EDI ADVOCACY PROGRAM HANDBOOK

McGill | E-IDEA Engineering Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity Advancement

Land Acknowledgement

The Office of E-IDEA is situated on unceded land belonging to the Kanien'kehá:ka, one of the founding nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. McGill sites, including campuses, research stations and reserves, also extend to Anishinaabeg, Abenaki, Naskapi and Innu, Inuit, Taino (Arawak) and Kalinago (Carib) territories. The Office of E-IDEA recognizes the history and legacy of dispossession and colonial violence perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples and commits to ongoing education and advocacy toward justice.

Contents

About the Program

Commonly Requested Tips & Tools

What is the EDI Advocacy Program?

The **EDI Advocacy Program** comprises a Community of Practice for academic and non-academic staff who are committed to creating a more equitable and inclusive environment in the Faculty of Engineering. Together, the EDI Advocates engage in collaborative learning and discussion, skill building, planning, and action to improve their EDI knowledge, practice, and impact. EDI Advocates may also act as local resources for staff and students seeking information and support. The EDI Advocacy Program Lead oversees activities and provides guidance, facilitation, and administrative support.

Who can join the Program?

The EDI Advocacy Program aims to support staff at any stage of their advocacy journey. Whether you're new to EDI topics or have experience leading EDI projects, we invite you to get involved! Program members span a broad range of positions and disciplines across the Faculty of Engineering. Our Community of Practice provides a collaborative space to develop practical EDI applications in your local environment, to give and receive peer feedback, and to participate in working groups targeting specific issues.

Consider becoming an EDI Advocate if you're interested in:

- Deepening your understanding of EDI topics
- Developing inclusive language and practices to incorporate in your day-to-day work
- Learning techniques for effective microintervention in the workplace
- Growing skills to effectively support students and/or peers navigating EDI issues in the workplace

- Expanding your awareness of McGill and non-McGill resources related to EDI
- Building relationships and collaborations with likeminded peers working toward shared goals

What is a Community of Practice?

A **Community of Practice (CoP)** is a group of people who come together to meet shared goals around a set topic or interest. Within the EDI Advocacy Program, our CoP brings together academic and non-academic staff who are committed to creating a more inclusive working and learning environment in the Faculty of Engineering. A CoP may also be framed as the intersection between Practice, Domain, and Community.

Graphic adapted from:
Wenger-Trayner E, Wenger-Trayner B. Communities of Practice, a brief introduction. 2015. http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice

What are the Program Activities?

The EDI Advocacy Community of Practice connects through a Microsoft Teams Group and monthly meetups (hybrid in-person/online format) held during the Fall and Winter semesters (September–April). Additional sessions may be organized according to the needs and interests of the group.

During the Summer (May–August), individual and/or group sessions are scheduled to discuss program feedback and objectives for the following year.

Examples of group sessions include:

EDI Learning Circles

Interactive sessions designed for EDI education on different topics of interest. Participants engage in group discussion and reflection to deepen their learning.

EDI Action Circles

Sessions focused on enabling strategic action around EDI objectives in the Faculty of Engineering. Participants may work collaboratively to develop and implement an equitable process, organize a working group, develop an action plan for a local unit, and more!

Information Sessions

Spaces to share information and updates about EDI-related policies, plans, and decision-making at McGill University and across Higher Education institutions.

What are the Member Expectations?

Expectations for group spaces

- Be an active member of the EDI Advocacy Teams Group, which is used for the following:
  - Sharing meeting agendas and reminders
  - Following up on group session content, action items, and organizing future sessions
  - Sharing information about events and resources
  - Storing program documents, including presentations and training materials
  - Connecting with other program members to discuss topics of interest, organize activities, and give and receive peer feedback
- Participate in regular group meetups (monthly September–April; hybrid format) and play an active role in discussions and exercises

Expectations for individual preparation

- Reflect on your local areas of EDI action and personal objectives within the program
- Regularly prepare ideas and updates you can share with the group
- If you miss a group meeting, follow up on the content before the next meeting
- Be active in seeking support from the Program Lead and/or other EDI Advocates to advance your personal objectives
- Participate in periodic program feedback discussions with the Program Lead (typically May–August)
- Notify the Program Lead if you are taking a leave of absence or will otherwise be unavailable to participate in program activities for an extended period of time
- Communicate with the Program Lead regarding any accessibility needs

How can I Join the Program?

