



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT,
RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

EDI in your grant application

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Hi everyone, thanks for joining us today, and welcome to the OOR's workshop on equity, diversity, and inclusion (that's the acronym EDI) in grant applications. I'm Eli Friedland, I'm an Advisor working with Dominique and her team in the OOR, and I'm the point-person on EDI in our office. Before we begin, I'd like to thank Tanja Tajmel very much for her very thoughtful suggestions and guidance with this presentation – she's in the Centre for Engineering in Society, and she's a global pioneer in EDI efforts in STEM fields. She's also one of our Concordia Research Chairs, in EDI in STEM Fields.

So, we put together this session since EDI is being given an increasing role in grant applications, as you may have noticed – especially Tri-Agency, but also for provincial grants – and with a lot of increased expectations which we'll discuss in a minute. For some grants it's become essential and even a focus, for others it's just being introduced, but either way we can expect that the importance of EDI in all grant applications is going to steadily increase, and the sooner you get a jump on it the more equipped you'll be to address it when it comes time. I thought we'd start with a very brief introduction to the concepts that make up EDI itself, for those who are new to it, and then get into the practicalities of EDI sections in applications. We will have time for questions and discussion at the end, so please send Dominique any questions by private chat as they come up, and she'll make a note of them

for afterward. I'll ask you to use *only* the private chat function please, so that people using screen readers aren't hearing the chats and my discussion at the same time – they drown each other out in a hurry. Please also feel free to jump in with questions or for clarifications or with comments as we go, but otherwise please keep your chats private and your microphones muted. Also, wherever I'm not already sort of recapitulating the major points of a slide in my discussion about it, I'll read the points of the slide itself since screen readers won't be able to translate them into audio on a screen-share. This'll add no more than 5 minutes to the presentation – I've pared the slides down to essential details already.



Understanding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion



What is EDI?

Three foundational concepts:

- Equity
- Diversity
- Inclusion

Five groups designated for specific focus:

- Women
- Indigenous peoples
- Persons with disabilities
- Members of racialized minorities
- LGBTQ2+

So, at the top you have the 3 basic concepts of EDI – and we'll go through each one briefly in moment. Now as I just said, the expectations of the Tri-Agency (that's NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR) with respect to EDI have changed drastically in the last few years. This is especially true of all NSERC competitions and the NFRF competitions managed by SSHRC. Whereas for many years they expected only a sort of "token" signoff – typically focused on gender or biological sex – they now expect a deeply thought-out, realistic and concrete plan for equity, diversity, and inclusion for your research project. Four groups have been designated by the Tri-Agency for specific focus, and they're listed at the bottom of the screen: Women. Indigenous peoples, Persons with disabilities, and Members of racialized minorities. LGBTQ2+ individuals will soon be designated as well, and researchers are asked to consider groups beyond these also, as well as intersectionality.

The first step of developing an EDI plan is to familiarize yourself with EDI literature – this workshop, and Tri-Agency guidelines, are starts, but it really shows through in EDI sections of grant applications when a researcher has educated themselves more broadly about EDI, and when they have not. The articles and books recommended in the NSERC and CRC guidelines (e.g. "Underrepresented and Underpaid") are good places to start, and they also show you the directions and trends that the Tri-Agency is focused on.

EDI vs GBA+

GBA+

- GBA+ is an analytical process used to assess the potential impact that identity factors, such as sex, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age and mental or physical disability, may have on an individual's experience. The purpose of GBA+ is to promote rigorous research that is sensitive to identity factors

EDI

- EDI focuses on the research environment and its impact on the researchers' experience. It relates to practices that support team members by helping to reduce barriers and recognizing the contributions of all researchers, thereby promoting innovation and excellence.

EDI is about the research personnel, GBA+ focuses on the research itself



What does this mean for you?

- Your research project must meaningfully **engage** members of the four designated groups through the participation of students, postdoctoral fellows, co-principal investigators, co-applicants and/or collaborators, as applicable.
- Your application must clearly describe the research team's commitment to this, in particular related to how they will address each of the following three key areas:
 - team composition and training activities
 - recruitment processes
 - inclusion

Going beyond just “considering” EDI in the practices of your research program is key to an EDI plan that will impress adjudicators, so it's best to go to the most demanding of the Tri-Agency's programs in this respect. That's NFRF. They also have a helpful guideline that walks you through some important EDI considerations and questions for research projects – though, again, you don't want to rely on just this guideline, nor just pick best practices from their examples. As professors, I'm sure you all know the “feeling” you immediately get when you read a student's paper that is just repeating what you said in class. You don't want your reviewers to get that feeling!

EDI, the basics:

1. *Equity*

- “**Equity** is the fair and respectful treatment of all people and involves the **creation of opportunities and reduction of disparities in opportunities** for diverse communities. It also acknowledges that these disparities are rooted in historical and contemporary injustices and disadvantages.”

OK, let's open up those 3 terms a bit. **Equity**: Equity is not the same thing as “equality”. Equality focuses on creating the same starting line and process for everyone. Equity has the goal of providing everyone with the full range of opportunities and benefits, and focuses on the different things that different people need in order to *actually* have the same access to participation in them. In practice, this means that members of groups that have been historically marginalized need and deserve recruitment, hiring, and retention processes that are tailored to correcting the disadvantages they have faced and do face in those processes. This means recognizing and removing *systemic barriers* to their participation. So equity looks toward the *real* resources that members of different groups need in order to fully participate in all of the opportunities that your research program has to offer. For example, “equal” might be, say, a recruitment criterion focused strictly on the number of articles applicants have published in top-tier journals over the past 5 years. “Equitable” would build into that criterion that some people may have taken parental or disability leaves during that time – or work at a pace conducive to living well with a disability for example – or published in less mainstream journals that are nevertheless important to their particular research or field, etc.

