



CANADIAN
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION

ANTI-RACIST INTERSECTIONAL RESEARCH GUIDELINES



The Guidelines are a living document. Their structure and ideas are based on findings and feedback obtained through focus groups, interviews, and surveys with the Foundation's partners, collaborators, and staff. The Guidelines are a tangible tool for learning and improving knowledge production and knowledge sharing practices through employing critical reflection and reflexivity. The Foundation constantly seeks to improve existing practices and processes. If you have insights on how the Guidelines can better advance diversity, equity, and inclusion please share them with your contact at the Foundation.

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the participants who shared their insights and spoke openly during the focus groups, interviews, and surveys. By candidly sharing lessons, strategies, insights, and challenges related to working within anti-racist and intersectional diversity, equity, and inclusion frameworks, colleagues, including peers at other foundations and women's organizations, have contributed significantly to this project. We also warmly acknowledge the generous support of the Canadian Women's Foundation to initiate this research and bring together supporters and donors to promote anti-racist and intersectional approaches to advance gender equity in Canada.

– Norin Taj and Esel Panlaqui, *Towards Better Outcomes*

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO INTERSECTIONAL RESEARCH

The Canadian Women's Foundation's Anti-Racist Intersectional Research Guidelines were developed to support our partners, collaborators, and staff to actively incorporate the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion into their practices. The Guidelines are intended as a functional tool to enhance the capacity of the Foundation to support our teams, partners, and collaborators to adopt anti-racist and intersectional approaches. This introductory section provides context for the practices outlined in Part 2.

ABOUT INTERSECTIONALITY

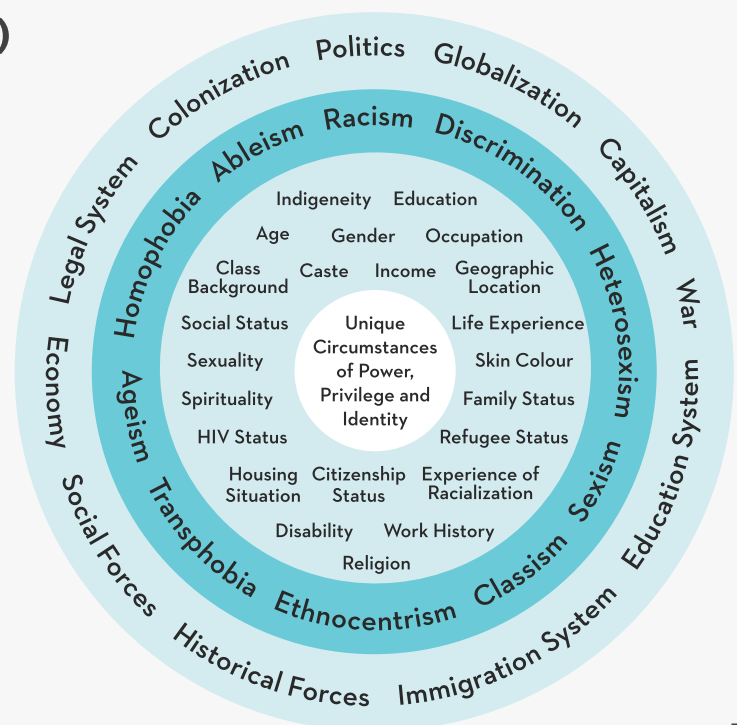
The term intersectionality was coined by American critical race scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1989). The concept is rooted in Black feminist writing, Indigenous feminisms, third world feminisms, and queer and postcolonial theory (Bunjun, 2010; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Van Herk et al., 2011).

Intersectionality promotes an understanding of how factors such as race, disability/ability,

ethnicity, age, class, gender, geography, Indigeneity, migration status, religion, sexuality, and occupation furnish individuals simultaneously with privilege and oppression (Hankivsky, 2014). An intersectional approach acknowledges how inequity and systemic discrimination based on these factors work together and heighten one another. The concept is often depicted through a Wheel Diagram.

The Wheel Diagram (Simpson, 2009)

- **The innermost circle** represents a person's unique circumstances.
- **The second circle** represents various aspects of identity.
- **The third (blue) circle** represents different types of discrimination and attitudes that impact identity.
- **The outermost circle** represents larger forces and structures that work together to reinforce systemic discrimination and exclusion.



Intersectionality encourages critical reflection and asks decision-makers to move beyond single, or typically favoured, categories of analysis, such as gender, race, and class. Instead, intersectionality takes into consideration the interactions and complex relationships between various aspects of social identity, as well as structures, systems, and processes of oppression, such as racism, ableism, and sexism (Hankivsky et al., 2009). Equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential concepts to thinking about and understanding intersectionality. These concepts are used in specific contexts to question and challenge multiple systemic barriers to opportunity and various forms of prejudice.

