



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations in the Alliance Training Plan

How to develop your training plan in support of sub-criterion 3.2

Presented by NSERC's Alliance Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
Outreach team

Outline

1. Importance of EDI in the research team

- Why NSERC is asking you to consider EDI in the research team

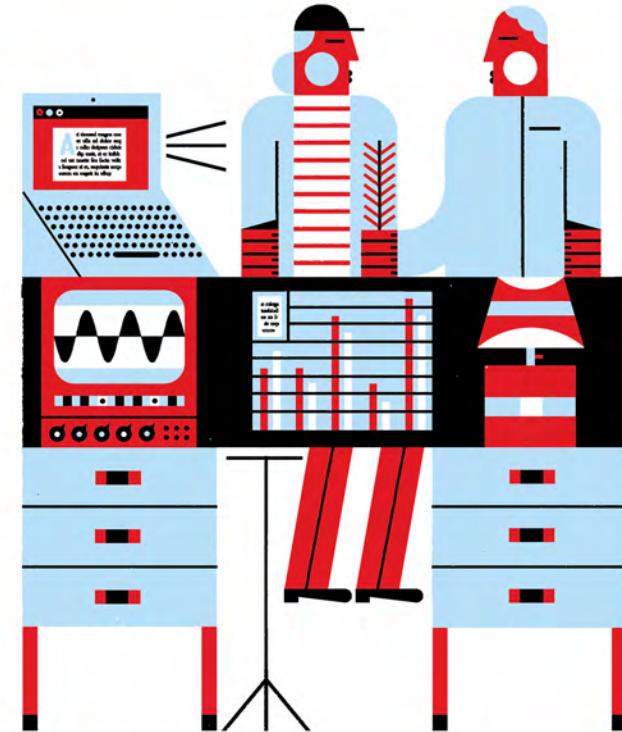
2. EDI in the Alliance application

- Where to address EDI in your project proposal
- How EDI will be evaluated in your training plan

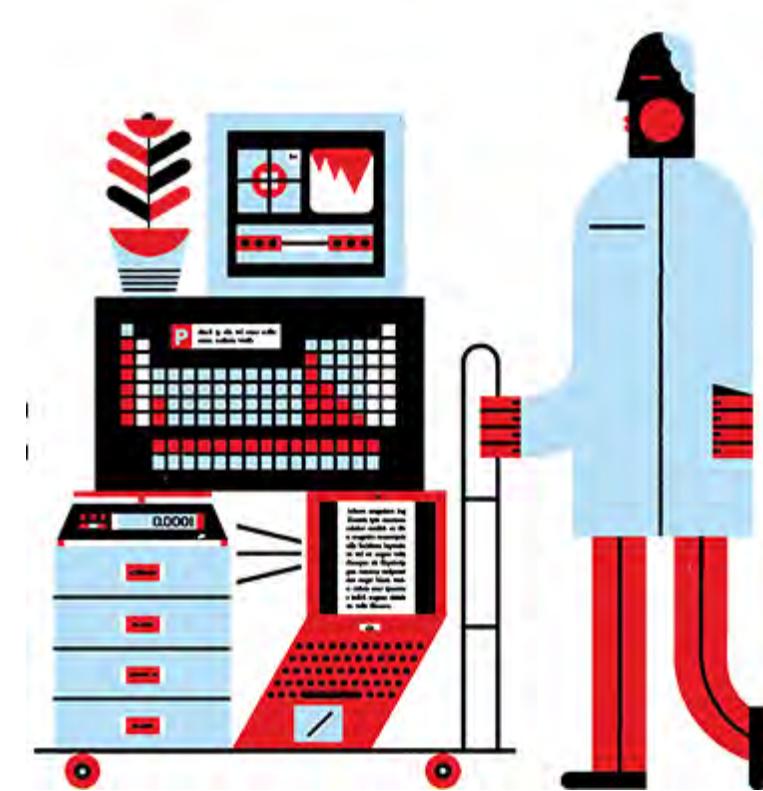
3. Writing a strong EDI statement in the training plan

- How to describe your "Exceptional" EDI training plan

4. Examples



1. Importance of EDI considerations in the research team



Why consider EDI in your research team?

- Members of many equity-deserving and rights-holding groups remain underrepresented in science and engineering disciplines and research environments due to systemic barriers to entry and not their inherent capacity.
- Equity aims to eliminate disparities and disproportions that are rooted in historical and contemporary injustices and oppression.

“For Canada to lead the pack in the global science and innovation race and address key societal challenges, we need to foster a truly inclusive research environment. In particular, addressing complex problems requires a broad range of perspectives and experiences.”

– *Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System*

EDI Considerations contribute to excellence for research and training environments

Research is **strengthened** when persons with diverse perspectives and experiences participate equitably within inclusive environments.

