officer will participate in activities and events supporting outreach efforts to underrepresented groups.
- EEO/Diversity grading will be implemented into performance evaluations.
- At least quarterly, the EEO Officer will meet with the HR Director and/or Recruitment Manager to discuss recruitment processes, outreach initiatives, targeted audiences, and information relating to hiring statistics within our hiring community.



Staff Development and Training

Goal

As one of the NFTA's core values of encouraging professional development and growth of our staff, we will identify key talent and provide development opportunities that enhance knowledge, develop skills, and enrich the NFTA.

Objective

To build a talented and dedicated diverse workforce by continually assessing our current workforce and cultivate our future leaders.

Action Items

- Provide quality cost-effective training designed to increase individual and organizational productivity with an emphasis on retention and advancement of underrepresented groups.
- Continually monitor the percentage of workforce eligible to retire and dedicate recruitment efforts to these areas.
- Conduct a barrier analysis to determine exact barriers and provide remedies for overcoming those barriers for underrepresented groups.
- Continue to monitor and improve NFTA succession plan
- Create employee engagement surveys.
- Expand employee recognition programs.
- Provide ongoing leadership and support to the NFTA's succession efforts by developing a mentor program to prepare current employees to fill future vacancies.



Target I Performance Indicators (Staff Development and Training)

- Annually, evaluate the areas of employees eligible for retirement and report to the Executive Director on the progress.
- Annually, review the results of the employee engagement surveys and where practical implement/ address suggestions.
- Report to Executive Director annually on the status of the succession plan.
- Employees selected to attend training will report on their experience.



Target II: Supplier Diversity

Goal

The goal of the NFTA Supplier Diversity Program is to ensure a continued focus on improving supplier relationships with disadvantaged, small, minority-owned, women-owned and service-disabled veteran owned businesses. NFTA is working diligently to include diverse-owned suppliers in opportunities for new or expanded business. We cannot achieve the industry-wide change for diversity, equity, and inclusion that we hope to without commitment at every level of our supply chain. Therefore, we expect that diverse suppliers competing directly for business will demonstrate the same innovative approach that we seek from all of our suppliers. We expect all our suppliers to create greater inclusion through their supply chains. We track our spending with our funding sources and we expect that all our suppliers report their spending with diverse-owned businesses.

Objectives

It is the policy of the NFTA to ensure that MWBEs, as defined in Article 15-A, SDVOBs, as defined in article 17-B, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE)/Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (ACDBE) as defined by 49 CFR part 26 and 23 have an equal opportunity to receive and participate in NFTA procurements and projects. Through the implementation of this plan, the NFTA intends to:

- Ensure nondiscrimination in the award of contracts.
- Remove unseen or artificial barriers to the participation of MWBEs, SDVOBs, DBEs and ACDBEs in NFTA procurements and contracts.
- Ensure continuous improvement of supplier diversity and relationships with small businesses, MWBEs, SDVOBs, DBEs and ACDBEs.
- Level the playing field so that MWBEs, SDVOBs, DBEs and ACDBEs can compete fairly for NFTA procurements and/or projects.
- Ensure only the following diverse suppliers participate in NFTA procurements and projects:
 - DBE and ACDBE firms certified by NYS Unified Certification Program (of which NFTA is a certifying partner)
 - MWBE firms certified by Empire State Development
 - SDVOB firms certified by NYS Office of General Services (OGS)
 - Firms that have demonstrated Good Faith Efforts (GFE) to comply with goals
- Ensure continued broad market research analysis of the supplier community to identify and utilize the best suppliers.

Target II Performance Indicators:

- All participation goals (MWBE, SDVOB and DBE/ACBE) are reviewed by the Executive Director prior to awarding a procurement and or contract.
- Quarterly Utilization Reports for MWBE and SDVOB are monitored and reported to the Executive Director and Empire State Development.
- In addition to fully complying with Project Sunlight, contacts made at outreach events and other venues will be reported as needed to the Procurement and EEO Managers.
- NFTA will verify payments to MWBE, SDVOB and DBE subcontractors. For MWBE and SDVOB subcontractors, payment information is entered in the NYS Contract Compliance System.
- DBE utilization is reported monthly by the Prime Contractors and overall utilization and participation is reported by NFTA to Federal Aviation Administration annually and Federal Transit Administration semiannually.



