

# Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in the evaluation of FRQNT grant applications

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## Background

While Québec must be able to count on all its best science and technology talent, barriers remain to achieving the full participation of certain groups. For example, women continue to be underrepresented, a situation that intensifies as their career advances<sup>1</sup>. Indigenous and racialized individuals also face obstacles to equity and inclusion, as do persons with disabilities and those from sexual and gender minorities<sup>2</sup>.

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)<sup>3</sup> contribute to strengthening the research community and the quality of research. It is therefore important to dispel the myth that EDI efforts run counter to excellence. On the contrary, addressing the prejudices and systemic barriers faced by certain individuals simply because of their gender, ethno-cultural origins, sexual orientation or disability provides the research community with access to all its top talent. Moreover, greater diversity is associated with better performance<sup>4</sup>.

The Fonds de recherche du Québec – Nature et technologies (FRQNT) therefore believe that EDI efforts should be recognized when evaluating researchers, research teams and clusters. This commitment is in line with the FRQ’s EDI strategy (*available in summer 2021*).

## Revised criteria and expectations of the FRQNT

Since the Fall 2020 competitions, consideration of EDI has been a part of the evaluation criteria in all regular FRQNT grant programs. The **EDI criterion has been revised** for the Fall 2021 competitions to clarify the type of information that should be included. An EDI criterion has also been included in the 2021 Strategic Clusters program (see [Appendix 1](#) for a description of this criterion, which differs from that presented here).

For non-cluster grant programs, this criterion assesses the applicant's or the team's **efforts** to promote EDI:

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

Funding applications should not contain information as to whether applicants, or members of their team, belong to marginalized or underrepresented groups.

The FRQNT's EDI criteria focus on the **steps taken** to promote EDI, **not the composition of research teams or clusters**. The FRQNT does not wish to know, for example, the number of women or Indigenous students who will be supervised by the applicant. This type of counting approach may encourage the tokenism of people from underrepresented groups. In addition, greater diversity does not necessarily reflect greater inclusion or equity, as the presence of underrepresented groups can vary widely from one area of research to another.

Individual applicants, teams and clusters will be evaluated on their **efforts** to create more diversified, inclusive and equitable research environments, whose climate and culture enable everyone to feel supported and respected. Note that **the efforts described for the EDI criterion should be those made by the applicant, team or cluster** and not those of their institution (e.g. an institutional EDI policy), unless the applicant has contributed personally to the initiative in question.

In addition to targeting the people who conduct research, the EDI actions described must also, **where possible, address the way in which the research is planned, conducted and disseminated**. The research should consider the diversity of realities, concerns and needs that exist within society. In addition to allowing for more equitable outcomes, taking this diversity into account improves the research and its impacts. While the consideration of EDI in research designs is not applicable to all projects, applicants and teams should reflect on this question for each project submitted.

Examples of actions that can be taken by *individual applicants and teams* are presented in [Appendix 2](#). Actions that can be taken by *clusters* are presented in [Appendix 1](#).

For more information, please refer to the resources listed in [Appendix 3](#) or contact [Fanny Eugène](#), Strategic Advisor on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

## Appendix 1: Information specific to the Strategic Clusters program

### EDI criterion for FRQNT strategic clusters

Equity, diversity and inclusion (5 points):

- Implementation of concrete actions to promote EDI within the cluster;
- Contribution to awareness and training of the cluster's experts on EDI issues;
- Consideration of EDI in the development and implementation of the democratization of knowledge to a diverse public.

### Examples of actions that can be implemented by clusters

The following are examples of actions that could be taken by strategic clusters to promote EDI, depending on their specific context.

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

- Organizing conferences, seminars or other scientific events that are inclusive and diverse (e.g., ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities, diversity of invited speakers, accommodation for parents of young children);
- Organizing or supporting science activities for young people from underrepresented or marginalized groups (outreach);
- Holding science communication activities for diverse target audiences.

These are just a few examples. Clusters are encouraged to think about the challenges specific to their field or research setting in order to develop relevant and effective actions.

The fact sheet entitled Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in research, produced by the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Québec) and available on the [Chair website](#) under “EDI Information Resources”, may be useful in this exercise.

## Appendix 2:

### Examples of actions that can be implemented by individual applicants and teams

The following are examples of actions that could be taken by individual applicants and teams to promote EDI, depending on their specific context.

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

These are just a few examples. Applicants are encouraged to think about the challenges specific to their field or research setting in order to develop relevant and effective actions.

The fact sheet entitled Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in research, produced by the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Québec) and available on the [Chair website](#) under “EDI Information Resources”, may be useful in this exercise.

## Appendix 3: Additional resources

- FRQ webpage on EDI: <https://frq.gouv.qc.ca/en/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/>
- Workshop on EDI in university research and grant applications (video recording, in French): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VcbnOvW8n0>
- Workshop on EDI in university research and grant applications (slides): <https://rqedi.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Atelier-EDI-en-recherche-15-avril-FINAL.pdf>
- Toolbox for EDI in research from the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Québec) (*available in summer 2021*): <http://cfsg.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/tools-for-edi-in-research/>
- Training in equity, diversity and inclusion from the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Québec) (in French): <http://cfsg.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/formation-en-equite-diversite-et-inclusion/> (The training course itself is only available in French, but Fact sheets provide a summary in English here: <http://cfsg.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/edi-in-higher-education-and-research/>)
- Workshops and training offered by the Québec Interuniversity Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Network (RIQEDI): <https://rqedi.com/en/workshops/>
- RIQEDI resources: <https://rqedi.com/en/resources/>
- Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in your application — NSERC Guide: [http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/EDI/Guide\\_for\\_Applicants\\_EN.pdf](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/EDI/Guide_for_Applicants_EN.pdf)
- Gender Summit 11 of North America Report, co-organized by the FRQ, NSERC and Portia Ltd.: [https://www.gender-summit.com/portia\\_web/assets/GS11NA\\_REPORT\\_EN.pdf](https://www.gender-summit.com/portia_web/assets/GS11NA_REPORT_EN.pdf)
- Gendered Innovations (this website presents information on the consideration of EDI in research): <http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/what-is-gendered-innovations.html>
- Training on gender-neutral writing in French, from the Office québécois de la langue française: [https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/redaction-epicene/20180112\\_formation-redaction-epicene.pdf](https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/redaction-epicene/20180112_formation-redaction-epicene.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> Devillard, S. et al. (2017). [The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Canada](#), McKinsey Global Institute; Canadian Association of University Teachers (2018). [Underrepresented & Underpaid : Diversity & Equity Among Canada's Post-Secondary Education Teachers?](#)

<sup>2</sup> Henry, F. et al. (2017). *The Equity Myth: Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities*, UBC Press; Freeman, J. (2018). [LGBTQ scientists are still left out](#), *Nature*, 559, 27-28.

<sup>3</sup> Visit the [FRQ website](#) to better understand what the FRQ mean by equity, diversity and inclusion.

<sup>4</sup> Hunt V., Layton D. et Prince S. (2015). [Diversity Matters](#), McKinsey & Company; Nielsen, M. W et al. (2017). [Gender diversity leads to better science](#), *PNAS*, 114 (8), 1740-1742.