



Gender
Equality &
Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE
SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS
INITIATIVE

From principles to practice: A framework for embedding gender, equity, and inclusion in research grant-making



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Acronyms and abbreviations

SGCI: Science Granting Councils Initiative in Africa

IDRC: International Research and Development Centre

NORAD Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

SIDA: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

DFG: German Research Foundation

FONRID: Fonds National de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pour le Développement, Burkina Faso

FONSTI: Fonds pour la Science, la Technologie et l'Innovation, Côte d'Ivoire

MEST: Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, Ghana

MESRI: Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation, Senegal

NRF: National Research Fund, Kenya

NRF: National Research Foundation, South Africa

UNCST: Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

COSTECH: Commission for Science and Technology, Tanzania

MTERST: Ministry of Communications and Innovation

NCST: National Commission for Science and Technology, Malawi

FNI: Fundo Nacional de Investigação, Mozambique

NCRST: National Commission on Research, Science and Technology, Namibia

NSTC: National Science and Technology Council, Zambia

RCZ: Research Council of Zimbabwe

GEII: Gender Equality, Inclusion and Intersectionality

GEI: Gender Equality and Inclusivity

GESI: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

EDI: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

HSRC: Human Sciences Research Council

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

CLARE: Climate Adaptation and Resilience

SGCI-GEI: Science Granting Councils Initiative Gender Equality and Inclusivity project



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Overview

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Why this resource and why now?

Research funding is a powerful determinant of what knowledge is produced, whose expertise is recognised, and which research priorities receive support. As gatekeepers, funders shape the legitimacy of research approaches and methodologies, influence who participates in knowledge production, and determine who ultimately benefits from research outcomes. In doing so, funders hold significant potential to either reinforce or disrupt existing inequalities (Hankivsky et al., 2018). (See Box 1 for more on inequalities in African research systems.)

Growing attention to social justice in science and innovation—alongside mounting calls to decolonise knowledge systems—has heightened scrutiny of how research funding is allocated and to what ends (Charani et al., 2022). These dynamics are unfolding amid a broader recognition of the strategic role that public funders play in driving systemic change, both within research institutions and across national and global research ecosystems.

In response, a growing body of literature and practice have emerged on how funders can support the integration of intersectional gender and equity

considerations into both research content and grant-making processes. This includes efforts to embed an intersectional gender and equity lens in research design and analysis, address structural inequalities in funding access and research careers, and rethink partnerships and power dynamics in collaborations (Hunt et al., 2022; White et al., 2021). Yet while these

“ Women account for only 30% of researchers in Africa and remain underrepresented in leadership roles ”



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efforts offer important insights, they often remain fragmented—siloeed by discipline, funder type, or specific stages of the grant life cycle.

This resource addresses that gap. It offers a comprehensive framework for Science Granting Councils and other public funders seeking to embed intersectional gender and equity principles throughout their grant-making practice. The framework brings together conceptual clarity, actionable strategies, and context-specific examples. These were developed through an extensive literature review and are grounded in the lived experiences and collaborative insights of councils participating in the multi-donor Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) in sub-Saharan Africa. This document is designed to support funders in aligning their practices with efforts to build more inclusive, responsive, and equitable research systems, ultimately ensuring that science investments benefit all.

Box 1: Gender disparities in African research systems

Despite some progress, education and research environments remain deeply unequal (Lynch et al., 2024). The grant-making cycle offers a key opportunity to tackle gender disparities, both within the research workforce and the knowledge they generate.

Gender inequalities in education and research systems

Gender disparities persist throughout the research pipeline, beginning with unequal access to education. Socio-cultural factors such as domestic responsibilities, school-based violence, limited support for pregnant learners, and early marriage contribute to lower school completion rates among girls (Human Rights Watch, 2022; Muhanguzi, 2019). These gaps widen in research careers, where women account for only 30% of researchers in Africa and remain underrepresented in leadership roles (Huyer, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Structural obstacles—including the unequal burden of care work, sexual harassment, wage gaps, and insecure contract-based employment—continue to undermine women's advancement, particularly at early career stages (Beaudry et al., 2023; Fisher et al., 2020; Mukhwana et al., 2020).

Limited attention to gender in research content and design

Beyond workforce representation, gender inequities are also evident in how research is framed and conducted. Despite increasing recognition of the value of gender analysis, intersectional sex and gender dimensions are often overlooked in research content and design. A review of over 1.6 million studies related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) found that only 21% included sex and gender keywords (Herbert et al., 2022). Just six SDGs were addressed through a gender-sensitive lens, with the remainder deemed 'gender-blind' or 'gender-sparse'. These patterns point to deeper systemic gaps in research agenda-setting and practice.

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Development of this resource

This framework was co-created in partnership with 13 Science Granting Councils participating in the SGCI Gender Equality and Inclusivity (GEI) Project. Participating councils include those from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The GEI Project, implemented by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) of South Africa in collaboration with Jive Media Africa and Portia, supports councils as they lead efforts to advance gender equality. These efforts are through transforming institutional policies, integrating sex, gender, and diversity analysis into research, and reforming grant-making practices throughout the funding cycle.

The framework emerged from an iterative process that combined practical insights from councils with evidence from global research. Development unfolded over three interrelated stages:

- 1 Collaborative priority-setting:** The process began in early 2023, when participating councils identified key priorities and challenges related to gender, equity, and inclusion in grant-making. These dialogues and workshops informed early framing and content areas of the framework.
- 2 Applied learning:** In 2024, councils co-designed and implemented an intersectional gender and equity-integrated funding call, through financial support from the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) South Africa. This real-world application of inclusive grant-making principles—including peer review processes and reflective learning—generated valuable lessons on what it takes to embed intersectional gender and equity principles into each stage of the grant cycle.
- 3 Literature review:** A comprehensive review of global literature was conducted in 2025 to complement these experiential insights. This review brought together key guidance, scholarly critiques, and practice-based learnings from a range of funder contexts, helping to ensure the framework is grounded in both theory and action.



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Intended users

This resource is intended for practitioners working in Science Granting Councils and other public research funding agencies. While rooted in the experiences of SGCI participating councils, its insights and approaches are relevant to funders across a wide range of regional and institutional contexts. It is also relevant to other actors in the research and innovation ecosystem, including multilateral agencies and development partners.

The framework is designed to be accessible regardless of a funder's prior experience with intersectional gender and equity integration. It supports users at different stages of this work, offering practical, funder-led approaches that can be adapted across policy, programme, and grant management roles.

How to use this resource

This framework is structured around 12 domains that reflect the core components of transformative grant-making. Each domain includes an overview of its purpose, key actionable practices, and grounded examples to support Science Granting Councils in aligning their work with intersectional gender and

equity goals. To support practical implementation, each domain also includes links to open-source tools, templates, and other resources that can be adapted to different institutional contexts.

At the heart of the framework are four domains that serve as essential institutional enablers for integrating intersectional gender and equity in grant-making. These foundational domains set the strategic direction, ensure councils are adequately capacitated to deliver on that strategy, and establish the monitoring and adaptation systems needed to sustain impact. Together, they lay the groundwork for a comprehensive and context-responsive approach to embedding intersectional gender and equity principles throughout the grant-making process:

- **Domain 1:** Institutional strategy on transformative grant-making
- **Domain 2:** Research funding priority setting
- **Domain 3:** Organisational capacity for transformative grant-making
- **Domain 12:** Grant-making strategy impact tracking

OVERVIEW

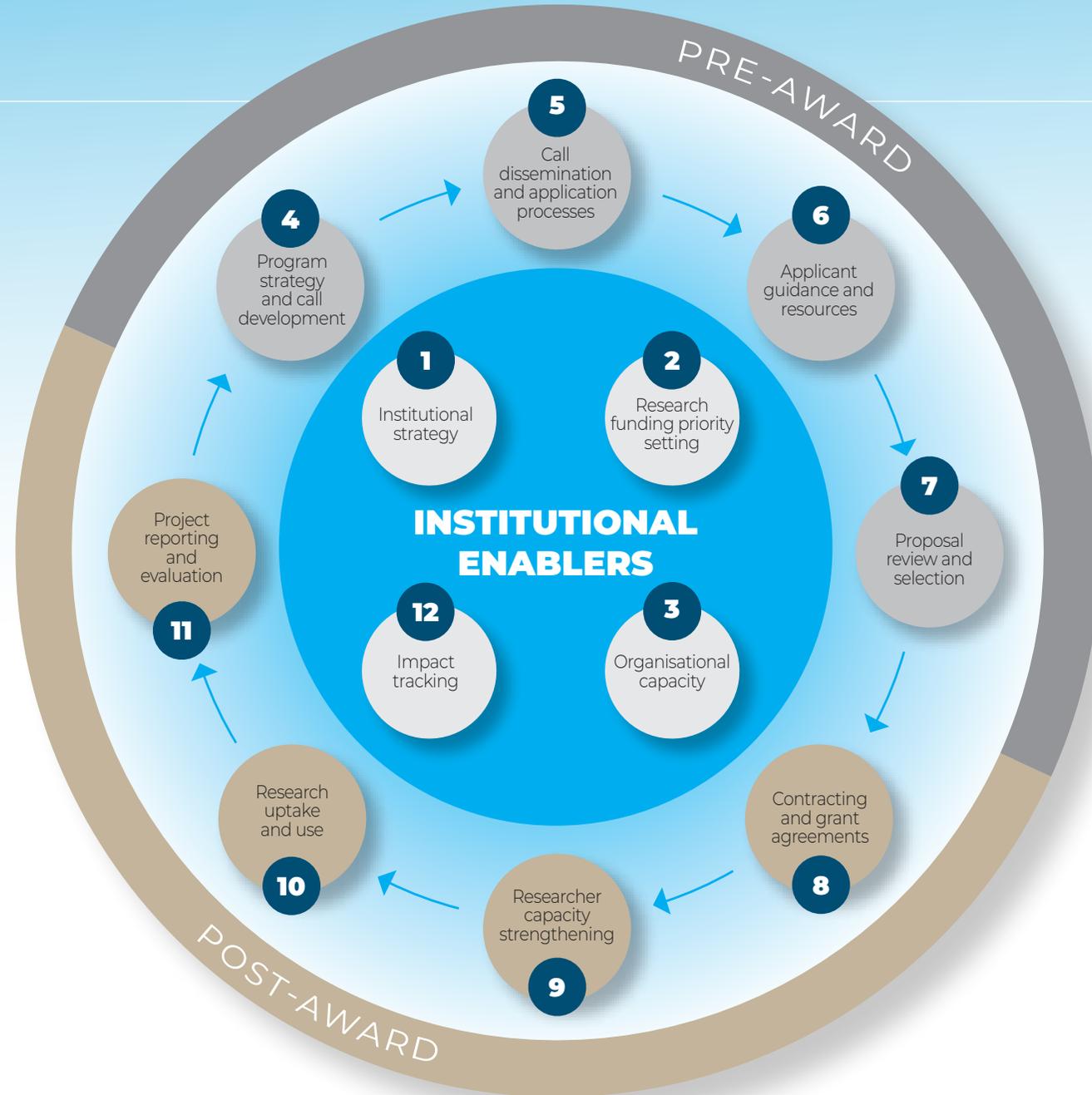
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On the outer circle are eight domains that follow the full grant-making cycle—from pre-award to project close-out. These domains reflect the practical entry-points where intersectional gender and equity considerations must be intentionally integrated to shift how funding is distributed, who it benefits, and what kinds of knowledge and outcomes are valued:

- **Domain 4:** Program strategy and call development
- **Domain 5:** Call dissemination and application processes
- **Domain 6:** Applicant guidance and resources
- **Domain 7:** Proposal review and selection
- **Domain 8:** Contracting and grant agreements
- **Domain 9:** Researcher capacity strengthening
- **Domain 10:** Research uptake and use
- **Domain 11:** Project reporting and evaluation

The framework is intended as a flexible resource for reflection, adaptation, and action. While the 12 domains are presented individually, they are deeply interrelated. At the same time, the layout of this resource allows councils to engage with specific domains most relevant to their current efforts, offering targeted entry points for strengthening practice. Councils can use the framework to assess current practices, identify opportunities for change, and progressively integrate intersectional gender and equity principles across all stages of their funding processes. Together, the domains offer a practical roadmap for embedding these principles across the full grant-making cycle.