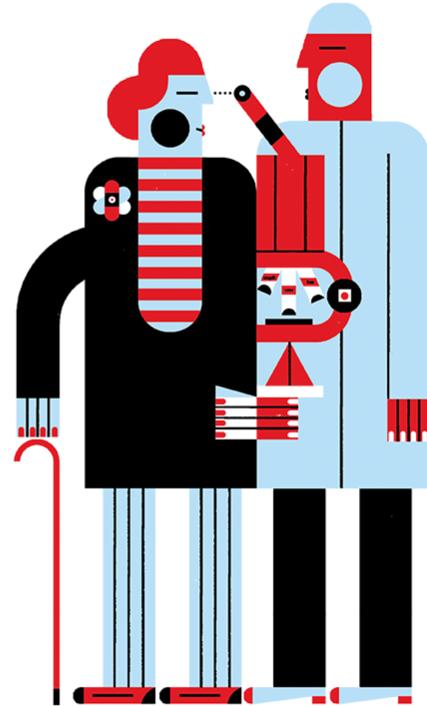
Benefits of EDI in research and training environments:

- Improved **access to talent**
- Improved collaboration and **collective intelligence and creativity**
- Different points of view leading to **improved performance**
- Greater capacity for **innovation**
- Enhanced **recruitment and retention** through effective mentorship and attractive work environments

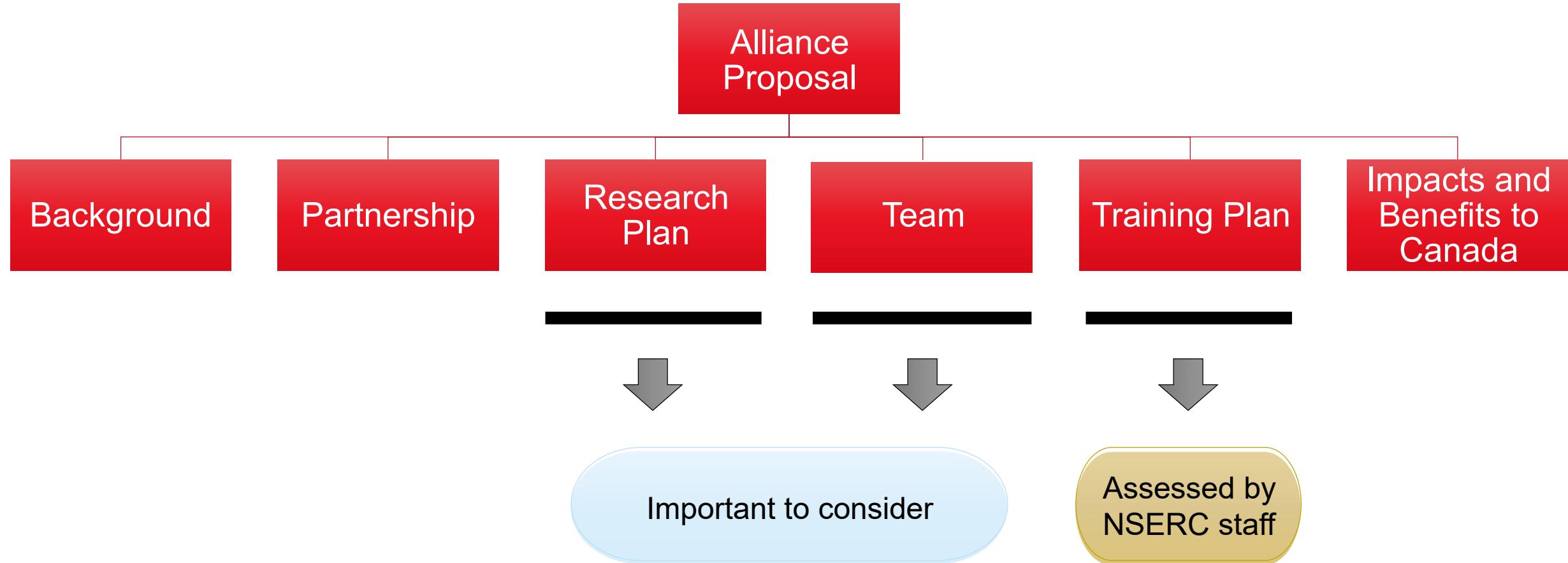


Inclusion allows for the **realization of the potential of diversity**.

2. EDI in the Alliance application



Where do I need to address EDI considerations in my project proposal?



Training Plan

- Describe the learning experiences the project will provide, including the nature of interactions between trainees (undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows) and partner organizations.
- Describe the research and professional skills that trainees will develop through these experiences and through their roles in the project.
- Explain how the research and professional skills gained by the trainees will prepare them for their future careers.
- Describe challenges to equity, diversity and inclusion in the context of your project's training environment and specify concrete practices you will implement to address them. You are encouraged to cite evidence supporting the proposed practices and to describe how you will monitor and adapt your actions based on non-demographic indicators of success.

Excerpt from Alliance grants Proposal Template



Evaluated using merit indicators for sub-criterion 3.2

Merit Indicator 3.2:

Consideration of equity, diversity and inclusion in the training plan

To achieve an **exceptional** rating:

- identify an EDI issue, and propose EDI practices that are specific, concrete, context-specific, based in evidence, and address multiple aspects of the training plan. Include a plan to monitor and to adapt the plan if necessary.



Updated Merit Indicators for EDI in the Training Plan

Exceptional

Describes a strategy to monitor progress and adapt plan as necessary.

Links proposed actions or practices to empirical or scholastic evidence supporting their effectiveness.

Exceeds

Describes proposed actions or practices in multiple aspects of the training plan

Links proposed actions or practices to existing systemic or localized barriers

Meets

Describes at least one proposed specific and concrete action or practice to support EDI in the training plan.

Does Not Satisfy

The training plan does not adequately outline specific and concrete practices to advance equity, diversity and inclusion in the project training environment.

3. Writing a strong EDI statement in the training plan



How to incorporate EDI into your training plan

1. Define the context

- What EDI issues exist in your field of research or institution?
- Which issue will you focus on addressing?

