



# Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Research Teams and Training: Promising Practices and Resources Handbook

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## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

A commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is a cornerstone of research excellence—it enables universities and research teams to draw on all available research talent and allows these researchers to achieve their full potential. A new research team or project can be an opportunity to advance inclusive excellence and to implement practices that support all team members and highly qualified personnel (HQP) in beginning, building, or sustaining their research careers.

This handbook outlines a number of ways to embed EDI considerations in your research team and in HQP training, as well as strategies to effectively communicate these practices in a research funding application. For resources related to diversity in research design and methods, please consult the “[Additional Resources](#)” section at the end of this document.

This document provides a range of practices for advancing EDI in research on an ongoing basis. Each section also includes excerpts drawn from successful external funding applications at the University of Toronto. When considering these examples for your own research group, you will need to select the particular actions that are most applicable to your research and training context, tailoring these examples to your team. Be sure to identify practices that are feasible and that you can meaningfully implement over the life of a research grant (and beyond).

The content in this handbook is drawn from peer-reviewed literature, gray literature, and promising practices shared by researchers in a variety of venues. The handbook was reviewed and discussed by the University’s Committee on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Research & Innovation, which provides guidance to the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, and Strategic Initiatives on matters related to EDI across the University’s research and innovation ecosystem.

## EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSING EDI CONSIDERATIONS

### Context and Systemic Barriers

The EDI plan for your research team should address the context and systemic barriers in your discipline, department, or team. Systemic barriers are the policies and practices that result in some individuals from under-represented groups being excluded from participation or receiving unequal access to opportunities. These barriers can be unintentional but nonetheless have real impacts.

Systemic barriers in research and innovation can include:

- The impact of unconscious bias in recruitment/hiring and peer review
- An unwelcoming or hostile research climate and culture
- Narrow definitions of excellence that undervalue emerging areas of research, non-traditional scholarship, or Indigenous ways of knowing
- Inequitable access to research, training, and career development opportunities
- A lack of role models/mentors for students, trainees, and junior faculty members from under-represented groups
- Exclusion from networks, particularly informal networks
- Physical, sensory, and other barriers experienced by researchers with disabilities
- Disproportionate service burdens faced by faculty members from under-represented groups
- Isolation, microaggressions, and stereotyping for those who are especially under-represented in their department or discipline
- The “hidden curriculum” in research (norms, practices, unwritten rules), which can be exclusionary

For more information about systemic barriers, please consult the “[Additional Resources](#)” section at the end of this document.

To reflect on the systemic barriers in your field, you can start by asking the following questions (adapted from [this resource](#) developed by the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering – Quebec Region):

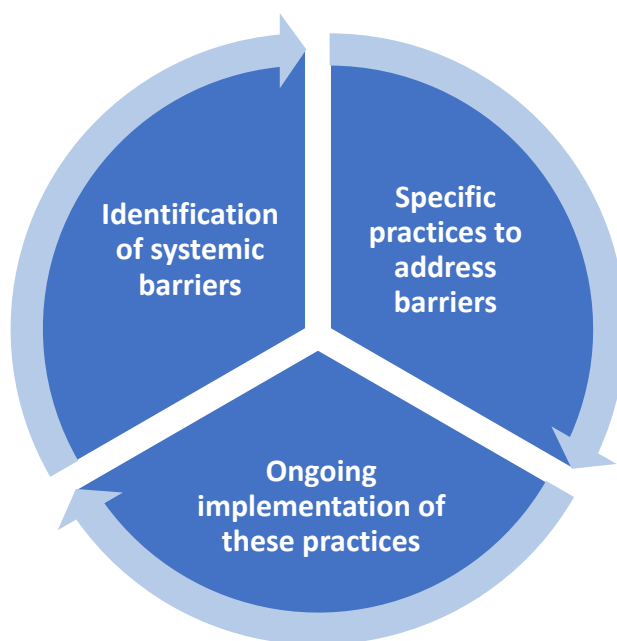
- Is there diversity in the current team, or in the relevant research fields in general? Are equity-deserving groups represented?
- If not, what are some of the key explanations for this lack of representation?
- If yes, is this diversity the result of deliberate actions, or of chance? Is there **intentional** engagement of and support for members of under-represented groups?
- What are the usual practices for recruitment and research training in your team or research discipline? Are these practices fair and consistent?
- Do all team members and trainees feel included and supported in their success? Why or why not?