“ The world needs science— and science needs women. ”

**TIRELO RAMASEDI—MINISTRY OF
TERTIARY EDUCATION, RESEARCH,
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,
BOTSWANA**

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Key terms

Diversity refers to the presence of differences among people, including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, geographic location, and education (UNICEF, 2017). In grant-making, recognising diversity means being attentive to whose voices, experiences, and knowledge systems are represented and valued in research processes and outcomes—whether among research teams, partners, or the communities engaged through the research.

Equality means treating everyone the same and giving everyone equal opportunities. It assumes a level playing field, but in practice, it may not account for historical or systemic disadvantages (UNICEF, 2017). In research funding, equality could mean offering the same application support to all, regardless of differing needs or barriers.

Equity recognises that people have different needs, circumstances, and levels of access to resources. It involves ensuring fairness by removing barriers and providing targeted support so that everyone has a genuine opportunity to succeed (Kelly et al., 2022). In grant-making, this could mean offering additional

support to marginalised groups or adapting processes to improve inclusive access.

Equity-centred outcomes go beyond technical excellence to focus on impacts that advance social justice and fairness (Chilisa, 2020). They focus on addressing structural inequalities by ensuring that research and grant-making practices meaningfully promote inclusion, empower marginalised groups, and foster transformative change within communities and institutions (Venkateswaran et al., 2023).

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, identities, and power relations associated with being a woman, man, or person of another gender identity. Unlike sex, which relates to biological characteristics, gender is shaped by cultural, political, and historical contexts and can vary across time and place (United Nations Women, 2021). Applying a gender lens in both research and grant-making practices is critical for understanding and addressing how social norms, discrimination, and power dynamics influence access to resources, participation, and outcomes. Ignoring gender can obscure structural inequalities and reinforce exclusion, while integrating it supports more relevant, impactful, and equitable research and funding strategies.

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Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how multiple aspects of a person’s identity and lived experience—such as gender, race, disability, class, or geography—interact to produce unique and often compounding forms of privilege or disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality goes beyond simply recognising diversity by highlighting how overlapping systems of power and exclusion, such as racism, sexism, ableism, and classism, can intensify marginalisation. An intersectional lens guards against treating groups as uniform or one-dimensional, which risks obscuring intragroup disparities and reinforcing “one-size-fits-all” solutions. In research and funding contexts, it means recognising that gender is never experienced in isolation and must be analysed in relation to other intersecting systems of power and exclusion (Hankivsky et al., 2018).

Marginalisation refers to the social process through which certain individuals or groups are pushed to the edges of society and denied full access to rights, resources, and opportunities. Marginalisation can affect both research participants and researchers, particularly those from underrepresented or historically excluded communities. Factors such as gender, disability, ethnicity, class, sexuality, or geographic location can shape whose knowledge is

valued, who gets to participate in research, and who benefits from funding and research outcomes (Kelly et al., 2022). Addressing marginalisation involves actively including these groups in decision-making and ensuring their perspectives inform research agendas, partnerships, and processes.

Sex refers to the biological characteristics—such as chromosomes, hormone levels, and reproductive anatomy—that are typically used to classify people as female, male, or intersex at birth. It is distinct from gender, though the two are often conflated (United Nations Women, 2021). Clearly distinguishing sex from gender in both research and grant-making practices is essential for ensuring equitable methodologies, data analysis, and funding decisions. While sex-based data can reveal biological differences, integrating a gender lens helps uncover how social roles, power relations, and structural inequalities shape experiences and outcomes. Conflating the two can lead to flawed study designs, misinterpreted findings, and inequitable resource allocation—ultimately limiting the relevance, impact, and fairness of research outputs and funding strategies.



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Social inclusion refers to efforts that ensure all individuals—especially those who are marginalised or excluded—can participate fully in society, including in decision-making, knowledge production, and benefit-sharing (Eerdewijk et al., 2021; Mhlanga & Ndhlovu, 2023). In grant-making and research, this includes enabling inclusive participation of researchers and community members who may otherwise be underrepresented or routinely left out of mainstream funding and research processes.

Transformation refers to meaningful, systemic change that shifts the root causes of inequality (Hankivsky et al., 2014). In the context of grant-making, it involves challenging dominant assumptions about whose knowledge counts, redistributing power in research partnerships, and creating funding and research systems that are more just, inclusive, and responsive to real-world inequities (Lynch et al., 2022).

Transformative grant-making focuses on funding research that aims to shift or disrupt prevailing social patterns or scientific paradigms while also generating knowledge about these changes. It aims to enhance social impact for marginalised or vulnerable groups affected by intersecting factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and disability. Key strategies include prioritising inclusive research approaches, supporting systemic change, facilitating collaboration, and embedding intersectional gender and equity considerations throughout the research and funding process (Di Giulio & Defila, 2024; White et al., 2021).

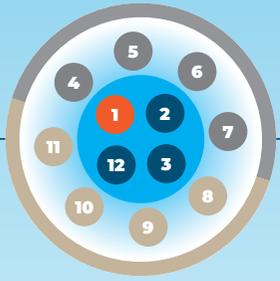


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“ Our goal is inclusive processes—from proposal calls to ensuring all grant-making staff understand gender, equity and intersectionality issues. ”

GENEROSA SIMON—NATIONAL COMMISSION ON RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, NAMIBIA



Domain 1

Institutional strategy on transformative grant-making

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Principle: Commit to a strategic vision for transformative grant-making that embeds intersectional gender and equity considerations in institutional policy, strategy and theory of change.



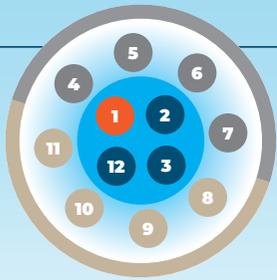
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From left to right: Laila Hansrod (Jive Media Africa), French interpreter, Nicole Tagne, facilitating communication, and Daouda Diouf—MESRI, Senegal

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Why this matters

Science Granting Councils are increasingly recognising the importance of addressing gender and equity in science. This shift responds not only to the need to redress historical inequalities but also to strengthen the societal relevance and inclusive development impact of publicly funded research (Kelly et al., 2022). A clearly defined strategy for transformative grant-making is essential to guide this work.

When grounded in national laws, development plans, policies, and scientific evidence—and underpinned by a clear theory of change—an intersectional gender and equity strategy ensures that these values are

embedded at the core of funding decisions, rather than treated as optional or peripheral. Such a strategy allows councils to articulate their commitments, align resources with national and regional development goals, and demonstrate leadership in building more inclusive and responsive science systems (Lynch et al., 2024).

As one of the framework's core institutional enablers, this domain lays the foundation for sustained progress by shaping how intersectional gender and equity considerations are understood, prioritised, and operationalised throughout the grant-making process.

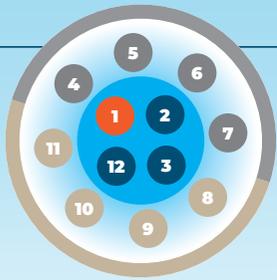


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“ We want to influence policy decision makers to have a national gender policy that can be understood at the level of researchers, what gender, inclusion, equity, all these terms mean. We hope that, in the future, terms like gender, inclusion and equity will be clear to all researchers, students and innovators. ”

DIRCE MADEIRA—FUNDO NACIONAL DE INVESTIGAÇÃO, MOZAMBIQUE



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Key actions

1.1 Develop clear, accessible definitions for key terms like gender, equity, diversity, intersectionality, and inclusion.

Action: Clarify and communicate your definitions of key concepts such as gender, equity, diversity, intersectionality, and inclusion. Ensure these definitions are consistently understood and applied across your organisation and by grantees. Use them to guide funding calls, research criteria, institutional policies, and capacity-building efforts—laying the foundation for coherence across organisational documents.

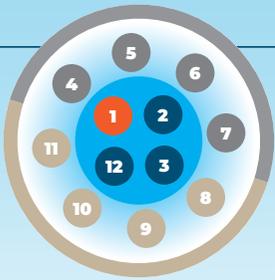
On the ground: The Uganda National Council for Science and Technology tailored the concept of intersectionality to reflect their national context by developing a “3G” approach—focusing on gender, geography, and generational exclusion. This definition emerged from local context analysis, recognising how overlapping barriers affect women, rural researchers, and younger researchers, particularly where these identities intersect.

1.2 Develop and formalise an institutional strategy or policy framework for transformative grant-making.

Action: Build on your core definitions and values by embedding them into a comprehensive institutional strategy or policy framework. This strategy should be evidence-informed, aligned with national or regional priorities, and include clear goals and measurable targets for systemic change. Ensure it guides all aspects of your work, from funding decisions to partnerships and internal operations.

On the ground: The National Science and Technology Council in Zambia is developing a Gender Equality, Inclusion, and Intersectionality (GEII) policy that foregrounds social justice and intersectionality principles. The policy aligns closely with national commitments to gender equality, youth empowerment, and inclusive development, as outlined in the 8th National Development Plan and the 2023 National Gender Policy.

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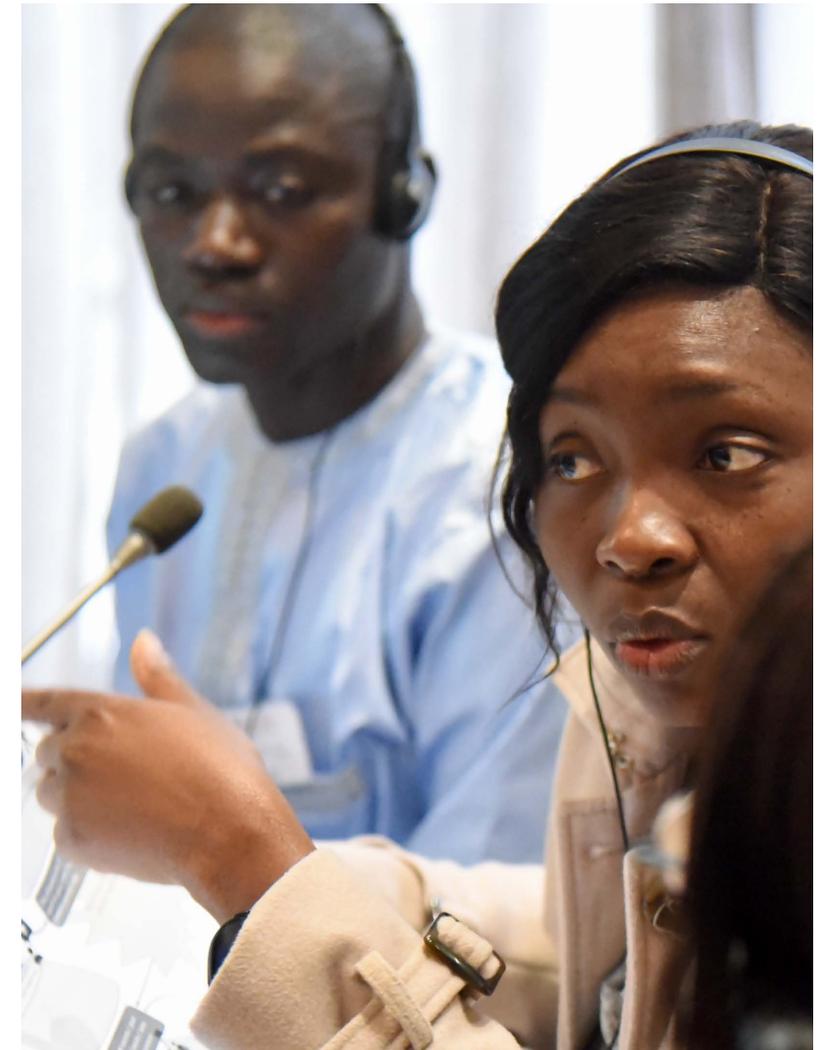
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1.3 Create or revise your theory of change to align with equity-centred outcomes.

