

Guidelines regarding the equity, diversity and inclusion criteria in FRQNT grant applications

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Table of contents

Context	1
Criterion on EDI in regular FRQNT grant programs	2
Guidelines for applicants	2
Guidelines for reviewers.....	2
Suggested evaluation grid	3
Appendix 1 : Information specific to research infrastructures programs	4
Appendix 2 : Examples of actions that can be implemented by individual applicants and teams	6

Context

The Fonds de recherche du Québec consider that « all individuals should have access to the same opportunities to be recognized for their skills and ability to contribute to research. Every member of the research community should have the opportunity to develop and reach their full potential »¹. Additionally, research « should take into account the diversity of realities, concerns and needs that exist within society as a whole. In addition to allowing for more equitable outcomes, this leads to better research with greater impacts »².

It is important to dispel the myth that equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)³ 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 has been associated with better performance⁴.

Considering that equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) efforts contribute to strengthening the research community, the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Nature et technologies (FRQNT) want these to be recognized when evaluating researchers, research projects, research teams and strategic clusters.

Therefore, since the Fall 2020 competitions, consideration of EDI has been a part of the evaluation criteria in all regular FRQNT grant programs. An EDI criterion has also been included in FRQNT’s research infrastructure programs (the criterion used in infrastructure programs is presented in Appendix 1). Finally, some programs or competitions developed in partnership may include different EDI criteria than those used in regular FRQNT programs.

¹ Excerpt from the [Fonds de recherche du Québec EDI Strategy 2021-2026](#) (p. 3).

² Idem (p. 4).

³ See [FRQ’s EDI webpage](#) for information on what is meant by equity, diversity and inclusion.

⁴ 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.

Criterion on EDI in regular FRQNT grant programs

Integration of the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in research (5 %)

This criterion assesses the applicant's efforts to promote equity, diversity and inclusion, not the composition of research teams. *

- **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 EDI in the design and execution of research projects (research questions, methodology, etc.) and the dissemination and mobilization of knowledge to a diverse audience;
- **Involvement:** specific actions already taken and/or planned to promote EDI in the applicant's community or field or within the research community in general (committees, inclusive scientific events, awareness activities, etc.).

* *The applicant should not provide any information as to whether they, or members of their team, belong to marginalized or underrepresented groups.*

Guidelines for applicants

- Funding applications **should not contain personal information** as to whether applicants, or members of their team or infrastructure, belong to historically discriminated or underrepresented groups. The FRQNT does not wish to know, for example, the number of women supervised by the applicant.
- Applications will be evaluated on their **efforts** to create more diversified, inclusive and equitable research environments, where climate and culture enable everyone to feel supported and respected. They **will not be evaluated on the composition of the research teams or infrastructures.**

The presence of underrepresented groups may vary widely by field, environment and chance, and does not necessarily reflect efforts made in this regard. Furthermore, this type of counting approach may encourage the tokenism of people from underrepresented groups.

- The **actions described should be those of the individual, team or infrastructure submitting the application** and not those of their institution (e. g., institutional policy on EDI), unless the applicants contributed to them.
- In addition to targeting the people who conduct research, the EDI actions described must also, **when it is relevant, address the way in which the research is planned, conducted and disseminated.**
- Examples of actions that can be taken by individual applicants and teams are presented in [Appendix 2](#). Actions that can be taken by infrastructures are presented in [Appendix 1](#).

Guidelines for reviewers

- The evaluation of this criterion **must not consider the composition of the research team or infrastructure**, but rather **on the actions** that have been or will be implemented.
- The **actions described should be those of the individual, team or cluster submitting the application and not those of their institution.** For example, being affiliated with an institution that has an EDI policy does not necessarily reflect an effort on the part of the applicant, unless the applicant identifies their contribution to its development or implementation.

- The actions described **may target different groups that have been historically discriminated against** based on, for example, gender, disability, Indigenous identity, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, age, language, parental status, immigration status, or socioeconomic status.
- A good response should demonstrate an **understanding of the principles of EDI** and describe **specific actions** that indicate a desire to contribute to strengthening EDI in research.
- There are no specific points awarded for each of the three elements of the criterion (training, research, involvement). **The score awarded for this criterion is not dependent on the number of elements addressed** by the efforts described.
- The **consideration of diversity in research design and development** should be evaluated when it is relevant to the project. However, **it is not applicable to all projects**. In such cases, applicants or applicant teams should not be penalized.
- The actions described **need not be limited to the scope of the proposed project**, but may be aimed at supervised students, the applicants' environment (e.g., their department or institution) or research field, the populations targeted by the research, the dissemination of results, etc.
- Actions to **acquire EDI knowledge** or a better understanding of EDI issues within a team, research setting or field (e.g., voluntary participation in a training or workshop) are considered efforts to promote EDI.
- It is important to remember that not all applicants or applicant teams have the same opportunities to act on or develop their EDI knowledge. The evaluation of this criterion should therefore take into account, among other things, the **career stage**, the **field or type of research** carried out by the applicant or applicant team, and the **location, size and type of institution** (e.g., college vs. university).

Suggested evaluation grid

5	The application clearly describes actions taken or planned that demonstrate a strong commitment and a consistent approach to promoting EDI.
4	The application clearly describes actions taken or planned that demonstrate a commitment to EDI.
3	The application clearly describes at least one action taken or planned .
2	The application demonstrates a sensitivity to EDI principles and provides a vague description of intentions in relation to EDI.
1	The application demonstrates a sensitivity to EDI principles, but does not describe any intention or action taken or planned in relation to EDI.
0	No relevant information has been provided for the EDI criterion.

For more information, see the FRQ's [EDI Resources webpage](#) or contact [Fanny Eugène](#), Strategic Advisor on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Appendix 1 : Information specific to research infrastructures programs

Information provided in this appendix applies to FRQNT's research infrastructures programs such as Strategic Clusters and Innovation Catalyst Program: College-University (RIC-NT). **Infrastructures must also take into account the information provided in sections *Guidelines for Applicants* and *Guidelines for Reviewers*, including the suggested evaluation grid.**

Criterion on EDI in FRQNT's research infrastructures programs

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (5 % of total score) :

- 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 research infrastructures

These are just a few examples. Infrastructures 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's website](#), may be useful in this exercise.

- 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.

Appendix 2 : Examples of actions that can be implemented by individual applicants and teams

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's website](#), may be useful in this exercise.

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

Training:

- Introducing training to reduce the influence of bias in recruitment procedures and in the awarding of funding to students.
- Expanding recruitment methods to reach a broader diversity of students (e.g., proactively reaching out to members of underrepresented groups).
- Establishing clear and transparent procedures to ensure that opportunities for networking, conference attendance, etc. are communicated to all trainees and that support is distributed in an equitable manner.
- Introducing sustainable work-life or study-life balance measures.
- Implementing measures to accommodate the specific needs of underrepresented groups (e.g. adapting the workspace for people with disabilities).
- Using gender-neutral and inclusive language in communications.

Research:

- Considering diverse perspectives in literature reviews.
- When developing a project, consulting with communities or groups that have been historically discriminated against or underrepresented and that may be affected by the project.
- Including sex and gender-based analysis in a project.
- Participating in science communication activities for groups that have been historically discriminated against or underrepresented.

Involvement:

- Participating in EDI committees, working groups or advocacy groups.
- Organizing or participating in mentorship or sponsorship activities for members of groups that have been historically discriminated against.
- 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 in their research setting.
- 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 scientific activities for young people from groups that are underrepresented or historically discriminated against (outreach).