NEW FRONTIERS IN RESEARCH FUND – EXPLORATION COMPETITION

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion – Tips & Resources

August 2020

OVERVIEW:

This document outlines a number of ways in which you can address equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) considerations in your NFRF Exploration application. This resource is offered in addition to the 2020 Exploration Full Application Guide, the NFRF guide to Best Practices in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research, and the Exploration Merit Indicators, and it is not intended to replace a careful reading of those documents.

The EDI section of your NFRF Exploration application must

- describe the EDI context of your team;
- identify the **concrete actions** that your team has adopted/will adopt to meaningfully engage members of under-represented groups; and
- describe the relevance of these actions, the implementation, the expected impact, and the means of measuring this impact.

It is important that you **do not simply copy and paste** text from this tips sheet into your application. Please tailor and customize these suggestions to fit the EDI context that is specific to your research team or research area. You are also encouraged to individualize the text to reflect team members' past experience in recruitment, mentoring, and training.

The hyperlinks below have been included for your reference and information. As noted in the NFRF Best Practices guide, it is not sufficient to simply state that you will follow an institutional policy or to link to an existing institutional policy or resource.

Please note: Per the NFRF Exploration competition overview, applicants **must not** include any personal information about team members or trainees.

ANALYSIS OF CONTEXT (maximum 2500 characters)

- Describe the EDI context of team, focusing on the specific circumstances of the team, the research fields, and/or the institution.
- Demonstrate your understanding of EDI challenges in the context of your research team, pointing to **specific systemic barriers**. For example, you could discuss some of the following barriers, as relevant to the context:
  - The impact of bias in recruitment/hiring and peer review
  - The effects of the research climate and culture

- The impact of stereotype threat on the recruitment/retention of members of under-represented groups
- A lack of role models/mentors for students, trainees, and junior faculty members from under-represented groups
- Barriers experienced by researchers with disabilities
- Disproportionate service burdens faced by under-represented faculty members
- Narrow definitions of excellence that undervalue emerging areas of research or non-traditional scholarship

- As noted in the merit indicators, the context and the barriers described here must be addressed by specific actions you develop in each of the three sections below.
- Describe the team's overall **commitment to advancing EDI** and addressing these barriers. As applicable, discuss the team's strengths related to EDI. For example, describe team members' expertise in EDI and their experience in initiatives or leadership activities designed to promote an equitable, diverse, and inclusive research community.

EDI PRACTICES

For each of the three section below, you are expected to identify **at least one concrete practice** and describe the relevance to your team, the implementation, and the measures/indicators for assessing this impact. (See the merit indicators for more information.) Each of these specific practices should **address the context you have described above**; be sure to make the connections between the context and the actions clear for the reviewers.

The bolded sub-headings in the sections below are drawn from the "Examples of best practices" column in the NFRF Best Practices guide. The bullet points below each sub-heading provide examples of specific actions/practices and steps for implementation, while also identifying relevant U of T resources. (These sections highlight selected examples from the Best Practices guide; those that are self-explanatory have not been included.)

This resource is intended to provide you with a wide range of potential practices; because there are strict character limits in the Exploration EDI form, you will need to **select the particular strategies that are most applicable** to your research team and to the EDI context. At the same time, this list of suggested practices is not exhaustive, and you are encouraged to describe other relevant strategies or resources with which you are familiar.

Team Composition & Recruitment Processes (maximum 250 characters to identify the practices + 2500 characters to describe relevance, approach, impact, and measurement)

Example of best practices: **Commit to developing your knowledge of EDI.**

- Participate in various EDI training and workshops available at U of T (see "Provide EDI training for team members," below).
- Consult the following documents:
    - U of T Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence

- ➢ U of T's Canada Research Chairs EDI Action Plan
- ➢ Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Canada Charter (U of T has endorsed the Charter and is an affiliate institution)
- ➢ VPRI Equity and Diversity in Research and Innovation Working Group Report
- ➢ Final Report of the Steering Committee for the University of Toronto Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
- ➢ VPHRE Annual Reports & Publications

Example of best practices: **Ask your institution about its current employment equity targets and gaps.**