The work of understanding these barriers will be iterative and ongoing, as context may evolve or new challenges emerge, and as you deepen your awareness.

### Addressing Systemic Barriers

As you continue to identify and develop an understanding of barriers in your field, you can then engage in specific practices and actions that help address these barriers. Examples of these practices are discussed in the sections below.

These practices should be **specific** and **intentional**, proactively addressing EDI in recruitment practices, training/mentorship, and the research and training environment. Practices should be implemented on an **ongoing basis**—EDI work requires sustained effort.



Identify and consider actions across a range of steps, from initial outreach and recruitment to the everyday experiences of team members and trainees in your research team or group. These practices will allow you to move beyond representation/diversity to consider researchers’ and trainees’ opportunities and experiences.

A well-developed EDI plan will include the *equitable* processes that enable you to attract, retain, and support *diverse* team members and trainees, as well as the steps you are taking to intentionally foster an environment that is *inclusive* of all team members and trainees.

### EDI in Proposal Writing – General Tips

It is important to communicate your EDI plan effectively in a research funding proposal, clearly demonstrating to reviewers your commitment to EDI:

- Avoid broad or generic statements about EDI, and do not simply point to high-level institutional policies or statements on EDI. Do not assume the work to advance EDI is already done or that someone else will do it.
- Describe **specific, concrete practices** that will promote EDI within your research team; provide sufficient detail to demonstrate to reviewers that you have an intentional, well thought-out plan.
- Do not include demographic data or identifying personal information about team members or trainees. How a person self-identifies is confidential, and a commitment to EDI goes beyond the diversity of the current team or trainee group. Instead, focus on the processes and practices that will advance EDI.
- Wherever possible, describe EDI practices that you are already implementing. You don't need to wait for a successful grant to start proactively addressing EDI in your team.
- Demonstrate that EDI is a key competency within the team. Highlight the EDI expertise or experience among PIs and team members.

The sections below provide examples of EDI practices that you can incorporate into your team or research training environment and can describe in a research funding application. While they outline a range of practices, these lists are not exhaustive, and you are encouraged to incorporate other relevant strategies or resources with which you are familiar.

## RECRUITMENT OF TEAM MEMBERS & TRAINEES

Identify and describe the specific steps that you will take to embed equity throughout the recruitment and selection process. These actions may refer to the recruitment of academic team members (faculty members), or they may refer to the recruitment of trainees or other research personnel. If your team is already established, you can also describe how you will use these processes to engage future team members/trainees, should the opportunity arise.

### Examples of Specific Practices

#### Address EDI in the team composition.

- Be intentional in seeking out a diversity of team members (e.g., gender balance, inclusion of other under-represented groups, diversity of career stages).
- Recruit team members who have demonstrated experience in EDI leadership or initiatives.
- As applicable, identify a management team member who will be responsible for oversight of the team's EDI objectives. This individual will have relevant EDI experience and knowledge of best practices, and should have some training/experience in the management and resolution of complaints and concerns related to EDI.

#### Openly post opportunities to attract a broad and diverse pool of applicants.

- Ensure that opportunities to participate in the team or group are open to all eligible applicants and are widely communicated. For example, undergraduate opportunities can be posted to the University of Toronto [Career and Co-Curricular Learning Network \(CLNx\)](#).

- 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-deserving groups, as well as any discipline-specific organizations that reach these groups.
- Keep postings 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 broad channels and diverse professional networks to actively seek out a broad pool of potential team members or trainees.
- Use conferences or workshops to connect with a broad group of potential trainees, and attend disciplinary conferences or caucus meetings for members of under-represented groups.