Equity

The Practical Points

- How can opportunities offered by your research program be made equally available to all participants?
- What **systemic** barriers and biases exist that impede this?
- Do members of designated groups – and think intersectionally too – have more, **or different**, needs in order to access opportunities?
- *Recruiting*: candidates may have taken leaves, and/or have diverse and equally valuable research histories (e.g. non-peer-reviewed articles on important Indigenous issues), etc.
- *Having been recruited*: funding, publishing, conference participation, recognition (within and outside of the university), industry connections, etc.



The next 3 slides largely speak for themselves – they're about the first steps of taking the theory down to practical questions to ask and issues to attend to. There's some overlap between these 3 concepts – you can't actually have equity without an inclusive environment, for example – but for our purposes it's still helpful to consider them separately.

As we talked about before, making opportunities equally available requires an equitable approach – the last four points are in a way breaking down the first one to make it feasible. To give you an example, if you allow all of your HQP to sign up for an opportunity to work with star researchers and co-publish a paper with them, that's equal, but not equitable, and means that *actual access* to that opportunity is not equal. Statistically speaking, members of majority groups are much more likely to see themselves as qualified for demanding opportunities, and to put themselves forward for them; while members of minority groups are less likely to see themselves as qualified, and less likely to put themselves forward for these opportunities even when they do feel – and are – highly qualified for them. An equitable approach would likely require proactive encouragement, and a commitment to ensuring that the opportunity was not just offered, but taken.

EDI, the basics:

2. Diversity

- “**Diversity** is the **demographic mix** of the university community and involves recognizing and respecting everyone’s unique qualities and attributes, but **focuses particularly on groups that remain underrepresented at Concordia.**”

Diversity: Diversity should be thought of not only in terms of an obligation to have team-members and HQP from broadly diverse populations, but also and especially in terms of the specific advantages that accrue to your research project through their full participation. If there are particularly prominent under-representations in your field, they’re worth specifically addressing, but be sure to be thinking and concretely planning in terms of broader diversity, particularly the 4 designated groups and LGBTQ2+ individuals. For example, the under-representation of women in STEM fields is a crucial focus, but if it’s your only focus you’ll miss the majority of other groups without which diverse and proportionate representation is impossible – and your EDI section will risk looking like the token-EDI statements that I mentioned earlier. On the flip side, you need to be aware that not every designated group is under-represented in every field – for example, visible minorities taken as a whole are not necessarily under-represented in the field of engineering in Canada or at Concordia, though some specific visible minorities may well be (the National Society of Black Engineers reports a severe under-representation of Black people in the field, for example). I also wanted to mention that when thinking about *proportionate* representation, keep in mind that the Tri-Agency’s yardstick is the Canadian population-level. That’s not the only measure of proportion, and by necessity you have to be concerned with the university’s population-level – but to keep the Tri-Agency’s yardstick in mind is a good idea.

Diversity

The Practical Points

- Which designated groups – and consider intersectionality – are underrepresented in your **specific** field/department/program?
- The Tri-Agency focuses on members of 4 federally designated groups – women, Indigenous peoples, members of racialized minorities, persons with disabilities. You can go beyond this (e.g. 2SLGBTQI+)
- Diversity of trainees
- **Proactive** search for trainees – members of underrepresented groups may be more reticent to put themselves forward for a position, even when they feel wholly qualified
- Diversity of role models – research team and beyond

Likewise for diversity. Again, you need to look at your specific environment, and prepare for proactive candidate searches for your project. Planning to carefully word job calls for your project, with attention to making them seriously inviting to members of equity-seeking groups, is one aspect of a good EDI plan. – and note that the diversity of your team and the role models you can provide can be expected to impact the diversity of the applicants your project will attract. Going back to what we were discussing before, about planning EDI into your project from the outset.

EDI, the basics:

3. Inclusion

- **“Inclusion** means creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and respected, focusing on groups that remain underrepresented at Concordia. It means **creating the conditions** to have the opportunity to fully participate in the University, and where everyone’s talents are valued and celebrated. **It is important to note that while an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group is not always inclusive.**”

Adapted from University of Toronto Equity and Diversity in Research & Innovation Working Group Report (2018)



Ok, **Inclusion**: Inclusion is usually the most neglected aspect of the EDI component, but without it, no plan can get off the ground. An equity and diversity plan without inclusion is kind of like a family thinking that they’re adopting someone unrelated to themselves, and making no special effort after it’s done to make that person feel at home (imagine how that person feels!). Inclusion is analogous to a family recognizing that they’ve neglected or even shunned other family members, and doing everything possible to make sure that those family members now feel like, contribute to, and are nurtured and flourish as, part of the family they belong to. Don’t take that analogy too far please – it’ll break down like all analogies eventually, but it’s helpful to put it starkly to begin with. So we’ll have to pay a lot of attention to inclusion as we go along.