2. Describe your action plan

- What specific and concrete action(s) will you take to address barriers in EDI ?
- How will your plan address the ***identified*** issue?
- Have you incorporated multiple aspects in your training plan (e.g., recruitment, opportunity, work environment)
- What empirical evidence do you have that these actions will be effective in addressing the identified issue?

3. Describe your monitoring and adaptation plan

- How will you know if your action plan is working?
- How will you adjust your plan based on your monitoring results?

Exceeds

Meets

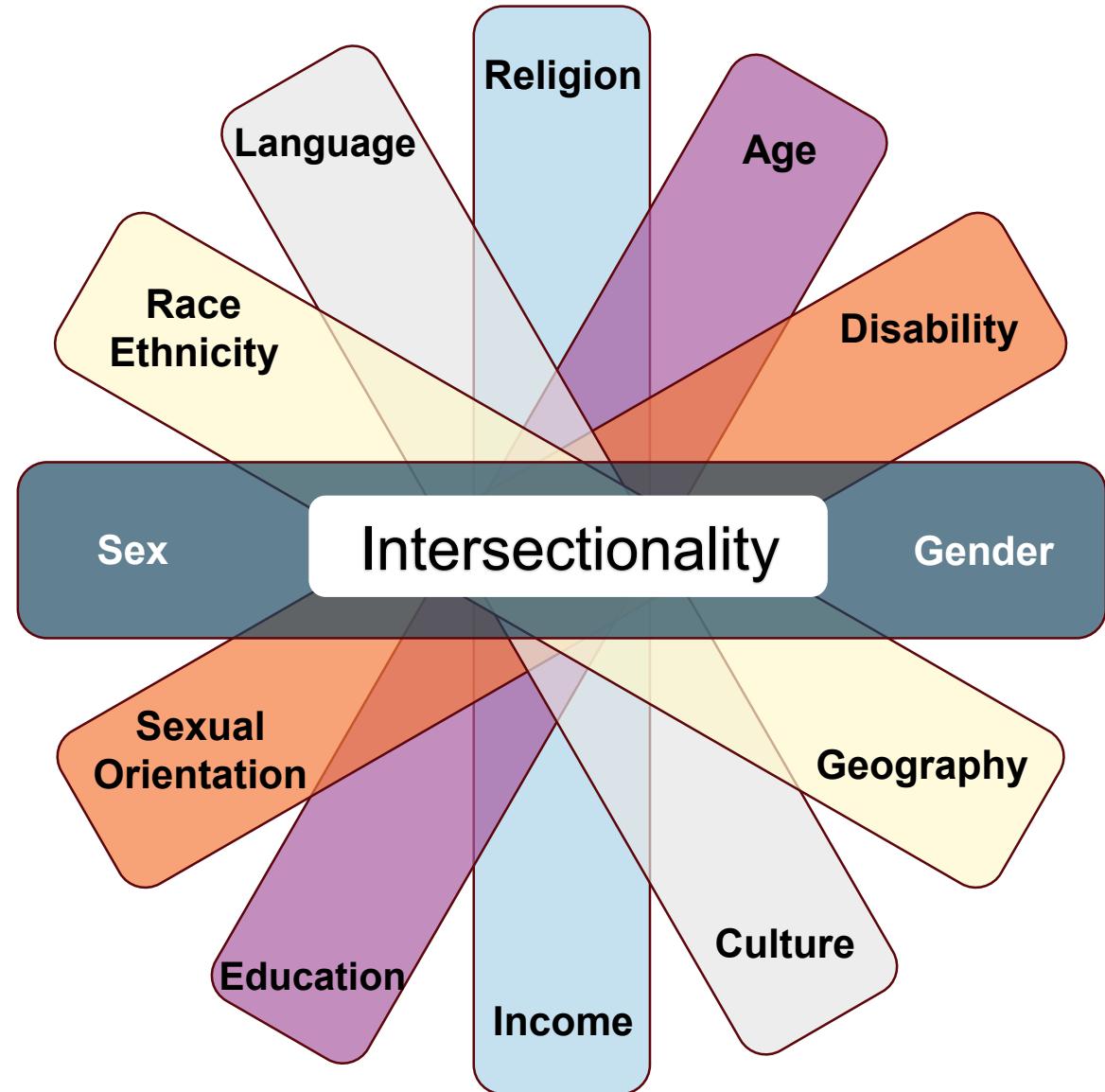
Exceptional

1. Define the Context



Guiding questions:

- What EDI issues exist in your field of research or institution?
- Which issue will you focus on addressing?



Brainstorm

Where might you look, or what might you do to identify the EDI challenges your discipline/ institution/lab is facing?

- publicly available research
- blog posts, social media, podcasts by individuals from underrepresented groups
- your institution's EDI action plan

2. Describe your action plan: Actionable Areas in the Training Plan

! Guiding questions:

- What specific and concrete action(s) will you take?
- Did you address the *identified issue*?
- Have you incorporated multiple aspects in your training plan
- What empirical evidence do you have that these actions will be effective in addressing the identified issue?



3. Develop your monitoring and adaptation plan



Guiding questions:

- How will you know if your action plan is working?
- How will you adjust your plan based on your monitoring results?

