

# EMPLOYMENT EQUITY PLAN

## MAY 2025-APRIL 2026

### INTRODUCTION

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The Employment Equity Plan for 2025–2026 builds on the insights, accomplishments, and challenges detailed in the 2024–2025 Employment Equity Report. It affirms Queen’s University’s sustained and evolving commitment to Indigenization, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Anti-Racism (I-EDIAA), while fulfilling the institution’s responsibilities under the Federal Contractors Program (FCP) and the Employment Equity Act.

In 2024–2025, Queen’s achieved a 74% completion rate of the goals outlined in its plan. Key milestones included revising recruitment strategies such as the engagement of Indigenous search firms and the development of targeted resources for equity-deserving groups. However, in terms of the numerical targets for closing the gaps when it comes to underrepresentation of the designated groups in particular NOCs, the federal government found Queen’s to have been successful in 54% of its targets. This falls short of the 80% threshold required to demonstrate substantial progress. This outcome highlighted the need for more coordinated, sustained, and intentional institutional action.

### 2025-2026 GOALS

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Queen’s remains committed to meeting its obligations under the FCP, which requires equitable representation of Indigenous peoples, racialized persons, persons with disabilities, and women across all occupational classifications. This work is also guided by the university’s broader I-EDIAA mandate, which extends support and inclusion to 2SLGBTQI+ employees.

The **Faculty and Staff Recruitment, Retention and Support (FSRRS)** University Council on Anti-Racism and Equity (UCARE) Sub-Council is the primary body overseeing the development and implementation of this plan. Each year, a draft of the plan is shared at the Employment Equity Forum, where faculty, staff, and community members are invited to provide feedback. On May 6, 2025, input gathered at this forum directly informed the final version of this plan.

The following sections outlines the goals and background that will guide employment equity efforts during the 2025–2026 cycle. These efforts are organized across three core areas: recruitment, retention, and professional development.

# 2025-2026 EMPLOYMENT EQUITY PLAN

## “SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY”

The Employment Equity Plan for May 2025 to April 2026 reflects Queen’s ongoing commitment to advancing equity in the workplace. From strengthening policies and practices to elevating the voices of equity-deserving communities, this plan reinforces that equity is a shared responsibility. Building on past achievements and community feedback, it sets out focused actions across recruitment, retention, and professional development to promote equitable representation and foster a culture of belonging. Each goal is assigned clear timelines and leadership accountability, emphasizing that achieving equity requires collective effort and dedication. As Queen’s prepares for the 2027 FCP assessment and broader institutional transformation, this plan stands as both a commitment to compliance and a deeper pledge to fairness, inclusion, and institutional integrity.

### RECRUITMENT

<u>Action Items</u>	<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Lead</u>
1. Establish an Employment Equity Task Force to Advance FCP Goals.	December 2025	HREO
2. Conduct pilot focus groups to assess equity considerations in the Recruitment Planner.	April 2026	HREO
3. Review the Employment Equity Representative Trainings	April 2026	HREO
4. Explore a process for sharing candidate feedback with HR.	April 2026	HR
5. Update the National Occupational Classifications 2021 in PeopleSoft	September 2026	HR
6. Develop an evaluation rubric template for faculty hiring.	April 2026	Provost (Academic)

## RETENTION

<u>Action Items</u>	<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Lead</u>
7. Develop and implement an ERG Leaders Time Release Policy communication plan.	April 2026	VPCEI
8. Host an ERG showcase and drive to grow membership.	April 2026	VPCEI
9. Support the creation of an ERG for persons with disabilities.	April 2026	HREO
10. Develop an onboarding framework to act as a pilot that could be transferred to the university.	April 2026	HR
11. Review the Exit Survey and Internal Transfer Survey processes.	April 2026	HR
12. Explore mechanisms to conducting Stay Surveys	April 2026	HR
13. Increase awareness and understanding of smudging practices.	April 2026	OII

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

<u>Action Items</u>	<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Lead</u>
14. Launch the DEAP Tool for researchers, including an education plan.	April 2026	HREO
15. Create online modules on the new Harassment and Discrimination Policy.	December 2025	HREO
16. Include special considerations for ERG leaders in the Queen's Leadership Program.	April 2026	HR
17. Develop a performance evaluation rubric for QUFA members.	April 2026	Provost (Academic)
18. Finalize, promote and educate the University community on the Indigenous Cultural Leave Policy	September 2025	OII
19. Develop and implement an Indigenous certificate training program for Employees	September 2025	OII

# GOALS' BACKGROUND

## RECRUITMENT

### GOAL # 1:

#### Establish an Employment Equity Task Force to Advance FCP Goals

This goal builds on Goal 4 of the 2024-25 Plan, which focused on preparing Equity Deserving Group data for the 2024 FPC compliance review. This goal is focused on establishing an Employment Equity Task Force with a clear mandate to lead and coordinate efforts toward meeting the new 2027 FCP targets. This internal working group will engage in data-informed workforce analysis, identify systemic barriers in employment practices, and facilitate meaningful engagement across units, especially those directly impacted by FCP representation gaps.

