

Addressing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Your Research Funding Application – Research Teams and the Training of Highly Qualified Personnel

A Tips & Resources Handbook

Research Services Office
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Introduction

This handbook outlines a number of ways in which you can address equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) considerations in a research funding application. This resource is focused on embedding EDI in the composition of the research team and/or in the training of highly qualified personnel (HQP), and does not describe the integration of diversity/gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) into research design. For resources related to research design and methods, consult the [resources page](#) of the EDI in Research & Innovation website.

The sections below are adapted in part from [New Frontiers in Research Fund – Best Practices in EDI in Research](#). These sections provide you with a range of potential practices to support EDI in your research team and HQP training, as well as information on implementing these practices on an ongoing basis. Each section also includes excerpts drawn from successful external funding applications. When considering these various examples, you will need to select the particular actions that are most applicable to the context of your research and training team.

It is important that you **do not simply copy and paste** text from this handbook into your application. Please tailor and customize these examples to fit your application, providing further details and description.

General tips:

- 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.
- Avoid broad or generic statements about EDI, and do not simply point to high-level institutional policies or statements on EDI.
- Do not include demographic data or identifying personal information about team members or trainees; instead, focus on the processes and practices that will embed EDI into your team. How a person self-identifies is confidential, and a commitment to EDI goes beyond the diversity of the current team or trainee group.
- Go beyond simply describing the diversity of the team: instead, point to the *equitable* processes that will enable you to attract, retain, and support *diverse* team members and trainees, as well as the steps you will take to create an environment that is *inclusive* of all team members and trainees.
- Highlight the EDI expertise or experience among PIs and team members.
- As space permits, describe the planned implementation and expected outcomes of the specific practices and strategies.

For additional information, please consult the [NSERC Guide for Applicants: Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in your application](#) and additional resources available on the [resources page](#) of the EDI in Research & Innovation website.

Recruitment of Team Members & Trainees

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.

This section provides you with a range of potential practices; you will need to select the particular strategies that are most applicable to your team, lab, or group. 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.

Examples of Specific Practices

Consider 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.
- 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 diverse professional networks to actively seek out a broad pool of potential team members. For example, ask colleagues to identify strong prospective candidates and to encourage these candidates to apply. Ask specifically for recommendations of diverse applicants.

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 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 under-represented groups, including those who identify as women, trans or non-binary, Black, racialized, Indigenous, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ2S+ persons.
- 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.
- Be mindful of the disproportionate service burdens that are often faced by members of under-represented groups.
- 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 Tri-Agency/CRC [unconscious bias training module](#), 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 the [NSERC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement](#).)
- 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 vet 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 the VPRI’s [Best Practices in Peer Review](#), VPFAL’s [Strategies for Recruiting an Excellent and Diverse Faculty Complement](#), or the CRC Program’s [Guidelines for Assessing the Productivity of Nominees](#) and its [Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention](#), particularly [section F: Hiring Decisions](#).

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 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. Encourage the committee to be mindful that the most qualified applicants may not be those with the highest number of publications, and to consider the substance, quality, and significance of the candidates' work.

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. As with community-engaged research, encourage the committee to be mindful that the most qualified applicants may not 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/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

"In order to ensure diversity in the pool of candidates during recruitment, all openings in the team will be advertised in an open and transparent manner. We will post opportunities on the group's website

and social media postings, the university/faculty website, and in scientific journals. Additionally, a diverse panel of PIs and HQP from all levels within the team will collectively evaluate potential applicants. Finally, all postings will use non-gendered and inclusive language in the job description. Currently the university includes the following statement for each job posting: ‘The University 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.’ We will integrate this statement onto our team’s careers webpage.”

“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.”

“We plan to continue conducting training workshops for graduate students related to cultural sensitivity, as well as training to detect and prevent other forms of unconscious bias. The workshops are facilitated by the PIs and by other faculty and staff at the university and external organizations. We consider these to be integral components of conducting research in culturally sensitive contexts. 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 and , given the diverse group of students and faculty we already have on our team, also highlights to candidates the values that define our research group and the inclusive environment we have built and strive to maintain. 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 postdoc and research assistant for this project. In addition, all PIs on the project team have enrolled in unconscious bias training sessions.”

[For an interdisciplinary project]: “In order to recruit top candidates, we are committing to an increased stipend and pay equity for the graduate students on the project. The increased stipend is intended to diminish financial barriers for strong applicants; we also recognize that the choice to pursue research in an emerging interdisciplinary field can come with the perception of diminished scholarship opportunities, or other potential disincentives. In addition to the increased stipend, we will pay all graduate students the higher of the stipend of XXX Department. This pay equity is recognizes that there is traditionally limited transparency about graduate student funding packages, and that discrepancies do exist between fields. This approach is designed to promote equity and remove barriers to interdisciplinary interactions.”

