How to Integrate Principles of Anti-Racism and EDI in Research Grants

VPRI Office, Unity Health

Principles of anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are increasingly becoming necessary for the submission of grant applications, and for being awarded funding. As outlined in the Research Strategic Plan, our organization is committed to ensuring that the core values of anti-racism and EDI are embedded into all aspects of what we do, both within our research institute and in the creation and conduct of our research. This document is meant to:

1. Outline best practices on integrating anti-racism and EDI principles in research programs
2. Provide tips on what to include in EDI grant sections
3. Highlight additional resources that can be explored for more detail

This document has been developed by the Office of VP Research & Innovation, and has been reviewed and informed by the Research Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) Task Force. It will be a "*living document*", meaning that it will be continuously updated as we learn more and have access to a wider array of resources.

WHAT ARE ANTI-RACISM AND EDI, AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT IN RESEARCH?

Anti-Racism	The policy or practice of opposing racism and promoting racial equality.
Equity	A solution for addressing imbalanced social systems that recognizes each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. The World Health Organization defines equity as "the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically".
Diversity	Is about the individual, and captures the presence of individuals with their unique range of qualities and attributes. Valuing diversity means valuing and respecting diversity of knowledge, worldviews and experiences that come from membership in different groups, and the contribution that diversity makes to the work/research environment.
Inclusion	Is about the collective, and focuses on creating a culture that appreciates and encourages people to contribute with their unique differences, talents, skills, and perspectives in a way that shows respect for the individual, and ultimately creates a dynamic multi-dimensional organization. It is the shared responsibility of all community members to foster a welcoming, supportive and respectful work environment.

Considering EDI in the research process promotes research excellence by making it more relevant to society as a whole, ethically sound, rigorous, reproducible, and useful (Tannenbaum et al. 2019). It also fuels innovation through scientific discovery, and by opening new areas of research. EDI considerations promote research excellence by:

- expanding the applicability of research findings and new technologies across a wider segment of society;
- helping to reveal implicit assumptions related to research that otherwise might go unnoticed and unchallenged;
- helping to mitigate biases by conducting inclusive research and improving technologies;
- supporting research outcomes that fairly benefit communities most impacted by the research;
- questioning biased norms and stereotypes;
- preventing overgeneralizations of findings that can be harmful and/or misleading; and,
- improving reproducibility of research findings. Reproducibility can be more difficult when diversity-related variables are relevant to research but are not reported.

When EDI are not considered in the research process, research results may be of lower quality and can lead to harmful outcomes. For example, when products are engineered based on a particular standard or on subjects assumed to be representative of the population as a whole, it can lead to serious consequences, such as decreased safety and security or other inequities for some groups. In 2022, there remains a significant prevalence of dominant groups in research, which has been shown to have serious implications, risks and health consequences for those who do not belong to those groups, highlighting the need to maintain EDI as a top priority in health research.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS TO ADDRESS IN YOUR EDI PLAN

Systemic Barriers in Research	Policies or practices that result in some individuals from underrepresented groups receiving unequal access to, or being excluded from, participation in employment, services or programs.
Implicit or Unconscious Bias	Life experiences and social/economical background can shape individual's beliefs and unconsciously determine views and feelings about others.
Indigenous Research	Involves active engagement and reciprocity with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Prioritizes identity development; Indigenous ways of knowing; reflexivity and power sharing; participation and accountability; and methodological flexibility.
Sex and Gender Based Analysis + (SGBA+)	To produce robust and useful findings, it is critical to integrate considerations of biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences in health research studies. SGBA+ is an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The "plus" in SGBA+ acknowledges that SGBA goes beyond sex and gender differences, and includes other key factors of identity, like ethnicity, income, age, race, education. All these factors may affect health experiences and outcome.

*Links to learn more and identify actions you can take to address these areas can be found on our EDI Resources page of the Unity Health Research Website. More resources will be added here as they become available.

HOW TO INTEGRATE EDI INTO OUR RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

*For details on these areas, please refer to the EDI in Research workshop located on our Unity Health Intranet page.