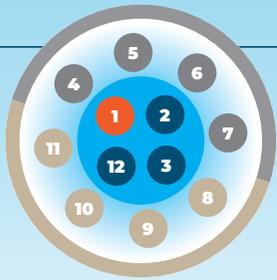
Action: Translate your institutional values and strategic goals into a theory of change that prioritises equity-centred outcomes. This should link your long-term vision to measurable changes in research funding, practice, and impact, and serve to align planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

On the ground: The National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa translated its commitment to equity and transformation into a Strategic Plan (2020–2025) underpinned by a dedicated Transformation Framework (NRF, 2021). This framework connects long-term vision to measurable outcomes—such as increasing the share of women among NRF-funded PhD graduates to 55% and funded researchers to 42% by 2025. Initiatives such as the targeted Early Career Researcher programme operationalise these priorities by factoring race, gender, age, and disability into funding decisions and offering sustained, merit-based support to Black and women researchers. Equity goals are reinforced through strategic funding allocations, performance indicators, organisational culture change, and system-level analytics, enabling the NRF to track progress and adapt over time.



Foreground: Annette Ouattara—FONSTI, Côte d'Ivoire
Background: Daouda Diouf—MESRI, Senegal

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“ FONSTI believes in the capacity of women. National development depends on including all layers of society. ”

DR ANNETTE OUATTARA—
FONDS POUR LA SCIENCE,
LA TECHNOLOGIE ET
L'INNOVATION (FONSTI),
CÔTE D'IVOIRE

1.4 Commit to long-term, sustained strategies for social transformation in research.

Action: Ensure that your institutional commitments go beyond short-term targets to support enduring change. This includes sustained investment in underrepresented research areas and communities, long-term partnerships, and continuous reflection to ensure progress toward inclusive, just research systems.

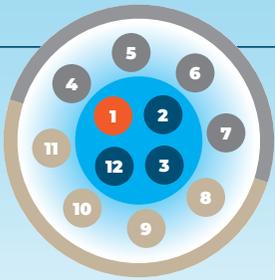
On the ground: The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Senegal supports the PAPES Fund (Program for the Improvement and Promotion of Female Teachers and Researchers) to address gender disparities in the research workforce. PAPES supports women researchers through dedicated funding, while also working with government partners to advocate for legal parity, install gender units in ministries, and increase women's representation in leadership (Babacar et al., 2023). This long-term approach fosters collective ownership of gender equity goals and seeks to address the structural roots of inequality across Senegal's research ecosystem.



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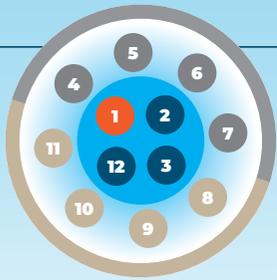
1.5 Allocate dedicated resources to implement and sustain your strategy.

Action: Back your strategy with adequate financial and human resources. This includes earmarked funding for staff capacity strengthening, dedicated roles to lead implementation, and institutional commitment to revisiting and adapting plans as learning deepens and contexts change.

On the ground: Ghana's Ministry of Environment, Science, and Technology appointed a dedicated Gender Lead to coordinate the integration of gender and equity principles across its grant-making processes. This role provides technical input into programme design and represents the Ministry in national and regional forums on inclusive research systems. Although a dedicated budget line is still in development, the Ministry has committed staff time and leveraged support from the SGCI to build internal capacity for gender-responsive research.

Reflection questions

- How does your current strategy reflect national or regional commitments to inclusive development and equitable research systems?
- In what ways are your existing values and priorities already aligned with transformative grant-making, and where could they be made more explicit or better resourced?
- What partnerships or dialogues could help ensure your intersectional gender and equity efforts are grounded in local knowledge and experience?



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Resources



Applying intersectionality across grant-making and research systems

What it is: A report from the SGCI GEI Project that explores how African Science Granting Councils advance knowledge system transformation by integrating intersectionality in grant-making, with practical recommendations and insights (Lynch et al., 2022).

Use it for: Exploring how intersectionality applies within your institutional context and practice.

Access here:

- ◆ [Integrated report: Intersectionality in research grant making and human capital development](#)

Glossaries of intersectional gender and equity terms

What it is: A selection of glossaries that define key terms related to intersectional gender and equity considerations (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016a; UNDP, 2024; UNICEF, 2017; United Nations Women, 2021).

Use it for: Reviewing or developing a shared glossary grounded in national policies and refined through consultation to ensure cultural and contextual relevance.

Access here:

- ◆ [UNDP Sub-regional Hub for West and Central Africa gender dictionary](#)
- ◆ [UN Women gender glossary](#) (English and French)
- ◆ [European Institute for Gender Equality glossary](#)

Gender and intersectionality in stakeholder consultations

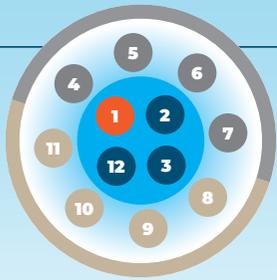
What it is: A practical guide from the European Institute for Gender Equality on conducting inclusive, equity-focused stakeholder consultations to integrate gender and intersectionality in funding policy (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019). While the primary focus is on gender, it can be adapted to other context-specific equity considerations.

Use if for: Engaging marginalised voices to define terms, shape priorities, and inform decisions.

Access it here:

- ◆ [Gender stakeholder consultation](#)

DOMAIN 1



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RESOURCES

Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) Tool: A step-by-step guide for equity focused grant-making

What it is: A practical guide from the European Institute for Gender Equality to support research funders in applying an intersectional gender and equity lens to grant-making (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

Use it for: For Domain 1, refer to Step 2 for scanning your institutional and national context, and Step 3 for designing a gender equality strategy.

Access it here:

- ◆ [GEAR step-by-step guide for research funding bodies](#)

Designing a theory of change through a gender and equity lens

What it is: A four-part guide to help funders apply a gender and equity lens when developing a theory of change (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2022). It supports clarifying goals, engaging communities, and strengthening strategies and outcomes. Each part can be downloaded separately.

Use it for: Designing or refining your theory of change to reflect gender and equity commitments, community input, and measurable impact.

Access it here:

- ◆ [AECF Theory of Change Guidance](#)



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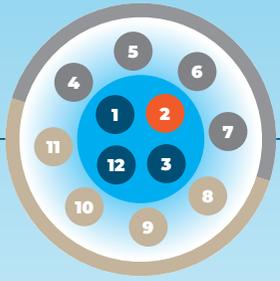
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Even men now see that the world cannot move forward without the contributions of women and vulnerable groups.



**DAOUDA DIOUF—MINISTÈRE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR,
DE LA RECHERCHE ET DE L'INNOVATION, SENEGAL**



Domain 2

Research funding priorities

WHY THIS MATTERS

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Principle: Ground research funding priorities in local realities by collaboratively defining context-responsive areas of investment aligned with intersectional gender and equity considerations.



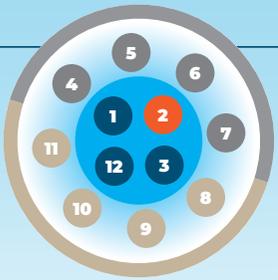
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Thomas Kaluvi—NCST, Malawi

DOMAIN 2



WHY THIS MATTERS

KEY ACTIONS

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Why this matters

Decisions about what research gets funded are fundamental to shaping whose knowledge counts and which problems are addressed. When Science Granting Councils embed intersectional gender and equity considerations into priority-setting processes, they help ensure that public research investments respond to lived realities, address structural inequalities, and contribute to socially transformative outcomes (Charani et al., 2022).

Councils also have a key role in ensuring research aligns with national development goals—from health and education to climate resilience and inclusive innovation—and in ensuring that these agendas

reflect the needs of structurally excluded populations (Alvarez et al., 2019). By convening diverse actors, identifying context-specific knowledge gaps, and setting the tone for equity-focused inquiry, councils can influence research ecosystems well beyond their portfolios.

As a core institutional enabler, this domain provides a vital link between strategic intent and research relevance—ensuring that funding priorities not only reflect equity goals but also drive systemic change across the research landscape (Cole et al., 2023).

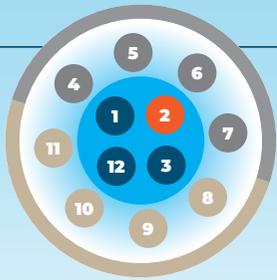


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“ Our review of current practices aims to shed light on how people engage with the grant management calls, particularly regarding the disclosure of disabilities, which will help shape more inclusive approaches. ”

**NANDI GARISES—NATIONAL COMMISSION ON RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,
NAMIBIA**



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Key actions

2.1 Collaborate with funders, researchers, and communities impacted by research to conduct collective knowledge gap analyses that inform context-responsive, intersectional priority-setting.

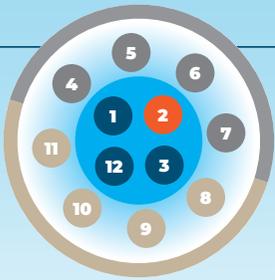
Action: Move beyond top-down research priority-setting by embracing participatory approaches that actively engage funders, researchers, and communities directly affected by the issues under study. Co-defining research agendas in this way draws on diverse forms of knowledge, uncovers overlooked or underexplored areas, and ensures funding priorities are firmly grounded in lived experience. This approach results in more contextually relevant, inclusive, and equitable research investments that respond effectively to intersecting forms of structural inequality.

On the ground: The Research Council of Norway’s GLOBVAC program integrated gender and equity into its third-phase planning (2020–2031) by involving a geographically and gender-diverse panel of senior researchers from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in setting funding priorities. This inclusive approach ensured that perspectives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America shaped the agenda (Research Council of Norway, 2019).



Foreground: Tirelo Ramasedi—GEI Change Team Member, Botswana
Background Left: Felicite Djoukouo—CODESRIA, Cameroon
Background Right: Dikabo Mogopodi—University of Botswana

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The process demonstrated that early, structured involvement of diverse partners (with funded support for their participation) fosters trust, expands networks, and embeds gender and equity considerations in research funding strategies.

2.2 Provide thought leadership to influence research discourse and promote intersectional gender and equity in priority funding areas.

Action: Take a proactive role in shaping how intersectional gender and equity considerations are understood and embedded within the specific research areas prioritised for funding. Contribute to strategic conversations, policy development, and collaborative platforms to elevate equity-focused approaches in these areas and drive meaningful engagement.

