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NANOMEDICINES INNOVATION NETWORK
RÉSEAU D'INNOVATION NANOMÉDECINES

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Framework

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The NMIN EDI Framework was developed based on a survey of best practices of the Federal Government and other NCEs¹

1. Introduction

As one of the national Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE), the NanoMedicines Innovation Network (NMIN) is expected to align itself with the Federal Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) commitment to enhance excellence, innovation and creativity through the increase of EDI in research environments, which will in turn strengthen the quality, social relevance, outcomes, and impacts of its research.

The NCE Program guide states:

The participation of all qualified individuals, inclusive of members of under-represented groups, is essential to mobilize Canada's best research, development and entrepreneurial expertise to create excellent, innovative and impactful results. Networks must support the inclusion and advancement of women and other under-represented groups as one means to foster excellence. Networks must consider equity, diversity and inclusion in the selection of the management team and members of the governing board and committees. Where applicable, networks are encouraged to pay particular attention to involvement of Indigenous peoples in Network activities. The Government of Canada is committed to a renewed relationship with Indigenous peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership, including in the way that research is funded and conducted.²

This document is presented as a draft for Board of Directors' approval to fulfil the Federal government's and the NCE Program's expectation of NMIN's alignment with EDI best practices. NMIN's EDI Framework will be reviewed by the RMC and Board, with the target timeline of approval at the December 4, 2019 Board meeting. Annual reviews will occur thereafter.

2. EDI Commitment

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Commitment:

NMIN is committed to recognizing and reducing systemic barriers and mitigating biases of all kinds to develop an inclusive network of nanomedicine and nanomedicine-related experts from

¹ NCE Statement of EDI: https://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/About-APropos/EDI-EDI_eng.asp

NCE Checklist when considering EDI in NCE Networks: https://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/_docs/BestPractices-PratiquesExemplaires/BP-MR_eng.pdf

Strengthening Canadian Research Progress Report 2018-2019: https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/CRCC-CCRC/pdf/SSHRC_CRCC_progress_report_2019-eng.pdf

NSERC Framework on EDI: https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/EDI-EDI/framework_cadre-de-reference_eng.asp

CIHR Gender Equity Framework: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50238.html>

Canada Research Chair EDI Action Plan: https://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/action_plan-plan_action-eng.aspx

BioCanRx Statement on EDI: <https://biocanrx.com/about/equity-diversity-inclusion>

GlycoNet survey for EDI: <https://canadianglycomics.ca/survey-a-first-step-for-glyconet-to-develop-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy/>

² NCE Program Guide: https://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/ReportsPublications-RapportsPublications/NCE-RCE/ProgramGuide-GuideProgramme_eng.asp#a4-2-7

across disciplines and sectors. By integrating equity, diversity and inclusion into every process of the Network, this will exponentially strengthen the nanomedicines research and innovation community and the quality, relevance and impact of its research.

Definitions

Equity is the removal of systemic barriers and biases, allowing for equal access to and benefit from different programs and opportunities.³

Diversity is the differences between individuals, which could refer to differences in race, colour, place of origin, religion, language, immigrant and newcomer status, ethnic origin, ability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, parental status, age, etc.³

Inclusion is an individual within the community feeling valued, respected and equally supported.³

Guiding Questions

For all strategic planning, the following questions will be used as a guide:

- a) Are members of underrepresented groups in key leadership positions?
- b) Are members of underrepresented groups able to act as role models for underrepresented members?
- c) Have we “cast the net” far enough to engage underrepresented groups?
- d) Who else within the Network can be asked to identify individuals from underrepresented groups?
- e) Will the people being engaged in the process be able to identify the systemic barriers and biases?

By using these EDI-focused questions as a guide in decision-making and planning processes, this will ensure NMIN is “walking the walk” in its commitment to EDI.

3. EDI Strategies

Strategy 1: EDI Strategies and Training

- i. Mandatory EDI training for all staff and committee members at all levels of the Network. Training modules will be provided by the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI), and will include *Diversity and Inclusion Fundamentals* and *Unconscious Bias*. Modules are self-directed, 30-minute long courses that are available in both English and French. Committee members can be exempted from the training *if* they supply proof that they have already completed similar training.
- ii. Additional EDI training will be provided to all interested parties, which may include EDI-focused hiring practices, Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), inclusive communication

³ https://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx

- in the workplace, intercultural competency, accessibility and accommodations, and how to become champions for change
- iii. In response to PIs weakness in identifying and describing EDI strategies in their research applications, training will be provided to any and all interested PIs, collaborators and trainees on how to develop and implement an effective and meaningful EDI strategy

Strategy 2: EDI Strategies and Hiring/Recruiting

- i. When advertising job postings, inclusive, unbiased, and ungendered language will be used. The prioritization of traits and descriptions traditionally viewed as masculine will be avoided (such as “ambitious” or “dominate”)
- ii. Documentation of the merit basis of all candidates, appointments, and hiring decisions will be completed and maintained, and this information will be included in public communications/announcements of appointments/hiring

Strategy 3: EDI Strategies and Events

- i. Invitation lists for events will be reviewed by the RMC and EDI experts within the Network to ensure that experts outside of the Network and underrepresented groups are included
- ii. Early-career investigators and trainees will be included in all events

Strategy 4: EDI and Communication

- i. The shared responsibility for EDI efforts will be communicated across the Network
- ii. A new section in newsletters, entitled “My EDI”, will be developed. Investigators or trainees can share the effective EDI processes they use or have seen. This will not only highlight exceptional work within the Network, but will provide a starting point for others in developing EDI strategies in their own lab or workplace

Strategy 5: Other EDI Strategies

- i. Data on numbers of Network participants from underrepresented groups will be collected. This self-reported data may include gender-identity, indigenous status, visible-minority status, and disabilities status. All questions will have the option to select “Do not wish to disclose”, as self-identification is a choice

4. Context

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), also known as the Tri-Council Agencies, have been driving towards more diverse and inclusive research communities. This focus includes addressing biases that lead to

underrepresented groups, including but not limited to women, Indigenous people, members of visible minorities/racialized groups, and persons with disabilities.

