

Guidelines on considering equity, diversity and inclusion in the evaluation of strategic clusters

Why has the FRQNT added an equity, diversity and inclusion indicator to its strategic clusters evaluation criteria?

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 in science and technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), a situation that intensifies as their career advances, especially in decision-making positions¹. Achieving greater participation of women in STEM careers is thus among the objectives of the *Québec Research and Innovation Strategy* and the *Government Strategy for Gender Equality Toward 2021*. Indigenous and racialized² individuals also face obstacles to equity and inclusion, as do persons with disabilities and those from sexual and gender minorities³.

As part of their new 2018-2022 strategic planning, the Fonds de recherche du Québec are committed to strengthening the integration of equity, diversity and inclusion in scientific assessment. In addition, one of the strategic goals of the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Nature et technologies (FRQNT) is to promote diversity and inclusion within the scientific community, particularly through initiatives aimed at encouraging research environments to introduce measures toward equity, diversity and inclusion.

Diversity in research is not simply a question of equity, but a question of excellence in the research we support. It is important to dispel the myth that equity runs counter to excellence. When our choices are influenced by implicit biases, they are no longer based on the quest for excellence. On the contrary, addressing the prejudices and systemic barriers faced by certain individuals simply because of their gender, ethno-cultural origins or disability provides the research community with access to all its top talent. Moreover, greater diversity is associated with better performance in both corporate⁴ and research⁵ environments. Furthermore, in a training environment such as a strategic cluster, diversity within the faculty provides students with a wider range of role models.

Funding for strategic clusters accounts for 30% of the FRQNT's investments, and therefore plays an important role in implementing the FRQNT's mission and vision. Clusters must provide equitable and inclusive training and work environments where all feel welcome, supported and respected.

How will the FRQNT evaluate this indicator?

The purpose of this new measure is not to impose quotas on strategic clusters. The FRQNT does not expect, for instance, every cluster to achieve gender parity in their composition. By adding this indicator, the FRQNT wishes rather to lead clusters to examine their composition and practices, and to introduce measures for improvement. The FRQNT expects the clusters it supports to make efforts to ensure that they are equitable, diverse and inclusive work and training environments.

Strategic clusters must demonstrate the efforts put in place to ensure that their composition reflects the diversity of their research field and their community, for example in the recruitment of staff or new members. The efforts made by clusters should not be limited to their composition, but must, in a broader sense, aim to

create inclusive, equitable environments for all, where climate and culture allow all members to feel respected. As stated in the program rules, these efforts will be evaluated in relation to the quality of the cluster, organization and management, and the quality of the training environment.

The assessment committee will therefore be called on to examine the policies and measures in place, as well as the equity, diversity and inclusion plans of the clusters or of the institutions with which they are affiliated. Furthermore, clusters will need to demonstrate how their policies and practices promote equity, diversity and inclusion, for example in the hiring process, the selection of the steering committee, the allocation of funding, the organization of conferences or other scientific activities, or access to mentoring. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list: clusters are encouraged to highlight all efforts made to achieve equity, diversity and inclusion.

For additional information, please contact [Fanny Eugène](#), FRQ Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor.

Additional resources

- Report from Gender Summit 11 North America, co-organized by the FRQ, NSERC and Portia Ltd: https://www.gender-summit.com/portia_web/assets/GS11NA_REPORT_EN.pdf
- Downloadable leaflets on gender diversity from Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology: <https://www.sfu.ca/wwest/resources/White-Papers.html>
- NSERC Report – Strengthening Research Excellence through Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/EDI/EDIpresentation_EN.pdf
- Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in your application – NSERC Guide: http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/EDI/Guide_for_Applicants_EN.pdf

Notes and references

¹ 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 and Equity among Canada’s Post-Secondary Education Teachers](#)

² The term *racialized* recognizes that the concept of “race” is a social construct. The expression *visible minorities* is often used to refer to racialized minorities, i.e. groups who are the target of racial discrimination.

³ Freeman, J. (2018). [LGBTQ scientists are still left out](#), *Nature*, 559, 27-28.

⁴ Hunt V., Layton D. et Prince S. (2015). [Diversity Matters](#), McKinsey & Company.

⁵ Nielsen, M. W et al. (2017). [Gender diversity leads to better science](#), *PNAS*, 114 (8), 1740-1742.