- U of T Report on Employment Equity
- U of T Canada Research Chairs equity targets and representation (U of T is currently meeting and exceeding targets for all four designated groups)

Example of best practices: **Provide EDI training for team members.**

- Develop an equity training plan for the team and create a timeline for implementation.
- Ask all team members to complete the Tri-Agency/Canada Research Chairs unconscious bias training module.
- Encourage team members to make use of the unconscious bias education resources available from the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life.
- Encourage faculty members on the team to participate in unconscious bias education workshops offered by the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life, or in workshops offered by TIDE (the Toronto Initiative for Diversity and Excellence).
- Request a team training workshop from the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office.
- Encourage team members to complete EDI-focused courses offered by the Centre for Leadership, Learning and Culture.
- Team members can also do the following:
  - ➢ Make use of EDI resources and information sessions offered by the Division of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation.
  - ➢ Make use of online resources available from the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity. U of T has an institutional membership, and all faculty, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and staff can create an account and access these resources.
  - ➢ Participate in any EDI-focused training, workshops, events, invited talks, etc., offered by your division or department.

Example of best practices: **Implement measures to ensure there is diversity in the pool of candidates.**

- Conduct recruitment processes that are open and transparent, integrating EDI principles throughout the various stages.
- Ensure that opportunities to participate in the team are open to all eligible applicants and will be widely communicated.
- If the team is engaged in the recruitment of external candidates, take additional steps to reach a wide audience: advertise opportunities in targeted venues, such as websites, list-servs, journals, and professional networks and caucuses that serve members of under-represented or equity-seeking groups, and any discipline-specific organizations that reach under-represented groups.

- Ensure that postings are active for sufficient time to ensure that they are seen by a wide group of potential candidates. Post all opportunities for an agreed-upon minimum number of days.
- Engage in proactive recruitment, using diverse professional networks to actively seek out a broad pool of potential team members. For example, encourage colleagues to identify strong prospective candidates and to encourage these candidates to apply. Ask specifically for recommendations of diverse applicants.

Example of best practices: **Use non-gendered, inclusive, and unbiased language in the job post.**

- Screen job postings for gendered or exclusionary language. See for example this resource from Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology.
- Include a statement outlining the institution's commitment to equity and encouraging applications from members of the four designated groups and other under-represented groups. ("The University of Toronto is strongly committed to diversity within its community and especially welcomes applications from racialized persons/persons of colour, women, Indigenous/Aboriginal People of North America, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ persons, and others who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas.")
- Include additional language about the particular team's commitment EDI principles, reconciliation, and/or inclusive excellence.
- Provide information about University accommodations for persons who experience disability. Include a statement of commitment to an accessible recruitment process, and provide the opportunity for applicants to request accommodations on a confidential basis.
- Include a statement acknowledging that researchers have varying career paths, and provide applicants the opportunity to explain career interruptions in their application materials. State clearly that such interruptions will be given fair consideration in the selection process.

Example of best practices: **Use targeted hiring to address potential gaps within the team.**

- Consult with your division's Human Resources lead.
- Targeted or preferential hiring is permissible under Section 14 of the Ontario Human Rights Code. Job postings for targeted hires should include a statement that the hiring process will follow the provisions for a special program under Section 14. (For more information, please see Your Guide to Special Programs and the Human Rights Code.)

***Example of best practices*:** **Create a selection committee and a process that prevents potential bias.**

- Ensure, whenever possible, that recruitment decisions are made by a group or committee rather than by one individual.
- Create a committee that is diverse and includes members of under-represented groups.
- Be clear that entire team will be responsible for a commitment to equity, emphasizing that this role will not fall to faculty members who belong to under-represented groups.
- Be mindful of the disproportionate service burdens that are often faced by members of under-represented groups.

***Example of best practices:* Involve and EDI officer/HR representative from the institution in each stage of the recruitment process.**

- Identify an equity officer or equity champion who will serve on the recruitment committee. This individual should be a faculty or staff member with demonstrated competency and experience in EDI, particularly knowledge of best practices related to recruitment and peer review.
- Ask the equity champion to review the job posting for inclusive language.
- The equity champion should attend recruitment committee meetings to observe and to support committee members in carrying out an equitable selection process and in mitigating the effects of unconscious bias. For example, the equity champion can conduct periodic check-ins during the review process to ensure that criteria are applied consistently to all candidates.