Self-Refection	• How firm is your commitment to anti-racism and EDI principles? • What are your personal privileges, lived experiences, and/or unconscious biases? • What challenges to anti-racism and EDI, or opportunities to overcome anti-racism and EDI, have you identified in your research program? • Tool for EDI Reflective Exercise: Link
Team Composition	• What are the systemic barriers specific to developing a diverse team in your field of research? • What best practices of EDI are used in forming your team's composition? • Does your research include people with lived experience? Resource Link
Trainee Hiring / Recruitment and Training Program	• What are the systemic barriers faced by your trainees within your field of research? • What EDI best practices have you incorporated into your hiring process? (e.g. pre-set interview questions, training for the hiring panel, diversity within the hiring panel) • What are the ways in which you ensure an inclusive, equitable, and collaborative research environment? • What EDI training and resources are available for your research team – how often are these offered, are they mandatory or optional? Training options to consider: Link • What are some concrete EDI practices you apply to your research team? *HOW* will these practices be implemented and *WHAT* are your measures of success? • How are you ensuring to provide equitable mentorship and training? • What resources are available to you from the organization (Unity Health and/or U of T) • How do you highlight diversity and equity in networking (e.g. conferences) and training events?
Research Methods and Methodology	• Are sex, gender and/or diversity considerations relevant factors in your research? • Have EDI principles been considered at each step of the research process? Resource Link
Research Impact / Knowledge Mobilization	• How will you ensure that your results will have impact for those who are disadvantaged or marginalized? • How will your results be equitably disseminated?

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN AN EDI SECTION?

• How an individual self-identifies in terms of belonging to one or more underrepresented groups is considered personal information. DO NOT provide the personal information of team members (e.g., Dr. X identifies as a member of a visible minority; the team has X women, X men and X individuals who identify as persons with disabilities, etc.) without the explicit permission from each team member to do so. Some grant agencies do not allow this information even with permission (i.e. NFRF), while others currently allow it to be included (i.e. CIHR) – please review the guidelines of the grant to which you are applying.

TYPICAL EDI STATEMENT LAYOUT

Acknowledge the Inequity → Describe HOW you Contribute → Describe the Impact of these Contributions

* Describing what you are DOING, or what you have DONE, is better than what you WILL DO.

- Unity Health Human Resources has recently developed a harmonized [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#) and [Equitable Hiring Practices Toolkit](#) to promote anti-racism and EDI within our network. The policy outlines a requirement that all hiring leaders are accountable to ensure that all members participating on selection panels review the Equitable Hiring Practices Toolkit.
- Unity Health has established an Anti-Racism, Equity and Social Accountability (ARESA) office, recruited a Director and is building capacity to support organizational equity initiatives; last year the Council for Anti-Racism, Equity and Social Accountability ([CARESA](#)) was also established, with research representatives contributing to its mandate: to inform and oversee transformational improvements in equity, systemic racism and social accountability at Unity Health Toronto
- Unity Health has a partnership with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI), which offers many resources dedicated to helping organizations improve workplace equity, diversity and inclusion. With your Unity Health email, you can register and access their Knowledge Repository for research, reports, toolkits, etc. ([more info here](#))
- The Research EDI (REDI) Task Force of Unity Health works to provide resources and training opportunities for the research community.
- St. Michael's Research Student Association (SRSA) regularly offers series of EDI seminars. Some of those seminars target trainees only, and some of are open to the research community. SRSA also has [a peer-to-peer mentorship program](#), which can help support trainees who are experiencing EDI challenges.
- The Research Training Centre (RTC) offers an annual Research Day to support all trainees with networking, and for them to practice presenting. RTC regularly communicates with the other RTCs in the GTA and at U of T, to share EDI best practices and events for trainees.
- Evaluation of anti-racism and EDI are incorporated into the mandatory Internal Peer Review process that is necessary for all grant submissions.
- At this time, Research at Unity Health does not have a dedicated EDI officer; however, research groups are welcome to develop this role internally.
- Unity Health collected [mental health and wellness resources for Unity Health employees who identify as BIPOC](#). The Wellness team also partnered with the Mental Health Commission of Canada to offer courses to staff on [Mental Health First Aid](#) as part of our mental health strategy.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Equity, diversity and inclusion considerations at each stage of the research process](#) (NSERC)
- [Guide for Applicants: Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in your application](#) (NSERC)
- [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the Research System](#) (CIHR)
- [NFRF Webinar Equity, diversity and inclusion](#) (NFRF)
- [Best Practices in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research](#) (NFRF)
- Unconscious Bias Training ([Harvard University](#), [CRC/Tri-Council](#), [Univ. of Toronto](#))
- [EDI in Research & Innovation](#) (Univ. of Toronto)
- [Equity Hub](#) (Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Univ. of Toronto)

*Please let us know if you learn of any useful resources that should be added to this list.