Training & Mentorship Opportunities

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.

This section provides you with a range of potential practices; you will need to select the particular strategies that are most applicable to your team, lab, or group. 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.

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 the [Career & Co-Curricular Learning Network](#) (for undergraduate research opportunities). You can also circulate postings to student organization that serve under-represented groups.
- 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 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.
- Provide equitable financial support in order to mitigate barriers to participation. 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.

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 Tri-Agency/Canada Research Chairs [unconscious bias training module](#).
- Encourage faculty members on the team to participate in inclusive recruitment practices 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 \(ARCDO\)](#).
- Encourage team members to complete EDI-focused courses offered by the [Centre for Leadership, Learning and Culture](#).
- Team members can also do the following:
 - Consult [EDI resources](#) and information sessions offered by VPRI.
 - 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.
- Share and discuss research on systemic barriers, unconscious bias, and best practices. For an introductory list of books, articles, and essays, consult the [“Further Reading”](#) page on the EDI in Research & Innovation website.

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 partner 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.

Make use of institutional tools that support mentorship.

- 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.
- Share the [student edition of these Supervision Guidelines](#) with graduate students.
- 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 [resources available from the School of Graduate Studies](#).
- Make use of existing mentorship programs or resources within your department or division, especially those that promote diversity.
- Encourage team members to access the online career development resources available from the [National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity](#).
- Consult resources from the forthcoming [Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision](#).

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 off of practices that the PI has already implemented in her lab. For example, rather than making 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. That is, students direct the content of meetings so that they can spend more time discussing theories, planning tasks, or getting help with specific tools and methods, depending on their personal requirements.”

“To provide some standard oversight over training, the PI already schedules an annual check-in meeting with trainees, which she will now schedule twice a year. In preparation for this meeting, trainees prepare a document outlining their accomplishments since the last meeting, their plans for the upcoming year (skill development, career development, and project deliverables), and ways in which the PI can adjust her mentoring to better support these goals. The PI has found that asking students to write out these plans and requests helps students who are less likely to advocate for themselves express their needs.”

“As a PI, I have sought out training on unconscious bias, mental health, and harassment, which helps me manage and advise my HQP. 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 it as especially important—we begin each lab meeting with a 10-minute summary of an EDI research paper. Another challenge is our past inability to attract under-represented students at the graduate level. I previously organized a highly successful annual weekend workshop for senior undergrads (ensuring gender balance among students and speakers) to learn about research in

my field and both academic and non-academic career paths. We plan to reboot this event with a broader EDI focus by gearing it towards early-stage undergrads from groups who underrepresented in our upper level courses and grad program, including Black and Indigenous students. We will work with UofT organizations, including First Nations House and the Black Student's Association, to seek advice and recruit attendees."

"The research team will fund all students to register/present to at least one conference that highlights EDI topics in Science, Technology and Engineering, including the Women in Science and Engineering National Conference, National Society of Black Engineers Annual Convention, and the Canadian Federation of Engineering Students Conference on Diversity in Engineering. The team leads will be supportive of student engagement with student groups that serve under-represented groups. We will also engage our industry and government partners in the discussion of EDI, inviting to review their own EDI policies and consider means of incorporating continual improvement in their business practices, if they have not already done so."

[For a large-scale project] "The research team will appoint an EDI Advisor to its Governance Committee. The advisor will guide the establishment of clear protocols in all of the team's research and training activities and recruitment procedures to ensure EDI in all aspects of the research. The EDI Advisor and team leads will monitor strategies and processes to engage under-represented groups in the HQP recruiting process, the inclusion of EDI elements in the research topics of projects in the proposed research program, the identification and strategies to address unconscious bias, and the day-to-day behaviour of all members and partners of the team. 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. The Equity Advisor will also organize training sessions for investigators regarding the development of equitable HQP recruitment strategies and processes."

Inclusion

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

This section provides you with a range of potential practices; you will need to select the particular strategies that are most applicable to your team, lab, or group. 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.

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.
- Considering developing a team EDI statement, such as the [Schloss Lab Social Contract](#), developed by Professor Patrick Schloss, Department of Microbiology and Immunology, University of Michigan, or the [Lewis Lab EDI Statement](#), created by Professor Mark Lewis, Department of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences, University of Alberta. You can also draft a mission statement for the team that emphasizes inclusive excellence. Post these statements in your office, your lab, and 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., 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 [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, or this [Inclusion Lens tool](#) from York University.
- 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 use clear and uncluttered slides and run an 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 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](#) and consult [this resource](#), developed by the Grainger School of Engineering at the University of Illinois.
- 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 annual Conference for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the [Race, Equity & Action Speaker Series](#), or events organized by your division or department.
- For additional resources, see the [resources page](#) of the EDI in Research & Innovation website.