Indicators and methods might include:

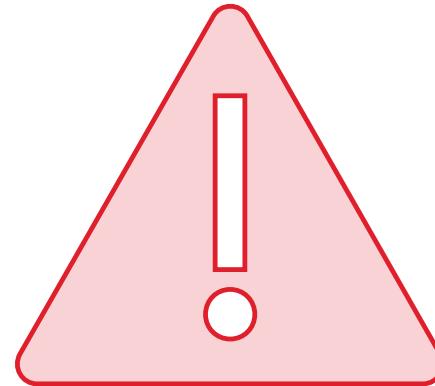
- An **annual audit** of proposed EDI-related actions
- Systems to **track access** to equipment, mentorship and training opportunities
- Anonymous trainee **feedback surveys** to measure sense of inclusion and/or identify persistent barriers
- Trainee **retention rates** relative to an established baseline

Very Important!

Do not include personal or demographic data for your research team or any of its members, including trainees.

Doing so compromises the privacy of those concerned.

This information is not requested, required, nor assessed.

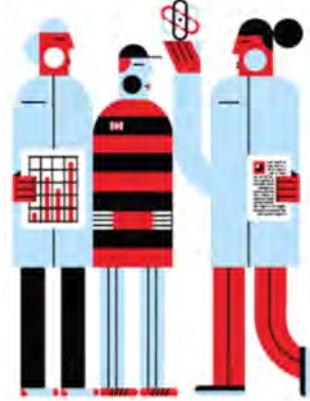


NSERC **does not assess past EDI actions**, but you may describe how previous experience and learning will inform your proposed training plan.

For example, you could reflect on and include responses to the following prompts, as applicable, within the context of your current project:

- What will you continue to do to recruit diverse trainees to your team?
- What practices will you put in place to retain diverse trainees in your team?
- How do your own experiences inform concrete EDI actions, moving forward?

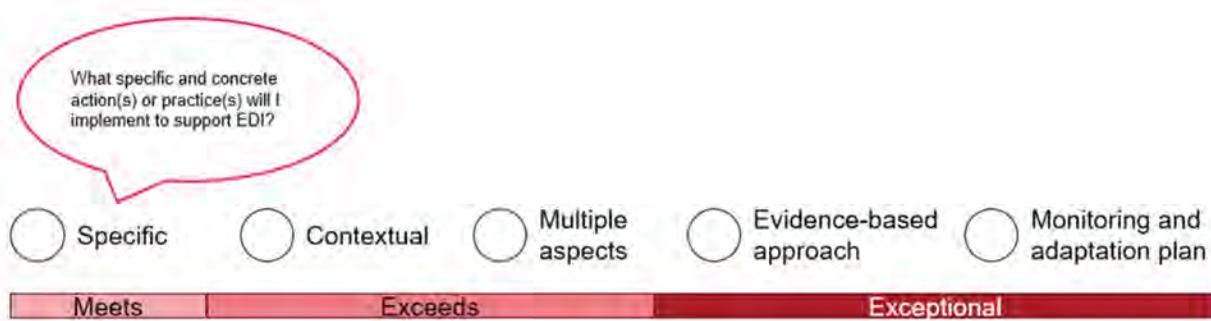
4. Examples



To help you get a better sense of how EDI in the Training Plan is evaluated, let's first walk through some examples together. These are based on real texts that have been modified with permission for training purposes. We'll build up a training plan from a "Does Not Satisfy" rating all the way to a rating of "Exceptional" to show how improvements can be made. And then you'll have a chance to evaluate some training plan statements.

DOES NOT SATISFY

As a PI, the lack of diversity in my field is incredibly frustrating. It is important that the current research team contribute to the mission of increasing EDI in the natural sciences and engineering disciplines. I will work with my co-applicants and collaborators in this Alliance grant to ensure that all HQP evolve in an environment where EDI principles are upheld.



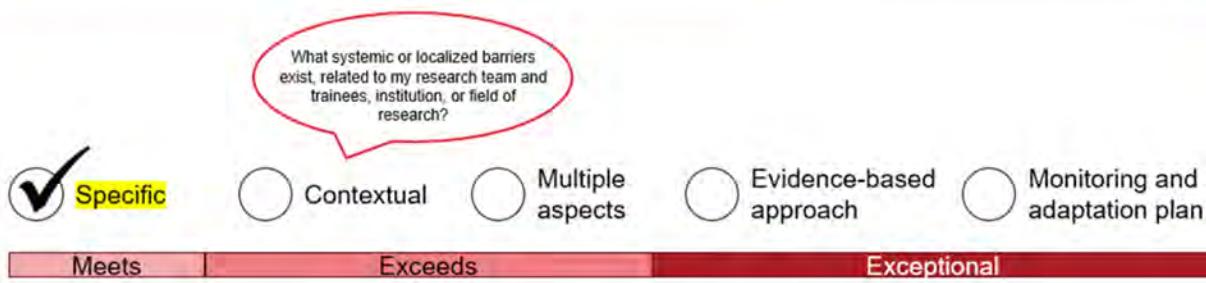
The example provided here would receive a “Does Not Satisfy” rating.

The applicant has the intention of upholding EDI principles, but we don’t know what concrete or specific action they will take to support their intention. This response does not check any of the boxes on the merit indicator scale at the bottom of the slide.

