



Best Practices for Inclusive Recruitment

INTRODUCTION

The CaRDM Eq training program has been designed with inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and anti-racism (IDEAA) at its core. IDEAA is integral not only to our objectives – digital health tools designed for equity – but also to how the program is delivered. Our priority is to provide opportunities for all trainees to thrive in safe, supportive, and accessible research environments.

As part of this commitment, strategies for program recruitment, mentorship, and training are guided by an IDEAA Committee. This document outlines the Committee's best practices for recruitment that attracts and fosters a diverse group of trainees.

These best practices draw from findings from an environmental scan, a CaRDM Eq survey of research team recruitment strategies, and institutional guidelines from U of T and McMaster.

Why Inclusive Recruitment?

Women, Black, and Indigenous individuals remain significantly underrepresented in STEM. In 2022–23, women accounted for just one-quarter of engineering graduates in Ontario, and they represent less than 30% of Canada's STEM workforce overall. Indigenous peoples make up nearly 5% of the Canadian population, but less than 1% of the engineering profession. Similarly, only about 3% of Canadians employed in STEM occupations identify as Black. Data on 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in STEM and engineering is scarce.

Graduate programs are a critical gateway to research careers, faculty positions, and leadership in STEM. Through intentional recruitment, we can improve representation, shift the workforce, and drive systemic change!

Because CaRDM Eq only supports students and fellows supervised by our research team, the diversity of our trainee pool is directly tied to the inclusiveness of each PI's recruitment practices. This guide is designed to help supervisors embed and strengthen IDEAA principles in their own efforts, ensuring our program cohorts reflect the future we want to see.



PREPARATION

Faculty members bring a wide range of experiences with IDEAA, and it can be valuable to take time to reflect on your own knowledge and identify areas where further learning might strengthen your approach.

Completing your institution’s mandatory IDEAA training is a good starting point, and revisiting modules you may have taken some time ago can serve as a helpful refresher.

Many faculty also choose to explore additional opportunities for growth. The following table highlights training topics especially relevant to recruitment, along with suggested resources.

Topic	Objective	Resources
Unconscious bias	Understand how biases can shape decisions and strategies to minimize their impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TIDE's Unconscious Bias Education Modules are self-guided modules developed at U of T for academic contexts. • Anti-Bias in Research: With enough interest from PIs, CaRDM Eq can arrange a tailored workshop led by Dr. Nicole Kaniki
Cultural safety & anti-racism	Create environments where Indigenous, Black, and racialized trainees feel respected, safe, and supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The On the Land land-based Indigenous education program is offered annually by TRANSFORM HF • The Indigenous Learning Series offers a set of workshops offered by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives at U of T • Check the EDI & Indigenous Event Calendar hosted by U of T's Division of People Strategy, Equity & Culture regularly to stay on top of new learning opportunities (AODA and Universal Design, Indigenous Initiatives, Sexual & Gender Diversity, Anti-Racism & Cultural Diversity) • The Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation offers various events around inclusive learning – mostly around reconciliation and Universal Design for Learning • Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office at U of T offers training on advancing racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. You may even request a training / workshop. • Find your Faculty/Divisional EDI Lead to ask about other resources
Inclusive communication	Use language and practices that welcome and affirm all identities, including 2SLGBTQIA+ trainees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Institute for Management & Innovation out of UTM has an excellent guide on inclusive writing. • The Sexual & Gender Diversity Office offers educational opportunities for U of T students, employees, librarians and faculty, including around gender inclusion
Accessibility & accommodations	Ensure recruitment and supervision processes are designed to be accessible and flexible for trainees with diverse needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centre for Learning, Leadership & Culture helps build staff's professional skills, including around EDI. They've partnered with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Office to offer a variety of training sessions on how to ensure that content is accessible.



PROMOTION

Recruitment is not just about filling a position — it is also about sending a clear message about your lab's values. Inclusive postings signal that *all* qualified candidates are welcome, while proactive recruitment ensures those postings reach equity-deserving communities that might otherwise be missed. Together, these practices help supervisors align with CaRDM Eq's IDEAA commitments and broaden opportunities for underrepresented groups.

Inclusive Postings

Ideally, recruitment postings would clearly reflect CaRDM Eq's commitment to IDEAA and signal that all qualified applicants are welcome. To achieve this:

- Use non-gendered, inclusive, and jargon-free language. Check out the [Government of Canada Inclusive Writing Guideline](#) and Simon Fraser University's list of [Gendered Words](#) for your specific tips.
- Use inclusive and representative images where necessary.
- Acknowledge different life experiences by welcoming applicants with non-linear career paths or career interruptions.
- Reinforce your lab's commitment to IDEAA and encourage applications from underrepresented groups by including a meaningful equity statement (a sample is included at the end of this section).
- Have postings reviewed by a colleague with IDEAA expertise to ensure language and framing are appropriate. Feel free to reach out to CaRDM Eq Program Manager for assistance!

Proactive Recruitment

Beyond well-crafted postings, proactive recruitment expands reach and helps build a diverse applicant pool. The goal is to spread awareness of positions widely, especially to equity-deserving communities that might not see standard postings.