Inclusion

The Practical Points

- A lot of reflection and work has to go into this aspect
- What resources are already available at Concordia (e.g. Women in Engineering Concordia, Indigenous Student Recruitment Office, Access Centre for Students with Disabilities, Black Perspectives Office)? Can you establish links between your proposed research program and these resources?
- Mentorship is crucial
- Consider rates of attrition in *your* field for members of designated groups (e.g. natural sciences and engineering – 37% women at bachelor level -> 12.5% women at full professor level)
- Concrete responses to **ensure** all researchers feel they belong – individuals valued, contributions respected, equitable support

One way to get to the practicalities of inclusion is to think of your research program as an exercise in **ensuring** that **every** one of your grad student / postdoc members eventually becomes a full professor. You don't actually want to assume that they all want to become full professors, or even professors at all, and planning to discuss individual goals is a good inclusive step in itself. But thinking about it in this way – thinking through the different steps and different potential setbacks that each HQP might take or face in order to get there – can give you a set of practical points to focus on, particularly for the mentorship you plan for your HQP and early-career researchers. The key word is "ensure" here – how will you *ensure* that your project will offer – and maintain and course-correct – an environment in which your diverse HQP will all thrive? What needs do you need to meet that may be specific to members of different groups, and the 4 designated groups in particular? You don't want to assume that you know what these are. You need to research and consult with members of the designated groups, and attend to their experiences – and this regardless if you are a member of one or more designated groups yourself.

EDI Planning in 4 Steps – The Basics



In 5 steps – that are obviously much more complicated than these basic descriptions are.

Incorporating EDI into Grant Applications

- NSERC
- FRQ
- NFRF



Considerations





NSERC Discovery Grant

- HQP training plan
- Past Contributions to Training
- Most Significant Contributions
- EDI in Research Design

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion [guide for applicants](#)



HQP Training Plan

- Clearly describe **qualitatively** any challenges or barriers encountered in ensuring an inclusive research and training environment, **both** in your Field **and** your Institution.
- Clearly define specific actions to support recruitment of a diverse group of HQP, and ensure an inclusive research and training environment with equitable mentorship approaches.
- Describe Institutional practices that help support and promote EDI



HQP Training Plan-examples

- **Recruitment Practices**

- Non-gendered language in recruitment ads
- Aligning with organizations for under-represented groups to promote training opportunities: National Society for Black Engineers, Women in Engineering, Indigenous Student Association
- QUALITATIVE assessments of potential students: Instead of just looking at CVs, allow space for an applicant to explain any delays, absences, or comparative lack in success and/or experience



HQP Training Plan-examples

- **Recruitment: Accommodation Practices**
 - Applicants are encouraged to consider how to promote and support a variety of forms of mentoring that recognize barriers to trainees' equitable participation and growth.
 - DESCRIBE planned approach to promoting the participation of a diverse group of HQP, taking into account equity and inclusion in recruitment practices, mentorship approaches and initiatives aimed at ensuring an inclusive research and training environment
 - Accommodating single parents with flexible hours
 - Accommodating maternity/paternity leave
 - Accommodating disabilities with flexible lab set-up, flexible hours/location, additional support by techs, etc.
 - Seek out **local** long-term industrial internships to accommodate families and caregivers of family members, or anyone with local commitments that would preclude long-term non-local internships
 - Accommodate cultural and religious holidays and practices



HQP Training-examples

- **Retention:** Environment
 - Hold a Lab Orientation session each year for existing and incoming students where you talk about the concept of EDI
 - Clarify a process whereby personnel can request personal accommodation/report breaches in EDI principles
 - Identify and provide links to on-campus resources such as mental health help, sexual assault support, students with disabilities center, etc.
 - You and your research personnel are encouraged to participate in EDI training workshops on a regular basis



OVERVIEW

PEOPLE

PUBLICATIONS

FACILITIES

DOWNLOADS

Applying to the Lab? Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are core values in our Lab. If you a member of under-represented groups in engineering, you are welcome in our Lab. If you have a 'non-standard' academic pathway, you are also welcome in our Lab, just submit a 1-page document highlighting any special circumstances that might have negatively impacted their academic/research performance

New to the Lab? Before joining our Lab it is mandatory to go through the following training modules: **[EDI modules:** 1) [Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion](#); 2) [Unconscious bias](#) and 3) [Gendered innovations](#)]; **[Safety modules:** WHMIS for laboratory personnel and Laser safety training]; **[Literature review modules:** [Smart ways to quickly find the best academic literature](#) and [Google scholar 1 & 2](#)]; **[Programming modules:** [Matlab](#); [Labview](#) and [Python](#)]; **[CADing modules:** [Solidworks](#)].

CURRENT MEMBERS

Name

<https://users.encs.concordia.ca/~kadem/research/people/>



Past Contributions to HQP Training

- Describe qualitatively any challenges or barriers encountered in ensuring an inclusive research and training environment.
- Describe specific actions implemented to support equity and inclusion in the research training environment
- Trainee demographic data is not requested or required to assess impacts resulting from consideration of equity, diversity and inclusion in the research and training environment.

DO NOT provide any identifying details in the description of such cases



Many times you will have had experiences with EDI situations without realizing

Past HQP Training: Describe specific actions implemented to support equity and inclusion in the research training environment

- Students who have gone on parental leave and had to extend their degree.
- Students who, due to illness, disability, or pregnancy, could not use specific equipment or materials and accommodations were made. Eg: due to impending parental leave, student was given priority access to facilities in order to collect sufficient data for either publication or graduation
- Resolving possible issues of harassment in lab members
- Accommodating cultural and religious practices where possible
- Accommodating family commitments and responsibilities
- Describe any experience you have had and emphasize that you do as much as possible to see your students successfully through their degree while addressing any personal challenges or obstacles that come up. Address any intentional strategies toward recruiting under represented groups.