Forum feedback emphasized several needs: greater awareness of the FCP across the university, more targeted action for specific equity groups and job classifications, and the integration of FCP compliance within Queen's broader institutional priorities. The Task Force will directly address this by ensuring the university not only meets regulatory requirements but builds an equitable and representative workforce through sustainable structural change.

### GOAL # 2:

#### Conduct pilot focus groups to assess equity considerations in the Recruitment Planner

This goal builds on the outcomes of Goals 1 and 2 from the 2024–25 Plan, which focused on enhancing outreach to equity-deserving groups through updated advertising strategies and exploring mechanisms for engaging and tracking applicants from those groups.

Last year, Human Resources (HR) developed a centralized Recruitment Planner tool and explored possibilities for engaging equity-deserving candidates through CareerQ, Queen's Equity Appointment Process (QEAP) tool, or an opt-in listserv. HREO in coordination with HR will pilot focus groups aimed at evaluating how equity considerations are being integrated and experienced in the use of the Recruitment Planner. These focus groups will gather qualitative insights from Employment Equity Representatives (EE Reps) to assess the tool's effectiveness, identify any gaps or barriers, and inform future improvements.

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**GOAL # 3:****Review the Employment Equity Representative Trainings**

EE Reps are central to promoting fair and equitable hiring processes at Queen's. HREO will assess the trainings' content, accessibility, and delivery methods. Special attention will be given to strengthening practical scenarios, improving understanding of FCP-related obligations, and ensuring alignment with Queen's current employment systems and tools.

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**GOAL # 4:****Explore voluntary feedback mechanisms with interviewed candidates**

Starting January 1, 2026, Ontario's new amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000 will require employers to notify all interviewed candidates of a hiring decision within 45 days of the last interview. This legal obligation presents a timely opportunity to strengthen transparency, consistency, and candidate care. This goal aims to explore options to invite voluntary, confidential feedback from candidates about their experience. This input will help identify patterns of success and challenges, particularly for equity-deserving groups, and inform continuous improvements to recruitment practices.

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**GOAL # 5:****Update the National Occupational Classifications (NOCs), 2021, in PeopleSoft**

Currently, updates to NOC codes in PeopleSoft are underway and are expected to be completed by Fall 2025. Finalizing this integration will enhance the university's ability to conduct precise workforce analysis, identify gaps in representation, and track progress toward employment equity goals with greater accuracy.

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**GOAL # 6:****Develop an evaluation rubric template for faculty hiring**

The development of a formalized evaluation rubric template will provide search committees with a consistent, structured, and equity-informed framework for assessing external candidates. Led by the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic), this initiative complements ongoing work on faculty recruitment and development and will support hiring units in making fair, bias-aware decisions. The rubric will be designed to: align with Queen's I-EDIAA priorities, promote equitable evaluation criteria across disciplines, and increase transparency and confidence in hiring decisions.

## RETENTION

### GOAL # 7:

**Develop an Employee Resource Groups (ERG) Leaders Time Release Policy communication plan**

Following the formal release of Queen's [Employee Resource Group \(ERG\) Leaders Time Release Policy](#) in March 2025, the next step is to ensure broad awareness and encourage consistent implementation across the university.

### GOAL # 8:

**Host an ERG showcase and drive to grow membership**

ERGs are essential community-building that support equity-deserving staff and faculty. Building on the momentum on the ERG's policy, this goal focuses on increasing visibility, engagement, and membership across all ERGs. Hosting a university-wide ERG Showcase will provide a platform for current ERGs to share their purpose, goals, and accomplishments, while offering prospective members an opportunity to learn, ask questions, and get involved.

### GOAL # 9:

**Support the creation of an ERG for persons with disabilities**

Persons with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented across occupational groups at Queen's, a trend confirmed through both internal workforce analysis and the most recent Federal Contractors Program (FCP) compliance review. Support for this ERG will include dedicated outreach, leadership support, and coordination through the HREO, in collaboration with the Office of the VPCEI. This is an important step toward ensuring that the voices of employees with disabilities are not only heard but embedded into institutional planning and decision-making.