On the ground: The Swedish Research Council and Forte (the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare) jointly mapped critical gaps in sex-differentiated health research. This revealed a lack of studies on conditions that uniquely or disproportionately affect women (Swedish Research Council, 2023). They identified priority research

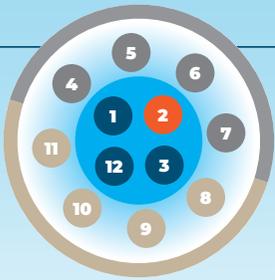
areas focused on women's health, including disease mechanisms, treatment, and healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth, that can guide future investments and better align research priorities with these equity-focused needs.

2.3 Share practical knowledge on effective strategies for integrating intersectional gender and equity approaches in the identified priority research areas.

Action: Equip researchers, funding partners and other ecosystem actors working in the prioritised funding areas with targeted, accessible guidance and examples of how intersectional gender and equity considerations can be meaningfully applied. Promote learning through peer exchanges and ongoing support that address the specific dynamics of each field.

On the ground: The Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR) is a global agricultural research and innovation network that conducts and supports research across many LMICs. To promote inclusive agricultural research, the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform provides accessible gender evidence briefs, tools, manuals, and training courses

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for the wider research community. It also hosts communities of practice and maintains a map of gender specialists to help researchers, funders, and policymakers understand and address intersecting forms of marginalisation in their work (CGIAR, 2025).

“ Yes, these transformative processes disrupt established habits, but they are essential. We cannot accept a society that leaves some groups at the margins. ”

INOUSSA ZONGO—FONDS NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE ET DE L'INNOVATION POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT, BURKINA FASO



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Reflection questions

- To what extent do your current research priority-setting processes include the voices and knowledge of those most affected by the impact of the research you fund, and what would it take to shift toward a more collaborative approach?
- How are you using your position and platform to stimulate critical reflection on dominant research agendas and to promote more inclusive, equity-oriented inquiry across the broader research ecosystem?
- What mechanisms do you have in place to assess and strengthen your institutional capacity to lead, model, and share intersectional approaches in priority-setting processes?



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Resources



Applying a gender lens to development research priorities

What it is: A toolkit for applying an intersectional gender perspective across all SDG goals and targets (Pollitzer, 2022).

Use it for: Identifying entry points to deepen a gender lens across diverse development research priorities.

Access here:

- ◆ [Gender Analysis Toolkit for Prioritising SDG Goals and Targets](#)

Participatory approaches to grant-making

What it is: Although rooted in philanthropic practice, this resource is relevant to Science Granting Councils exploring participatory approaches to research priority setting (Gibson, 2018). It reviews existing frameworks for embedding participation in decision-making, proposes a starter framework for participatory grant-making, and offers actionable ideas for institutions seeking more inclusive, community-engaged funding processes.

Use it for: Exploring how participatory decision-making can be adapted to your institutional context to support more inclusive research agenda-setting.

Access here:

- ◆ [Participatory Grantmaking: Has its Time Come?](#)

Principles for co-creation in publicly funded research

What it is: A statement by the Global Research Council, outlining principles for embedding participatory co-creation approaches in research funding (Global Research Council, 2025). The principles promote collaborative ecosystems where diverse stakeholders—such as research institutions, the private sector, civil society, and public bodies—jointly shape research agendas and funding priorities. The principles are relevant across multiple domains in this framework.

Use it for: Guiding inclusive, participatory approaches to agenda setting and knowledge exchange in publicly funded research.

Access here:

- ◆ [Co-Creation for Addressing Global Challenges](#)



Domain 3

Organisational capacity for transformative grant-making

WHY THIS MATTERS

KEY ACTIONS

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Principle: Recognise that organisational capacity is foundational by strengthening intersectional gender and equity understanding and skills across all levels of council staff.

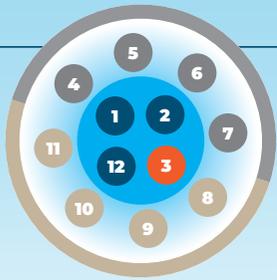


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DOMAIN 3



WHY THIS MATTERS

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Why this matters

Formal gender and equity policies are important, but insufficient on their own; therefore, organisational capacity is a critical enabler of transformative grant-making. Without accompanying shifts in informal norms, day-to-day practices, and institutional power dynamics, formal commitments are unlikely to result in meaningful or lasting change (Newman et al., 2017).

Building this internal alignment requires equipping staff with relevant skills, conceptual grounding, and practical tools that support consistent, equity-aware decision-making. Councils that invest in reflective practice, distributed leadership, and context-responsive learning are better positioned

to implement intersectional gender and equity commitments effectively—and to catalyse change within the broader research ecosystem (Hillenbrand et al., 2023).

Organisational capacity strengthening, as one of the foundational domains in this framework, creates the internal conditions needed to implement equity-focused strategies and embed intersectional gender and equity considerations into routine grant-making practices.

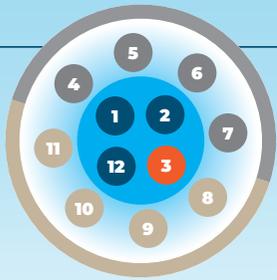


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“ We want women, men, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups to have a place in research and development. ”

DR ANNETTE OUATTARA—FONDS POUR LA SCIENCE, LA TECHNOLOGIE ET L'INNOVATION (FONSTI), CÔTE D'IVOIRE



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Key actions

3.1 Build internal capacity through context-responsive training and resources.

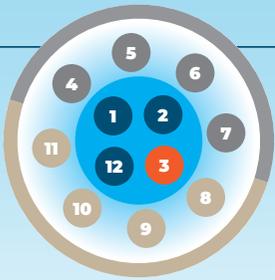
Action: Provide all relevant council staff with tailored ongoing training and tools—responsive to local context—to support the integration of intersectional gender and equity principles in their roles. Ensure consistency by aligning these internal resources with those used in engagement with applicants, evaluators, and partners, so that terminology, expectations, and policies are coherent across the grant-making ecosystem.

On the ground: The National Commission for Science and Technology in Malawi held a capacity-building workshop for staff across multiple directorates—including Research, Technology Transfer, Knowledge Management, and Finance—to strengthen understanding and application of gender equality, inclusion, and intersectionality in research and grant management. Bringing together teams from across the institution helped build shared understanding and foster alignment in how these principles are applied throughout the Commission’s work. It also created space for knowledge exchange and reflection on how to make programming more responsive to local contexts and equity goals.

3.2 Create spaces for self-reflection and critical learning about structural inequities.

Action: Go beyond technical training by creating opportunities for staff to reflect on how power, privilege, and structural inequality shape research and funding systems. Ensure these activities are facilitated by someone with the skills to guide inclusive dialogue. Prioritise learning that is grounded in the real-world challenges faced by researchers in the settings where grants are implemented.

On the ground: The Arts and Humanities Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation, introduced dedicated Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion learning and reflection sessions. The aim was to deepen staff understanding of the structural barriers faced by under-represented applicants across different contexts (AHRC, 2023).



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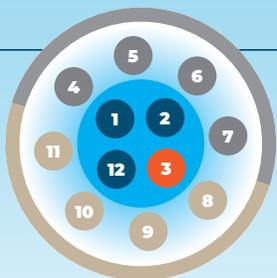
3.3 Identify and support champions to drive organisational change.

Action: Identify intersectional gender and equity champions across all institutional levels—staff, leadership, and board—and back their initiatives with tangible support. This includes allocating time, visibility, and resources for them to pilot new ideas, mentor others, and advocate for internal shifts.

On the ground: The National Research Foundation of Kenya has adopted a gender champions approach to advance its gender mainstreaming goals. Champions—women and men from across different staff levels—are supported to challenge stereotypes, break down barriers, and foster inclusive, equity-oriented practices across the institution. They work with workplace social groups to promote transformative norms aligned with gender equality, inclusion, and intersectionality (GEII) principles. Once nominated to the gender committee, champions receive training facilitated by the National Gender and Equality Commission. Training covers topics such as bias, inclusive decision-making, and gender-responsive workplace policies, including maternity support and childcare. This training is designed to equip them to lead change from within and mentor others in embedding GEII in the organisation’s programmes and culture.

Reflection questions

- What opportunities exist to implement joint intersectional gender and equity training across council staff, applicants, evaluators, and partners that promote a consistent understanding of intersectional gender and equity principles?
- How can you distinguish which training components and resources can be shared across these groups, and which must be tailored to specific roles?
- Beyond technical knowledge, how prepared are staff at all levels to critically engage with the ways gendered and structural inequalities manifest within their everyday grant-making decisions?
- What formal or informal mechanisms can enable your council to surface and challenge internal norms, power relations, and practices that may hinder equity objectives?



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Gender mainstreaming toolkit for institutional transformation

What it is: A resource from the European Institute for Gender Equality to support funding organisations in introducing and managing institutional change (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016b). It focuses on structural and personnel-level shifts as foundations for meaningful gender and equity outcomes in research.

Use it for: Planning and guiding internal transformation processes to embed gender and equity in institutional structures and culture.

Access here:

- ◆ [Gender Institutional Transformation](#)

Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI) online training

What it is: A self-paced, bilingual (English/French) online course designed for institutional staff, reviewers, and applicants (Partnership for Economic Policy, 2024). Developed with a focus on African contexts, it covers why and how to integrate GEI in research, analyse social relations, use data to inform policy, and apply GEI across disciplines. This course is referenced in other sections of the framework, as its cross-stakeholder focus supports shared understanding and coherence in GEI practice across the research ecosystem.

Use it for: Building GEI-related knowledge and capacity across your organisation.

Access here:

- ◆ [Gender Equality and Inclusion \(GEI\) in research online training](#)



Domain 4

Program strategy and call development

WHY THIS MATTERS

KEY ACTIONS

REFLECTION

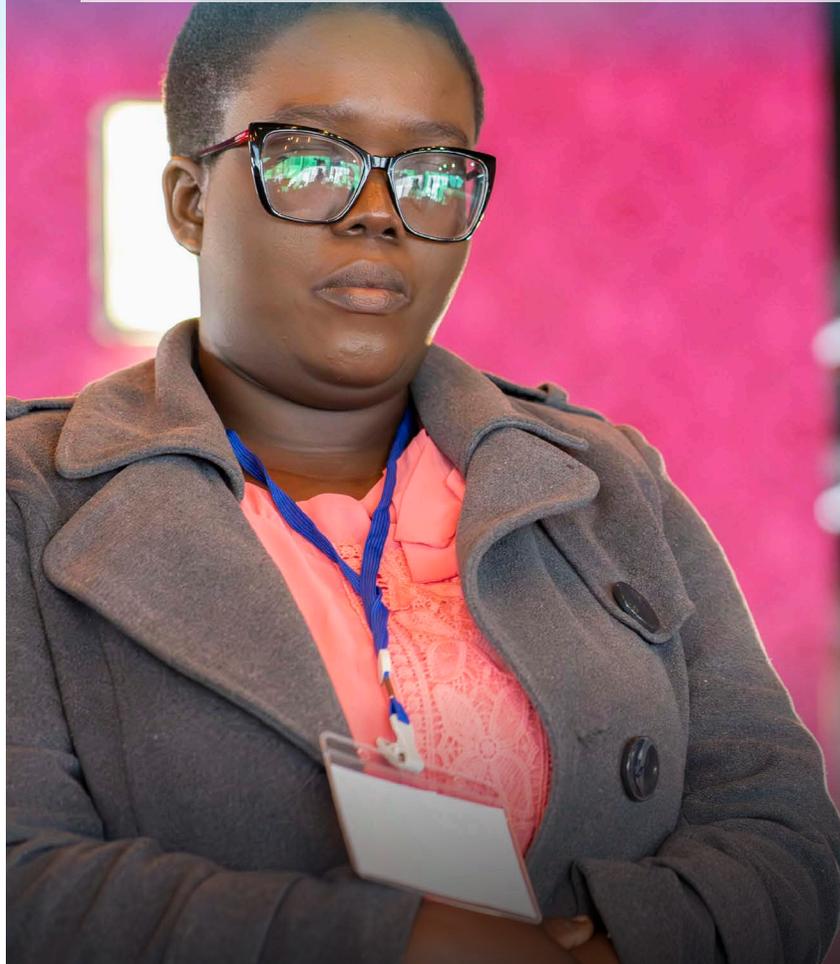
RESOURCES

Principle: Adopt a programmatic approach to embedding intersectional gender and equity integration across all projects within a funding programme.