Contributions

- NSERC recognizes that the entire research ecosystem is strengthened by equitable, diverse and inclusive access and participation
- Advances to equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in the research ecosystem
 - EDI at all stages of research
 - expanding the applicability of research findings and new technologies across a wider segment of society



Research Design

- The inclusion of sex (biological), gender (socio-cultural) and diversity considerations in research design makes research more ethically sound, rigorous and useful. Describe the rationale for including sex, gender and diversity considerations, and how these aspects will be addressed in the research design, if applicable.
- GBA+ is particularly applicable to this, please attend our GBA+ workshop June 15th for more details!



Research Design-examples

- AI, Deep Learning
- Energy efficient buildings, Smart Cities
 - Accessibility, cultural preferences, age disparities, sex
- Biomedical
 - Sex or racial differences, socioeconomic disparities

EDI-research design





NSERC Alliance

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion guide for applicants



Proposal Template

- Proposal
 - Explain how sex, gender and diversity have been considered in the research design, if applicable
- Team
 - Explain how equity, diversity and inclusion have been considered in the academic team composition.
- Training Plan
 - Explain how equity, diversity and inclusion are considered in the training plan (see [here](#) for guidance).



Explain how equity, diversity and inclusion have been considered in the academic team composition.

- We will strive to reduce the existing systemic barriers to EDI by putting in place concrete measures and policies in the team management and in the recruitment and training of HQP. Equity. We will create an equitable research environment where all members will have equitable opportunities in terms of project management and dissemination of their research outcomes. LK is the nominated PI because of his dual background (engineering and experimental medicine). Diversity. The team acknowledges the lack of diversity in engineering. We are committed to contribute to increase diversity by recruiting a diverse pool of HQP. Two female PhD candidates will be hired for Aims#2&4. For the MASc candidates that are still not identified, we will reach out to other underrepresented groups by prioritizing the dissemination of the postings to Nat. Society of Black Eng., LGBTQ2S+ student associations and Indigenous Peoples student associations. Inclusion. We will strive to create an inclusive environment by putting in place a formal process to identify and resolve conflicts, lack of recognition or biases that may appear during the duration of the project. Meetings will be scheduled in such a way to accommodate any personal or family obligations that any team member might have.

Explain how equity, diversity and inclusion are considered in the training plan (see here for guidance).

- A high-quality training in EDI principles will be an integral part of the training of all HQP. The HQP will attend, very early, the EDI workshops offered on their campus and read material pertaining to EDI, including the toolkits developed by the Canadian Center for Diversity and Inclusion. For most engineers, GBA+ is an abstract concept, because it is not included in the curriculum. All HQP will then go through the case studies provided by Stanford University's gendered innovations website. Creating an inclusive research environment. Any issue that might contribute to the deterioration of the inclusive environment will not be tolerated during the project. The team will use adequate strategies to promote equity and make sure all students are fully integrated into the group. We will allow for a flexibility in working hours by scheduling meetings between 9:30 am and 4:00 pm to accommodate HQP who might have personal or family obligations. Our inclusive research environment will significantly promote the feeling of belonging to the team and positively impact the well-being and the progress of the team members. Outreach. The team strongly believes that reducing the barriers to EDI must start very early. Dr. Kadem and Dr. Di Labbio already have experience in teaching programming and robotics to kids from under-privileged neighbourhoods. All HQP will be strongly encouraged to participate in such activities.



Updated EDI guidance for HQP plan

- Are opportunities to join the team communicated to all potential candidates in an open, inclusive and transparent way? What specific communication channels will be used to ensure your intended reach?
- When hiring trainees and other team members, how will unconscious bias^{Footnote1} and conflicts of interest be managed and mitigated in the selection process?
- What types of EDI-related training will the academic team and/or highly qualified personnel receive, based on the current level of EDI competency among members and the context of the work environment?
- If your institution has an EDI action plan or EDI commitments and initiatives within its strategic plan, how could the team draw from and/or build on this to foster an equitable, diverse and inclusive research environment?
- What specific practices will be followed to ensure that individuals with family, care, cultural, religious or community responsibilities are supported and not disadvantaged within the team and training environment?
- What specific measures will be taken to equitably promote and foster leadership and mentorship roles for members of underrepresented groups?

EDI Training considerations



Continued....

- What processes are or will be put in place to ensure that mentorship responsibilities as well as training and career development opportunities associated with the grant are distributed equitably and communicated clearly to team members?
- What practices are or will be put in place to address and mitigate micro-aggressions, conflicts, unconscious bias¹ and racism that may arise within the team (e.g., complaints management and/or conflict resolution process(es), designated EDI champions, etc.)?
- What specific measures will be taken to equitably promote and foster leadership and mentorship roles for members of underrepresented groups?
- What processes are or will be put in place to ensure that mentorship responsibilities as well as training and career development opportunities associated with the grant are distributed equitably and communicated clearly to team members?
- What practices are or will be put in place to address and mitigate micro-aggressions, conflicts, unconscious bias¹ and racism that may arise within the team (e.g., complaints management and/or conflict resolution process(es), designated EDI champions, etc.)?