**Use non-gendered, inclusive, and unbiased language when posting application opportunities.**

- Screen job postings for gendered or exclusionary language. See, for example, [this resource](#) from Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology.
- Clearly list the required qualifications, the explicit selection criteria, and the basis for assessment of these criteria.
- Include a statement outlining the institution's commitment to equity and encouraging applications from members of under-represented groups, including those who identify as women, Black, racialized, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, and persons with disabilities.
- Include additional language about your particular team's commitment to 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 and trainees have varying career/academic paths, and provide applicants the opportunity to explain interruptions in their application materials. State clearly that such interruptions will be given fair consideration in the selection process.
- If feasible, offer part-time employment as an option, stating that interest in this option should not be disclosed in the application and will be offered when the position is offered.

**Create a selection committee and a process that mitigates the impacts of unconscious bias.**

- Ensure, whenever possible, that recruitment decisions are made by a group or committee rather than by one individual.
- Create a selection committee that is diverse and includes members of under-represented groups. Be clear that entire committee will be responsible for a commitment to equity, emphasizing that this role will not fall to under-represented faculty members, who already face disproportionate service burdens.
- Consider inviting graduate students, postdocs, or junior faculty in your team onto the selection committee, as appropriate, recognizing that this experience is a valuable training opportunity.
- Require committee members to complete unconscious bias education, such as the [online modules available from TIDE \(the Toronto Initiative for Diversity and Excellence\)](#), prior to beginning the recruitment process. Confirm that all committee members have completed this training.
- Share information regarding 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. In addition, committee members should first read applications without letters, form an assessment/score, and only then read reference letters. Any change in score after reading the reference letters should be explicitly justified using specifics of the reference letters.

- Ask all members of the selection committee to declare potential conflicts of interest. 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. (See, for example, [Section 6](#) of the University's [Guide to Canada Research Chairs Nominations and Renewals](#).)
- 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.

#### **Involve an equity officer/equity champion in the recruitment and selection 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.

#### **Use consistent selection criteria and processes.**

- Evaluate application materials using pre-determined and well-defined evaluation and selection criteria, applying these criteria consistently to all applications.
- Determine and prioritize detailed selection criteria before opening any applications. These criteria should align with the qualifications and criteria clearly listed in the opportunity posting.
  - Develop clear and inclusive definitions of excellence/quality for each criterion (see below) 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).
- Recognize that unconscious biases tend to be most pronounced when we are rushed or distracted; spend sufficient time reviewing each qualified candidate.
- Avoid ranking applicants against each other until the final stage. Instead, assess each candidate objectively only against the stated selection criteria.
- When making short-lists or final decisions, randomize applications for review, as opposed to reviewing them in order of score, which can introduce confirmation bias.
- For additional information on best practices, consult [Best Practices in Peer Review](#) (Division of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation) and [Strategies for Recruiting an Excellent and Diverse Faculty Complement](#) (Office of the Vice-President, Faculty & Academic Life).

#### **Adopt an inclusive definition of research excellence.**

- 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 SSHRC's [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.

**Ensure that research interruptions are fairly considered in the evaluation 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.
- Remind committee members to take into account these interruptions and fairly consider their impact on a candidate's research productivity.
- Be mindful that the most qualified applicants may not be those with the highest number of publications, and consider the substance, quality, and significance of the candidates' work.
- Ask the equity officer to review applicant CVs for career/academic interruptions, and to support the committee in ensuring that such interruptions are not unfairly penalized.

