

NSERC Discovery Grant Application: Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the Training of HQP Component

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NSERC Evaluation Group 1501 (Genes, Cells, and Molecules)
Genes Stream
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N SERC Discovery Grant Application

Three components:

1. Excellence of the Researcher

2. Merit of the Proposal

3. Training of HQP

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Training of HQP

Two components:

1. HQP Training Plan
2. Past Contributions to HQP Training

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1. HQP Training Plan

Max. 5,000 characters

2. Past Contributions to HQP Training

Max. 2,500 characters

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Applicants are encouraged to increase the inclusion and advancement of women and *other under-represented groups* in the natural sciences and engineering, as one means to enhance excellence in research and training.

Describe the planned approach to promoting participation from a diverse group of HQP, taking into account equity in recruitment practices, mentorship and initiatives aimed at ensuring an inclusive research and work environment.

– *NSERC – Discovery Grants Program – Instructions for completing an application*

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Other under-represented groups:

...visible minorities, Indigenous peoples, people with diverse gender identities and people with disabilities.

– *NSERC Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence in Natural Sciences and Engineering Research*

...and age, sexual orientation, parental status/responsibility, immigration status, religion, language, race, place of origin, ethnicity, culture and socio-economic status.

– *NSERC – Guide for Applicants: Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in your application*

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Last year, that equity, diversity and inclusion had been taken into account in the application was considered a "bonus".

This year, it is mandatory, but EG members have yet to receive instructions from NSERC on how to evaluate this component, and this component fails to appear on the Discovery Grants Merit Indicator, which is used, together with the Peer Review Manual, to arrive at a rating of the application.

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Inequality is real.

... despite decades of efforts to increase faculty, staff, and student diversity, the culture of academia remains distinctly white, male, heterosexual, and middle- to upper-class.

— *G. Gutiérrez y Muhs G., Y. Flores Niemann, C.G. González & A.P. Harris eds. (2012). Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia.*

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Inequality is not only the result of demographic inertia but of unconscious bias.

– *Shaw A.K. & Stanton D.E. (2012). Leaks in the pipeline: separating demographic inertia from ongoing gender differences in academia. Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences 279: 3736–3741.*

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Women are just as biased as men.

– *Steinpreis R.E., Anders K.A. & Ritzke D. (1999). The Impact of Gender on the Review of the Curricula Vitae of Job Applicants and Tenure Candidates: A National Empirical Study. Sex Roles 41: 509-528.*

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

General advice

- Avoid platitudes.
- Be specific and detailed.
- Assume reviewers and evaluators are at least as smart as you are.

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

- Take the [Bias in Peer Review](#) online learning module.
- Take the [GBA+ \(Gender-Based Analysis Plus\)](#) course.
- Ask your trainees to do the same.
- Mention in your application (in the "HQP Training Plan" and/or in the "Past Contributions to HQP Training") that you did all that.

Awareness of discrepancies between the ideals of impartiality and actual performance, together with strong internal motivations to respond without prejudice, effectively reduces prejudicial behavior.

– Devine P.G., Plant E.A., Amodio D.M., Harmon-Jones E., Vance S.L. (2002). *The Regulation of Explicit and Implicit Race Bias: The Role of Motivations to Respond Without Prejudice*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82: 835–848.

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Document your participation and your trainees' (in the "Past Contributions to HQP Training"), or describe plans for you and your trainees to participate, to workshops (e.g., Gordon Research Conferences Power Hour) (in the "HQP Training Plan") that increase awareness of unconscious bias.

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Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Now that you are aware of unconscious bias, how do you ensure your decisions are not affected by it?

In all programs NSERC encourages applicants to explain their process of identifying, recruiting and selecting research personnel based on equity and diversity best practices¹ as one means to enhance excellence in research, training and outreach.

– *NSERC – Guide for Applicants: Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in your application*

¹ For example, check out [Reviewing Applicants – Research on Bias and Assumptions](#)

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

- Document your participation (in the "Past Contributions to HQP Training") or describe your plans to participate (in the "HQP Training Plan") to programs (e.g., **WiSEST**) that aim at increasing equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Document the historical inclusion of members of under-represented groups among your trainees (in the "Past Contributions to HQP Training").

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Advertise available positions internationally.

I post available positions in my lab on bulletin boards at national and international conferences (see CCV for those attended in the past six years), on my lab website and on the websites of The Canadian Society of Plant Biologists, The American Society of Plant Biologists and The Arabidopsis Information Resource.

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Develop and prioritize evaluation criteria prior to evaluating candidates and apply them consistently to all applicants.

Different standards are used to evaluate male and female applicants, and when criteria are not clearly articulated before reviewing candidates, evaluators may shift or emphasize criteria that favor candidates from well-represented demographic groups.

– *Biernat M. & Fuegen K. (2001). Shifting Standards and the Evaluation of Competence: Complexity in Gender-Based Judgment and Decision Making. Journal of Social Issues 57: 707-724.*
Uhlmann E.L. & Cohen, G.L. (2005). Constructed criteria: Redefining merit to justify discrimination. Psychological Science 16: 474-480.

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

Explain in your application (in the "HQP Training Plan" and/or in the "Past Contributions to HQP Training") how you identify, recruit and select trainees.

Trainee applications are forwarded to my wife, who kindly blacks out name, gender, marital status, country and photograph from email, accompanying letter, CV and reference letters. My wife keeps the original; I only evaluate the blacked-out copy.

Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application

- Be aware of and correct unconscious bias in the reference letters you write for your trainees.
- Mention in your application (in the "HQP Training Plan" and/or in the "Past Contributions to HQP Training") that you do that.

Reference letters for female applicants differ systematically from those for males: they are shorter; provide “minimal assurance”, rather than solid recommendation; raise more doubts; portray women as students and teachers, and men as researchers and professionals; and more frequently mention women’s personal lives.

– *Trix, F. & Psenka C. (2003). Exploring the color of glass: letters of recommendation for female and male medical faculty. Discourse & Society 14: 191–220.*

ECRs vs. ERs

All applicants are evaluated using the same criteria. The only difference in the assessment of ECRs and ERs is the role of the training record in determining the final rating. ECRs should not be rated as Insufficient solely due to the lack of training record; the review should focus on the plan for future training. To compensate for the fact that ECRs have little to no training record and generally receive a lower HQP rating than most ERs, ECRs are usually funded to a lower quality threshold

— *NSERC – Discovery Grants Peer Review Manual 2018-19*

Good Luck!