CV attachment: Past HQP training (6000 characters)

- Training environment
 - Describe the research training and development opportunities provided for HQP (e.g., HQP science outreach and engagement, interdisciplinary research, promoting equity, diversity and inclusion [EDI] in the natural sciences and engineering [NSE], collaborations, interaction with the private and public sectors). Describe qualitatively any challenges or barriers encountered in ensuring an equitable, diverse and inclusive research and training environment, and describe specific actions implemented to address them.

trainee demographic data **is not requested** nor required to assess impacts resulting from consideration of EDI in the research and training environment.



FRQ

Requires EDI to be “integrated throughout” – 5 point weight. By 2026, all FRQ research clusters will require concrete EDI plans.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
and
Considering EDI in grant applications



New Researcher criterion: 1 page EDI

- Training: specific actions already taken and/or planned to promote EDI in the training of the next generation (recruitment, mentoring and career development practices, etc.)
- Research: where relevant, the consideration of diversity in the design and execution of research projects (research questions, methodology, etc.) and the dissemination and mobilization of knowledge to a diverse audience
- Involvement: specific actions already taken and/or planned to promote EDI in the applicant's community or field or within the research community in general (committees, inclusive scientific events, awareness activities, etc.)

The applicant should not provide any information as to whether he or she, or members of the team, belong to marginalized or underrepresented groups.

Concrete Measures: non-cluster

- Organizing or participating in activities to develop knowledge and skills related to EDI (e.g., workshops, training) and to the challenges encountered by minority groups in their field or environment;
- Organizing or participating in mentoring or sponsorship activities for members of historically disadvantaged groups;
- Introducing training to reduce the influence of bias in recruitment procedures and in the awarding of funding to students;
- Using gender-neutral and inclusive language in communications;
- Considering human diversity in the development and implementation of research projects;
- Disseminating research results to a diverse audience;
- Organizing conferences, seminars or other scientific events that are inclusive and diverse (e.g., ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities, diversity of invited speakers, accommodation for parents of young children);
- Organizing or participating in science activities for young people from underrepresented or marginalized groups (outreach);
- Participating in an EDI committee;
- Establishing clear and transparent procedures to ensure that opportunities for networking, conference attendance, etc. are communicated to all trainees and that financial support is distributed in an equitable manner



Concrete measures: Cluster

- Organizing activities to develop knowledge and skills related to EDI and to the challenges encountered by minority groups (e.g., workshops, training);
- Creating an EDI committee within the cluster's governance structure;
- Developing an EDI action plan based on best practices;
- Writing job postings in an inclusive manner and disseminating them to reach underrepresented groups;
- Inviting people from underrepresented groups to apply for decision-making positions within the cluster;
- Introducing training to reduce the influence of bias in recruitment procedures and in the awarding of funding to students.
- Establishing a mentoring or sponsorship program within the cluster, ensuring that members of underrepresented or marginalized groups are included;
- Using gender-neutral and inclusive language in internal and external communications;
- Encouraging cluster members to expand their recruitment methods to reach a greater diversity of students (e.g., reaching out to underrepresented groups rather than waiting for them to come forward);
- Introducing work-family or study-family balance policies and measures;
- Implementing measures to accommodate the specific characteristics of underrepresented groups (e.g., adapting the workspace for people with disabilities);
- Adding consideration of human diversity in the development and implementation of projects and the dissemination of research results as a condition for research project funding
- Organizing conferences, seminars or other scientific events that are inclusive and diverse (e.g., ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities, diversity of invited speakers, accommodation for parents of young children);
- Organizing or supporting science activities for young people from underrepresented or marginalized groups (outreach);
- Holding science communication activities for diverse target audiences.





New Frontiers in Research Fund: EDI- RP

Best Practices for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
in Research



EDI-RP: Research Practice

- EDI in NFRF now referred to as EDI-RP, to differentiate from EDI-RD, or Research Design, which refers to GBA+



Research Team and Research Environment

- Team composition and recruitment processes
- Training and Development opportunities
- Inclusion

For each, a brief explanation must be provided, including: how each practice applies to the team's specific context; how it will be implemented; the expected impacts; and how the impacts will be measured



Team Composition

- Applications must not include any self-identifying information about members of the research team in the EDI-RP section, but you may include information that reveals team members' affiliations, including departments, lab groups
- Focus on the team's commitment to EDI, not on its EDI profile



Training and Development Opportunities

- Applicants may draw on institutional EDI policies and practices where these exist, but they must be tailored to the particular context of the fields and teams involved. Applicants are encouraged to be specific and concise



An exception:

From the *NFRF Best Practices in EDI in Research*

“You **can include** information about yourself, your lab group and institution, and your team members, their lab groups and institutions **in the biographical information** about the team. If a team member’s self-identification (gender, Indigenous identity, disability or racial background) **is relevant to the research project**, you may include that self-identity information in the biographical information **only with their consent**. Otherwise, self-identification information about any team member should not appear anywhere in the application.”

https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/nfrf-fnfr/exploration/2020/guide_application-guide_demande-eng.aspx



This is the one exception to that rule, in NFRF applications. You may also find this exception provided for in other applications, and you’ll need to read this section of the application guide for your particular grant every time you apply – things may change year-to-year. Two things are important for this exception: 1) including such information can **only** be done with the **explicit consent** of the team member; 2) you cannot include self-ID data, even in the biographical information section, just to advertise your team’s diversity – it has to be relevant to the research project (for example, if your project is specifically designed to be Indigenous-driven, it would be relevant *to your research project* that you or members of your team self-identify as Indigenous).