**Embed equity considerations into the interview process.**

- 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 or remote platforms.
- Prepare the interview questions in advance, and review interview questions to ensure they are aligned with the criteria mentioned above. Share the questions with candidates in advance, and ask the same questions of all candidates.
- Recognize that some candidates may have never done this type of interview before. Share with them the committee membership as well as the length and format of the interview, and send them links to resources on preparing for interviews.
- Make allowances for differences in communication, presentation style, and apparent level of confidence.
- Review the total strengths and weaknesses of each candidate after each interview, using pre-determined selection criteria. Assessments should be based on the application materials as well as the interview. After all of the interviews are complete, meet to discuss and compare candidates, evaluating them based on the pre-determined criteria.

**Excerpts from Successful Applications**

"Our approaches to encourage a diverse trainee applicant pool will include i) outreach to undergraduate communities, such as offering summer student opportunities and informal presentations; ii) use of social media to broadly advertise available positions and directly reach out to under-represented groups (for example, through the use of hashtags such as #womeninstem, #blackinstem, #disabledinstem, #LGBTQinstem); iii) creation of job descriptions that use non-gendered language and, whenever possible, use personal terms that convey a sense of team like 'you', 'us', 'we'; and iv) brand lab websites to highlight a commitment to EDI and to encourage applications from under-represented minorities."

"To address diversity challenges in the pipeline, I aim to enhance current University of Toronto outreach activities by developing (with my HQP) an all-girls summer academy course (which typically attracts hundreds of students from around the world) for the recruitment of high school students. Research has indicated that all-girls education in this field can better attract women and girls into the pipeline. Next, I will focus on strategies



to recruit a diverse group of students into my research program. In addition to broadly advertising research opportunities online, I have budgeted for two annual trips to the National Society for Black Engineers Canada, the American Indian Science and Engineering Society in Canada National Gathering, or the Women in Science and Engineering National Conference to connect with and recruit potential HQP.”

“During candidate evaluation, a committee of individuals trained in the identification of unconscious bias and EDI considerations will make hiring and selection decisions. This selection committee will be required to declare any potential conflicts of interest with regard to the applications. A common set of interview questions and evaluation rubric will be consistently applied to all candidates. Both the questions and rubric will be developed prior to evaluating the applications. In the case of graduate student and postdoctoral fellow hiring, the evaluation of applicants’ scientific contributions (publications, etc.) and transcripts will be conducted in a blind manner.”

“One barrier we are acutely aware of is that summer stipends for undergraduate research often pay less than other employment opportunities available to our students. This provides an early advantage to students for whom summer earnings are not a concern. This is a real problem given the importance that access to independent research plays in recognizing one’s own enthusiasm for research, as well as the doors it opens for future endeavours (other research opportunities in later years, graduate school admissions, fellowship applications.) To that end, we provide the maximum support possible for such students, advocate for greater funding, and provide a variety of opportunities for students to gain this experience (for instance, during the school year, for credit as part of the program of study).”

“We will also continue our current initiatives of providing training for graduate students in inclusive hiring practices, and current PhD and Masters students will be involved in all aspects of the recruitment processes (e.g., review of applications and interview of graduate and undergraduate research assistant candidates). This step will help create a more equitable recruitment process. We have already established as a practice the attendance of graduate students during all phases of interviewing of candidates, including their full participation in the decision process. We will continue to do so for the hiring of a postdoc and a research assistant for this project.”

## TRAINING & MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Identify and describe the specific steps you will take to create an equitable training environment in which all trainees—including those from under-represented groups—are able to fully participate, gain research experience, acquire skills, and access mentorship and career development opportunities.

### Examples of Specific Practices

#### **Establish procedures or policies for equitably distributing trainee opportunities.**

- 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 the research group/lab website, departmental or divisional list-servs, and to student organizations that serve under-represented groups. Undergraduate student opportunities can be posted to the [Career & Co-Curricular Learning Network](#).
- When evaluating applications, use the selection processes described above in the section on [Recruitment of Team Members and Trainees](#).
- Develop mechanisms to ensure that all team members and trainees have equitable opportunities for co-publishing, presenting their research, networking, engaging with partners, etc., relative to their career stage or level of study. As an example, team leaders could create a policy that all 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.