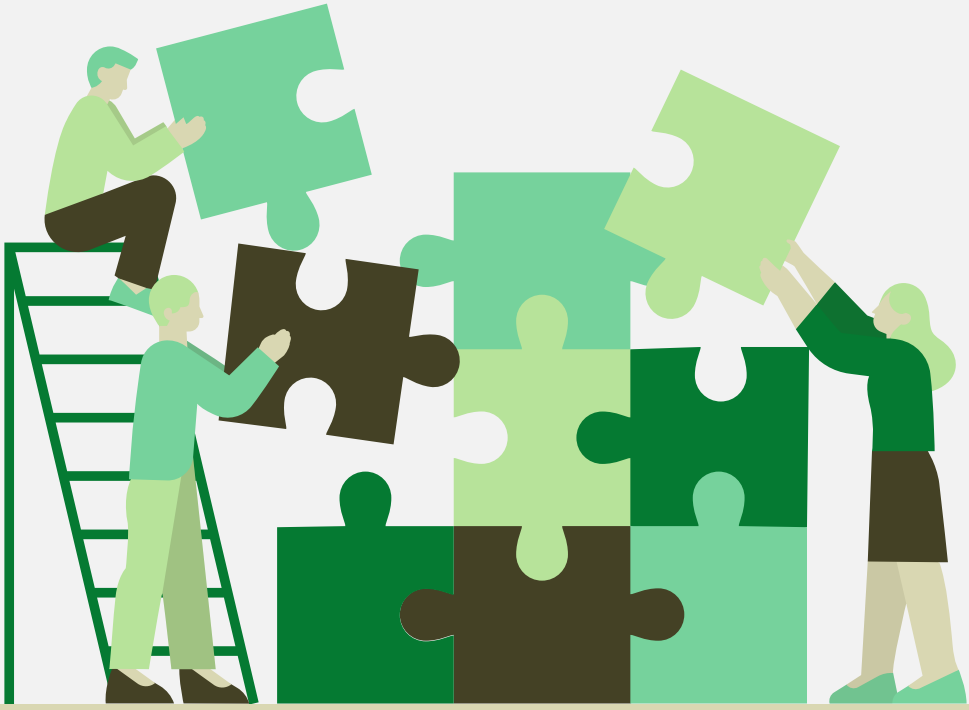
Contact **Nia Fernandez**, Program Lead, at eidea@mcgill.ca to express your interest in becoming an EDI Advocate! All academic and non-academic staff in the Faculty of Engineering are welcome to join at any time of the year. Visit our Meet the EDI Advocates webpage to learn more about our current members.

Our Program Lead will schedule an in-person or online meeting to discuss the following with you:

- Your motivations and areas of interest
- Program expectations and operations
- How you can get started as an EDI Advocate!

eidea@mcgill.ca

EDI Advocacy Program Website



Understanding Social Dynamics

The later sections in this handbook provide commonly requested tips and tools for inclusive behaviour. Effective EDI practice requires us to first examine our own power, privilege, and positionality, as well as the intersectionality of our own and others' experiences. Regularly checking in on these concepts will help shape our advocacy and ways to engage responsibly in different situations.

Power

The potential to have influence and control over people, decisions, and events. The ability to decide who has access to resources.