Strategies include:

- Advertise beyond the main website (e.g., targeted emails, social media, physical spaces on campus).
- Use targeted recruitment channels with strong participation by underrepresented groups, such as:
 - [UofT Black Research Network](#)
 - [McMaster Women in Engineering Society](#)
 - [National Society of Black Engineers](#)
 - [Black Engineers of Canada](#)
 - [Canadian Black Scientists Network](#)
 - [Women in Science and Engineering \(UofT chapter\)](#)
 - [Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology](#)
 - [Discover Ability Network](#)



- [Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology](#)
- [Pride in STEM](#)
- [Canadian Accessibility Network](#)
- UofT Black and Indigenous Medical Society (contact Mena Gewarges, mena.gewarges@uhn.ca)
- Partner with current students to reach communities that may be harder to access (e.g., women in engineering).
- Maintain an up-to-date list of networks, platforms, organizations, and institutions for outreach.
- Disseminate postings across multiple platforms, including:
 - University websites and buildings
 - Social media channels
 - Conferences and recruiting events
 - Student success centres
 - Networking and professional associations
 - Career and diversity-focused websites

Sample Equity Statement

Equity statements should be meaningful and not generic. Below is an example statement, however faculty are strongly encouraged to adapt for their own uses.

The [\[insert your lab name here\]](#) values diverse perspectives and is committed to fostering a safe, supportive, and accessible research environment. We encourage applications from all qualified candidates, including those from equity-deserving groups such as women, Black and Indigenous peoples, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and persons with disabilities.



ASSESSMENT & SELECTION

The goal of an inclusive assessment and selection process is to minimize bias, ensure candidates are evaluated fairly, and provide equitable opportunity.

Reviewing Applications

- Establish pre-determined criteria: Define what you are looking for in advance, and apply those criteria consistently across all applicants.
- Account for different life experiences: Recognize that applicants may have faced systemic barriers or career interruptions, and avoid penalizing them for these.
- Use a second pair of eyes: Where possible, have at least two reviewers assess each application to help minimize unconscious bias.

Conducting Interviews

- Ensure consistent pre-communication: Provide all candidates with the same information and opportunities to prepare.
- Provide and respect accommodations: Clearly communicate to candidates that accommodations are available at every stage of the process, and follow through on requests to ensure accessibility needs are met. Accessibility Services has a helpful booklet on [demystifying academic accommodations](#), and they can be reached at accessibility.services@utoronto.ca.
- Review questions for inclusivity: Ensure interview questions are not exclusive, biased, or unnecessarily technical. Where possible, have a colleague with IDEAA expertise review them.
- Use standardized questions: Apply the same interview questions and evaluation criteria across all candidates, focussing on skills and competencies.

Making Selection Decisions

- Manage conflicts of interest: Disclose and address any conflicts to ensure objective decision-making.
- Evaluate potential as well as experience: Consider how lived experiences and non-linear career paths may enrich the trainee pool.
- Make it a two-way process: Allow short listed applicants to meet with lab members so they can assess whether they would feel included in your lab.
- Document the process: Keep a record that demonstrates consistent application criteria.
- Provide Feedback: Where appropriate, offer constructive feedback to support transparency and professional development.

Consider reaching out to the [Institutional Equity Office](#) at U of T's Division of People Strategy, Equity and Culture if you have any questions about how to make the selection process more inclusive. Additionally, each U of T Faculty/Division has an [EDI Lead](#) that might be able to provide more tailored guidance for your context.



BEYOND RECRUITMENT

Inclusive recruitment is only the first step! To truly foster IDEAA, it is important to ensure that trainees experience a supportive, welcoming environment once they join your lab. Supervisors can strengthen long-term impact by:

- Fostering a welcoming environment: Build intentional IDEAA initiatives into the day-to-day lab culture, such as structured mentorship, equitable access to opportunities, and career development support for all trainees.
- Encouraging training within your lab: Share resources and encourage lab members to participate in IDEAA-related training (e.g., unconscious bias, intercultural competence, accessibility awareness).
- Maintaining strong supervisory relationships: Good supervision is a shared responsibility between a graduate student and their supervisor. The [Centre for Graduate Mentorship & Supervision](#) facilitates interpersonal skill-building and conflict resolution so you can ensure you're holding up your end of the partnership.
- Creating a lab IDEAA committee: Even a small group of trainees can help generate ideas, flag concerns, and support implementation of inclusive practices.
- Tracking progress: At the lab level, this can mean reflecting on who is applying to opportunities, who is being selected, and who is advancing in their careers.
Important: If you are considering collecting demographic data within your lab, always consult with your Faculty/Department [EDI Lead](#) first to ensure it is done ethically and in line with institutional policy.
- Drafting or reviewing your lab's IDEAA statement: Make your commitment to equity explicit. A written statement can guide decision-making, set expectations, and demonstrate to trainees and collaborators that inclusivity is a core value.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Division of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation has several repositories and resources which may be helpful for continued learning:

- An [EDI in Research Teams and Training Handbook](#) which also outlines best practices for recruiting trainees, as well as training and mentorship which may be of interest.
- A [Research Environments & Practices Repository](#) consisting of resources to support an equitable, diverse, and inclusive research environment. These include EDI strategies in developing a diverse research team, hiring and recruitment, trainee program, and much more.
- A [Research Development & Design Repository](#) consisting of resources that support the application and implementation of EDI in research design. These include areas such as gender and sex, sexuality, race, accessibility and disability, and other aspects of identity that are important to EDI considerations in the research process. Community engaged research better practices resources are also included.

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