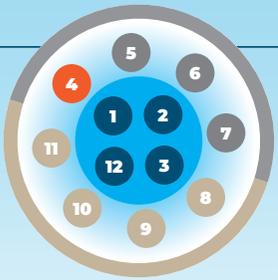
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Rumbidzai Kuwora—RCZ, Zimbabwe
and Oswald Mughungora—NCRST, Namibia

DOMAIN 4



WHY THIS MATTERS

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Why this matters

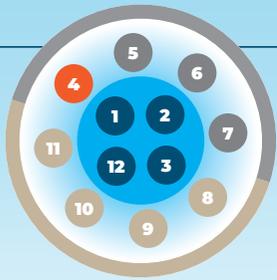
This domain marks the starting point in the grant-making cycle where councils can actively embed intersectional gender and equity principles into funding practice. A programme-level strategy signals the kinds of knowledge, partnerships, and outcomes a council values, guiding the programme's direction and setting the tone and intent for call development. Without a clearly articulated and consistently applied approach at programme level, efforts to integrate intersectional gender and equity—such as those surfaced through priority-setting in Domain 2—risk remaining fragmented or superficial. A coherent strategy fosters alignment, accountability, and cumulative impact across the programme's funded projects (van Eerdewijk et al., 2021).

Integrating intersectional gender expertise early in call development ensures these considerations are structurally embedded, rather than treated as add-ons post-award. Clearly communicating the relevance of intersectional gender and equity in each call enhances applicant engagement and sets expectations for responsive research design. Call designs that encourage cross-sectoral collaboration, when done intentionally, can also increase the likelihood of socially transformative outcomes (Mullinax et al., 2018). Together, these practices shape a programme that is more inclusive, context-responsive, and impactful.



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Key actions

4.1 Ensure the programme strategy for integrating intersectional gender and equity considerations is structured and communicated consistently across all projects, promoting alignment across the programme.

Action: Establish and embed a shared set of intersectional gender and equity commitments and expectations at the program level and communicate these clearly in all call documents and internal planning processes. This alignment strengthens coherence, accountability, and long-term impact across the programme.

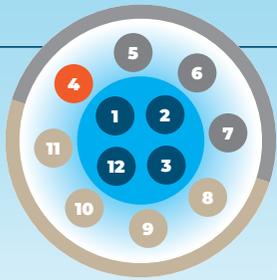
On the ground: The Empowering Teachers Initiative (ETI) embeds equity as a foundational commitment across its research programme on teacher professional development (TPD) in the Global South. Framed around three streams—knowledge generation, capacity strengthening, and policy influence—ETI aims to support more equitable, high-quality, and efficient TPD systems (ETI TPD@ Scale, 2025). The programme ensures that each funding call contributes to a coherent set of goals by making equity central from the outset, rather than operating in silos. This strategic alignment helps

avoid fragmentation across the programme and reinforces accountability to underserved educators and education systems.

4.2 Integrate intersectional gender and equity expertise into the call design process from the outset.

Action: Involve individuals with relevant intersectional gender and equity knowledge in the design of calls for proposals—whether through dedicated staff, advisory input, or partnerships. Such expertise helps shape calls that address intersectional gender and equity across all dimensions of the research process, including team composition, research questions, methods, partnerships, and the potential impact of findings or innovations.

On the ground: When developing a funding call on gender, equity, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the International Development Research Centre and the International Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance Solutions convened AMR researchers and gender and equity experts from LMICs to shape the call's focus (Valuks, 2021). Their input ensured the call responded to local researchers' practical needs; including the development of a context-appropriate tool for



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integrating gender and equity throughout the AMR research process.

4.3 Clearly communicate the relevance of intersectional gender and equity considerations within each call.

Action: Be explicit in call documentation about why intersectional gender and equity considerations matter to the funding institution, and how they relate to the specific research area or goals of the call. This helps applicants understand the rationale, engage meaningfully, and tailor their proposals to reflect these priorities.

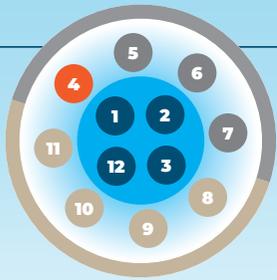
On the ground: The Ministry of Science and Technology in Ghana is progressively embedding a coherent approach to gender equality and inclusion (GEI) across all research programmes under its mandate. While this work is still evolving, the Ministry has begun to align its call development processes with broader institutional goals on inclusivity, drawing on lessons from projects supported by the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI). This shift ensures that calls are not only technically sound but also

communicate why GEI considerations matter to the Ministry’s research agenda and national priorities, making it easier for applicants to meaningfully integrate these priorities into their proposals.

4.4 Design calls that require or prioritise cross-sectoral collaborations to strengthen intersectional gender and equity integration and the transformative potential of research outcomes or innovations.

Action: Structure calls to support collaborations across sectors, disciplines, or knowledge systems—for example, between research institutions and public bodies, development organisations, or industry partners working on equity-related challenges. These collaborations enhance the capacity of funded projects to meaningfully address intersectional gender and equity considerations. They also increase the likelihood of relevant, impactful, and transformative outcomes across projects.

DOMAIN 4



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On the ground: The Global Partnership for Education's Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) launched a call for proposals focused on strengthening gender equality and social inclusion in schools. This call specifically encouraged collaborations between research institutions, education ministries, and community-based organisations in LMICs to develop and scale innovative, context-specific approaches. The initiative aimed to generate evidence-based solutions that address multiple forms of marginalisation by fostering partnerships across sectors. These partnerships ensure that educational innovations are both inclusive and impactful (IDRC & Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange, 2023).

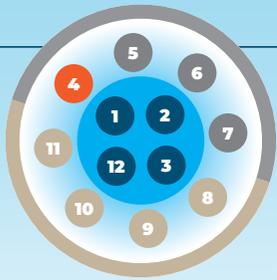


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Reflection questions

- Across your institution's funding programs, where do existing program-level strategies support intersectional gender and equity integration?
- Where is stronger alignment needed to ensure coherence and impact across the funded projects?
- At what points in your call development process could intersectional gender and equity expertise add the most value?
- What partnerships or capacities could help embed this input from the outset?
- What opportunities exist to design calls that incentivise or prioritise collaborations across sectors, disciplines, or knowledge systems, to strengthen context-responsive research and advance equitable impact?



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Resources



Gender mainstreaming toolkit for institutional transformation

What it is: This report outlines the development of a gender integration strategy for the Climate, Adaptation, and Resilience research programme, funded by Canada’s IDRC and the UK’s FCDO and implemented in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific (van Eerdewijk et al., 2021). The report illustrates how a programme-specific strategy can offer conceptual clarity and enable a consistent, coherent approach to gender integration across funded projects.

Use it for: A case study on developing a programme-level intersectional gender and equity strategy with clearly defined outcomes and impacts, fully integrated into calls for proposals.

Access here:

- ◆ **Integration of gender equality and social inclusion considerations into CLARE : the ‘what’ and the ‘how’**





Domain 5

Call dissemination and application processes

WHY THIS MATTERS

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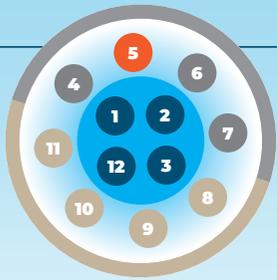
Principle: Address structural barriers to funding by ensuring dissemination and submission processes for calls for proposals are inclusive and accessible.



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Why this matters

To ensure fairness and broad participation in competitive funding environments, grant-making institutions must proactively address how structural barriers in application processes exclude or disadvantage specific groups (Alvarez et al., 2019). Inequities related to intersectional factors such as gender, disability, language, caregiving responsibilities, career stage, and geographic location shape researchers' access to information, time, and institutional resources (Fisher et al., 2020).

Designing dissemination and application procedures that are responsive to these realities enhances the quality, relevance, and diversity of applicant pools. Clear communication, inclusive formats, and adequate lead times all play a role in enabling more equitable participation.

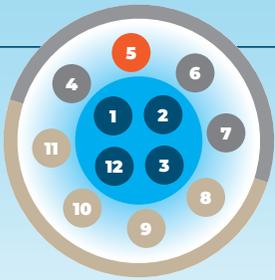
“ You can't develop a country without the participation of women and the most vulnerable people. ”

DAOUDA DIOUF—POLICY LEAD AT THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (MESRI)



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5.1 Broaden applicant reach through inclusive and targeted dissemination.

Action: Use dissemination strategies that actively include historically underrepresented or structurally excluded researcher groups—for example, women, early-career researchers, and those based at rural or under-resourced institutions. Partner with regional, disciplinary, or equity-focused networks and platforms to ensure calls reach researchers and institutions that may typically be overlooked or excluded.

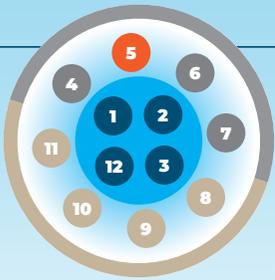
On the ground: To broaden reach and improve accessibility, Research Council Zimbabwe advertises funding calls through national newspapers and social media. The council also distributes hard copies to every provincial office with support from the Minister for Provincial Affairs. This approach is designed to ensure the call reaches underrepresented researchers, including those with disabilities and those in rural or under-resourced areas.

5.2 Build application timelines that account for unequal workloads and time constraints.

Action: Design flexible timelines that recognise the uneven time and capacity of researchers due to caregiving responsibilities, administrative loads, or teaching commitments. This could include longer application windows, deadlines that avoid periods of heavy academic or caregiving demand, and two-stage application processes.

On the ground: The UK Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Curiosity Awards operate on a rolling basis, with no fixed closing date. This open-ended application window allows researchers to apply at a time that suits their circumstances, accommodating varying workloads and personal responsibilities (AHRC, 2023).

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5.3 Make application processes accessible to researchers with disabilities.

Action: Audit digital platforms and submission processes for accessibility barriers. Consult with researchers with lived experience of disability and disability justice organisations to identify improvements. Ensure application platforms and documents are screen-reader compatible, offer alternative formats, and provide support on request.

On the ground: The Canadian Institutes of Health Research identified numerous accessibility barriers and overwhelming evidence for systemic ableism spanning the pre-application, application, assessment of applications, and grant award policies and processes. The CIHR used these findings to inform consultations with external advisory groups on accessibility and persons with disabilities, as well as their allies, to reform processes to reduce systemic ableism (CIHR, 2022a).

5.4 Promote language inclusion in how calls are shared and submitted.

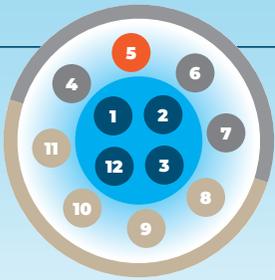
Action: To promote inclusive participation, ensure that call materials and application platforms are available in relevant local or regional languages alongside English. Allocate resources for translation and language support and clearly inform applicants about how to request assistance in their preferred language.

On the ground: The SGCI NRF-DFG special call encouraged Science Granting Councils to submit proposals in their preferred language. They also provided technical assistance in three regional languages—English, French, and Portuguese—to support proposal development.