Privilege

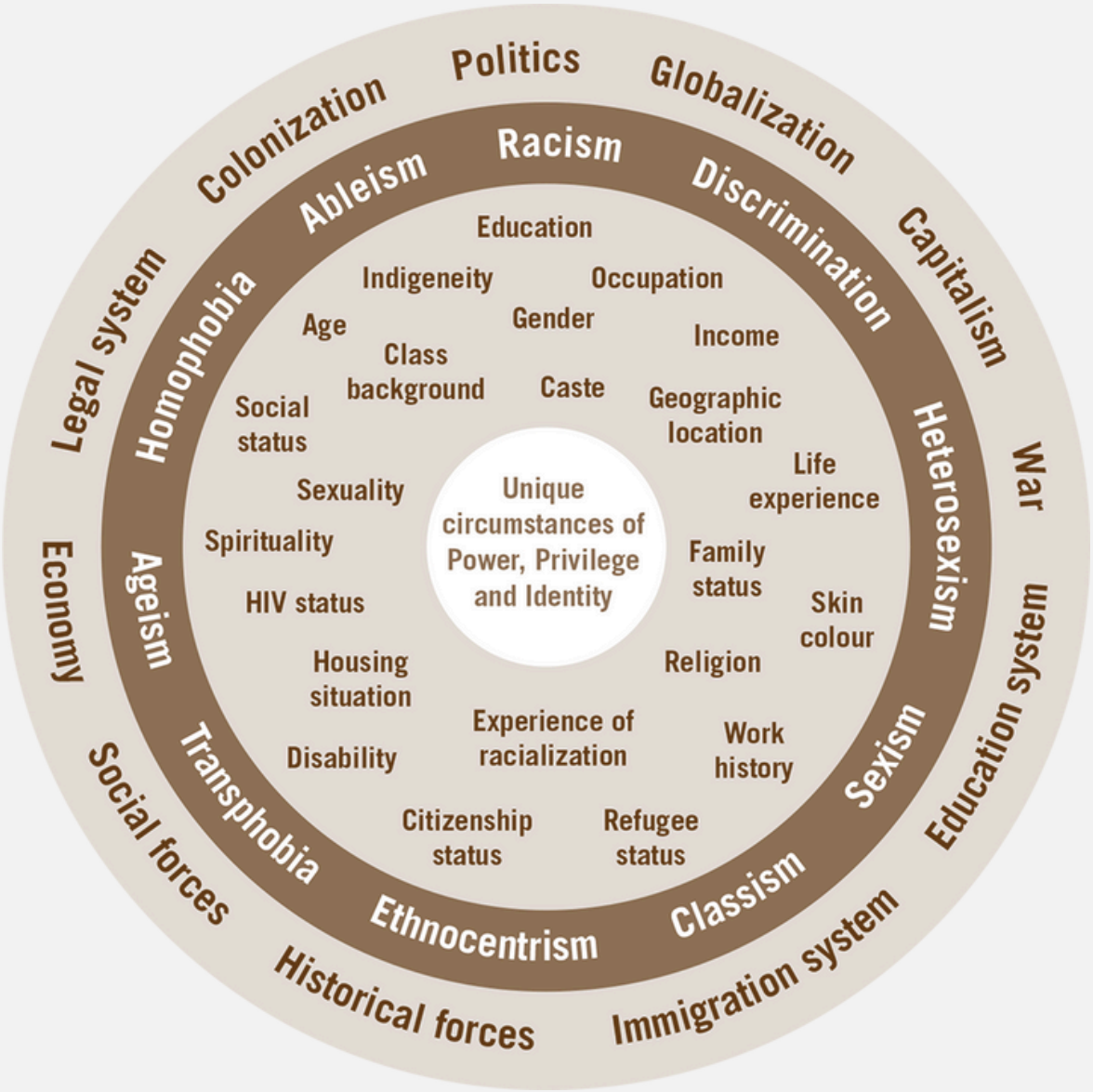
Unearned advantages and benefits an individual has by virtue of belonging to a particular social identity group. Privilege and power are closely intertwined, in that privileged groups are often assigned more power over others. Try E-IDEA's privilege self-assessment!

Positionality

How differences in social position and power shape identity and access in society. This influences how an individual views and interacts with the world. Understanding one's positionality is key to challenging personal biases.