***Example of best practices:* Align the selection process with best practices already in place within the institution.**

- Consult the following documents:
  - U of T's Canada Research Chairs EDI Action Plan
  - Guide to the Administration of CRCs at U of T (steps for open and transparent CRC recruitment and nomination processes)
  - Strategies for Recruiting an Excellent & Diverse Faculty Complement and Better Practices in Recruitment (VPFAL)

***Examples of best practices:* Use the same assessment process for all candidates and ensure it is equitable./Develop the interview questions and assessment grids before receiving the applications.**

- Evaluate application materials using pre-determined evaluation and selection criteria, applying these criteria consistently to all applications.
- Determine and prioritize detailed selection criteria before opening any applications. Ensure that these criteria align with the qualifications explicitly listed in the opportunity posting.
  - Develop clear and inclusive definitions of excellence/quality for each criterion and the broader qualifications outlined in the posting.
  - As applicable, determine the short-listing process in advance of reviewing any applications.
  - Record assessments of candidates using an evaluation criteria grid or rubric, consistently applying the abovementioned criteria of excellence to all candidates.
  - Avoid relying on holistic or intangible qualities like "fit" or perceived personal attributes.
  - Review all of the required materials submitted by each qualified candidate, but do not consider any extraneous information (such as personal knowledge of the candidate).
  - For additional information on best practices, consult the CRCP's Guidelines for Assessing the Productivity of Nominees.
- Recognize that unconscious biases tend to be most pronounced when we are rushed or distracted; spend sufficient time reviewing each qualified candidate.
- If applicable, when scheduling an interview and/or campus visit, avoid suggesting days of celebration or religious observation, even if they are not statutory holidays or occasions observed by the University. For more information, consult this list of dates.

- Offer all candidates the option of accessibility accommodations for the interview. Communicate information about the interview setting(s) in advance of the interview, providing candidates with details about the accessibility of locations.
- Prepare the interview questions in advance, and review interview questions to ensure they are aligned with the criteria mentioned above. Ask the same questions of all candidates.
- Make allowances for differences in communication and presentation style.
- Review the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate after each interview, using pre-determined selection criteria. After all of the interviews are complete, meet to discuss and compare candidates, evaluating them based on the pre-determined criteria.

Example of best practices: **Establish a policy/procedure to ensure that career leaves are fairly considered in the recruitment and selection processes.**

- Within the application materials, provide candidates with an opportunity to explain any leaves, including parental leaves or medical leaves, or any career/academic interruptions or slowdowns.
- Ensure that committee members take into account these interruptions and fairly consider their impact on a candidate's research productivity. Encourage the committee to be mindful that the most qualified applicants may not the be those with the highest number of publications, and to consider the substance, quality, and significance of the candidates' work.
- Consult the CRCP's Guidelines for Assessing the Productivity of Nominees or its Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention, particularly section F: Hiring Decisions.
- Ask the equity officer to review applicant CVs for career interruptions, and to support the committee in ensuring that such interruptions are not unfairly penalized.

Example of best practices: **Ask all members of the selection committee to declare all potential conflicts of interest with the applicants.**

- Committee members should not evaluate any applications for which they have a conflict of interest and should inform the chair of such conflicts as soon as possible.
- At the first meeting, the committee chair should confirm that members do not have any conflicts of interest that would prevent them from assessing candidates in an objective manner.
- For an example, consult the NSERC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement.

Example of best practices: **Have those involved in the hiring process complete EDI training.**

- Require committee members to complete unconscious bias education prior to beginning the recruitment process, such as the Tri-Agency/CRC unconscious bias training module or the unconscious bias resources available from the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life.
- Develop a process to confirm that all committee members have completed this training.
- Make committee members aware of potential biases in letters of reference. Ask members to read letters carefully for signs of bias. Consider adopting a rule that candidates cannot be excluded from consideration based on a single reference letter.