- Identify someone, such as the EDI lead, who will track/monitor trainee engagement and uptake; identify a plan (among the team leads) to address disparities in access or participation, should they arise. This plan should include considerations of accessibility, caregiving responsibilities, religious or cultural observations, etc.
- Provide equitable financial support in order to mitigate barriers to participation, ensuring this is reflected in your proposed budget. For example, you could state that all post-doctoral fellows will receive funding to attend one international conference, while all graduate students will receive funding to attend one national conference.

### **Create equitable access to mentoring and career development opportunities.**

- 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. See, for example, the [CIHR Individual Development Plan](#) or [Science Careers myIDP](#).
  - Use the mentorship plan as 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.
- Hold regular group meetings that allow trainees to share their research, ask questions, share challenges, discuss professional development, etc. Offer the option of one-on-one meetings for those who may require additional support.
- Adopt an “open-door policy” for trainees to contact you online (e.g., email, Teams, Slack) or drop in to meet with you (during designated working hours).
- 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.
  - Ensure that the workload of team members and senior HQP providing mentorship is equitable and balanced.
  - For additional information on fostering an effective mentorship culture, consult [this resource](#) from the National Center for Women & Information Technology.
- Ensure that team members/trainees have equitable access to infrastructure or lab equipment.

### **Provide EDI training and education for team members.**

- Develop an equity training plan for the team and create a timeline for implementation. The team’s EDI lead may take on responsibility for identifying this plan.
- Ask all team members to complete the [TIDE unconscious bias education modules](#).
- Encourage faculty members on the team to participate in the inclusive recruitment practices workshops offered by the [Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life \(VPFAL\)](#), or in [workshops offered by TIDE](#).
- Participate in training workshops from the [Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office](#), the [Sexual and Gender Diversity Office](#), or the [Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre](#).
- Participate in any EDI-focused education, workshops, events, invited talks, etc., offered by your division or department.

- Encourage team members who are appointed staff to complete EDI-focused courses offered by the [Centre for Leadership, Learning and Culture](#).
- Share and discuss research on systemic barriers, unconscious bias, and best practices. For an introductory list of books, articles, and essays, consult the list in the “[Additional Resources](#)” section, below.

#### **Embed equitable training into partnerships.**

- Ensure that trainees of the same level have equitable opportunities to engage with industry partners or partner organizations in order to build research or professional development skills, access equipment or facilities, receive feedback, network, etc.
- Describe the partners organization’s own EDI principles and practices, and indicate how the partner will bring EDI experience or expertise to interactions with team members and trainees.
- Create equitable opportunities for mentorships with partner organizations. As applicable, ask individuals from partner organizations to join your mentorship network.

#### **Employ institutional tools that support mentorship.**

Make team members aware of the School of Graduate Studies [Graduate Supervision Guidelines](#), which include sections on equity in supervision and student accommodations, and [Best Practices for Supervisors and Instructors of Graduate Students with Family Responsibilities](#). Share the [student edition of these Supervision Guidelines](#) with graduate students.

- Share information about the [programming for faculty available](#) from VPFAL workshops and information sessions available through the [Centre for Research & Innovation Support](#); and [resources available from the School of Graduate Studies](#).
- Consult the resources and services available from the [Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision](#), including resources on accessibility and English language support, and resources for Black students, Indigenous students, and international students. Participate in the Centre’s [Healthy Research Teams Initiative](#).
- Make use of existing mentorship programs or resources within your department or division.
- Encourage team members to access the online career development resources available from the [National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity](#).

#### **Excerpts from Successful Applications**

“To avoid unconscious biases from influencing the equitable delivery of training and career development, the PI will develop a set of standard practices and implement them in the mentorship of trainees. They will build on practices that the PI has already implemented in her lab. For example, rather than having meetings on an as-needed basis (which can unintentionally favour some trainees over others), the PI has set weekly meeting times with each of her graduate students and postdocs. Each meeting is also the same length (1 hour). The use of this equitable access to the PI for one-on-one meetings, however, is tailored to meet the unique requirements of each student.”