Intersectionality

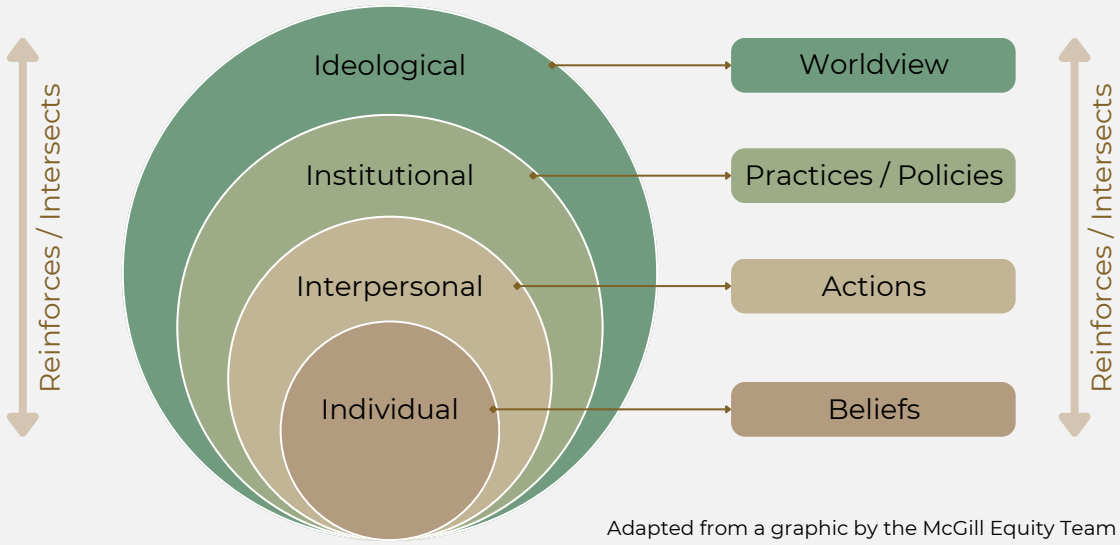
The complex ways different aspects of identity intersect to produce unique experiences of privilege and oppression. Multiple forms of oppression work together in generating injustice. See the graphic on the next page.



Simpson J. (2009). Everyone Belongs: A Toolkit for Applying Intersectionality. Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women.

The Four I's of Oppression

The "Four I" framework can help us understand how oppression operates at different levels. Importantly, these levels don't exist in isolation—they intersect, influence, and feed back into one another.



Adapted from a graphic by the McGill Equity Team

1. Ideological (or Cultural)

Worldviews held by a society. These may be values that society prioritizes, broad assumptions or stereotypes made about particular groups of people, or perceptions of what is acceptable or not acceptable in society.

2. Institutional (or Systemic)

Practices and policies in place; how things are actually done and enforced within systems.

3. Interpersonal

Specific interactions between specific people. The actions and behaviours individuals choose within the different spaces they inhabit.

4. Individual

The beliefs that we hold individually, including the beliefs we have about ourselves, i.e., internalized oppression.

How to Support Others

As an EDI Advocate, it is possible that students, staff, or faculty members will come to you for support or advice regarding a difficult situation. Here is a brief overview of steps you can take to best help them.

1. Active listening

Focus on listening without immediately needing to offer a solution. Validate their feelings, ask open-ended questions, and gather information about their situation without making assumptions or judgements.

2. Resource referral

If the person is interested, explore a few resources that may be helpful. Do not overwhelm them with resources—stick to a couple to start with! Familiarize yourself with the E-IDEA Resources webpage.

3. Consult other EDI Advocates

If you are uncertain about how to proceed, reach out to other EDI Advocates for advice without revealing identifying information about the person.

4. Consult the Program Lead

For more guidance about McGill resources and policies, or to escalate an EDI issue to the Office of E-IDEA, consult the EDI Advocacy Program Lead at eidea@mcgill.ca.