To improve this section of the application, the applicant could ask themselves: *What specific and concrete actions or practices will I implement to support EDI?*

MEETS

As a PI, the lack of diversity in my field is incredibly frustrating. It is important that the current research team contribute to the mission of increasing EDI in the natural sciences and engineering disciplines. In this project, we will be recruiting one postdoc and two PhDs, and we will aim to increase the representation of persons from underrepresented groups on our team. We will broaden the number of applicants who view our job posting by using a multitude of platforms (e.g., Canadian Black Scientists Network, Association for Women in Science) to ensure we reach a greater number of applicants from underrepresented groups, including women. We will use inclusive language when drafting the job description that encourages persons from underrepresented groups to apply.



Note the highlighted addition. This paragraph would now receive a rating of “Meets.”

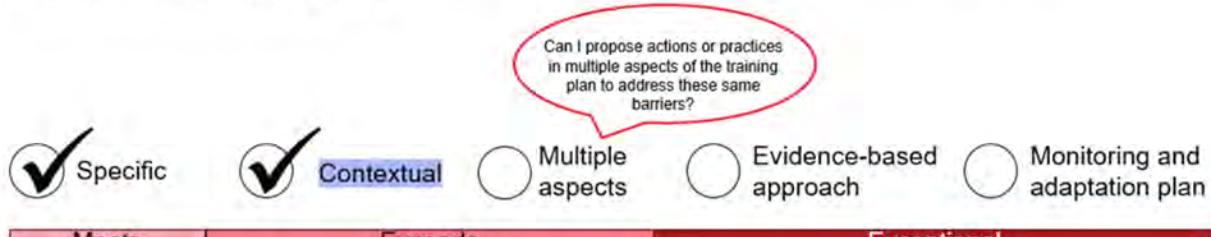
This response increases in specificity. We see that the PI's plan is to increase the representation of persons from underrepresented groups on their team. They will do this in the trainee recruitment aspect of the training plan. Specifically, they will post their positions on the specified platforms and use inclusive language.

Note that we have a bit of context (the PI's field lacks diversity), but this is still too vague to check the “contextual” box on the merit indicator scale on the bottom of the slide. We need more information about the barriers.

To build on this paragraph toward an Exceeds, the applicant could reflect on, and then describe... *what systemic or localized barriers exist, related to their research team and trainees, institution, or field of research?*

EXCEEDS (1/2)

It is important to the current research team to contribute to the mission of increasing EDI in the natural sciences and engineering disciplines. We will focus our efforts on recruiting and retaining HQP from underrepresented groups, including women. As the representation of women in the fields of chemistry and chemical engineering continues to lag, one of our goals is to contribute to Engineers Canada's target of reaching 30% representation of women among newly licensed engineers by 2030. In this project, we will be recruiting one postdoc and two PhDs. We will broaden the number of applicants who view our job posting by using a multitude of platforms (e.g., Canadian Black Scientists Network, Association for Women in Science) to ensure we reach a greater number of applicants from underrepresented groups, including women. We will use inclusive language when drafting the job description that encourages persons from underrepresented groups to apply (...)

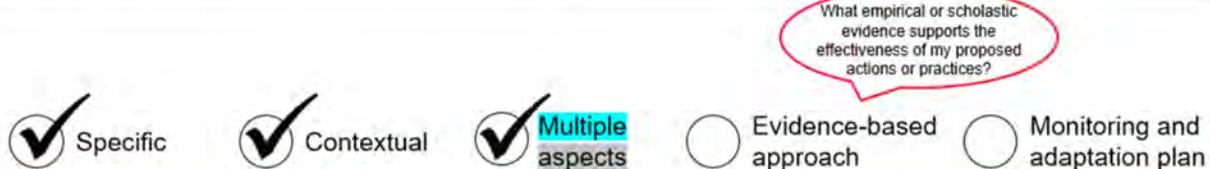


The highlighted text aims to provide more context. Now the applicant has identified an EDI challenge and pinpointed where they believe that barriers exist. They explain that there is a lack of diversity – including gender diversity -- in the fields of chemistry and chemical engineering, and that barriers exist in recruitment and retention.

They are now halfway to an “Exceeds.” The applicant will still need to *propose actions or practices in multiple aspects of the training plan to address the barriers they have identified*. Remember that they have already proposed actions in the recruitment aspect of their plan.

EXCEEDS (2/2)

(...) Responsibilities will be transparently assigned, and opportunities will be transparently shared in regular meetings with project partners, fostering participation from all group members. All newly recruited HQP, regardless of gender, will be matched with a mentor in the project (senior PhD student or postdoc). They will also be encouraged to take on leadership roles, including leading progress presentations. We will design team building activities that enable the participation of everyone and foster an environment that promotes our team diversity. Flexible work schedules and inclusive events (e.g., in accessible settings, alcohol-free, during work hours, cognizant of dietary needs) will promote inclusion and contribute to overall well-being. We will establish a policy that outlines the expectations for enabling a safe and respectful environment for all participants. During group meetings when discussing research results and objectives, we will ensure to use language that recognizes the efforts and contributions of all team members.



Meets

Exceeds

Exceptional

26

Here the applicant adds actions in two other aspects of the training plan, to address barriers to retention. They have described actions to increase access to training and development opportunities, such as transparency, mentorship, and leadership – and they connect these actions to the identified issue of increasing gender diversity. This is important for achieving the next rating level.

They also described practices to enhance the inclusion of all trainees in the research environment, like flexible work schedules and inclusive events, among others. These practices ultimately address their EDI challenge of increasing the representation of persons from underrepresented groups on their team.