“One challenge is that the HQP who are least aware of EDI issues may not choose to attend relevant (optional) workshops. To ensure a minimum education around EDI for my HQP—and signal that I view EDI as especially important—we begin each lab meeting with a 10-minute summary of an EDI research paper.”

“The research team will fund all students to attend/present to at least one conference that highlights EDI topics in Science, Technology and Engineering, including the Women in Science and Engineering National Conference, the National Society of Black Engineers Annual Convention, and the Canadian Federation of Engineering Students Conference on Diversity in Engineering.”

“The PI has developed a ‘Welcome to the Lab’ guide, with the aim of making implicit assumptions about grad school and the university explicit, thus reducing the perceived gap in expectations for students who may be the first in their families to go to graduate school. This guide provides clear, equal opportunity rules about publishing work, authorship, travelling for conferences, reference letter support for fellowships, and allocation of lab space. The guide makes clear that all trainees at the same level have equitable opportunities to engage with training and development opportunities (for example, visits to industry partners, presentations at conferences, etc.).”

“All recruited students and postdoctoral fellows will be assigned an established researcher as their mentor. The mentor will support and guide the trainee throughout the project, overseeing and advocating for equal access to opportunities. We will discuss career goals and interests of all team members at the project outset to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for skills development during the project, including networking opportunities and relevant conferences and workshops. We will measure equitable outcomes by tracking key metrics beyond the qualitative understanding of the team members and their specific circumstances: number of sub-projects each team member has participated in, number of conferences attended, number of co-authored papers, etc.”

## INCLUSION

Identify and describe the specific steps you will take to build a supportive, respectful, and welcoming research and training environment that fosters a sense of belonging and allows all trainees and team members to reach their full potential for excellence.

### Examples of Specific Practices

#### **Integrate inclusive practices into the day-to-day management of the team.**

- 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. See, for example, the [Lewis Lab EDI Statement](#), created by Professor Mark Lewis, Departments of Mathematical & Statistical Sciences and Biology, University of Victoria.
- You can also draft guidelines and expectations for the team that emphasize inclusive excellence and well-being. Consider co-developing this statement with your team and trainees. Post these statements in your office, your lab, and/or on the team website. See, for example, the [Schloss Lab Social Contract](#), developed by Professor Patrick Schloss, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, University of Michigan.
- Develop a team manual or orientation package that is shared with all new members and trainees. This document can outline the team’s policies and its commitment to EDI, and can also be used to share resources that support EDI ([see below](#)).
- Support accessibility in your team; offer information about the layout/accessibility of research and event spaces, provide flexibility for medical appointments, and aim to remove as many obstacles as possible without requiring disclosure.
- Encourage all team members and trainees to share their pronouns.
- 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., 10:00–4:00), and avoid holding meetings on [culturally significant days](#), even if these are not statutory holidays.
- Only send emails during regular working hours, and use the “[schedule send](#)” option to delay sending emails composed outside of working hours.
- Provide virtual meeting options to those who are travelling or have caregiving options.
- 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.

#### **Apply an equity lens to the organization of research team events.**

- If planning and hosting research workshops, conferences, or other events, aim for diversity among invited speakers or presenters.
- Design events that are welcoming to all participants. For example, use best efforts to ensure that spaces or platforms 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 an intentional, meaningful, and accurate [land acknowledgement](#) at both online and in-person events.
- For further guidance on hosting accessible and inclusive events, please see the [planning guide from the Council of Ontario Universities](#) or the [500 Women Scientists Guide to Organizing Inclusive Scientific Meetings](#).
- Offer sign language interpreters for plenary sessions, with seating reserved at the front for the hearing impaired or those with other accessibility needs.
- Provide a list of childcare options for events, rather than requiring attendees to research these options themselves. For more information, consult the [Family Care Office](#).
- If organizing events online, adopt practices that promote accessibility. For example, present clear and uncluttered slides and use the Accessibility Checker in PowerPoint; enable live captioning during presentations and/or provide transcripts; and identify a contact who can address requests for accommodation in a remote platform.

