

Canada Council for the Arts Equity Policy

April 2017

Equity Policy

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1. Preamble

I. *Effective Date*

The Equity Policy is effective April 1, 2017.

II. *Purpose*

The Canada Council for the Arts' (the Council) Equity Policy governs and supports the Council's application of equity principles and practices in all of its activities, including those pertaining to granting.

III. *Objective*

The objective of this policy is to outline and communicate the values, legislative context, instruments, and administrative roles and processes that

- support the Council's positioning and implementation of equity in the arts, and
- provide the orientation and definitions that inform policy and program development, strategic initiatives, communications and human resources management, including staff training and professional development.

IV. *Authority and Responsibility*

Authority for the *Equity Policy* resides with the Council's Director and CEO. Each division and section has particular functions and responsibilities pertaining to implementation.

- The Director General, Strategy and Public Affairs, is responsible for the development and implementation of the *Equity Policy*.
- The Director General, Arts Granting Programs, is responsible for the implementation of the *Equity Policy* within granting programs and liaising with the arts communities in matters regarding the Policy.
- The Director General, Corporate Services is responsible for ensuring accessible and optimal work environments, information and technologies, and ensuring accommodations as well as *Employment Equity Act* implementation and outcomes as related to staff recruitment, training for new hires and retention.
- The Director General, Communication and Public Engagement is responsible to ensure communications tools and messages are highly accessible and reaching a diverse public.
- The Equity Office, under Strategy and Public Affairs and working with other divisions and sections, is responsible for developing and promoting best practices and protocols that foster the implementation of the Equity Policy

within Council programs and initiatives. The Office also provides recommendations and strategic advice on equity-related issues.

In addition there are specific federal public services designations that are subject to the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* and the *Official Languages Act*, where high level staff is appointed to advance the spirit and the letter of legislation thus ensuring legal compliance within the institution.

The *Multiculturalism Champion* is a senior official who plays a leadership role in building awareness and furthering the understanding of multiculturalism in their respective government departments and in initiating appropriate policies, programs, services and practices across the institution.

The *Official Languages Champion* is an executive-level staff member responsible for leadership, advocacy and ensuring official language-related questions are considered within the Council's decision-making framework.

V. *Approval and Revisions to the Policy*

Recommendations regarding the *Equity Policy* may be brought forward to the Executive Management Committee through the Director General, Strategy and Public Affairs. The Council's Director and CEO approves the policy and any revisions or amendments to this policy.

2. **Equity and Diversity: The Council's Definitions and Understanding**

Equity and diversity are interconnected and interdependent concepts. Equity promotes diversity, and the promotion of diversity impacts the implementation of equity. However, the two notions are distinct: equity is a principle and a process whereas diversity reflects a reality or desirable state.

I. *Equity*

Equity is a principle and process that promotes just conditions for all persons to fully participate in society. It recognizes that while all people have the right to be treated equally, not all experience equal access to the same resources, opportunities or benefits. Achieving equality is not simply about treating individuals or groups in the same way, but may require the use of specific measures to ensure fairness. Implementing equity, therefore, concretely upholds the principle of social justice, equal opportunities for all, human rights, and requires a genuine and universal effort to uphold for the dignity of all people towards creating sustainable human development.

1. Equity does not mean sameness
2. Equity means fairness

Treating people in the same way (formal equality) assumes that all people have comparable opportunities and access to resources. However many groups and individuals in society have been and continue to be systemically excluded and marginalized, and therefore deprived of true equality. The concept and practice of equity enables one to confront situations that are assessed as unjust and therefore moves to counter the injustice by attempting to create a level playing field (substantive equality). The need for equity also accounts for and arises from the existence of power relations and discriminatory practices that maintain or re-enforce systemic exclusion.

II. *Cultural Equity*

Cultural equity is a concept which affirms that the traditions, aesthetics and expressions of all cultures have equal value. Cultural equity seeks to correct the inequalities experienced by individuals of different cultures by first identifying historical and current power imbalances between cultural groups and by recognizing and respecting fundamental characteristics which distinguish these groups from each other. Marginalized cultures deserve financial, infrastructural and public policy support comparable to the dominant culture of a society.