Now, this EDI in the training plan section would be given an “Exceeds” rating. To build toward an “Exceptional” rating, the applicant could reflect and respond to the question, *what empirical or scholastic evidence supports the effectiveness of my proposed actions or practices?*

EXCEPTIONAL (1/2)

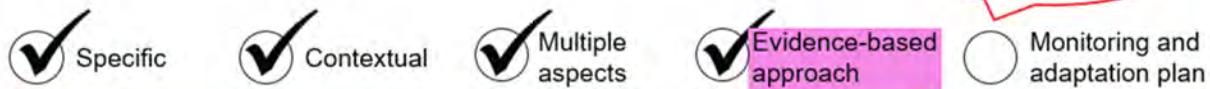
(...) We will use inclusive language when drafting the job description that encourages underrepresented groups to apply and use a blind recruitment process that does not involve personal information from the applications. A blind recruitment process has been shown to increase the number of applicants from underrepresented groups who are invited for an interview.²³

(...) Newly recruited HQP will be assigned a mentor in the project (senior PhD student or postdoc). Our current research team is composed of a diverse group of genders and races, and we will select mentors that will best support underrepresented individuals within our group, as it has been shown that students value mentors with whom they identify on demographic or shared values.²⁴ (...)

²³Anonymized Recruitment Pilot Project – Final report (Public Service Commission of Canada) (Gatineau, Quebec, Canada, 2018).

²⁴Atkins, K. et al. "Looking at Myself in the Future": how mentoring shapes scientific identity for STEM students from underrepresented groups. International Journal of STEM Education 7 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-020-00242-3>.

What is my strategy to monitor progress and adapt my plan, as necessary?



Meets

Exceeds

Exceptional

27

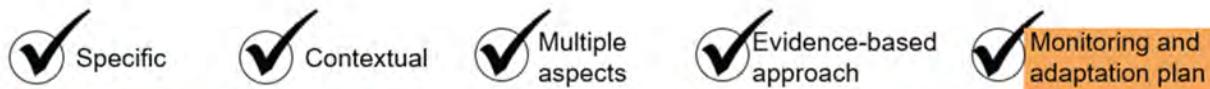
The highlighted portions of this slide contain evidence in support of the effectiveness of proposed actions or practices. Here, they have based their actions on practices that can be backed up empirically.

To achieve an “Exceptional” rating, the applicant would also need to *describe their strategy to monitor progress and adapt their plan, as necessary*.

EXCEPTIONAL (2/2)

(...)

Monitoring progress: We will assess our recruitment effort by collecting data about the ways in which applicants heard about the opportunity in our lab. If it does not appear representative of platforms and avenues we used, we will revisit our communication plan with the EDI team at the university to improve it. We will monitor our retention efforts by requesting anonymous feedback from all participants. Non-demographic indicators of success such as contributions to research reports and presentations, time on equipment, # of conferences offered, opportunities to present, scientific articles, and overall well-being will be collected and used to update and adapt our proposed approach. If, for example, students report inequitable time on equipment, we will brainstorm together to identify barriers and rethink our approach.



Meets

Exceeds

Exceptional

28

In the final highlighted addition, we see that a monitoring and adaptation plan is in place. They have described how they will know if their action plan is working, and they have provided an example of how they might adjust their plan based on their monitoring results. These can be traced back to their EDI challenge: increasing diversity in the fields of chemistry and chemical engineering by addressing barriers in recruitment and retention.

Now that we've built the section on EDI in the Training plan together from the ground up, let's look at some examples and reflect on what rating we should give them.

1. WHAT RATING WOULD YOU GIVE?

STEM, and forest ecology in particular, disappointingly trails behind other disciplines in the retention of HQP from underrepresented groups. While recruitment at the MSc and PhD level tends to be relatively strong, particularly for women and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, strong candidates are lost during the training process, with many declaring that the research world or even science is not for them after successfully completing their degrees. Consequently, I have been working on adapting my strategies to favour the retention of candidates from underrepresented communities. My practices are meant to reduce filters at the application stage and ensure students from all horizons receive the specific support they need and to thrive.

First, HQP positions are announced broadly on multiple platforms. The announcement text places an emphasis on an inclusive and supportive lab culture, and work life balance. Because students from underrepresented groups are more likely to experience poverty, we will set stipends at a level that ensures no trainee is beneath the poverty line for our region. I also personally follow up with potential HQP I meet during my different activities (teaching, conferences, committees), and I work with my research partners to identify potential candidates, particularly in Indigenous communities.

Once a student has accepted, I individually accompany students in order to ensure that all candidates have the conditions necessary for success. I ensure that the desired pronouns are adopted for each HQP.

Specific Contextual Multiple aspects Evidence-based approach Monitoring and adaptation plan

Meets

Exceeds

Exceptional

29

What rating would you give? The example reads, "STEM, and forest ecology in particular, disappointingly trails behind other disciplines in the retention of HQP from underrepresented groups. While recruitment at the MSc and PhD level tends to be relatively strong, particularly for women and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, strong candidates are lost during the training process, with many declaring that the research world or even science is not for them after successfully completing their degrees. Consequently, I have been working on adapting my strategies to favour the retention of candidates from underrepresented communities. My practices are meant to reduce filters at the application stage and ensure students from all horizons receive the specific support they need and to thrive.