#### **Foster a leadership style that is intentionally inclusive.**

- PIs/team leaders can familiarize themselves with allyship and commit to act as allies. See, for example, these allyship resources from the [U of T Temerty Faculty of Medicine](#) and the [Association for Women in Science](#).
- Learn about microaggressions and identify strategies for responding. For example, read [this overview from the National Institutes of Health](#) or consult [this resource](#), developed by the Grainger School of Engineering at the University of Illinois.
- Share the U of T resource [Your Journey: A Career Guide for Trans and Nonbinary Students](#).
- Consult the Institutional Equity Office [EDI Education Calendar](#). Participate—and encourage team members to participate—in campus initiatives and events that promote EDI. These initiatives might include U of T’s [Positive Space](#) campaign, Pride events, [Black History Month](#), Women’s History Month, the events for the annual [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#), the [Race, Equity & Action Speaker Series](#), or events organized by your division or department.

#### **Address any issues that arise swiftly and in a sensitive manner, respecting privacy and confidentiality.**

- Identify a process by which team members and trainees can raise concerns related to the workplace or research environment, and identify a team lead or leaders, such as the EDI lead, who will receive these

concerns and will be accountable. Such processes should be clearly communicated to all team members and trainees, and may be included in your code of conduct.

- As required for concerns that cannot be addressed within the team, work with equity leads or HR staff in your division or department, or the U of T Equity Offices, 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, and information about [student complaints regarding prohibited discrimination](#).
- Share information about the [Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office Complaints Resolution Services](#).

#### **Share EDI and wellness resources with team members.**

- Communicate to all team members the services and supports available from the University's [equity offices](#) and the [Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre](#), [Health & Wellbeing Programs and Services](#), the [Community Safety Office](#), and the [Multi-Faith Centre](#).
- Share resources regarding [student mental health](#), including the [Navi wayfinder](#), which includes resources for mental health. Communicating these resources is an important step in supporting mental health and normalizing conversations around our mental well-being.
- Consult and share the ["Identify, Assist, Refer" reference guide](#), available from the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering.
- 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](#) and Accessibility Services ([St. George](#), [UTM](#), and [UTSC](#)).
- If holding an event on campus, share the [online campus map](#) with team members, trainees, and visitors; the map allows users to easily locate accessible entrances and washrooms, all-gender washrooms, and baby-change stations and breast/chest feeding spaces.
- 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 (see Part 5: Provision for leaves from grant activities).
- Promote and make use of divisional or departmental resources and/or events that support inclusion and belonging.

#### **Excerpts from Successful Applications**

"We have implemented policies in place to support PhD students who are parents. These policies include modifying/providing flexibility in expected work schedules, dedicating physical space in the lab to accommodate bringing a child to the office, providing financial support in the form of grant top-ups, and subsidizing travel to conferences for spouses in lieu of childcare."

"When students join my group, I share with them the group's mission statement and 'getting started' guide. This statement outlines the inclusive and respectful environment that I expect all members of my group to commit to. It details our approach to innovation and provides some practical tips on how to get started in research and common problems frequently encountered by new HQP. Students are reminded annually of the group's mission statement and policies, and we work to evolve the statement together as needed. I educate my students and collaborators on allyship and active bystander behaviour."

"Our department has an existing confidential complaint processes, in which undergraduate students, graduate students, postdocs, or staff members can raise an issue and have some choice about how this complaint is pursued. The lab distributes information about the complaint process and resources via its internal

communication platforms. Each year, we will invite the graduate coordinator to a lab meeting to describe the complaint process and options. The PI will not be present for this portion of the meeting to facilitate open communication.”