Target III: Community Outreach and Compliance

Goal

Establish new partnerships with organizations that will further the diversity initiatives of the NFTA's mission.

Increase the number of NFTA sponsored activities that celebrate diversity, enhance awareness, or promote engagement across diverse groups.

Objectives

Identify organizations that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, awareness, and engagement across diverse groups and issues.

Action Items

Community Outreach

- Annually, create and advertise a calendar of Authority-wide activities, events, forums, and seminars that promote diversity, awareness, and engagement across diverse groups.
- Engage and educate the community on DBE/ACDBE certification process and the importance of obtaining such certification.
- Continue to have open dialogue with our community (e.g. Accessibility Advisory Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee).

Compliance

- Continue the trend of meeting and/or exceeding MWBE, DBE and SDVOB participation.
- Create a more inclusive work environment by clearly communicating with our employees what type of behavior is unlawful in the workplace. Provide all employees with discrimination and harassment and sexual harassment training within 90 days of hire as well as annually.
- Maintain compliance with applicable regulations pertaining to Title VI, Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency (LEP), Title VII EEO and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Target III Performance Indicators:

- At a minimum, hold at least three DBE educational sessions per year.
- Continue to set participation goals reflective of DBE firm's relative availability.
- Conduct annual training on our inclusive work environment, including but not limited to: harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination in the workplace, unconscious bias/implication association, and diversity, equity, and inclusion training
- Submit EEO Program and Title VI Program as required by Federal Transit Administration and Federal Aviation Administration as well as periodic review of these programs.
- Annually track the percentage of employees being trained on diversity-related topics.
- Annually assess the community outreach events and activities by business center.



Appendix A

Workforce analysis by demographics and job Category in comparison to our hiring community

Total Work Force

	Labor Force (2020)		NFTA - 2022	
Total	544,755		1,407	
Male	277,920	51.02%	1,041	73.99%
Female	266,835	48.98%	366	26.01%
Minority	64,406	11.82%	647	45.98%

1. Officials/Administrators

	Labor Force (2020)		NFTA - 2022	
Total	68,205		54 3.83%	
Male	39,995	58.64%	38	70.37%
Female	28,210	41.36%	16	29.63%
Minority	7,125	10.45%	9	16.67%

2. Professionals

	Labor Force (2020)		NFTA - 2022	
Total	115,960		88 6.25%	
Male	47,905	41.31%	63	71.59%
Female	68,055	58.69%	25	28.41%
Minority	16,455	14.19%	19	21.59%

3. Technicians

	Labor Force (2020)		NFTA - 2022	
Total	47,285		108 7.67%	
Male	26,280	55.58%	87	80.56%
Female	21,005	44.42%	21	19.44%
Minority	8,510	18.00%	34	31.48%

4. Protective Services

	Labor Force (2020)		NFTA - 2022	
Total	11,280		109	7.74%
Male	9,535	84.53%	97	88.99%
Female	1,745	15.47%	12	11.01%
Minority	2,195	19.46%	8	7.34%

5. Protective Services - Non-Sworn

	Labor Force (2020)		NFTA - 2022	
Total	1,110		9	
Male	380	34.23%	2	22.22%
Female	730	65.77%	7	77.78%
Minority	336	30.27%	2	22.22%

6. Administrative Support

	Labor Force (2020)		NFTA - 2022	
Total	11,280		109	7.74%
Male	9,535	84.53%	97	88.99%
Female	1,745	15.47%	12	11.01%
Minority	2,195	19.46%	8	7.34%

7. Skilled Craft

	Labor Force (2020)		NFTA - 2022	
Total	36,755		198	14%
Male	34,495	93.85%	196	98.99%
Female	2,260	6.15%	2	1.01%
Minority	3,915	10.65%	28	14.14%