FRAMING INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES

Principles of Intersectionality

These Guidelines ask collaborators, evaluators, researchers, report writers and other consultants to apply concepts of intersectionality, equity, diversity, and inclusion in their work across different contexts and with diverse groups and populations. Reflective and open conversations are highly encouraged, as is taking time to reflect on the strengths and limitations of implementing an intersectional approach. These five principles can help initiate thinking about challenging status quo practices that reinforce power and privilege:

- Apply Reflexivity
- Provide Meaningful Engagement and Compensation

- Ground Work in Context
- Acknowledge and Respect Diverse Ways of Knowing
- Strengthen Social Justice and Communities

1. Apply Reflexivity

Reflexivity is about acknowledging that we bring who we are to our work, including our prior experiences, biases, assumptions, and beliefs. Applying reflexivity as a principle requires consultants and collaborators to be aware of their role and to actively examine how their prior experiences, assumptions, and beliefs influence their work in knowledge production and research dissemination. It asks for acknowledgement of power dynamics between the researcher, collaborator, and the community, and for plans to mitigate.

Effectively applying this principle means consultants and collaborators need time to outline their assumptions about how the work will proceed, and identify limitations to taking an intersectional approach, such as lack of disaggregated data. They need to locate themselves with respect to the communities and issues being addressed or investigated and acknowledge the impacts of colonialism, structural oppression, and discrimination. They should centre voices of the communities in their work and ask who is not represented as well as whether they are the right team/person to do the work. Relevant demographic and knowledge gaps should be addressed and thought given to which groups are most accessible to the team, which are hardest to connect with, and why.

2. Provide Meaningful Engagement and Compensation

This principle encourages meaningful engagement—including the ethics of dignity, choice, and autonomy—with participants and their communities. Effectively applying this principle asks that researchers and collaborators outline how diverse participants will be recruited for the project and inform participants about the purpose of the work, what will happen with their input, the benefits and risks associated with participating in the process, and the ownership of the information and data. Representative voices should be engaged to participate in design, define meaningful change for their community, evaluate risk and safety concerns and consider opportunities for co-researching and co-analysis.

Budgeting should include equitable compensation for the time and contributions of participants and communities as well as an assessment of whether compensation influences who responds to the recruitment materials.

3. Ground Work in Context

This principle encourages grounding conversations in the specific contexts of communities, grantees, and partners. Applying understandings of diversity, equity, and inclusion can confront power inequities faced by different groups in their contexts. Effectively grounding work in context asks that researchers and collaborators collect disaggregated, demographic, race-based, abilities-based, and identity-based data for marginalized communities.

They should identify missing perspectives and acknowledge the reasons for it, such as communities being over-researched, exhausted, and/or discouraged. They should recognize that diversity, equity, intersectionality, and other terms may be understood differently by different groups and/or in different contexts and discuss the scope and meaning of terms and definitions and how representative voices understand them. The First Nations Principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) should be discussed and established as governing information gathered.

4. Acknowledge and Respect Diverse Ways of Knowing

Acknowledging and respecting diverse ways of knowing invites researchers and evaluators to appreciate varied ways of knowledge production and ownership. It urges acknowledgement of the authority and agency of various forms of knowing, such as traditional Indigenous knowledge systems, in the application of the ethics of intersectionality.

Effectively acknowledging and respecting diverse ways of knowing requires that researchers and collaborators listen to and establish trust with relevant communities prior to exploring projects. Diverse community perspectives, such as Afrocentric and First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives, should be acknowledged and respected when identifying the research needed and framing research questions. Members of relevant communities and those with lived experience should be involved in advisory and steering committees. Indigenous Elders should be listened to throughout the research process and their traditions observed and respected. Intersectionality and diversity within communities—such as Black and Muslim women’s communities in Canada—should be recognized, as should varied forms of data and evidence that are valued within communities such as photos and songs.

5. Strengthen Social Justice and Communities

Strengthening social justice and communities requires long-term relationship building and sharing resources with groups who have historically been excluded from knowledge production and dissemination processes. This principle supports researchers and partners to confront systemic racism and incorporate diverse, inclusive, and equitable practices in their work.