### GOAL # 10:

**Develop an onboarding framework to act as a pilot that could be transferred to the wider university**

This goal builds on the 2024–2025 Plan's environmental scan of onboarding practices (Goal #12), insights from the 2021–2024 Exit and Internal Transfer Survey, and feedback from the 2025 Employment Equity Forum. Across these sources, a common theme emerged: new employees (especially those from equity-deserving groups) often face unclear, inconsistent, or potentially unwelcoming onboarding experiences that affect early engagement and long-term retention.

To address this, Human Resources will develop a pilot onboarding framework that departments can adapt and scale. It will provide guidance on inclusive onboarding practices, suggest baseline content for welcome materials, and include mechanisms for employee feedback. The framework will reflect equity principles throughout and support a more consistent, welcoming, and informative experience for all new hires.

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### **GOAL # 11:**

#### **Review the Exit Survey and Internal Transfer Survey processes**

Between 2021 and 2024, Queen's recorded 1,171 staff terminations and 418 internal transfers. However, only 293 exit surveys and 227 internal transfer surveys were completed during that period, revealing a considerable gap between those leaving or moving within the institution and those who were invited or chose to share feedback.

These surveys offer critical insights that can support strategic planning and foster a more inclusive and responsive work environment. Feedback from the 2025 Employment Equity Forum highlighted concerns around the current survey process, including unclear timelines, lack of confidentiality assurances, and limited follow-up. This goal aims to enhance the reach, reliability, and impact of these tools by clarifying roles, increasing consistency, and exploring process enhancements that foster trust and strengthen data-informed equity efforts.

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### **GOAL # 12:**

#### **Explore mechanisms for conducting Stay Surveys**

While exit interviews provide some data, they often come too late. Forum participants strongly encouraged proactive measures, such as stay or engagement surveys, to understand what motivates employees to remain and what challenges they face in real time. Employees' insights will help identify risks, workplace strengths, and support needed for equity-deserving group members. Unlike exit surveys, stay data enables early interventions that can improve employee satisfaction, trust, and belonging.

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### **GOAL # 13:**

#### **Increase awareness and understanding of smudging practices**

This goal will support education and awareness initiatives to normalize [smudging](#) and reduce stigma or confusion in the workplace. Informed by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, efforts may include briefings, visual signage, and inclusion in onboarding or cultural awareness training. Respecting and enabling smudging practices is part of Queen's broader commitment to Indigenization and creating a culturally safe work environment for Indigenous employees.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### **GOAL # 14:**

#### **Launch the DEAP Tool for researchers, including an education plan**

This goal continues the work initiated in the 2024- 2025 EE Plan (Goal #13), which focused on developing a DEAP Research Tool. The tool is now ready for institutional rollout. The goal advances this work by supporting the formal launch of the DEAP tool and implementing a targeted education plan to ensure meaningful uptake. Through education and outreach, this goal aims to strengthen the integration of I-EDIAA principles into research design, culture, and operations.

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### **GOAL # 15:**

#### **Create online modules on the new Harassment and Discrimination Policy**

These modules will support awareness, understanding, and consistent application of the policy across the university community. Ensuring employees are well-informed about their rights, responsibilities, and available supports contributes to a safer, more respectful, and more equitable workplace.

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### **GOAL # 16:**

#### **Include special considerations for ERG leaders in the Queen's Leadership Program**

This goal complements ongoing efforts to recognize and support ERG leaders across Queen's. ERG leaders play a critical role in advancing inclusion and community-building, often without formal institutional recognition or access to leadership development pathways this goal seeks to address that gap by including ERG leaders in the Queen's Leadership Program,.

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### **GOAL # 17:**

#### **Develop a performance evaluation rubric for QUFA members.**

This goal will be led by the Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) and builds on Queen's commitment to equity-informed evaluation practices. It is designed to complement the faculty hiring rubric being developed under Goal #6. Developing a standardized, equity-conscious rubric for faculty performance evaluation will help ensure greater consistency, transparency, and fairness in the assessment of teaching, research, and service contributions.

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**GOAL # 18:****Finalize, promote and educate the University community on the Indigenous Cultural Leave Policy**

Following consultations with Indigenous staff, faculty, and community networks, the Indigenous Cultural Leave Policy is expected to be finalized and implemented in Fall 2025.

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**GOAL # 19:****Develop and implement an Indigenous certificate training program for Employees**

Also carried over from the previous year's plan, this goal supports the broader objective of embedding learning opportunities for Indigenous ways of knowing across Queen's.