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 group’s 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](#).
- 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](#).
- Share information about the [Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office \(ARCDO\) 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](#), including the [AODA Office](#), [ARCDO](#), 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](#).
- Share resources regarding [student mental health](#), including the [Navi mental health wayfinder](#). 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.
- 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.

Excerpts from Successful Applications

“To address potential or existing problems with inclusion, two senior group members will be designated (on a rotating basis to provide the opportunity to all trainees) to act as EDI ambassadors who will encourage and implement inclusivity in the team. These ambassadors will receive EDI training in advance, and the voices of all group members will be taken into consideration to implement changes within the groups, if needed. If such changes are recommended to be made, we will meet with the EDI ambassadors, as well as with individuals to discuss and confirm that these changes have made a positive impact.”

“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 details depend both on the nature of the complaint as well as the position of the complainant, but, as an example, a graduate student can make a complaint about their supervisor and choose to pursue at the department level (facilitated by the graduate coordinator), the faculty level (through an ombudsperson), and/or at the School of Graduate Studies (though the Office of the Vice-Dean of Students) as well as through the Graduate Students' Union. 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.”

“Since clear and effective communication will help the team function more effectively and will promote a sense of inclusion, we will enact a consistent communication and decision-making process. This process will focus around weekly group meetings held by each PI, with their respective research labs, and will be coupled into regular team meetings between all labs involved in the project. Trainees will be systematically asked (i.e., through a scheduled calendaring system) to present their research findings and discuss challenges faced and new directions they feel need to be pursued. In addition, everyone who attends the team meetings will have the opportunity to participate in discussions, if they choose.”

“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 child care.”

“In addition to implementing discussions on inclusion into our large group meetings, our group will also add this discourse into our weekly sub-group meetings. These meetings, which consist of 3–5 students and the PIs, have the primary goal of communicating research progress. However, they are also a great opportunity to address inclusion. These small groups are a low-pressure environment for students, especially those from underrepresented groups, to discuss science and group culture with the PIs. Ensuring that each student has a proportionate amount of opportunity to discuss science and group culture with the PI is important, especially for those from underrepresented groups who may feel uncomfortable expressing themselves in a large group setting. The PI will ensure that everyone, and especially individuals from underrepresented groups, has an equal chance to have input into conversations at these small group meetings.”

“Beyond technical excellence, I strive to train the next generation of leaders in our field; STEM needs thoughtful, compassionate leaders who will transform our field into a more diverse and inclusive space. 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. I have seen a number of my HQP serve as allies to other students facing discrimination or a hostile environment outside of our group.”

Concise EDI plan (for an application with limited space):

In some cases, the application will provide you with limited space to address EDI considerations, and the descriptions of concrete practices will need to be especially concise. In this case, you may need to integrate discussions of EDI into descriptions of past HQP training or the proposed research training activities themselves. The excerpt below provides an example of an application that successfully described a number of specific strategies in a short section.

Excerpt from a Successful Application

“HQP training in our lab emphasizes three growth areas: (i) leadership, (ii) problem solving, and (iii) technical proficiency. Our top priority is that trainees are ready to become leaders in any work force of their choosing via competency in critical decision-making, communication, and an ability to empower, empathize, and inspire. We believe that an EDI community inspires this training goal. Women and visible minorities are traditionally underrepresented in departments such as ours. Two major barriers are: (i) lack of role models and (ii) inequitable access to opportunity, both of which we are tackling via the following: (1) Celebrating EDI role models: (i) we doubled the number of invited departmental speaker seminars from 4 to 8 seminars per year while improving speaker gender and cultural equity. These speakers will serve as role models and will be able to interact with students from underrepresented groups over luncheons. (ii) New departmental communications and website have been launched. These channels will feature trainees and celebrate their achievements, especially those from

underrepresented groups. (2) Diversity in recruitment: Job opportunities in our lab will be advertised to undergraduate associations of underrepresented groups via on-campus seminars. I will identify and advertise funding support available to prospective trainees. To engage interest, our lab will host summer internships and advise team participation in an annual international competition for undergraduates in our research field. (3) Inclusive training environment: we will focus on creating diverse, orthogonal communication channels: (i) I will work with trainees to determine a mutually agreed upon dispute resolution process prior to training start. (ii) I will assist trainees in forming a diverse advisory committee that encourages accessibility and mitigates effects of unconscious bias. (iii) Annual milestone meetings, biannual peer evaluations, and anonymous mailboxes will be set up to allow regular ‘bottom-up’ feedback. (iv) Our lab hosts monthly socials to reduce communication barriers. (v) On-campus resources for wellness and work-life balance will be communicated to all trainees.”