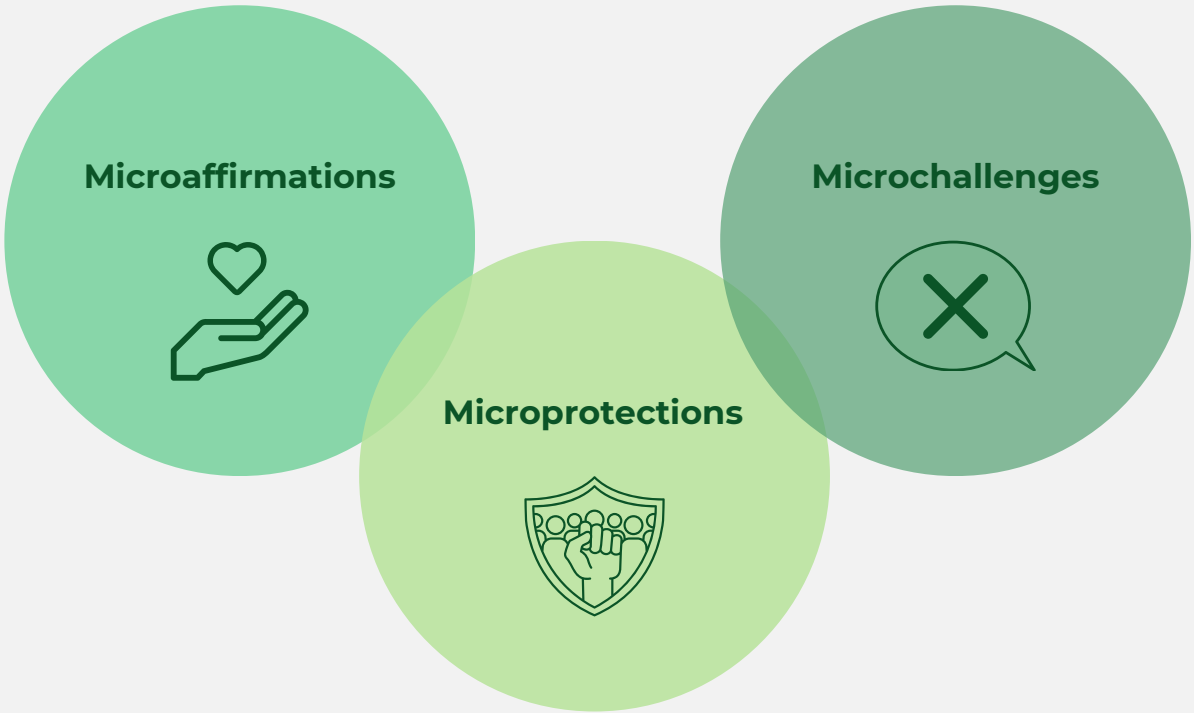
How to Safely Intervene

One of the most difficult parts of encountering a problematic interpersonal situation is knowing how to intervene without escalating the situation. In this section, we will discuss what you can do.

What are Microinterventions?

Microinterventions are action-oriented responses meant to expose and move away from bias and discrimination. These behaviours are especially important when you are seen as an authoritative figure in a space. Whether as a leader or a peer, you can create opportunities to model the values of respect and inclusion to others.

There are three main types of Microinterventions:



1. Microaffirmations

Microaffirmations are small acts that make the receiver feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued in the space (Rowe 2008). Some examples of microaffirmations are nodding your head in response to a person speaking, publicly recognizing someone's achievements, and validating a person's feelings when they've experienced a negative situation.

2. Microprotections

Microprotections are everyday actions that help those experiencing microaggressions to understand the realities of systemic forms of oppression and engage people in actions that promote cultural pride. Examples of this include sharing your own experiences of otherness, demonstrating pride in your own identity—especially underrepresented or marginalized identities—and discussing strategies and stories of resilience.

3. Microchallenges

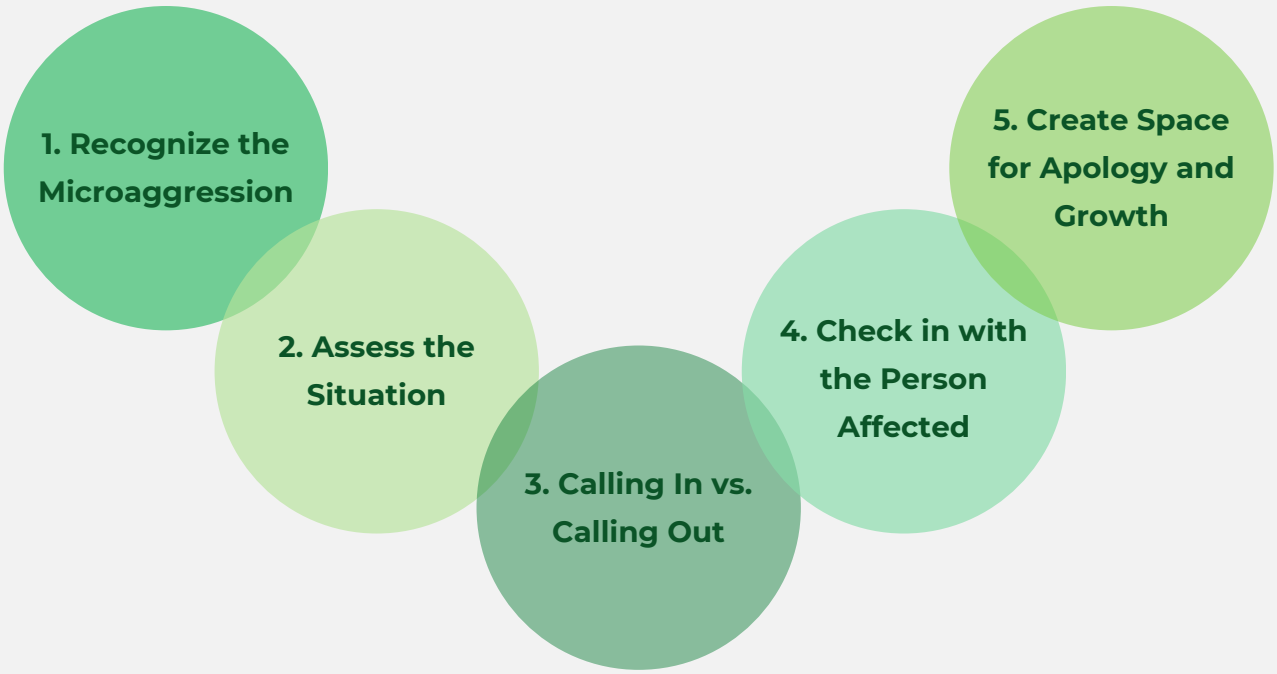
Microchallenges are actions directed at a person in an attempt to disarm, end, or deflect their biased behaviour. Some examples of microchallenges are expressing disagreement, interrupting, challenging a stereotype, asserting boundaries or community ground rules, and even asking for clarification about their behaviour.

