Best Practices for Embedding Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Research

UBC

Key Terminology

HMGs— "Historically Marginalized Groups"— refers to people who belong to groups that are historically, systemically, and persistently discriminated against and excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life, on the basis of—but not limited to—race, Indigenous identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, socio-economic status, disability, nationality, ancestry, or religion.

Recruitment: Equity, diversity & inclusion in selecting and recruiting your research team

Action	Questions to Ask	Why is this important?
Reflect on your assumptions and biases about the candidates you are seeking.	• Is there an **affinity bias** toward certain fields, demographics, or academic backgrounds in our recruitment efforts? • Are we unconsciously rejecting people who are different from us?	Diversity and inclusion enable creativity and innovation that result in excellence in research.
Value and **Assess** interpersonal equity, diversity, and inclusion competencies developed through working with HMGs.	• Are we using an expansive model of excellence that recognizes contributions (such as intercultural skills, relationship-building skills, effective conflict engagement) that may be overlooked using traditional models of excellence? • Are we providing diverse ways for people to demonstrate how lived experience (not only academic experiences) benefit this research project?	Valuing multiple perspectives that are relevant to the project will attract and retain team members and engage them in authentic research collaboration.
Develop fair, inclusive, and transparent recruitment processes that will attract people with diverse perspectives to the research team.	• What could we be doing to make our processes more inviting to people with diverse perspectives? • What supports could we be providing to remove barriers? • How are we integrating principles of universal design to support different HMGs in the hiring process?	Changes in the process and criteria are necessary to increase the talent pool and recruit excellent candidates.

Inclusion: Promote inclusion and belonging (especially for-but not limited to- HMGs)

Action	Questions to Ask	Why is this important?
Create onboarding practices, processes, and policies that support inclusion, belonging, and well-being.	• Do HMGs feel supported in our onboarding process? • Are our supports and expectations (eg. accommodations processes, counselling services, UBC affinity groups) clearly communicated and fairly applied? • What training supports and resources are we providing to ensure that new team members can succeed?	When team members clearly understand what is expected of them and they feel supported to meet those expectations, well-being, morale, and motivation is higher. This can, in-turn, increase productivity and promote a healthier work culture for the entire team.
Provide a safe environment for differences of opinion and conflict.	• What structures are in place to hear and value the insights of colleagues from HMGs? • How are we promoting psychological safety, so that team members feel included and encouraged to speak up without fear? • What systems are in place to mitigate power differentials? Are people in less powerful positions able to provide feedback, resolve conflict, and grow in their positions?	Psychologically safe environments foster acceptance and support that promote feelings of belonging and purpose, which are powerful drivers of engagement and productivity.

Research Design: Embed equity, fairness & inclusion into the development and design of projects

Action	Questions to Ask	Why is this important?
Reflect on your motives for engaging with HMGs .	• Why do we want to engage with HMGs? • Is it appropriate to engage with these HMGs? • Is our goal to promote justice and equity? • Are we being self-serving? • Do we actually have the time , resources, and capacity to provide tangible benefits to this community?	Ethical partnership with HMGs should authentically serve, amplify, and support them. Failure to engage ethically may result in our efforts being interpreted as performative and extractive, causing long-term harm between our institution and these communities.
Demonstrate ethical engagement that is mutual, reciprocal, transparent, accountable, reparative, and respectful with marginalized communities who participate in your research.	• How do we build-in enough time to authentically collaborate and develop a meaningful process to collaborate as equals? • How are we co-developing research projects in partnership with members of HMGs? • Who gets credit for the information? Who owns the information? Who benefits from the research? • How will we ensure that there are sufficient resources (eg. Translation services, communications support, time) to present the results back to the community in a way that is meaningful to them?	It is important to engage in research **with** HMGs, not **on** HMGs. Research should respect, support, honor, and empower marginalized communities who participate in our research.
Create safe and supportive processes to learn from conflict and differences in perspectives between researchers and communities	• What practices are we engaging in to ensure that conflicts are resolved in a mutually respectful manner? • How are we ensuring that community members are able to voice concerns to the research team?	Safe spaces promote, learning, creativity, intercultural understanding, and mutually acceptable solutions. Addressing differences early helps when navigating conflict.

Data Collection: Gather and use data equitably and ethically

Action	Questions to Ask	Why is this important?
Reflect on your assumptions and biases that relate to data collection.	• How might power dynamics of the research team adversely affect the quality of research? How might we disrupt them? • How might we rethink disciplinary and cultural assumptions on what constitutes data? • How can we bring different ways of knowing into our research?	It is critical to ensure a positive experience for communities and that the data you have collected is valid, reliable, and triangulated (with different sources).
Reduce barriers to broad participation in surveys, interviews, and focus groups.	• Are we taking steps to ensure all voices are heard? • Are we appropriately compensating participants for the information they provide? • What are the long and short-term costs to participants (childcare costs, transportation costs, etc.) of engaging in this research?	If key players are not included or overlooked, they may be less likely to support the study; some may even be motivated to actively undermine the interventions that result from the research project.

Equitable Benefits: Ensure everyone (including HMGs) can benefit from research outputs

Action	Questions to Ask	Why is this important?
Identify groups or communities that have not (in the past) benefited from, or have been harmed by, research outputs and engage in research that has the potential to address, mitigate, or avoid harm.	• Who has been underserved or harmed by past research efforts? Consider specifically within the disciplines that this research project draws from.	Understanding how past research outputs contribute to inequitable access and health outcomes promotes equity and enriches research design and implementation.
Carefully consider the long-term adverse impacts of possible research findings on communities and consider how you can develop projects that will reduce these impacts.	• How can we work to remove barriers to participation in research for HMGs and people with intersectionally marginalized identities to ensure that outputs are relevant and potentially beneficial to HMGs?	Understanding past and ongoing harms conducted for research may help researchers develop more positive relationships with marginalized communities and governments.