To strengthen social justice and communities, researchers and collaborators will need to establish a respectful, responsive, and informative engagement that incorporates acknowledgment and critical analysis of power dynamics and pays attention to equitable knowledge-exchange and partnership, rather than extraction of data. Communities should be supported to describe and define what it is happening for them and attention should be paid to inherent tensions in approaches depending on context. Researchers and collaborators should acknowledge that generic evaluation measures and metrics might not work well for transformative work and be open to developing additional tools and products in consultation with the representative communities. Findings should be identified and discussed with representative communities before reports are written and resources should be dedicated to presenting findings in accessible formats appropriate to relevant communities.

PART 2: APPLYING INTERSECTIONALITY TO RESEARCH

The Anti-Racist Intersectional Research Guidelines support our partners, collaborators, and staff to actively incorporate the values of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into funding, research, advocacy, and knowledge-sharing practices. This section is focused on knowledge production practises that can be applied to adopt anti-racist and intersectional approaches.

APPLYING INTERSECTIONALITY TO RESEARCH

Inequity and exclusion due to gender and gender identity, race, ability and disability, sexual orientation and identity, economic status, immigration status and national origin work together and manifest in many ways at different levels of society, including the following:

- **Institutional:** The oppression that exists at the institutional level—the organizations, laws, policies, regulations, assumptions, standards, schools, images, cultural norms, political power—resulting in unequal practices, marginalization, and institutional discrimination
- **Interpersonal:** The idea that one identity/ societal group is better than others permits members of the dominant group to disrespect or mistreat individuals in the marginalized group [through means] such as jokes, slurs, stereotypes, threats, physical assaults, bullying or patronizing behaviours.
- **Internalized:** The concept that one group is superior to others gets internalized, and the group starts to believe the widespread stereotypes, prejudice and negative messages about themselves, for instance, racialized persons not questioning discriminatory practices.

— David, 2017



These Guidelines discuss applying intersectionality to five areas of knowledge production work—Collaborative Research, Evaluation, Policy Briefs, Focus Groups, and Surveys.

Practises that apply across all five areas include:

- Strive for a research process that is an equitable exchange and partnership rather than a process of data extraction.
- Secure informed consent from all participants for all activities to be carried out and ensure participation does not cause oppressive or inequitable outcomes.
- Understand and implement the The First Nations Principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) to govern data collection and use.
- Allocate sufficient resources - such as budget, time, and staffing - to fully implement an anti-racist intersectional approach and provide communities with opportunities, resources, and capacity support to meaningfully engage with the research rather than participating as passive subjects.
- Ensure cultural safety for members of the group, for example, presence of Elders and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and other supports.
- Ensure project results are accessible to and shared with participants, and before finalizing, provide opportunities for participants to provide clarity and additional information. Co-design and co-identify findings wherever possible.
- Provide opportunities for training and growth to build organizational and community capacity and allow more diverse people to provide analysis and input while appropriately acknowledging community contributions to knowledge production.
- Remember that intersectional analysis and collaborative policy development takes time; address time constraints that create barriers to intersectional analysis.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AREAS

Practises for the five knowledge production areas—Collaborative Research, Evaluation, Policy Briefs, Focus Groups and Surveys— are outlined below.

1. Collaborative Research

Purpose, Roles, and Power Relations

- Recognize trust-building as a key part of the collaborative research process.
- Situate the identities of those conducting the research or information gathering in relation to the communities to be studied.
- Analyze who would benefit from how the research is conducted, generated, and used, in light of structural inequality and power dynamics and ensure community benefit.
- Identify and address any community representation gaps in the research concept: for example, women and gender diverse people with disabilities; migrant women and women with precarious status; women in precarious economic circumstances; Black communities; First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities; 2SLGBTQIA+ communities; elderly people; and children.
- Acknowledge, understand, and challenge racist histories and practices of data collection and use, such as the violence of data collection practices and use of data against First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities.

Equitable Design and Meaningful Engagement

- Design and implement research in collaboration with community members as experts in their context, needs, and assets using a trauma-informed approach.
- Compensate participants' time and work on the project financially and with appropriate supports and adopt compensation practices that support participation of communities facing barriers, including when and how budgets are created.
- Provide sufficient resources for advisory committees to lead research projects and be involved in every step of the process.
- Base case studies in research reports on diverse and intersectional identities.
- Ensure findings are validated with participants and dedicate resources to translate findings into accessible formats and relevant languages.
- Make disaggregated data available for Black, First Nation, Métis, Inuit, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, disabled, senior, youth and economically marginalized communities.
- Engage in diverse forms of research such as photography, songs, and other accessible approaches.
- Produce accessible tools that are useful to the communities studied or involved in the process for their own purposes.