5.5 Support applicants to navigate infrastructure and administrative capacity constraints.

Action: Consider the barriers faced by researchers in rural areas or lower-resourced institutions, including limited internet access and administrative support. Provide offline application options, allow for low-bandwidth submission formats, or support intermediary organisations that can assist applicants in navigating processes.

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On the ground: To address the geographic and institutional disparities affecting access to research funding, Uganda’s National Council for Science and Technology established the Gender Equity in Research Alliance (GERA) (See Box 2). GERA brings together researchers from under-resourced and geographically remote universities across Uganda, creating space to share experiences and co-develop strategies for inclusive research and grant access.

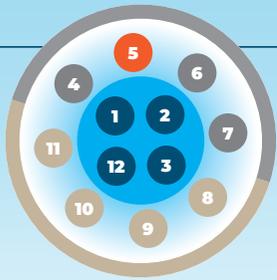
5.6 Use applicant feedback to drive improvements.

Action: Routinely gather structured feedback from both successful and unsuccessful applicants about the inclusiveness and accessibility of the call dissemination and application process. Use this data to iteratively improve future calls, with a focus on removing persistent structural barriers.

On the ground: The Barr Foundation regularly reviews grantees’ perceptions of the funding process to identify and remove structural barriers and improve efficiencies, leaving grantees with more “time” to do the work (Belanger, 2024).

Box 2: A decentralised approach to gender equity in national research systems

The Gender Equity in Research Alliance (GERA) was launched in 2019 by Uganda’s National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) in partnership with INASP. GERA is a national network addressing gender inequities in research by actively including voices from across Uganda’s diverse regions. Acknowledging that researchers in rural and remote universities are often overlooked in funding and gender equity efforts, GERA created four regional chapters—covering Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western regions—to ensure broader inclusion (Skovgaard et al., 2023). This decentralised, volunteer-led model enables locally driven activities such as institutional visits, awareness workshops, and gender policy development. A virtual platform hosted by UNCST supports continued collaboration, especially for those outside Kampala. UNCST is helping reshape the research system to be more inclusive, responsive, and equitable by mobilising researchers in under-resourced and geographically marginalised areas. The council is also demonstrating the powerful role funders can play in addressing structural barriers beyond their own institutions.



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Reflection and Resources



Reflection questions

- Who are the priority groups of researchers your council aims to reach through calls?
- How effectively do your current dissemination strategies engage these groups—particularly those who are structurally marginalised or based in under-resourced contexts?
- What new partnerships or channels could help broaden this reach?
- What assumptions underlie your application timelines and submission processes?
- How might these unintentionally disadvantage researchers with caregiving responsibilities, limited institutional support, or access barriers?
- Do your application systems and materials account for linguistic diversity and disability access needs?
- What support mechanisms are in place to assist applicants facing these barriers?

Identifying barriers to gender equity and inclusion in funding processes

What it is: A report outlining barriers to equity and access in research funding, mapping where they occur in the funding process, and offering practical solutions for funders (Gladstone et al., 2023).

Use it for: Identifying context-specific barriers, bottlenecks, and enablers in your funding process. Section 4 includes a helpful schematic to guide this.

Access here:

- ◆ [Equity and inclusivity in research funding: barriers and delivering change](#)



Domain 6

Applicant guidance and resources for proposal development

WHY THIS MATTERS

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Principle: Support meaningful integration of intersectional gender and equity considerations from the outset by offering applicants clear and accessible guidance and resources.



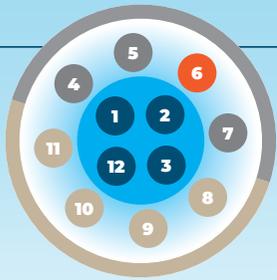
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Dr Mavis Akuffobe-Essilfie—
MEST, Ghana

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Why this matters

High-quality, widely accessible applicant resources can shift gender and equity from a symbolic requirement to a substantive element embedded in research framing, methods, implementation strategies, and outcome measurement (Göttgens et al., 2023). Ensuring that applicants have early and equitable access to guidance reduces disparities between researchers in different contexts and strengthens both the quality and relevance of the research.

By offering technical assistance and capacity-building opportunities early in the process, funders act not only as evaluators but also as enablers of equity and co-creators of knowledge. This demonstrates ethical leadership, strengthens social value, and contributes to more transformative research outcomes (Alvarez et al., 2019; Doona, 2020).

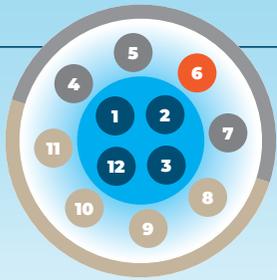


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“ If we are to progress at the current speed, a young woman entering the workforce today will not live to see a gender-equal world. ”

TIRELO RAMASEDI—MINISTRY OF TERTIARY EDUCATION, RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, BOTSWANA



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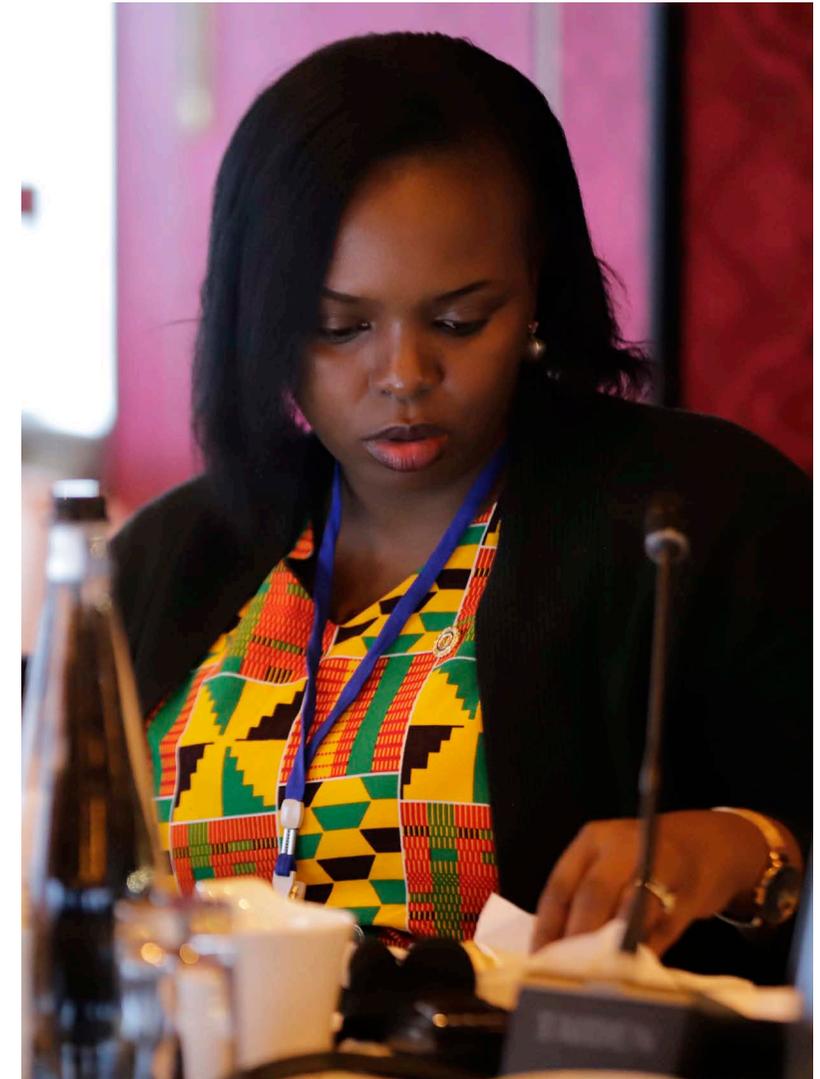
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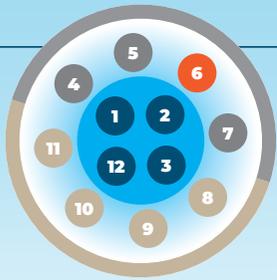
6.1 To support comprehensive integration of intersectional gender and equity considerations during proposal development, provide tailored guidance and toolkits across the following areas, where applicable: (a) framing the research problem, (b) designing research and methodologies, and (c) enhancing the uptake, impact, and scaling of the research.

Action: Curate open-access, user-friendly resources and toolkits to support incorporating intersectional gender and equity principles across all proposal components. Tailor these materials to different disciplines or research subject areas. Use clear, inclusive, and accessible language, provide translations in multiple relevant languages, and deliver via an easy-to-navigate online platform that accommodates varying levels of digital access. Include practical examples and tools—such as checklists, templates, sample texts, and self-assessment grids—to facilitate effective implementation.



Beth Mutumba—UNCST, Uganda

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On the ground: The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) provides comprehensive, easily accessible tools and resources to assist researchers in integrating gender, sex, and equity considerations throughout the research lifecycle. These resources cover areas such as integrating gender and sex in research design and practice, fostering equity in the research environment, supporting indigenous health research, reducing bias in peer review, and strengthening research excellence (CIHR, 2021).

6.2 Engage diverse stakeholders, including subject matter experts with local knowledge of gender and equity, in co-creating and reviewing such guidance and toolkits to ensure relevance, usability, and contextual appropriateness.

Action: Validate guidance and toolkits through consultation with local gender and equity experts and experienced past grantees. Encourage regular feedback and collaboration with diverse experts and applicants through activities such as targeted consultations, focus groups, or periodic check-ins to continuously improve the guidance, with particular attention to ensuring its ongoing relevance.

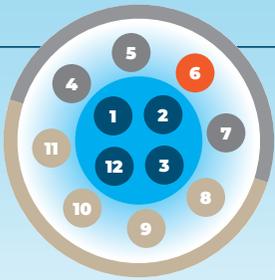
On the ground: The Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) developed and validated a toolkit to integrate intersectional gender and equity considerations into research. The toolkit was created in consultation with local gender and equity experts, as well as experienced past grantees. TDR continuously improves this guidance through targeted consultations and focus groups (WHO-TDR, 2020).

6.5 Offer seed grants or funding support to help applicant teams build internal gender and equity expertise and develop stronger proposals.

Action: Consider providing seed grants or targeted support to strengthen internal capacity and enhance proposal quality. This is particularly relevant for teams in under-resourced contexts and disciplines where gender and equity considerations are still gaining traction.

On the ground: The International Climate Initiative (IKI) requires all project proposals to include a gender analysis during the proposal development phase. This requirement is to identify gender-specific impacts and opportunities within the project context. To support

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this, IKI provides detailed gender analysis guidelines and facilitates access to targeted technical assistance and capacity-building resources. This early-stage support strengthens research teams' capacity and enhances alignment with IKI's gender integration requirements (IKI, 2023).

“ We feel it's necessary to create a balance of women's participation in research so that research priorities are useful for both women and men. ”

DIRCE MADEIRA—FUNDO NACIONAL DE INVESTIGAÇÃO, MOZAMBIQUE

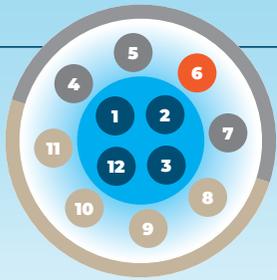


Gender Equality & Inclusivity

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Reflection questions

- What barriers might applicants from different disciplines or less-resourced institutional environments face when trying to integrate intersectional gender and equity considerations into their proposals?
- How can these barriers be better anticipated and addressed?
- How effectively do your resources accommodate different levels of experience with gender and equity integration among applicants?
- What opportunities exist to involve experts and past applicants in shaping support materials to ensure intersectional gender and equity guidance is relevant and practical?
- How might your council explore collaborations or resource pooling with other funders to offer seed grants or targeted support that strengthen applicants' capacity to integrate intersectional gender and equity considerations?