One of the most common EDI-related workplace challenges is navigating **microaggressions**. In this section, we discuss what microaggressions are and what steps we can take to address them.

What is a Microaggression?

Microaggressions are brief and commonplace comments or actions that convey bias, prejudice, or stereotypes toward marginalized groups (Sue et al. 2007). These behaviours may be intentional or unintentional. We use the prefix “micro” not because these are insignificant events, but because they refer to attitudes and behaviours at the interpersonal level. Microaggressions are also reflective of biases, discrimination, and oppression enforced at a systemic or societal level, i.e., “macro”-aggressions.

Microaggressions can have a significant negative impact on a person’s mental health and sense of belonging. Learning how to address microaggressions constructively is crucial for fostering inclusive environments.



1. Recognize the Microaggression

Microaggressions can take many forms. There are many kinds of both overt and covert comments about someone's race, gender, accent, ability, and more that can subtly belittle someone. Be wary for these kinds of comments and attitudes in your spaces, especially if you hold a position of power.

2. Assess the situation

Take a moment to gauge the context and the people involved. Consider your relationship with the person who made the remark and how comfortable you feel responding. You may need to decide whether to **call them in** (address the issue with empathy and curiosity) or **call them out** (address the issue directly and publicly).

3. Calling In vs. Calling Out

The "Calling In" approach invites the person to reflect on their actions without shaming them. It's useful in situations where the relationship is ongoing and you want to encourage learning and change. For example, saying something like, "I'm sure you didn't mean it this way, but what you said came across as dismissive of [X group]. Here's why it could be harmful..."

"Calling Out", on the other hand, is more direct and appropriate when the situation demands immediate attention or when the behaviour needs to stop immediately. For instance, "That comment was inappropriate and harmful. We need to be more mindful of how we talk about others."

4. Check in with the person affected

It's essential to check in with the person who experienced the microaggression. Acknowledge the harm done and offer your support. This lets them know they're not alone and that their experience is being taken seriously.

5. Create space for apology and growth

When possible, create an environment where the person responsible for the microaggression can apologize and reflect on their actions. Encourage accountability without fostering shame.

References

- Rowe M. (2008). Micro-affirmations and micro-inequities. Journal of the International Ombudsperson Association, Vol. 1.
- Sue, D. W. et al. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. American Psychologist, 62(4), 271–286.
- Sue, D. W. et al. (2020). Microintervention Strategies: What You Can Do to Disarm and Dismantle Individual and Systemic Racism and Bias. Wiley.

Organizing Inclusive Spaces

An inclusive space is an environment in which everyone has access, can participate fully, and feels that their contributions are valued. A related concept is that of **psychological safety**, which ensures that everyone feels welcome to share their ideas without fear of judgement. Inclusive spaces actively address barriers and foster a sense of belonging. When you are involved in organizing meetings, events, classes, work spaces, or other forms of gathering, consider the ways you can foster inclusivity in your spaces. Below are some non-exhaustive examples of actions you can take.