Summary



- **Do not** provide vague or generic statements (e.g., “in future hiring, EDI will be considered” or “the university is committed to EDI”)
- **Do not** refer to the team’s current diversity
- **Do not** refer to EDI general best practices only
- **Do not** refer to the university’s EDI policy alone



How can we help?

Institutional vs Applicant responsibility

- Working towards a comprehensive tool that can include one-stop-shopping for all EDI related resources: recruitment, training, on-campus resources, etc
- We want to alleviate the burden on the researcher



Information resources

- NFRF Best Practices in EDI:
<https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/nfrf-fnfr/edi-eng.aspx>
- NSERC Guide for considering EDI in your application (**this has many useful links to additional resources**):
[http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/EDI/Guide for Applicants EN.pdf](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/EDI/Guide%20for%20Applicants%20EN.pdf)
- CRC Best Practices for recruitment, hiring, and retention:
http://www.chairs-chaieres.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx
- NFRF Manual for Multidisciplinary Review Panel: Exploration 2018 – Merit Indicators for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:
http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/nfrf-fnfr/exploration/2018/reviewers_manual-guide_de_l_evaluateur-eng.aspx#7d

These are very useful links for getting a start on your EDI plan. But again, I do want to remind you that you need to go deeper than just guidelines and best practices guides, and as you see I've noted that the NSERC Guide has good additional resources that I'd definitely recommend reading.

Information Resources, cont'd

- Concordia's *Sustainable Development Goals – Preliminary Report 2020*:
<https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/concordia/services/sustainability/docs/Hub/sustainable-development-brochure.pdf>
- Concordia's *Report of the Working Group on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*:
<https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/concordia/offices/provost/docs/Working-Group-EDI-Report.pdf>
- OPVPA's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion webpage:
<https://www.concordia.ca/provost/resources/edi.html#inclusive>

A couple of good resources here for overviews of Concordia. The SDG report also outlines a bunch of specific past and present EDI initiatives at Concordia that are worth familiarizing yourselves with.

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Q & A



1) If on a team grant with two investigators, one is a woman and one is a man, can the team use the pronouns “she” and “he” to refer to themselves in the grant application (outside of the biographical information section), if those are the preferred pronouns of each one?

- In such circumstances it is acceptable to use “she” and “he”, even though they would identify who exactly is being spoken of in the context of a two-person team. The agencies do not require pushing this requirement to the point of not using gendered pronouns at all, but please be judicious in availing yourselves of this kind of exception. The point is that you need to make a serious *effort* to not identify anyone in particular with their demographic information. But there are situations in which the context of a very small team makes that impossible, and that effort does not need to be pushed to the point of absurdity in such situations.



2) From the Inclusion practical points slide, there was an emphasis on describing general trends in a field. This is not always easily available data. Will Concordia be providing resources for us to be able to obtain such information?

- Field-specific information varies greatly, so it's necessary to look into your own. Subject-specific librarians at the Concordia Library may be able to direct you to good, up-to-date resources:

<https://library.concordia.ca/about/staff/>



3) Does the FRQNT Teams application have a specific EDI section?

- No, but it is given a 5-point weight during the evaluation process. The two most prominent places to highlight the integration of your EDI principles in the Teams application are in Training Environment and Complementarity of Team Members. FRQNT also has a brief [EDI Guideline](#) available.



4) For FRQNT Research Support for New Academics, they have added a section on best practices for EDI in project management. Is this not "graded" per se, though?

- Yes, it is graded, with a 5-point weight. The instructions are fairly vague, though:

Criterion 3: Integration of the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in research (5 pts)

Efforts put in place to promote equity, diversity and inclusion. It is up to each applicant to choose how to address this criterion through concrete actions, taking into account his or her unique situation. Efforts may involve composition, organization and management, knowledge sharing and dissemination to user communities, etc.

FRQNT also has a brief [EDI Guideline](#) available.



5) (a) What university resources are there for outreach to under-represented groups (e.g. that group leaders can access for recruitment)? (b) How can researchers find out about what resources are available to support students from under-represented groups?

- (A) There are a lot of student groups at Concordia that support under-represented groups. Here is the database (n.b. it is being redesigned and many student groups register in late-August/early-September): <http://www.concordia.ca/offices/dean-students/studentgroups.html>. Recruiters use this database when attracting students to the university.
- (B) Some university-run resources include [the Otsenhákta Student Centre](#), the [Access Centre for Students with Disabilities](#), and the [Concordia University Student Parent Centre](#).



6) In NSE fields, research outputs will be mainly publications and presentations. What would be good examples of those categories for equity?

- One example of equitably evaluating these outputs is to take leaves (parental, disability, etc.) into account during the evaluation process, rather than looking only at an equal stretch of time for all applicants. You might also advertise, on the job posting, that applicants are encouraged to mention (in their cover letter) if, for example, they have experienced slower “production” periods due to disability, parenting, etc., even if these have not been periods of formal leave (see also next question). **Please remember though:** In general, in the context of recruitment at Concordia, only the following exception permits *any* questions during a recruitment process that might require an applicant to disclose or discuss their parental or marital status, under Québec human rights legislation:

Continued next slide



6) Continued

That the selection criterion used allows for an individualized assessment of the applicants.

