

Embedding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) into Policy Development and Management

1. Introduction

1.1 *Understanding EDIB*

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) is an essential framework for creating policies and procedures that ensure fairness, accessibility, and inclusivity for all members of the College community, irrespective of their backgrounds, identities, or experiences. It goes beyond traditional diversity initiatives by addressing systemic biases, promoting social justice, and fostering a sense of belonging for everyone.

1.2 *Rationale for EDIB Integration*

Embedding EDIB into policy development and management is imperative for the following reasons:

- **Promoting Equity:** EDIB ensures that policies and procedures rectify systemic inequalities and promote greater access to opportunities for all.
- **Fostering Inclusion:** Inclusive policies and procedures are accessible and beneficial to all, making it possible for individuals from diverse backgrounds to engage fully.
- **Encouraging Belonging:** Embedding EDIB policies and procedures creates an environment where everyone feels valued and included, leading to a sense of belonging and community.
- **Improving Decision-Making:** Diverse perspectives and experiences lead to more well-rounded, effective decision-making. Inclusivity in policy development results in solutions that consider a broad range of viewpoints and potential consequences.
- **Building a Foundation of Trust:** Policies and procedures that prioritize EDIB earn the trust and respect of the communities and interested/affected parties they serve. This trust is crucial for maintaining positive relationships and reputation.
- **Globalization and Cultural Competence:** In today's globalized world, cultural competence is essential. Embedding EDIB in policies and procedures helps institutions navigate diverse cultural landscapes, reducing cultural misunderstandings and conflicts.
- **Legal and Ethical Obligations:** Many legal and regulatory frameworks (*Alberta Human Rights Act, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, etc.*) require institutions to uphold EDIB principles. Compliance with these obligations is not only ethical but also avoids legal liabilities and penalties.

2. Key Recommendations for Embedding EDIB

2.1 Policy Development

- **Acknowledge and Check your Biases:** In our everyday interactions, biases naturally emerge and manifest. The way we perceive and act towards others, both individually and interpersonally, is significantly shaped by the circumstances we find ourselves in, our personal experiences, and the prevailing cultural and societal standards. Becoming aware of our biases challenges us to confront social stereotypes by educating ourselves and reflecting on how we perceive our relationships with others.
Example: Regularly examine your thoughts and attitudes, and consider how they can affect your judgment and decision-making as they pertain to, but are not limited to, gender, racialized identity, sexual orientation, faith and spirituality, etc.
- **Pay Attention to Power Imbalances:** Considering power imbalances when developing policies and procedures is crucial for creating equitable and inclusive frameworks that address the diverse needs and perspectives of our College community. Power imbalances exist within our society and institutions, and they can result in certain groups or individuals being marginalized, disadvantaged, or excluded.
Example: Start by identifying where power imbalances may exist within the context of the policy/procedure. This could involve examining organizational hierarchies, privileges, and historical disparities.
- **Inclusive Language:** Ensure policies and procedures explicitly address identified disparities, employing inclusive and respectful language that considers diverse backgrounds and experiences. Avoid biased or discriminatory terms that reinforce stereotypes and biases. Frame policies and procedures in a way that reflects a commitment to fostering a sense of belonging for all individuals.
Example: Replace gender-specific terms with gender-neutral language to ensure inclusivity for all members of the College community regardless of their gender identity - instead of writing "he" or "she", use "they".
- **Fairness and Flexibility:** Fairness and flexibility are essential principles in policy development. Balancing these principles ensures that policies are both just and adaptable to the changing needs of individuals. Emphasize the importance of equitable outcomes rather than rigid adherence to identical processes. Evaluate whether the policy aligns with the notion that fairness doesn't always equate to uniform treatment for everyone.
Example: Consider the unique needs of various individuals and groups. Address historical and structural inequalities by tailoring policies to address disparities and promote equity.

- **Provide Accessibility Adjustments:** Ensure that policies and procedures, communication, and implementation are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Accommodate diverse communication styles and accessibility needs. Select consultation spaces that are physically accessible to individuals with various disabilities.
Example: Provide policy-related information, documents, and communications in accessible formats, such as screen reader-friendly documents, large print, braille, and accessible digital formats.
- **Intersectional Analysis:** Intersectionality in policy development involves considering how different aspects of an individual's identity, such as racial marginalization, Indigenous heritage and ancestry, gender, class, disability, and more, intersect and interact to create uniquely nuanced experiences and needs. This approach ensures that policies and procedures address the complex realities faced by individuals with multiple minoritized identities.
Example: Avoid writing policies and procedures that apply a “one-size-fits-all” model. Acknowledge that individuals do not experience discrimination, privilege, or disadvantage based on one identity alone. Recognize that multiple identities intersect and influence outcomes.

2.2 Interested/Affected Party Engagement

- **Diverse Representation:** Engage a wide range of interested parties, especially those who will be most affected by the policy and procedure. This includes consultations, listening sessions, and soliciting input from minoritized groups.
Example: Ensure that policies and procedures undergo multiple rounds of consultation, incorporating a wide range of diverse viewpoints. Ensure the College’s EDIB Advisor and Senior Indigenous Relations Advisor are involved in the consultation process.

2.3 Implementation and Evaluation

- **Regular Assessment:** Continuously monitor policy implementation and evaluate its impact. Adjust policies as necessary to maintain their equity and inclusivity.