In order to create effective responses, there must be recognition of cultural differences, systemic barriers and uneven resources amongst diverse sectors and cross sections of the population, which are often a result of historic realities of conquest, colonialism, cultural domination and systemic exclusion.

III. *Equity-Seeking Groups*

Equity-seeking groups are communities that face significant challenges in participating fully in society. This marginalization could have historical, social or economic origins. These communities can also be disadvantaged due to discriminations based on age, ethnicity, culture, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. The decline of upward mobility and social capital in an individual or collectivity is further aggravated when these characteristics co-exist and intersect, particularly when economic disadvantages are present.

Equity-seeking groups are those that face challenges in access, opportunities and resources due to discrimination and seek social justice and reparation. The current usage of the term “equity-seeking group” at the Council refers to any group requiring specific measures to improve access to programs and funding support. While the Council is cognizant of a wide array of groups that face systemic barriers, currently, the priority equity-seeking groups that receive targeted funds and initiatives are from the following communities:

- Culturally diverse;
- Deaf and disability;

- Official Language Minorities.

Indigenous communities also form a designated priority group that receives targeted support at the Council through [Creating, Knowing and Sharing: The Arts and Cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in Canada](#).

Future initiatives and/or targeted interventions may also be developed based on the evolution of legislations as well as research and analysis for groups that experience inequity due to age; socio-economic disadvantage; gender and sexual identity and geographic region.

IV. *Diversity*

“Diversity” is commonly used to denote a multiplicity of views, expressions, characteristics, experiences, abilities, cultures, sexual orientations and origins, etc. Diversity provides the context of co-existence of varieties within the whole and furthers the notions of interconnectedness, exchange and sustainable human development.

a) *Cultural Diversity*

The Canada Council defines cultural diversity as follows:

Cultural diversity is the presence, expressions and participation of many different individuals and communities co-existing in the shared culture of a society, and the explicit recognition that the contribution and participation of all peoples, particularly marginalized people, have the potential of equal value and benefit to the society at large.

For the Canada Council, the notion of cultural diversity is imbued with aspirations and actions that foster social justice and sustainable human development through the equal participation of diverse cultural communities. Just as biodiversity ensures the sustainability of the natural world, the existence and interconnection of different cultures increase the sustainability of the arts ecology, offering greater collective knowledge base, intergenerational collaboration and the increased capacity to innovate.

The Council strives to promote and reflect the cultural diversity of Canada’s population through its commitment to workplace diversity, diverse representation on the Board and in the selection of peers who participate in assessing grant applications.

In order for the Council’s understanding of cultural diversity to have resonance within the specific context of a public arts funder, it is equally important to embrace not only the existence and participation of diverse cultures within the whole society, but to recognize and value the distinct and diverse cultural expressions preserved,

emerging and evolving within these cultural groups.

b) Culturally Diverse

The Council uses the adjective “culturally diverse” to respectfully identify racialized groups. These are Canadians of African, Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern and mixed racial heritages (mixed racial heritage includes one of the above groups) who have been historically disadvantaged as a group, and may experience discrimination based on colour and culture. While the Canada Council interprets the term culturally diverse more broadly, it generally corresponds to “visible minorities” under the *Employment Equity Act*.

The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as:

A person in a visible minority group is someone (other than an Aboriginal person...) who is non-white in colour/race, regardless of place of birth. The visible minority group includes: Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian-East Indian (including Indian from India; Bangladeshi; Pakistani; East Indian from Guyana, Trinidad, East Africa; etc.), Southeast Asian (including Burmese; Cambodian; Laotian; Thai; Vietnamese; etc.) non-white West Asian, North African or Arab (including Egyptian; Libyan; Lebanese; etc.), non-white Latin American (including indigenous persons from Central and South America, etc.), person of mixed origin (with one parent in one of the visible minority groups listed above), other visible minority group.