“To address potential intra-lab conflict or other concerns, time is set aside at the beginning of every weekly one-on-one meeting to discuss non-scientific issues. These have proven useful at identifying issues and patterns of behaviour that can then be addressed confidentially and at an early stage of intervention so that small issues do not become big ones. One challenge trainees face is how to address issues that might arise with their mentors. To provide a supportive forum in which to bring up such issues, all our graduate student committee meetings now start with a private discussion between students and their committees (with the graduate mentor stepping out of the room). Support also exists at the level of the department, with dedicated administrative support for students.”

“Fieldwork can place HQP in situations where personal and professional lines are necessarily blurred (e.g. living, working and socializing in close quarters far from home), where they may face discrimination from collaborators, or where they may experience real or perceived threats to their safety in remote locations. I now follow the best practice of communicating with all trainees a common set of guidelines regarding fieldwork. Expectations for behaviour are explicitly outlined, and everyone is aware of at least one formal reporting mechanism if they encounter serious problems. I also encourage informal discussions about interpersonal interactions and strategies for managing conflict, sharing examples from my own past experiences.”

**[For a large-scale project]** “The research team will appoint an EDI Advisor to its Governance Committee. The EDI Advisor and the team leads will organize an EDI seminar series as part of the training of all HQP. The series will draw on resources from the Equity Offices at the University of Toronto and the home institutions of the co-applicants, and will include presentations by the PI research team, since it is important for team leaders to be role models in promoting EDI. We will invite speakers from partner organizations about their EDI leadership experience. The seminar series will include open discussion about challenges experienced and achievement of best practices, with the goal of maintaining an ongoing discussion, promoting awareness and the adoption of best practices in EDI, and identifying and addressing challenges or shortcomings.”

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Systemic Barriers

- [“How Gender and Race Stereotypes Impact the Advancement of Scholars in STEM: Professors’ Biased Evaluations of Physics and Biology Post-Doctoral Candidates,” \*Sex Roles\* \(2020\)](#)
- [“The Science and Value of Diversity: Closing the Gaps in Our Understanding of Inclusion and Diversity,” \*Journal of Infectious Diseases\* \(2019\)](#)
- [“Are Gender Gaps Due to Evaluations of the Applicant or the Science? A Natural Experiment at a National Funding Agency,” \*The Lancet\* \(2019\)](#)
- [“Raising Doubt in Letters of Recommendation for Academia: Gender Differences and Their Impact,” \*Journal of Business and Psychology\* \(2019\)](#)
- [“Systemic Inequalities for LGBTQ Professionals in STEM,” \*Science Advances\* \(2021\)](#)
- [“Disrupt and Demystify the Unwritten Rules of Graduate School,” \*Nature Geoscience\* \(2021\)](#)
- [“The Diversity-Innovation Paradox in Science,” \*PNAS\* \(2020\)](#)
- [“Graduate Students of Color: Race, Racism, and Mentoring in the White Waters of Academia,” \*Sociology of Race and Ethnicity\* \(2017\)](#)



### EDI in Teams & Training

- U of T Division of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, [Best Practices in Peer Review](#)
- U of T Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life, [Strategies for Recruiting an Excellent & Diverse Faculty Complement](#)
- Canada Research Chairs Program, [Guidelines for Assessing the Productivity of Nominees](#)
- Canada Research Chairs Program, [Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention](#)
- New Frontiers in Research Fund, [Best Practices in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research](#)
- Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations for Research Teams](#)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, [Guide to Addressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations in Partnership Grant Applications – EDI in Research Practice](#)

### EDI in Research Design

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research, [How To Integrate Sex and Gender into Research](#)
- Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations at Each Stage of the Research Process](#)
- New Frontiers in Research Fund, [Best Practices in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research – EDI in research design](#)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, [Guide to Addressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations in Partnership Grant Applications – EDI in Research Design](#)
- Stanford University, [Gendered Innovations in Science, Health & Medicine, Engineering, and Environment](#)
- [Intersectional Design](#)
- Women's College Research Institute, [The Health Researcher's Toolkit: Why Sex & Gender Matter](#)