Example of best practices within the selection process.

- As appropriate to the position, consider including EDI competency as one of the selection criteria, and ask applicants to describe their experience in EDI initiatives in their application materials.

- Fairly assess non-traditional scholarship or scholarship that is outside the mainstream of the discipline. Ask the equity officer or a subject matter expert to support the committee in ensuring that this type of scholarship is not undervalued.
- As applicable, consult the SSHRC Guidelines for the Merit Review of Indigenous Research.
- As applicable, consider the challenges that may come with community-engaged, partnered, or collaborative research, taking into account their impact on publication timelines and choice of publication venues. As with potential career interruptions, encourage the committee to be mindful that the most qualified applicants may not the be those with the highest number of publications, and to consider the substance, quality, and significance of the candidates' work.
- Consult the CRCP's Guidelines for Assessing the Productivity of Nominees and Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention, particularly section F: Hiring Decisions.

Training and Development Opportunities (maximum 250 characters to identify the practices + 2500 characters to describe relevance, approach, impact, and measurement)

Examples of best practices: **Establish procedures or policies for distributing training and development opportunities associated with the grant to team members./Clearly communicate these procedures/ policies to all team members.**

- Ensure that training opportunities will be open to all eligible applicants and will be widely communicated. When recruiting trainees, team members can circulate student opportunities via department/division list-servs.
- When evaluating applications, use the selection processes described above in the Team Composition and Recruitment Processes section.
- Develop mechanisms to ensure that all team members and trainees have equitable opportunities for co-publishing, presenting research, networking, engaging with partners, etc., relative to their career stage. As an example, team leaders could create a policy that all summer undergraduate students will have equivalent access to particular opportunities and learning outcomes, and all graduate trainees will have equivalent access to another set of research and career development opportunities.

Examples of best practices: **Ensure all team members have equal access to mentoring opportunities, especially with senior researchers./Ensure there are opportunities for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty to develop papers, network and advance their own research with the assistance of more established researchers.**

- Develop training or mentorship plans with junior team members and trainees. For example, all trainees could work with their mentors to create an Individual Development Plan that identifies both short- and long-term goals.
- A mentorship plan is an opportunity to clarify expectations about the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and trainee, as well as to communicate information about mentorship style.
- A training or mentorship plan can also provide an opportunity for trainees to voluntarily and confidentially disclose their needs for accommodations or to discuss other personal circumstances that may have an impact on their academic progress.

- Develop a mentorship network among the team's members, wherein junior members and trainees are able to benefit from the experiences of more senior members and trainees.
- As applicable to the project, create equitable opportunities for mentorships with industry partners or partner organizations.
- For additional information on fostering an effective mentorship culture, consult this resource from the National Center for Women & Information Technology.

***Example of best practices:* Institute a policy/process with safeguards to ensure that individuals with career leaves, etc., are not disadvantaged during within the decision-making process.**

- Provide trainees with an opportunity to explain interruptions or slowdowns in their academic progress. Take these interruptions into account, considering their impact on academic timelines or research outputs.
- See also practices regarding consideration of career leaves, above.

***Example of best practices:* Discuss potential EDI training activities with team./Ensure mentors receive unconscious bias training and/or other EDI training as necessary**

- Please see "Provide EDI training for team members," above.

***Example of best practices:* Consider whether your institution has tools that could be used to help support the work of the mentors.**

- Make team members aware of the Graduate Supervision Guidelines available from the School of Graduate Studies. These guidelines include sections on equity in supervision and student accommodations.
- Make graduate students aware of student edition of these Supervision Guidelines.
- Make use of the new Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision, expected to launch in fall 2020.
- Share information about the programming for faculty available from the Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life; research funding information sessions available from the Division of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation; and professional development resources available from the School of Graduate Studies.
- Make us of existing mentorship programs within your department or division, especially those that promote diversity.
- Encourage team members to make use of the online career development resources available from the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity.