What should I consider when organizing spaces?

1. Accessibility

Ensure that physical spaces are accessible to people with disabilities. This includes ramps, elevators, and accessible seating. In digital spaces, provide captions, screen reader compatibility, and alternative text for images.

2. Inclusive language (Read more on Page 18)

Use language that respects all identities. Avoid assumptions about gender, background, or ability. Encourage the use of gender-neutral terms and the correct pronunciation of names.

3. Cultural sensitivity

Recognize and accommodate cultural differences in values, practices, and beliefs. Be aware of different levels of power, privilege, and positionality, and provide safe spaces for people to share their perspectives without fear of marginalization.

4. Active listening and empathy

Foster open conversations where everyone feels heard. When conflicts arise, approach them with empathy and a commitment to understanding diverse viewpoints.

5. Sustainability

Inclusivity is intertwined with the practice of treating our world well in order to preserve it for our peers and future generations—especially as wicked problems such as climate change disproportionately affect marginalized groups across the world. When organizing spaces, consider how you can implement principles of social, economic, and environmental sustainability to advance equity and inclusion.

What tools can help me organize inclusive spaces?

- The McGill Office of Sustainability hosts a Sustainable Events certification program which offers consultations, training, and practical information to encourage and support more responsible event planning. The sustainable events checklist available on the program website includes many actions related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Whether or not you proceed with the formal certification process, we highly recommend using this checklist as you plan your events!

- Many institutions have published guidelines for accessible and inclusive event and space planning—a simple online search should provide several options for you to explore! Some examples are the University of British Columbia's Accessible and Inclusive Event Planning webpage and the Government of Canada's Guide to Planning Inclusive Meetings.

- McGill SKILLS21 has curated a toolkit for inclusive workshop facilitation. This integrates principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and active learning pedagogy.

Using Inclusive Language

Inclusive language involves choosing words thoughtfully to ensure that all people feel heard and recognized by your communication.

Be aware of:

Gendered phrases

Terms like “guys”, “girls”, or “ladies and gentlemen”, while normalized, can isolate people who don’t identify by gender binaries. Instead, gender-neutral terms for groups such as “everyone”, “team”, or “folks” are more inclusive.

Racist or ethnic connotations

Many commonly-used expressions are rooted in racist, derogatory, and appropriative contexts. Some examples include “blacklist”, “powwow”, and “peanut gallery”. Educate yourself about the origins of the expressions you use so you can better honour those who are negatively impacted by them.

Ableist language

Ableist language includes a wide range of terms and expressions that devalue people with disabilities. Some examples are the terms “lame” and “dumb”, expressions like “they’re so OCD”, and figurative uses of the words “blind” and “deaf”. Practicing alternatives in your day-to-day communications can go a long way toward building a more welcoming environment that values disabled and neurodivergent folks.

Common triggers

If you're planning to mention or discuss sensitive content, it's important to consider how others may be impacted by it. Providing a verbal or written content warning or trigger warning, for example, prompts others to reflect on their wellbeing and decide whether or not they are prepared to engage with the material. This is especially important for persons with anxiety and/or stress disorders. While it is not possible to know and avoid all triggers, an awareness of common content tags can help you support the wellbeing of those around you.

What tools can help me use inclusive language?

- A Guide for Inclusive Language, The Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Western University
- Inclusive Language Resources, Equity & Inclusion Office, University of British Columbia
- Antiracist Language Guide, University of Arizona Libraries
- Gender Inclusive Language Guide, Public Service Alliance of Canada
- Guide de grammaire neutre et inclusif, Divergenres
- Pronoun Usage Guide, Egale Canada
- Ableist Language To Avoid and Alternative Phrases, Britt Hawthorne
- An Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings, University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

About this Handbook

Title: EDI Advocacy Program Handbook
Version: 2024–2025
Created By: Sehr Moosabhoy, Teamwork Fellow, Office of E-IDEA
Nia Fernandez, PhD, Manager, Office of E-IDEA
Last Updated: January 2025

Please direct questions about this handbook to eidea@mcgill.ca.

Visit the E-IDEA website for additional EDI resources.