The hiring standard used by the employer must be inclusive and incorporate accommodation measures (a flexible standard reflecting the differences between each applicant should be favoured over a rigid standard completed by quick-fix accommodation measures).

[\(Application and Interpretation of Section 18.1 of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms\)](#)

There are two other, extremely limited circumstances in which an exception might apply (please see the link above, Section 2.1), but their application would generally be highly dubious in a university context. **In no other circumstance** can you ask questions of this nature during the recruitment process. In the absence of the exceptions mentioned above, such questions are **strictly prohibited** by Québec human rights legislation.

Continued next slide



6) Continued

- Publications and presentations may also have taken place in lesser-known journals and venues, that are nevertheless important for certain fields – you could encourage applicants to highlight these, and accord them an equitable weighting in your evaluation (rather than, for example, putting a premium only on applicants' Tier-1 journal publications, H-indices, etc.).



7) If a student does not take a formal leave, how can you treat delays in research?

- Invite applicants to explain any delays they may have experienced in their research, and make it clear both in the job-posting and during interviews that you will take into consideration both slow-downs and informal leaves related to care-giving, maternity/paternity, parental responsibilities, disabilities, medical-related situations, etc.



8) How can one prevent EDI strategies in grant proposals from becoming all very similar through time (e.g., trying to hit all the “good points”) to the point that render them less important? EDI will evolve but perhaps not fast enough to the same pace in which researchers start using rubber stamp strategies.

- One cannot necessarily prevent this from happening, and many strategies are broadly applicable. For now, what reviewers want to see is your awareness of the systemic barriers that are most significant to the context of your research program, strategies to counter them that are feasible, and a commitment to ensuring that your program implements those strategies. It may well be that eventually EDI plans will become more and more similar – perhaps even to the point where the agencies simply mandate EDI plans that have been laid out in advance for research programs. For now, though, it’s important to your grant application to tailor your EDI plan to your specific program.



9) For a new researcher submitting to the NSERC Discovery program, the EDI incorporation would focus primarily on future student recruitment, correct? If not, how would we be able to speak to the inclusion strategies of the project with a specific context when you don't know the team composition?

- New researchers do not need to describe past training of HQP. Your EDI strategies in this case should focus on future recruitment, but also on inclusion strategies for the diverse student team that will result from that recruitment. It is true that you cannot know the specifics of that team composition now, but you need to map out inclusive practices that anticipate the diversity of needs to match the diversity of the team you will attempt to attract to your program.



10) Do we need a chart with the number of HQP in each designation? Is it appropriate to establish equity target numbers and gaps? Or should we focus only on recruiting procedures?

- No, you do not need such a chart, nor should you establish equity target numbers and gaps. The focus of your EDI plan should be on recruitment *and* inclusion strategies; i.e. ensuring not only a diversity of applicants and team members, but also an environment in which members of all groups can fully participate and thrive.



11) Student recruitment is the area where professors have the most control. When we search the database of applicants to look for candidates, gender is not one of the columns or search criteria. It is up to us to recognize names. It would be great if we could build on the recruitment efforts of Concordia toward the 4 designated groups.

- Agreed, but recruitment efforts need to be geared toward ensuring that the broadest possible diversity of applicants feel that the opportunities you are offering are fully available to them. Students' demographic data is fully confidential, and the University's recruitment team also has no access to it, other than in anonymized aggregate form.



12) What are the expected measures to be taken by the granting agencies to check that what was mentioned in an application is indeed taken as an action / actions?

- Some larger grants have mid-term reporting, and all grants have final reports that researchers must complete. In those reports, you will be expected to confirm that the EDI commitments you made were carried out, and to describe the results of those strategies.



13) Targets/gaps are used internally by Concordia itself (see page 10 of the [CRC EDI Action Plan](#)). I had planned to use Concordia's own EDI action plan as a resource, but is this not advisable?

- Targets and gaps with respect to representation of the four designated groups are mandated by the Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP), at the federal level, with each university required to include target/gap information – provided by the CRCP – in its CRCP EDI Action Plan. **These targets and gaps are exclusively for CRCs**, and do not apply to any other program at Concordia (n.b. the targets mandated by the CRCP are somewhat arbitrary, and are in general *very* low compared to the Canadian population – please do *not* use them). There are, however, other sections of this plan that can be helpful for getting direction or ideas for surveying your research “climate”, developing equitable recruitment practices and inclusive environments, etc. Please be sure to tailor these to your specific research program, though, rather than just adopting a university policy.