In continuing this commitment, the Tri-Council Agencies have partnered with the Canada Research Coordinating Committee in the development of the *EDI Action Plan*, which describes collective actions to ensure participation in the funding system and access to research support is equitable and inclusive. This action plan is forthcoming.

The Tri-Council Agencies also announced that they “will look to ensure that no grant or award funding provided by the agencies will be used in support of and/or participate in events or panels where the participation does not reflect these principles where possible, including the inclusion of underrepresented groups.”⁴

In a letter released in June 2019, the presidents of the Tri-Council Agencies confirmed they “personally commit to refusing to participate on panels or in events that are not inclusive and do not reflect the diversity of the Canadian population.”⁴

NMIN supports these decisions and is committed to the actualization of the principles of EDI within the Network.

5. Background

NMIN’s commitment to EI began early in its lifetime. In the successful NCE application, NMIN recognized the need to increase the number of women in the field of nanomedicine and committed to increasing the number of women in the Network by 10%. Specifically, the number of female PIs would be increased from 22% to 32%.

To begin this shift, the proposed Board of Directors included five (5) men and five (5) women.

NMIN also highlighted their history of commitment to improving diversity through awareness, engagement, networking and advocacy groups, through members involvement in Women in Chemistry (Toronto chapter) and UBC Women in Science and Engineering, along with other institution-led initiatives.

In the first *Call for Applications for Research Funding* a half-page section on Gender, Equity, and Diversity Issues was included, pushing PIs to consider how these issues would be addressed in their research.

During the planning of the first NMIN Research Strengthening Workshop in May 2019, it was identified that the invitation list would benefit from the addition of early-career investigators. The invitation would not only assist early-career researchers in building their own network, but it would also bring a different viewpoint to the meeting above and beyond what the more senior researchers would provide. Five (5) early-career investigators attended, which included four women, three visible minorities, and one francophone. Travel expenses to the meeting were covered by NMIN to ensure the financial barrier for early-career investigators was removed. These investigators were also invited to attend NMIN’s Scientific Meeting in September 2019 and will continue to be included in Network events in the future.

⁴ <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51566.html>

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the members of the NMIN are as follows:

Party	Responsibility
Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review and approve EDI Framework b) Annual review and recommendations of EDI Framework <i>re.</i> performance, policy, procedure, and reporting c) Participate in EDI training (<i>mandatory</i>) d) Establish EDI benchmarks/targets for the Network e) Confirm that processes for appointment and hiring decisions has included balanced consideration of EDI and merit
Research Management Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review the EDI Framework and recommended for approval to the Board of Directors b) Annual review and recommendations of EDI Framework <i>re.</i> performance, policy, procedure, and reporting c) Participate in EDI training (<i>mandatory</i>) d) Recommend to the Board EDI benchmarks/targets for research participants and HQP e) Document merit basis of all candidates, appointments, and hiring decisions f) Review invitation lists for events
Scientific Director and Research Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conduct annual review of EDI in their Themes and Cores b) Communicate EDI framework, policies, and procedures to Researchers
HQP Program Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Utilize the EDI Framework and guiding questions for decisions on the leadership and organization of the committee b) Utilize the EDI Framework and guiding questions during adjudication of applications for value-added capacity building programs
NMIN Student Network (NSN) Executive Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Utilize the EDI Framework and guiding questions for decisions on the leadership and organization of the committee b) Utilize the EDI Framework and guiding questions when reviewing applications for admission into the NSN community c) Utilize the EDI Framework and guiding questions when making recommendations for programming for trainee events
Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Participate in EDI training (<i>optional</i>) b) Participate in EDI training on developing and implementing effective and meaningful EDI strategies (<i>optional</i>) c) Report annually in the context of their projects for the RMC and Board review

Party	Responsibility
	d) Documentation of the latest date of EDI training (either institutional or other) taken will be required for completion in the Research Project report templates
Trainees	a) Participate in EDI training (<i>optional</i>) b) Participate in EDI training on developing and implementing effective and meaningful EDI strategies (<i>optional</i>) c) Utilize the EDI Framework and guiding questions when recruiting candidates to stand for election to the NSN Executive Committee
Administrative Team	a) Source additional EDI training sessions b) Participate in EDI training (<i>mandatory</i>) c) Ensure hiring and recruitment session adhere to Network's EDI Framework d) Document merit basis of all candidates, appointments, and hiring decisions e) Ensure regular communications around EDI issues to develop a culture of EDI in the Network e.g. inclusion of "My EDI" section in newsletters f) Develop EDI training on developing and implementing effective and meaningful EDI strategies g) Develop questionnaires for data collection on underrepresented groups in the Network h) Review invitation lists for events

7. Framework Review

The NMIN EDI Framework will be reviewed and updated annually, with approved by NMIN committees, as follows:

1. **Research Management Committee**
2. **Executive and Nominating Committee**
3. **Board of Directors**

The Board-approved EDI Framework will be utilized for all decision-making processes within the Network.

NMIN would also like to highlight that this is a working document, as the understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion and their implementation in practice will evolve and grow with the Network.

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 22 October 2019