V. Linguistic Diversity

Linguistic diversity is the variety of languages communicated, be they in written, oral or signed forms. The status of language use is largely determined by a variety of factors: history of preservation and everyday use; linguistic rights enshrined in the Constitution and the *Official Languages Act*; the resources and efforts to preserve and sustain Indigenous languages; diversification of languages spoken in the home and business as a result of immigration, education or international exchange; and the prevalence of people communicating in sign languages.

The Canada Council recognizes the distinct and unique place of First Nations, Inuit and Métis artists in Canada as creators, interpreters, translators and transmitters of an inherent Indigenous cultural continuity, as well as their unique contribution to Canadian cultural identity. As such, language preservation through artistic practices is an integral part of the supported activities under [Creating, Knowing and Sharing: The Arts and Cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in Canada](#), the Council’s dedicated program for Indigenous people of Canada.

a) Official Language Minority Communities

Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs), as identified in the Official

Languages Act, are groups of people whose maternal or chosen official language is not the majority language in their province or territory – in other words, Anglophones in Quebec and Francophones outside of Quebec.

For the purposes of its granting programs, the Canada Council defines OLMC individuals, groups and arts organizations as those who self-identify as belonging to one of these groups and have a primary residence in a province or region in which they are an official language minority at the time of application. Given the differing reality and cultural contexts, as well as varied level of barriers faced by these communities, the Council is committed to developing specific strategies to address the distinct needs of each group.

VI. *Deaf and Disability*

a) Deaf

Deaf describes people with hearing loss or are hard-of-hearing, oral-deaf, deaf-blind and late-deafened, many of whom identify as “culturally Deaf”, which signifies sharing distinct sign languages, traditions, histories, and values. Deaf with a capital “D” represents a range of experiences from being culturally Deaf to having hearing loss, and using multiple forms of oral and visual communication. Sign languages are regionally and culturally specific with unique syntax and grammar, distinct from written and spoken languages. Individuals who experience some degree of hearing loss may identify as having a disability rather than being culturally Deaf.

b) Disability

Disability is an experience of exclusion or disadvantage. People with disabilities are those with actual or perceived impairments who experience discrimination and/or disadvantage as a direct result of that impairment, or due to social, policy or environmental barriers. Impairments are physical, mental or learning conditions that have long-term, temporary or fluctuating effects. The Council recognizes Deaf and Disability arts as a distinct field of practice. Included in this, is the recognition of Mad arts practices, framed as a social and political identity by people who have been labeled as mentally ill or as having mental health issues.

VII. *Indigenous*

Indigenous refers to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada. Distinct from colonizing, settler and immigrant populations, the Indigenous people in Canada advocate self-determination in response to the massive loss of land, culture, language and spiritual/ontological/cosmological traditions as a result of racist policies and forced assimilation.

- The Council respects Indigenous worldviews, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).
- The Council supports and upholds the principles of reconciliation articulated through the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015).
- The Council supports artistic activities that respect and encourage First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultural self-determination and the artistic vitality of Indigenous communities.

3. Value Statement

The Canadian population is one of the most diverse in the world. For the Canada Council, cultural diversity is not only a necessary element in the development of the arts, but also an essential factor in developing sustainable human societies. This diversity needs to be reflected in the arts to counter homogenization of artistic expressions and inequitable distribution of resources, so the next generation of citizens can fully achieve their artistic potential and exercise their cultural rights. This is why the Canada Council will continue to ensure that all artists have equal access to its programs and that all Canadians can see themselves reflected in the country's arts landscape.

All citizens deserve to benefit from a vibrant, accessible and pluralistic arts sector, and all creative expressions should have the same chance to flourish. The Council recognizes that systems of power and systemic discrimination have created unequal conditions – including financial resource distribution – that prevent many Canadians from fulfilling their cultural capacity and being meaningfully engaged in the arts; this impacts health, wellbeing and sustainability of the entire society. The Council is therefore committed to taking bold actions to make measurable progress towards building an arts sector that engages everyone. Through its equity policy work, the Council strives to be a thought leader, influencer and instigator for change while maintaining its relevancy and credibility in a rapidly changing world.