2. Evaluation

Purpose, Roles, and Power Relations

- Centre the needs of the communities that are the intended beneficiaries of the project and prioritize relationship and trust-building throughout the evaluation process.
- Involve communities who are the intended beneficiaries in co-creating evaluation design and implementation, for example, by establishing a community evaluation committee.
- Ensure evaluation teams represent communities being served by the research, program, or policy.
- Ask who the evaluation is serving and ensure evaluation and evaluation strategies are necessary and useful.
- Consider who has influence over decisions in evaluation work and the equitable distribution of such influence.
- Consider what evaluation measures and metrics can be used to support the transformative potential of research, programs, or policy.

Equitable Design and Meaningful Engagement

- Build evaluation teams with wide representation of geographical and intersectional identities.
- Ensure budgets, resources, time allocated, and tools available are sufficient to fully support diverse representation from relevant communities with lived experience.

- Co-create success indicators and implement validation exercises with diverse participants and service-users and share accessible tools and results that are useful to the communities involved.
- Collect demographic, race-based, and other relevant identity-based information from program participants to better understand who is being served and who should be represented on evaluation teams.
- Produce accessible tools that are of use to the engaged communities for their own purposes.

3. Policy Briefs

Purpose, Roles, and Power Relations

- Critically analyze the power dynamics inherent in relationships and in relation to the issue, and establish respectful, responsive, and informative engagement.
- Acknowledge that colonialism, structural oppression, and discrimination have and continue to affect, shape, and harm different communities.
- Consider the impacts of policy positions on multiple intersectional communities—answer the question: “how does this impact across all communities?”
- Ensure competence in taking a systemic and structural approach to policy work.

- Recognize that there are fraught relationships between marginalized communities and the state; prepare communities to participate and work to mitigate impacts on them.
- Evolve policy priorities based on stakeholder engagement and input as well as political context and momentum.
- Regularly assess strategies for engagement and input to improve reach to diverse populations.

Equitable Design and Meaningful Engagement

- Ensure competence in taking a systemic and structural approach to policy work.
- Co-create policy solutions with communities with lived experience, using an iterative—repetitive and overlapping—process.
- Engage with stakeholders through networks across the country regularly to understand the on-the-ground impacts of policy on various sectors, locales, contexts, and diverse communities.
- Engage communities with lived experience on what they consider to be best practices, on-the-ground impacts of policy, and useful policy solutions, without reference to professional qualifications or professional experience.
- Provide meaningful and fair compensation to everyone who contributes to policy development.
- Engage in diverse forms of gathering input to inform policy development processes.

4. Focus Groups

Purpose, Roles, and Power Relations

- Situate the identities of facilitators conducting the focus group in relation to the participants, their communities, and the issues under discussion.
- Acknowledge the power dynamics between facilitator and participants and among participants and develop strategies to address them.
- Ensure the creation and operation of focus groups is non-prescriptive, flexible, and responds to the group.

Equitable Design and Meaningful Engagement

- Ensure equitable representation of diverse groups, particularly those who have not previously been involved in focus groups.
- Consider who is not being engaged, why that is, and how to engage them to address representation gaps.
- Provide fair and equitable financial compensation for time, expertise, and expenses and maximize inclusion measures by providing food, childcare, transportation, and multiple ways to engage.
- Create space and resources for conversations that may seem out of the scope of the focus group topic to allow for improvements to the format and accessibility of the focus group.
- Allow for creativity and non-structured processes in focus groups, for example, for children or youth.

- Provide dedicated, skilled, trauma-informed, emotional support for focus group participants, as needed.

5. Surveys

Purpose, Roles, and Power Relations

- Clarify and clearly communicate the intention and intended outcome of the survey, how data will be used, and whether it is truly anonymous or will have identifying information.
- Consider the limitations of using polling firms and consultants to develop and administer surveys or whether co-creation with marginalized communities is possible.
- Consider the implications of not using survey data because sample sizes are “too small” and whether this is equitable or overlooks marginalized people and communities.

Equitable Design and Meaningful Engagement

- Ensure survey design is inclusive, and language and wordings are inclusive and accessible, and allow for intersectionality. Include the choice option “other” where useful.
- Provide digital copies for use with adaptive technology and translation of the survey into multiple languages as necessary.
- Provide survey participants with access to support to complete the survey as needed and to emotional support for any triggering resulting from taking the survey.

- Provide opportunities for data validation by survey participants.
- Support all survey respondents to identify their intersectional identity information including ensuring First Nation, Métis, and Inuit respondents can identify their nations.



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Charitable Registration Number

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