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Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI) online training

What it is: A self-paced, bilingual (English/French) online course designed for institutional staff, reviewers, and applicants (Partnership for Economic Policy, 2024). Developed with a focus on African contexts, it covers why and how to integrate GEI in research, analyse social relations, use data to inform policy, and apply GEI across disciplines.

Use it for: Strengthening researcher capacity in applying GEI-related concepts, analytical frameworks, and methodologies.

Access here:

- ◆ [Gender Equality and Inclusion \(GEI\) in research online training](#)

Strengthening researcher capacity for sex- and gender-integrated research

What it is: An interactive resource platform by the Genderful Research Consortium (GRC) on sex and gender for biomedical and health researchers, with content adaptable to other disciplines (CIHR, 2022b).

Use it for: Strengthening researcher capacity in applying intersectional gender and equity concepts, analytical frameworks, and methodologies.

Access here:

- ◆ [Genderful Research World](#)



Domain 7

Proposal review and selection of grantees

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Principle: Ensure fairness in selection by embedding equity and inclusion in review and decision-making processes and valuing diverse forms of excellence.



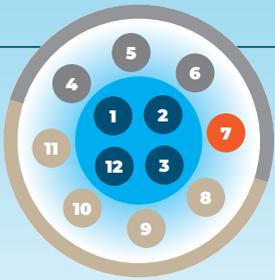
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Left to right: Dirce Madeira (FNI, Mozambique), Irène Kuetche Djembissi (CODESRIA, Cameroon) and Hildegalda Mushi (COSTECH, Tanzania)

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Why this matters

Bias and barriers in the review and selection process undermine both equity and scientific excellence. Systemic biases related to gender and other intersecting identities influence how proposals are assessed, limiting opportunities for women and other structurally excluded researchers (Recio-Saucedo et al., 2022). Without deliberate action to address these biases, review processes risk reinforcing homogeneity in research leadership and knowledge production (Severin et al., 2020).

Applying an intersectional gender and equity lens throughout review and selection helps dismantle these barriers, reduce reviewer bias, and broaden access for underrepresented applicants. This fosters more inclusive, innovative, and socially relevant research, and expands definitions of excellence to value diverse knowledge, lived experience, and societal impact (Alvarez et al., 2019; Morgan et al., 2018).



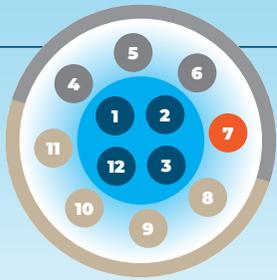
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“ Gender is now a cross-cutting theme in our research. We see it as a matter of equity in development. ”

**INOUSSA ZONGO—FONDS
NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE
ET DE L'INNOVATION POUR
LE DEVELOPPEMENT,
BURKINA FASO**





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Key actions

7.1 Ensure proposal review committees reflect a range of social identities.

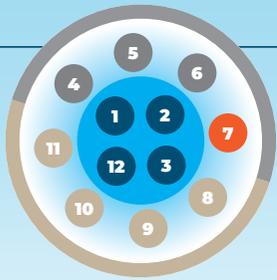
Action: Constitute proposal review panels to reflect a range of perspectives and social identities, including diversity in gender, career stage, and other salient characteristics. A more representative committee helps surface blind spots, reduce bias, and improve the fairness and contextual relevance of funding decisions.

On the ground: The German Research Foundation (DFG) has steadily increased the representation of women on its review panels. The DFG offers a lump sum to cover reviewers' childcare costs to help address structural barriers to participation—particularly for researchers with caregiving responsibilities—and in recognition of historically male-dominated decision-making (DFG, 2023).

7.2 Promote transparency and accountability in decision-making processes and make power dynamics explicit.

Action: Strengthen transparency by clearly articulating review criteria, decision-making steps, and the roles of each actor involved in the funding decision-making process. Clarify how intersectional gender and equity considerations are weighted and addressed during proposal evaluation.

On the ground: The Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology applies transparent review criteria to strengthen gender equity in research funded by the National Fund for Advancing Science and Technology. Gender equality and equity are integral in national guidelines for managing research integrity, chairs, centres of excellence and postdoctoral research programs. The commission uses positive discrimination measures—for example, when male and female applicants receive equal scores, priority is given to women. The maximum eligible age for postdoctoral funding is also extended to 45 for women (compared to 40 for men), in recognition of the impact that caregiving and reproductive roles can have on career progression.



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7.3 Ensure the review committee includes subject-specific experts on intersectional gender and equity integration.

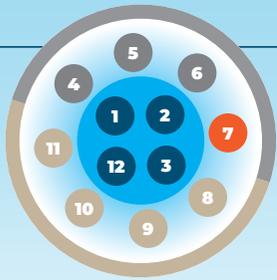
Action: Map existing experts from academia, civil society, and community organisations specialising in intersectional gender and equity considerations. Where necessary, pair equity experts with disciplinary specialists to ensure both methodological rigour and inclusive analysis are covered.

On the ground: The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has developed a targeted funding call to address health disparities in Indigenous and racialised communities. CIHR engaged reviewers with expertise in intersectional gender and health equity, including Indigenous scholars and advocates. By pairing equity-focused reviewers with disciplinary specialists in epidemiology and health systems research, CIHR ensured assessments were methodologically rigorous and contextually grounded (CIHR, 2023).

7.4 Include community or sector-based perspectives relevant to the call focus.

Action: For calls with a strong equity or community-engaged focus, integrate civil society or community-based actors into review committees. This action will foreground social impact, lived experience, and ethical considerations in funding decisions.

On the ground: The Other Foundation employs a peer review process that draws on activists and civil society actors from across Southern Africa to evaluate proposals. The foundation primarily funds research and initiatives focused on advancing human rights, social justice, and equality for marginalised groups. Reviewers are identified through a transparent nomination and application process that prioritises diversity and lived experience, helping to ensure funding decisions are grounded in community relevance and insight (Shastry, 2024)



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7.5 Provide committee members with evidence-based training on unconscious bias and relevant institutional policies or strategies.

Action: Provide committee members with structured training on unconscious bias, equity-informed evaluation, and any related organisational strategies or criteria that shape assessment.

On the ground: The Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology delivers training for review committee members on unconscious bias, gender equality, and equity-informed evaluation. The aim is to build evaluators' capacity to recognise systemic inequalities and evaluate research proposals through a gender and equity lens.

7.6 Prioritise research potential and relevance over narrow track-record metrics.

Action: Recognise how gendered, geographic, or disability-related inequities shape applicants' access to funding, career progression, and publishing opportunities. Evaluate proposals based on their relevance, innovation, and potential for impact, rather

than focusing narrowly on past outputs or institutional affiliations.

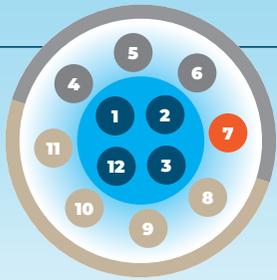
On the ground: The Technology Agency of the Czech Republic introduced extended eligibility periods for applicants with caring responsibilities. The agency also limits applicants to listing a maximum of five key research outputs, reducing bias associated with the quantity of past publications and promoting equity for researchers with less traditional career trajectories (Greithanner et al., 2025).

7.7 Provide constructive, transparent feedback to applicants, with attention to equity.

Action: Design feedback mechanisms that offer clear guidance on proposal strengths and areas for improvement. Use this as an opportunity to support learning and retention of underrepresented applicants.

On the ground: The Swedish Research Council offers coaching support for applicants who were not selected for funding, with particular attention to early-career researchers and those from underrepresented groups. This includes tailored feedback and guidance

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for resubmission, helping to reduce disengagement from the research funding ecosystem (Greithanner et al., 2025).

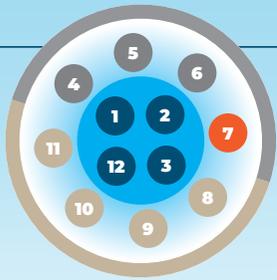
7.8 Create mechanisms to report and address bias or discriminatory conduct.

Action: Establish confidential and accessible mechanisms through which applicants or reviewers can report discriminatory conduct, biased reviews, or exclusionary patterns. Use this data to improve the review process.

On the ground: The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) implemented an equity, diversity, and inclusion action plan that established anonymous feedback channels for reporting bias or discrimination in grant assessments. Insights from these reports have been used to improve reviewer training, refine assessment criteria, adjust panel composition to enhance representation, and strengthen trust in the funding process (CIHR, 2024a).

Reflection questions

- How might you enhance the transparency and accountability of your review and selection processes?
- How might you more clearly demonstrate how equity considerations inform funding decisions?
- Whose perspectives and expertise shape the decisions you make?
- How might you bring more diverse, equity-informed voices into your review processes?
- What steps can you take to ensure your assessment processes account for structural barriers faced by marginalised researchers?
- What steps can you take to recognise diverse forms of excellence, innovation, and potential impact?



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Bias in peer review processes online training

An online module by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, designed to promote an understanding of bias, how it can affect the peer review process, and strategies for mitigating bias during the review process (CIHR, 2024b).

Use it for: Strengthening reviewer capacity to identify and address bias in the peer review process.

Access here:

- ◆ [Bias in Peer Review](#)

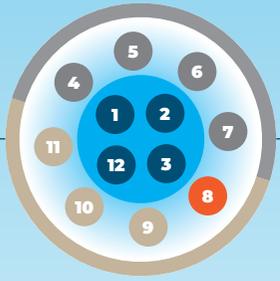
Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI) online training

What it is: A self-paced, bilingual (English/French) online course designed for institutional staff, reviewers, and applicants (Partnership for Economic Policy, 2024). Developed with a focus on African contexts, it covers why and how to integrate GEI in research, analyse social relations, use data to inform policy, and apply GEI across disciplines.

Use it for: Strengthening reviewer capacity to assess proposals through a GEI lens.

Access here:

- ◆ [Gender Equality and Inclusion \(GEI\) in research online training](#)



Domain 8

Contracting and grant agreements

WHY THIS MATTERS

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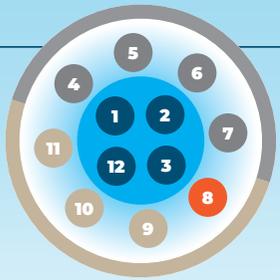
Principle: Uphold intersectional gender and equity values through grant agreements that support fair, inclusive partnerships and adapt to shifting local contexts.



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Why this matters

Contracting and grant agreements are not neutral instruments—they reflect the values and priorities of funding institutions. Embedding intersectional gender and equity principles into these agreements helps recalibrate power relations, ensure fair recognition of diverse contributions, and create enabling conditions for inclusive, context-responsive research (King et al., 2024).

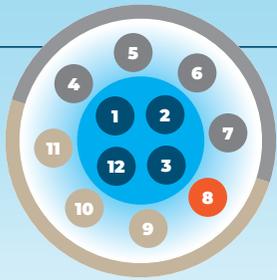
Conventional grant models often reinforce hierarchies, favour well-resourced institutions, and offer limited space for adaptation, which can constrain researchers'

ability to respond to changing social, political, or scientific contexts (King et al., 2024). In contrast, funding mechanisms that acknowledge and address institutional and individual asymmetries—such as caregiving responsibilities, uneven infrastructures, or evolving community dynamics—foster more just and grounded research processes (Charani et al., 2022; Global Research Council, 2019). Embedding these principles into the legal and financial architecture of funding is essential for enabling transformative knowledge production.