4. Legislative Context

As a federal Crown corporation, Canada Council's role in advancing equity and responding to the needs of artists from marginalized communities is interconnected with public policy goals affecting human rights, minority protections and international agreements that were adopted by social justice movements both nationally and internationally.

All Canada Council activities are governed by legislation and human rights instruments, including the:

[*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*](#) (1982) protects every Canadian's fundamental right to be treated equally under the law. Fundamental freedoms,

democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights, equality rights, linguistic rights and gender equality are protected. Council's practice of equity is based on fundamental freedoms stated in Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms whereas every individual is equal under the law and has the right to equal benefit. This includes programs or activities with the object to ameliorate the conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

[Canadian Human Rights Act](#) (1985) protects the principle that all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.

[Canadian Multiculturalism Act](#) characterizes Canada as a multicultural society and recognizes that all Canadians are free to protect, enhance and partake in their cultural heritage. It declares that multiculturalism is an essential characteristic to ensure equality between all Canadians and their respective communities of origin and will allow them to overcome barriers. This Act marks the government's recognition of the contributions ethnic groups have made to Canada and affirms that there existed no official culture which any Canadian had to assimilate to.

[Employment Equity Act](#) was enacted to ensure equal opportunity in employment and promotion for sectors of the population that may be disadvantaged, including women, members of visible minorities, Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. These groups have been designated due to statistical evidence of disadvantage in employment as manifested in higher unemployment rates, wage gap and prevalence in low status occupations.

[Official Languages Act](#) aims to ensure respect for English and French as the official languages of Canada and ensure equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all federal institutions, including in communicating with or providing services to the public and in carrying out the work of federal institutions. This *Act* also supports the development of English and French linguistic minority communities and generally advances the equality of status and use of the English and French languages within Canadian society; and more generally sets out the powers, duties and functions of federal institutions with respect to the official languages of Canada. The **[Official Languages Policy](#)** governs and supports the Canada Council's activities related to Official Languages.

5. Equity Principles

- a) The Council, in accordance with legislation cited above recognizes the individual worth and dignity of all people. The Council believes that all individuals have the right to be treated, in all matters, solely on the basis of their personal merits, and to be accorded equal opportunity with all other individuals
- b) The Council opposes any discrimination, stereotypes or generalizations based particularly on the following characteristics: race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability and conviction for which a pardon has been granted.
- c) The Council values the tenets of social justice and recognizes historical disadvantages experienced by individuals within certain groups based on characteristics related to culture, ethnicity, language, race, religion, region, generation, sex, gender-identity, sexual orientation, disability and socio-economic status.
- d) The Council acknowledges barriers (systemic or otherwise) to its programs and services faced by some individuals or organizations experiencing this disadvantage.
- e) The Council is committed to continuous learning and evolution, and implements rigorous evaluation and revision processes of its policies, practices and programs in order to ensure fairness and relevancy, and positively impact the conditions of disadvantaged artistic communities.

6. Equity Tools and Practices

The Council makes use of the following practices in support of equity-seeking communities;

- a) Tracking, measuring and monitoring funding to artists and arts organizations within various demographics in order to identify gaps, develop appropriate strategies and evaluate impacts.
- b) Implementing targeted funding mechanisms to ensure equitable opportunity to its grants, processes and services.
- c) Applying access and participation mechanisms and protocols that accommodate and ensure access for people wishing to apply and participate in Council processes.
- d) Striving for equitable funding outcomes through program design, strategic funding mechanisms, selection of peer assessors and fair assessment

- processes.
- e) Fostering the understanding and practice of equity in the arts through consultation, research, partnership, training and information sessions, as well as sector-wide and Council-wide initiatives.
 - f) Implementing employment equity legislation in exemplary ways and innovative practices to create and sustain a diverse workforce.