8. Service/Maintenance

	Labor Force (2020)		NFTA - 2022	
Total	126,635		746	53%
Male	71,175	56.20%	524	70.24%
Female	55,460	43.80%	222	29.76%
Minority	3,680	2.91%	510	68.36%

Appendix B

Community Outreach and Engagement by Division

Transit Authority Police Department

The Transit Authority Police Department (TAPD) was established in 1984. The NFTA created the Transit Police Department to protect and serve the traveling public. All Transit Police Officers are New York State certified in accordance with the New York State Bureau of Municipal Police Training. Transit Police Officers have the authority to exercise police powers and duties in traffic and criminal matters within the NFTA's jurisdiction of Erie, Niagara and Genesee Counties.

Community Outreach Events

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie, Niagara & The Southern Tier Annual Toy Drive and Bison's Game
- Vintage Car Shows
- Police Officer Preparation Exam Speaking Engagements (upon request)
- Buffalo Public School Speaking Engagements
- Active Shooter Training
- K-9 Demonstrations
- Sock Drive for the Homeless
- Coffee with a Cop
- Touch a Truck
- Partnership with Buffalo Peacemakers



Metro

Metro is proud to serve more than 25 million people each year in Erie and Niagara counties (54 bus routes, 4,000 bus stops and a 6.4-mile light rail). The more than 1,086 Metro employees made up of operators, planners, mechanics, technicians and specialists responsible for maintaining the system, work diligently to make it easy for our customers to experience the highest level of public transportation.

Community Outreach Events

- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Annual Track-bed Training
- Customer Appreciation
- Puerto Rican Day Parade
- Developmental Disability Awareness Day
- Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Buffalo Public School High School Orientation
- Pride Parade
- Go Buffalo Niagara
- Veterans Stand Down
- Metro Ambassador Program
- Juneteenth Parade
- Community Events
- University United Festival



Buffalo Niagara international Airport and Niagara Falls International Airport

The Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BNIA) is a medium hub airport located in Cheektowaga, New York. A total of 4.9 million passengers traveled through the airport in 2019. Following the COVID-19 impacts, by early 2023 the airport has recovered back to approximately 95% of the 2019 passenger traffic levels. The BNIA is currently served by the following scheduled airlines: Southwest, JetBlue, Delta, United, American, and Frontier. In addition, Sun Country Airlines and Vacation Express by Sunwing operate seasonal services from the airport.

The Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA) is located within the Towns of Niagara and Wheatfield, New York and is located approximately four miles from Niagara Falls, New York, four miles from Ontario, Canada and 20 miles from Buffalo, New York. The NFTA opened a new 69,000 square foot terminal building in December 2009. The NFTA served 243 thousand passengers in 2019. Following the COVID-19 impacts, by early 2023 the airport has recovered back to approximately 50% of the 2019 passenger traffic levels. Allegiant Air is currently the only scheduled carrier serving the NFIA.

Both BNIA and NFIA draw a significant share of customers from the Canadian market. Canadian passengers represent approximately 40 % of all BNIA originating passengers and approximately 80% of all NFIA passengers, based on monthly parking surveys.

Community Outreach Events

- SPCA Paws for Love
- Veterans Lounge
- Nursing Lounge
- NY Power Authority
- Fisher Price Play Area



Airport Rescue and Fire

The Buffalo Niagara International Airport Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) Team proudly serves the traveling public and is devoted to the health and safety of those in and around the Buffalo Airport. Formed in 1981, ARFF is an elite firefighting unit capable of responding to all types of aviation related incidents, in addition to structural fires and medical emergencies.

We average more than 650 calls per year. In between, we train daily in various aspects of firefighting. We also conduct periodic tabletop exercises and drills at the airfield, sometimes with other first responders from the area, to ensure we can all work together.

Community Outreach Events

- American Red Cross and UNYTS Blood Drive
- Host for Western New York Chapter American Society for Industrial Security
- Community Tours
 - Girl Scouts
 - Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts
 - Civil Air Patrol
- New York State Fire and EMS Course
- Training with Mutual Aid and Outlying Fire Departments
- Mercy Flights