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13) Continued

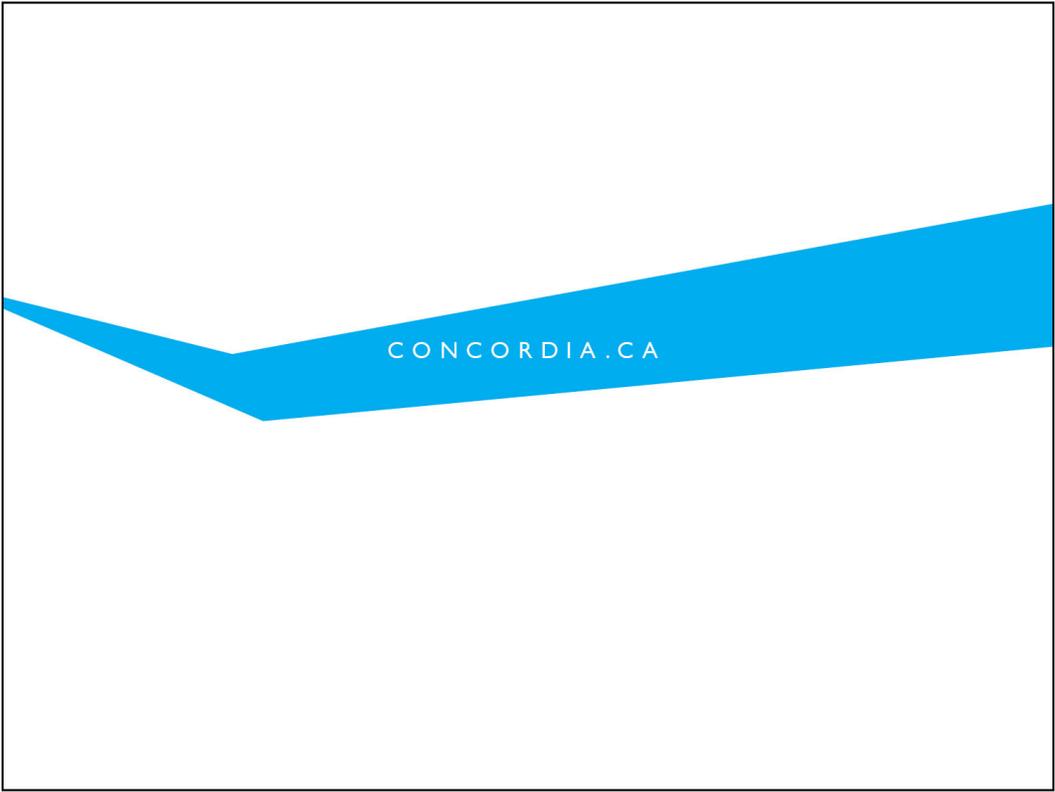
- Please remember that under Québec's human rights legislation, no group – even if it is already over-represented – may be *excluded* from any hiring process. Recruitment practices must be designed to *include* members of under-represented groups, not to reserve positions only for members of those groups.



14) Are there EDI components of CIHR grants?

- There are no EDI components to CIHR grants right now, but all PIs, co-PIs and co-applicants are required to complete the EDI questionnaire (for the purpose of CIHR collecting EDI-related demographic data from applicants). Apart from that, every proposed project must integrate Sex and Gender Based Analysis (SGBA) and Gender-Based Analysis + (GBA+) into its research design when appropriate.





HQP Training and EDI

- In 2018, Concordia University convened an EDI Advisory Committee (EAC) to examine shortfalls in current practices and identify priority areas for improvement.
- In consultation with a representative cross-section of the Concordia community and experts in the assessment and implementation of EDI best practices, the EAC produced a report that recommended specific measures be put into place to ensure compliance with EDI principles.
- University is crafting an Institutional best practices plan based on the report [recommendations](#)



HQP Training and EDI

- **EDI is about more than just hiring. It is important to note the distinction between “equal” treatment and “equitable” treatment: EDI is about *recruiting, retaining, and promoting* trainees by providing an environment in which all people can succeed.**
- Components to consider:
 - Recruitment
 - Retention
 - Environment
 - Accommodation



HQP Training and EDI

- **Recruitment Practices**

- Non-gendered language in recruitment ads
- Aligning with organizations for under-represented groups to promote training opportunities: National Society for Black Engineers, Women in Engineering, Indigenous Student Association
- QUALITATIVE assessments of potential students: Instead of just looking at CVs, allow space for an applicant to explain any delays, absences, or comparative lack in success and/or experience



Past Contributions to Training

- You can start with a quantitative statement: How many PHD, Msc, Undergrads, PDF you have trained/graduated in the last 6 years
- List former students and their eventual employment positions and explain what skills they acquired that prepared them for their current or most relevant positions.
- List any awards, prizes or recognitions
- Refer to industry partnerships, or participation in centres and/or networks where students were exposed to industry experience, to multi-disciplinary training, and specify the cases where students were hired by the companies they interned with



Past Contributions to Training

- Reference any difficulties in hiring students and explain why some students may not have finished their degree...usually there are personal/family reasons; these are valid but please do not go into specifics so as to protect the privacy of those students.
- Avoid statements such as: I could not find students that met my standards/were good enough for me.
- Explain your recruitment strategies (going to conference poster presentations, networking with colleagues, etc) and explain why you may have had less students...for example depending on what you are working on at the time, you prefer to focus on a few quality students so as to provide the best and most personalized training environment
- If you come from abroad and there are different metrics for success or expectations of training, BE EXPLICIT and explain.
- ALWAYS TRY TO TURN A NEGATIVE INTO A POSITIVE.



Past HQP Training and EDI

Describe specific actions implemented to support equity and inclusion in the research training environment

Students who have gone on parental leave and had to extend their degree.

- Students who, due to illness, disability, or pregnancy, could not use specific equipment or materials and accommodations were made. Eg: due to impending parental leave, student was given priority access to facilities in order to collect sufficient data for either publication or graduation
- Resolving possible issues of harassment in lab members
- Accommodating cultural and religious practices where possible
- Accommodating family commitments and responsibilities
- Describe any experience you have had and emphasize that you do as much as possible to see your students successfully through their degree while addressing any personal challenges or obstacles that come up. Address any intentional strategies toward recruiting under represented groups.

DO NOT provide any identifying details in the description of such cases



Many times you will have had experiences with EDI situations without realizing