I. *Track, Measure and Monitor*

Developing and implementing tools to track funding to equity groups and the analysis of this data is essential in achieving equity objectives.

a) *Voluntary Self-identification Form*

The Council encourages applicants and peer assessors to complete a Voluntary Self-identification Form. This form asks individuals to identify as Indigenous, culturally diverse, Deaf and/or disabled, their generation, gender, official language (including belonging to an Official Language Minority Community), other languages, and region.

The data collected is used to periodically monitor the impact of, and identify gaps (if any) in, funding to applicants from various demographic groups. It is also used to track representation of individuals from various equity-seeking groups on peer assessment committees as well as identify applications for priority or targeted funding after they have been assessed as having equal merit with other applications.

Tracking and measuring require performance indicators. Amongst other measures, the Council gauges its support to various demographic sectors (Indigenous, culturally diverse/visible minority, Deaf and disabled, gender, Official Language Minorities and youth –under 35 years of age) by measuring its funding against external benchmarks such as the arts labour force composition and the population rate of respective groups.

Monitoring refers to observing the trends and the development of equity-seeking communities through the increase or decrease of funding levels, data collected from final reports and other sources. Other benchmarks include external indicators such as progress against other public arts funders and sister agencies.

b) *Individual Self-Identification on the Online Registration Portal*

All applicants and potential peer assessors registered in the Council's online portal are invited to self-identify as belonging to one of more of the following

priority groups: Indigenous, culturally diverse, Deaf and/or disability and Official Language Minority Communities. Identification as such will allow the possibility for an applicant to benefit from specific measures such as [Access Support](#) and funding opportunities tied to strategic funds.

c) [Organizational Identification on the Online Registration Portal](#)

Organizations are asked to describe the make-up of their organizations as it relates to serving Indigenous, culturally diverse, Deaf and/or disability and Official Language Minority Communities. If they dedicate the majority of their resources to any of these communities, the organization is validated as an equity organization to enable access to specific measures and/or funding opportunities. A [Diversity Evaluation Tool](#) has been created to assist organizations in this process.

II. [Funding Mechanisms](#)

a) [Strategic Funds](#)

Strategic funds are initiatives that operate alongside and independently of the granting programs. They can be limited in duration, have specific intended outcomes (i.e. apart from those of the six grant programs) or deliver grants through dedicated envelopes. Strategic funds can be used to significantly bolster funding to individual artists, arts groups or organizations from underrepresented communities in order to develop and sustain their artistic vitality.

These include but are not limited to:

- [Access Support](#): Access Support funds individual applicants who are Deaf, have disabilities or who are living with mental illness, as well as Deaf and disability arts groups and organizations. Grants provide a contribution towards costs for specific services and supports required to complete a project funded through a [Canada Council grant program](#).
- [Official Languages Fund](#): The Official Languages Fund is designed to counter the isolation experienced by Official Language Minority Community (OLMC) artists and to assist the development of individuals and arts organizations working in OLMCs.
- [The Market Access Fund](#) for Official Language Minority Communities supports Canadian professional artists, arts professionals, artistic groups and arts organizations that identify as belonging to an OLMC.

III. *Access and Participation Mechanisms and Protocols*

The Council is committed to ensuring access and participation through mechanisms that accommodate and facilitate access for people wishing to apply to and participate in Council's overall processes.

[Expanding the Arts Guidebook](#) is a comprehensive and practical document that outlines best practices in engaging with people who are Deaf and have disabilities. The following tools are included in this document:

- [Application and Final Report Assistance](#) contributes to costs for services to assist applicants who are Deaf and /or have disabilities, specifically in completing a grant application and/or in submitting a final report. (Link to Application support)
- [Public Accessibility Policy](#) outlines requirements and standards pertaining to locations for meetings and events; web accessibility and online systems; and accommodation for Deaf people and those with disabilities to participate in Canada Council processes.
- [Evaluating Physical Accessibility Levels](#) A checklist tool to help people choose and evaluate the accessibility of venues.
- [Participation and Access Requirements Questionnaire](#) – a form sent to all Council peer assessment committee participants to ascertain accommodation requirements.