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EXCEEDS

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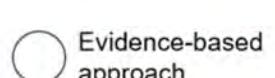
Specific



Contextual



Multiple aspects



Evidence-based approach



Monitoring and adaptation plan

Meets

Exceeds

Exceptional

30

This EDI in the Training Plan section would receive a rating of “Exceeds.” The applicant has presented the context [highlighted in purple]: recruitment and retention of HQP from underrepresented groups is one challenge in this field. They aim to reduce filters at the application stage, and to create the specific supports needed for students to thrive once onboarded.

The applicant discusses specific strategies to address these challenges across more than one aspect of the training plan [highlighted in blue]. Firstly, in the recruitment stage, they have addressed a potential barrier in stipend levels, for example. Then, they describe practices to create an inclusive research environment like ensuring that correct pronouns are used for each HQP.

They do not cite evidence for their approaches, and do not include a monitoring and adaptation plan.

2. WHAT RATING WOULD YOU GIVE?

I am strongly committed to EDI and to creating an inclusive environment for my trainees. I have taken courses through Women and Gender Equality Canada about Gender-based violence and Gender-based Analysis Plus. I have also completed modules on Unconscious Bias and research ethics. I participate in several working groups at the university to ensure that our practices and policies align with the most current research findings in EDI. I have even been recognized for contributions to EDI in the workplace.

I highly value a diverse team as it fosters innovation and research excellence¹¹. My efforts in recruitment and retention have resulted in a diverse team of students that I am very proud of. We benefit from the multitude of perspectives that are shared daily.

¹¹Gender diversity leads to better science (Wullum Nielsen et al. 2017)

Specific Contextual Multiple aspects Evidence-based approach Monitoring and adaptation plan

Meets Exceeds Exceptional

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Here's another example. What rating would you give?

The example reads,

"I am strongly committed to EDI and to creating an inclusive environment for my trainees. I have taken courses through Women and Gender Equality Canada about Gender-based violence and Gender-based Analysis Plus. I have also completed modules on Unconscious Bias and research ethics. I participate in several working groups at the university to ensure that our practices and policies align with the most current research findings in EDI. I have even been recognized for contributions to EDI in the workplace.

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DOES NOT SATISFY

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Specific Contextual Multiple aspects Evidence-based approach Monitoring and adaptation plan

Meets

Exceeds

Exceptional

32

This EDI in the Training Plan section would receive a rating of “Does Not Satisfy”.

Remember that it is not sufficient to just describe your past actions - you need to frame them within the context of your new project. Within this example, the applicant talks about the courses they've taken, but not how they are applying that knowledge.

The applicant provided a reference to back up their statement about the strengths of a diverse team but remember: the evidence needed is in support of the specific actions they are taking to meet an EDI challenge.

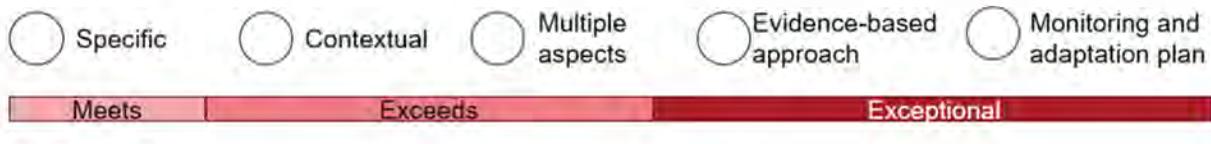
Let's try one more.

3. WHAT RATING WOULD YOU GIVE?

The mining industry is traditionally dominated by men, and the PI is actively working to change that by offering laboratory tours for female high school students and encouraging the younger generation to consider STEM careers. This is especially important for research as *Diaz-Garcia et al.* determined that incorporating women in research led to a significant positive relationship between gender diversity in R&D researchers and radical innovation³⁷.

For recruitment, the postings will be sent out through the co-op coordinators in my department, ensuring that the terminology is gender inclusive. An inclusive climate will be fostered by presentations from team members about their background and route to the university. In terms of transparent research execution practices, the team will use a booking schedule to ensure fairness and predictability for all members wanting to use a particular piece of equipment.

We will monitor our efforts by requesting anonymous feedback from participants. Non-demographic indicators of success such as contributions to research reports and presentations, scientific articles, skill acquisition, and overall well-being will be collected and used to update and adapt our proposed approach. If, for example, students report poor mental health, we will ensure that they know where to find and how to access mental health resources and check in with them individually to see how best to support them.



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What rating would you give? The example reads:

“The mining industry is traditionally dominated by men, and the PI is actively working to change that by offering laboratory tours for female high school students and encouraging the younger generation to consider STEM careers. This is especially important for research as *Diaz-Garcia et al.* determined that incorporating women in research led to a significant positive relationship between gender diversity in R&D researchers and radical innovation³⁷.

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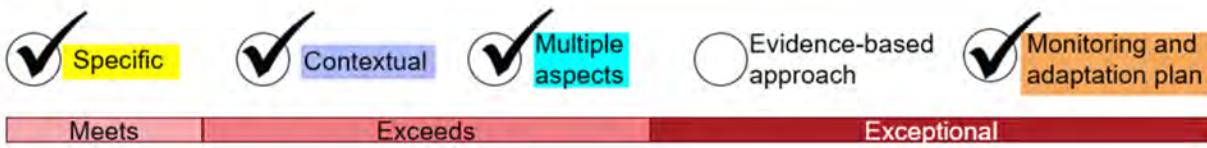
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EXCEEDS

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This EDI in the Training Plan section would receive a rating of “Exceeds.” Let’s see why.