Inclusion (maximum 250 characters to identify the practices + 2500 characters to describe relevance, approach, impact, and measurement)

***Example of best practices:* Ensure that the inclusion of all team members is a proactive consideration in how the team is managed on a day-to-day basis.**

- Foster a leadership style that is intentionally inclusive.
- Emphasize the team's commitment to professionalism, respect, and collegiality. For example, draft a team code of conduct or statement of values that outlines the importance of an inclusive

environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, and other exclusionary behaviours. You could also create a mission statement for the team that emphasizes inclusive excellence. Post these statements in your office, your lab, or on the team's website.

- Develop a consistent communication and decision-making process for the team, and establish an agreed-upon dispute-resolution mechanism. Clear and effective communication can help the team function more effectively and can promote a sense of inclusion.
- Be flexible in scheduling team meetings and events. For example, whenever possible, schedule meetings during "core" working hours (e.g., 9:00–5:00), and avoid holding meetings on culturally significant days, even if these are not statutory holidays.
- Ensure that everyone who attends team meetings, whether in person or online, will have an opportunity to participate in discussions and have their voice heard.
- If planning and hosting research events, aim for diversity among invited speakers or presenters.
- If organizing workshops or other events, design events that welcome all participants. For example, use best efforts to ensure that spaces are accessible, and communicate information about accessibility to all participants. Identify a contact who can manage and coordinate requests for accommodation on a confidential basis.
- Include a land acknowledgement at both online and in-person events.
- For further guidance on hosting accessible and inclusive events, please see this planning guide from the Council of Ontario Universities.
- If organizing events online, adopt practices that promote accessibility (e.g., use clear, uncluttered slides, enable live captioning and/or provide transcripts, and identify a contact who can address requests for accommodation).

Example of best practices: **Ensure that team leaders are demonstrating by good example to other team members.**

- Team leaders can familiarize themselves with allyship and commit to act as allies. See for example these resources from the U of T Faculty of Medicine and the Association for Women in Science.
- Participate in U of T's Positive Space campaign.
- For additional resources, see the "EDI Practices for Team Composition and Training" section of the VPRI EDI Resources page.

Examples of best practices: **Address any conflicts or issues that arise swiftly and in a sensitive manner, respecting the privacy and confidentiality of those involved./Put in place a complaints management process to address any issues that may arise within the team.**

- Identify a process by which team members can raise concerns related to the workplace or research environment, and identify a team lead or leaders who will receive these concerns and will be accountable. Such processes could be outlined and communicated in your group's statement of values.
- As required, work with equity leads or HR staff in your division or department to identify effective strategies for addressing these concerns.
- Communicate to all team members the University's Civility Guideline (civil conduct and workplace harassment), including mechanisms for complaints.

- Make team members aware of the University's Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment, Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment, and Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities.
- Make team members aware of the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office Complaints Resolution Services.

Example of best practices: **Develop a good understanding of microaggressions.**

- Familiarize yourself with the concept of microaggressions and identify strategies for responding. For example, read this overview from the National Institutes of Health and consult this resource, developed by the Grainger School of Engineering at the University of Illinois.
- Participate in relevant workshops offered by the U of T Centre for Learning, Leadership and Culture.

Example of best practices: **Provide EDI training for team members.**

- Please see "Provide EDI training for team members," above.

Example of best practices: **Identify easily accessible and appropriate resources for team members.**

- Communicate to all team members the services and supports available from the University's equity offices, including the AODA Office, the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office, the Sexual & Gender Diversity Office, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, and the UTM and UTSC Equity and Diversity Offices.
- Make team members aware of related resources, such as the Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre, Health & Wellbeing Programs and Services, the Community Safety Office, and the Multi-Faith Centre.
- Support team members in balancing family and other obligations. Make team members aware of the resources and supports provided by the University's Family Care Office.
- Communicate services available to students, such as the Indigenous Student Services and First Nations House, Accessibility Services (St. George), AccesAbility Services (UTSC), and the Accessibility Service (UTM).
- Share online campus map with team members, trainees, and visitors; the map allows users to easily locate accessible entrances and washrooms.
- Communicate to all team members University policies regarding eligible leaves (e.g., parental leave, caregiving leave, medical leave), as well as Tri-Agency policies regarding such leaves.
- Promote and make use of divisional or departmental resources and/or events that support inclusion and belonging.