IV. *Programs and Peer Assessment*

- a) All program guidelines include invitational language encouraging applications from equity groups and reinforcing Council's equity priorities.
- b) The Council creates specific funding and prioritizing strategies to meet its equity commitments based on evidence.
- c) In order to encourage the arts milieu to be more accessible and representative of Canada's diverse population, language is included throughout Council programs that reaffirm its commitment to equity. In particular, diversity-related assessment criteria outline the expectation and assessment of an applicant organization's commitment to designated equity groups and ask applicants to articulate a commitment to reflecting the diversity of the organization's geographic community or region.
- d) Peer assessment is the basis for the majority of the Canada Council's decisions as to which artists, artistic projects and arts organizations receive funding (see the Canada Council's Granting Policy). The Canada Council is committed to ensuring that the choice of peers reflects the diversity of Canada's population, including arts professionals who are culturally diverse, Deaf and/or disabled, or from Official Language Minority communities as

- well as representative of different regions, generations and gender. The total number of peer assessors from each demographic group is monitored on an annual basis to ensure that there is appropriate participation from these groups.
- e) The *Equity Priority Policy* is an operational policy contained within the Operational Policies of the Arts Granting Programs Division. Applied across all granting programs, this policy prioritizes funding to applicants (individuals or organizations) that are well-assessed and self-identify as belonging to a targeted equity group. This policy was created considering the attitudinal and systemic barriers faced by such groups when creating, producing and disseminating art and aims to better meet Council targets and outcomes for underfunded arts communities and strategically boost their artistic development.
 - f) *Access Costs* are legitimate and eligible expenses in project or core grants budgets. These may incur when organizational applicants engage Deaf or disabled arts professionals participating in proposed artistic projects/activities (e.g. attendant costs) and costs for making artistic content accessible to the public.
 - g) Context briefs on diverse artistic practices are commissioned and disseminated to peer assessment committees to provide additional background information on issues facing equity-seeking groups and reinforce Council's equity priorities.

V. *Fostering the Understanding and Practice of Equity*

The Council fosters the understanding and practice of equity in the arts through consultation, research, partnership and sector-wide and Council-wide initiatives to ensure relevancy, current application and increased competencies.

- a) The Council engages in research and analysis on equity-related subjects and provides training, developmental workshops and presentations on access, equity, diversity for staff and external stakeholders.
- b) The Council engages in partnerships to influence and advance equity across agencies, regions and demographic groups.
- c) The Equity Committee monitors equity policies and practices within the Canada Council. The Committee is comprised of staff, particularly program staff, to engage in discourse and increase knowledge of diverse arts forms, keep current on equity and diversity issues in the field and share best practices in implementing policies and mechanisms.

VI. *Employment Equity*

Through legislation like the Employment Equity Act, the Canada Council has the legal obligation to ensure diversity in its workplace. The Council also has several internal policies to govern issues around staff and equity, such as its *Accommodation Policy*. But more than merely being responsive to legal obligations, the Council benefits from the varied perspectives and knowledge of a diverse staff in order for its work to reflect the diversity of the country and beyond, as well as the diversity it hopes to promote to its client artists and arts organizations.

The Employment Equity Committee of Canada Council's Human Resources Division develops and evaluates the actions identified in the Employment Equity Action Plan. Each member of the committee is considered an agent of change and plays an important role to realize the ultimate goal of having a workforce that reflects Canada's diversity and that embraces equity in all its forms. The Equity Office collaborates with Human Resources to monitor the effect of equity measures, promote awareness of employment equity, and facilitate the undertaking of equity initiatives.

7. Conclusion

Since its inception, the Canada Council has been confronted with equity-related issues ranging from peer assessment processes to supporting regional and pan-Canadian art. With the Equity Policy, the Canada Council clarifies definitions and policies which underpin its overall commitment to create equitable processes that will have tangible impact on arts communities and ultimately, Canadians. Basing its policies and procedures on civic responsibilities, human rights and the equality of outcomes, the Council's aim in implementing its Equity Policy is to ensure that all stakeholders will have equal opportunity to benefit from public funding for the arts.

Approved by Executive Management Committee, April 11, 2017.