In this example, the applicant provides the context that the mining industry is traditionally dominated by men [highlighted in purple]. Their EDI challenge, then, is to increase gender diversity.

They provide one specific action to do that [highlighted in yellow]: sending out job postings with gender-inclusive terminology. This is an action in the recruitment aspect of the training plan.

Keeping with that same thread, let’s check for an evidence-based approach to address this EDI challenge. The applicant provides evidence for the importance of incorporating women in research, but what needs to be included for an “Exceptional” rating is evidence to support the actions they are taking to address their EDI challenge. Here, they needed to cite evidence that using gender-inclusive terminology in their postings will help increase the number of gender-diverse candidates who apply. That was not done.

There is an acceptable monitoring and adaptation plan in place [highlighted in orange] that could help them assess whether they are meeting the EDI challenge. To strengthen this plan, they might consider retention rate among the indicators.

Finally, they present actions they will take in another aspect of the training plan [highlighted in blue]: fostering an inclusive research environment.

Note that they also provide a second action that seems like it could be in support of a more diverse mining industry: they will offer laboratory tours for female high school students. Unfortunately, since high school students are not likely to be trainees in the current project, this action is not in the context of the training plan. However, this action could be adapted and built into the plan, with a little more thought. For example, if the trainees participated in these visits, it could increase their awareness of barriers to gender-diversity in the industry. This could lead to a more inclusive research and training environment, ultimately supporting the EDI challenge.

Remember: For a rating of “Exceptional” for the EDI in the training plan section, there should be at least one thread that ties your identified EDI challenge or issue through to your monitoring and adaptation plan.

In sum, you should:

- define the EDI challenge and context
- describe at least one concrete and specific action as it relates to the challenge
- cite evidence in support of your action, and
- define your monitoring and response plan

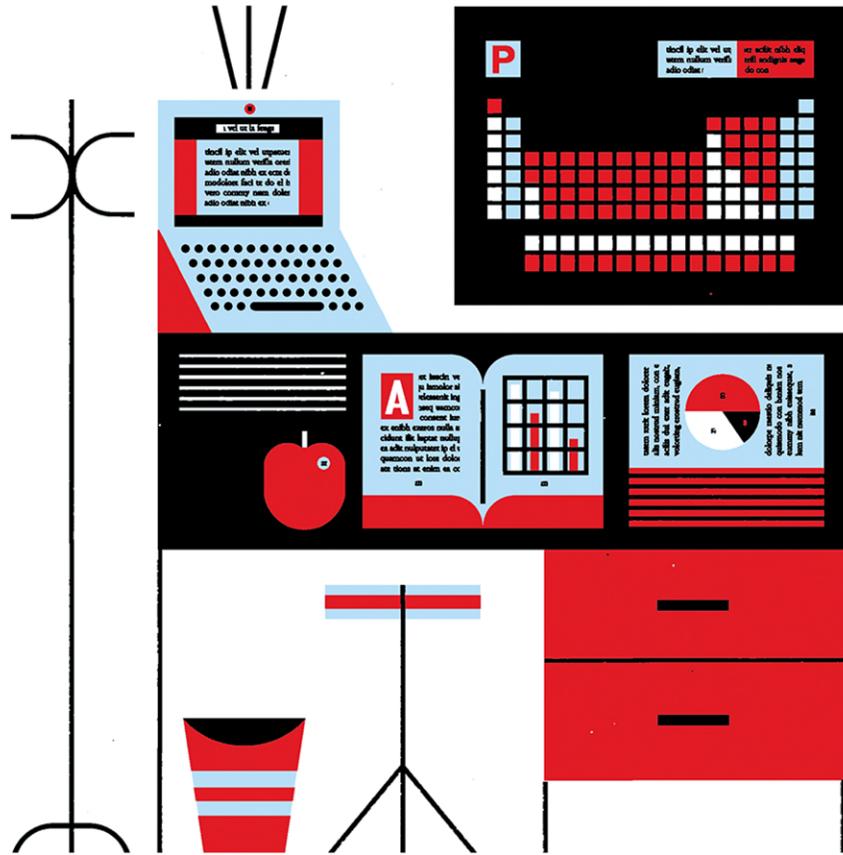
...all as it relates to your EDI challenge and context.

Revisiting Learning Objectives



You should now understand:

- why NSERC is asking you to consider EDI in the research team
- where to address EDI in your project proposal
- how EDI will be evaluated in your training plan
- how to write a strong EDI statement in the training plan



Questions?

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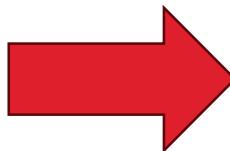
5. Resources





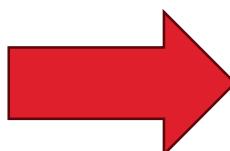
Additional considerations for EDI in the proposal

Sub-criterion 3.2 - Consideration of EDI in your training plan



Assessed by NSERC staff using established Alliance grants merit indicators

Remaining sub-criteria (e.g. 2.1, 2.2)



Evaluated through internal or external review, according to the published merit assessment mechanism

Resources:

- Consult the [Alliance Advantage grants Merit Indicators](#) for a full list of sub-criterion
- Refer to the [NSERC guide on integrating equity, diversity and inclusion considerations in research](#) for guidance on how to consider EDI in planning of research at each stage of the research process.