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Key actions

8.1 Embed equity principles in researcher, research team and institutional collaborations.

Action: Embed expectations for equitable collaboration directly into contracting and grant agreement processes. This includes recognising and addressing power asymmetries—particularly in international or unevenly resourced partnerships—by formalising shared decision-making structures, fair distribution of roles and credit, and equitable allocation of resources. When legal and financial requirements risk disproportionately burdening researchers or smaller institutions, provide supportive guidance and capacity-building to prevent compliance processes from reinforcing existing inequities.

On the ground: Acknowledging that standard funding procedures can unintentionally exclude less-resourced institutions, the UK National Institute for Health and Care Research adapted its contracting processes. These processes were revised to better align with the capacities of researchers based at smaller institutions in LMICs. It also introduced targeted support measures—such as simplified documentation, webinars, and development grants—

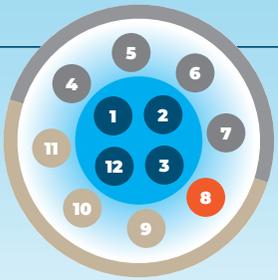
to broaden participation and ensure that compliance requirements do not disadvantage applicants with less institutional resources (NIHR, 2025).

8.2 Formalise fair terms for partnerships with community and equity-focused organisations.

Action: Use grant agreements to formalise equitable roles, responsibilities, and resource allocation in partnerships with civil society and community-based organisations—such as women’s rights groups or social justice movements—that bring essential contextual and equity expertise. Ensure these partners are recognised as core contributors rather than peripheral actors, with fair access to decision-making processes and funding.

On the ground: The UN Spotlight Initiative recognises women’s rights and community-based organisations as core partners in research and programming aimed at ending violence against women and girls. These organisations receive direct funding and are actively involved in shared decision-making and budget allocation. Grant agreements formalise these partnerships by outlining clear roles, transparent resource flows, and fair remuneration for civil society

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reference group members. To support consistent and equitable practice, Spotlight developed a Guidance Note on the Compensation of Civil Society Reference Groups, encouraging regional alignment in the inclusion of compensation in budgets (Spotlight Initiative, 2025).

8.3 Enable flexible funding that adapts to evolving research contexts and equity dynamics.

Action: Develop adaptive funding mechanisms that allow grantees to revise objectives, activities, or budget allocations in response to new insights or changing contexts—especially those impacting intersectional gender and equity factors—ensuring research remains contextually relevant and responsive throughout the grant period.

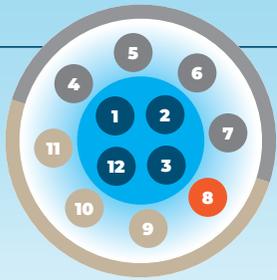
On the ground: The Collaborative for Equitable COVID-19 Response (CORE), developed during the pandemic, illustrates how flexible grant-making can support equity-oriented research. Through a closed call with grantees across the Global South, CORE supported shifts to objectives, budgets, and timelines with minimal bureaucracy as gendered and contextual dynamics evolved. Grant agreements

emphasised adaptability without compromising accountability. These agreements demonstrated how contracting can support responsive, socially grounded research. The initiative also highlighted the potential of hybrid models that balance the agility of closed calls with the diversity of open ones (Clark et al., 2022).

8.4 Make funding policies inclusive of researchers' life circumstances.

Action: Introduce provisions that accommodate changes in researchers' caregiving roles or health needs during the grant period—such as extensions, role-sharing, or supplemental funding—to retain diverse talent in the research ecosystem.

On the ground: the German Research Foundation (DFG) recognises that health needs and caregiving responsibilities—such as childcare and elder care—can affect academic careers. For this reason, they offer project extensions and additional staff funding to support researchers balancing these responsibilities alongside their research (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, n.d).



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Reflection and Resources



Reflection questions

- How do your current contracting and grant agreement processes address or overlook power imbalances between collaborating institutions?
- What changes could support more equitable and reciprocal research partnerships?
- How well do your current grant agreements enable researchers to respond to emerging contextual insights—such as new gender and equity findings or shifting social contexts?
- What risk mitigation strategies could you incorporate to support flexibility while maintaining accountability?
- How effectively do your funding policies accommodate researchers' diverse life circumstances?
- What contractual provisions could better support inclusion and retention across career stages and caregiving responsibilities?

Good practice guidance on equitable research partnerships

What it is: This good practice guidance offers practical insights on applying principles of equitable partnership in multi-country research consortia (ESSENCE on Health Research and UKCDR, 2022). It includes resources on funding procedures and contractual conditions and can be adapted for in-country partnerships.

Use it for: Designing or reviewing partnership models, funding procedures, and agreements to promote equity in research collaborations.

Access here:

- ◆ [Four Approaches to Supporting Equitable Research Partnerships](#)



Domain 9

Researcher capacity strengthening

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Principle: Invest in researchers' capacity to integrate intersectional gender and equity considerations across the full research cycle by providing tailored, sustained support.

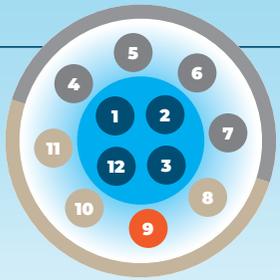


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Hildegalda Mushi and Bestina Daniel
- COSTECH, Tanzania



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Why this matters

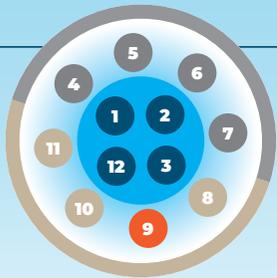
Science Granting Councils work within a research ecosystem where the projects they support inevitably carry gender and equity implications, especially those tied to national development priorities. Yet researchers often lack the tools, training, and ongoing support to meaningfully integrate these considerations into their study design, methods, and analysis (Baumann et al., 2022). This gap constrains their ability to produce nuanced, intersectional analyses and to generate evidence that contributes to equity and inclusion.

Beyond the grant application stage, sustained and tailored capacity-strengthening support empowers grantees to engage with intersectional gender and equity considerations across the full research cycle (Subramaniapillai et al., 2024). This reinforces the long-term quality, relevance, and impact of research.



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Key actions

9.1 Identify whose capacities, and in what areas, need strengthening to ensure support is relevant and responsive to researcher needs.

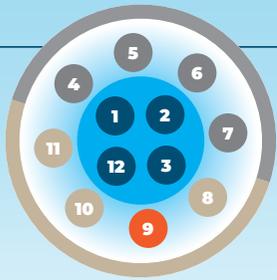
Action: Conduct a structured capacity needs assessment with researchers and institutions to identify capacity gaps and priority areas—such as roles, skills, and knowledge—that need strengthening to advance intersectional gender and equity integration.

On the ground: The Fundo Nacional de Investigaç o (FNI) in Mozambique undertook a structured process to identify capacity and participation gaps affecting women in research. This included dedicated workshops with women scientists to surface barriers to leadership and career progression, and to determine priority areas for support.

9.2 Provide resources for projects—across disciplines and subject areas—to conduct a full intersectional gender and equity context analysis at project inception.

Action: Ensure projects are supported to carry out an intersectional gender and equity context analysis during the inception phase. This support can be achieved by providing resources such as user-friendly toolkits and access to expert guidance or facilitation, helping to embed this lens in project design and planning.

On the ground: The Innovative Veterinary Solutions for Antimicrobial Resistance (InnoVet) programme offers grantees dedicated support from gender subject matter experts to carry out intersectional gender and equity context analyses during the inception phase. These analyses help research teams—including those in laboratory-based fields—identify social and structural factors that could shape the equitable uptake and impact of their innovations. Projects are better equipped to design interventions that address context-specific barriers and opportunities related to gender, geographic location, income, and other intersecting dimensions of inequality by embedding this analysis early on.



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9.3 Clarify and resource distinct roles for advancing gender and equity within projects.

Action: Require applicants to define and budget for both a gender and equity focal point (responsible for implementation and monitoring) and, where relevant, a subject-matter specialist (who shapes research design and focus), with clear responsibilities for each.

On the ground: The International Centre for Antimicrobial Solutions funds applicants to embed these dimensions into their antimicrobial resistance studies to support meaningful integration of intersectional gender and equity considerations into research. This includes appointing a gender and equity focal point responsible for implementation and monitoring, and, where relevant, involving a subject-matter specialist to help shape the research design.

9.4 Provide support, resources, and training for researchers to effectively engage end-users or research beneficiaries through collaborative, participatory, and dialogical methodologies.

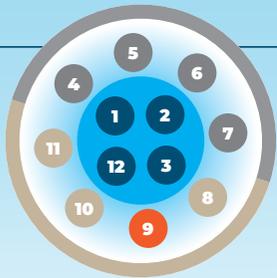
Action: Offer training and resources—such as an online learning repository or a PDF with active links—that equip researchers with practical skills to facilitate equitable, inclusive, and meaningful engagement with beneficiaries or end-users.

On the ground: The Fonds National de la Recherche et de l’Innovation pour le Développement (FONRID) in Burkina Faso established an online learning hub. The hub offers training modules and resources focused on participatory and inclusive engagement methodologies to equip researchers to collaborate authentically with diverse communities and ensure their perspectives shape the research.



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Reflection and Resources



Reflection questions

- How can you design post-award support that truly equips grantees to integrate intersectional gender and equity throughout their research—especially considering diverse capacity needs and resource limitations?
- In what ways are you leveraging external expertise and partnerships to supplement your own capacity-building efforts, ensuring researchers have access to quality gender and equity mentorship and tools?
- How can you support grantees to define clear, feasible roles for advancing gender and equity within their teams—such as coordination and subject-matter expertise?
- How can you ensure these roles are adequately resourced and embedded throughout the project?

(Also see the resources listed in Domain 6)

Jhpiego toolkit for conducting a gender and equity context analysis

What it is: A bilingual (English/French) toolkit developed by Jhpiego to guide gender and equity context analysis in health research, with relevance beyond the health sector (Jhpiego, 2020). It provides guiding questions across five key domains to support a project-level gender context analysis. It can also be supplemented with intersectionality-focused resources such as the WHO-TDR toolkit mentioned below.

Use it for: Strengthening researcher capacity to conduct a gender context analysis.

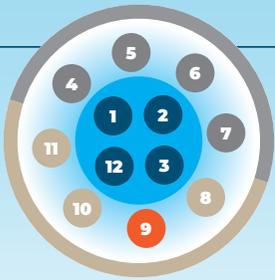
Access here:

◆ [Gender Analysis Toolkit for Health Systems](#)

WHO-TDR toolkit for applying intersectional gender analysis across a project cycle

What it is: A World Health Organisation (WHO) toolkit with online modules designed to support researchers in applying an intersectional gender approach to health research, with a focus on infectious diseases

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of poverty (WHO-TDR, 2020). While tailored to this context, it is equally relevant to broader health research and interventions.

Use it for: Strengthening researcher capacity to integrate intersectional gender analysis in research design, implementation, and evaluation.

Access here:

- ◆ [Incorporating intersectional gender analysis into research on infectious diseases of poverty: a toolkit for health researchers](#)

CRIAW toolkit for applying intersectional gender analysis across a project cycle

What it is: A toolkit developed by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) for policy and intervention implementation, with relevance for research (Khosla, 2021). It provides a systematic approach to examining how gender and other intersecting factors shape unequal impacts within both research methodologies and project contexts.

Use it for: Strengthening researcher capacity to apply intersectional analysis throughout the research cycle, from design to implementation and impact assessment.

Access here:

- ◆ [Gender Equality and Intersectional Analysis Toolkit](#)

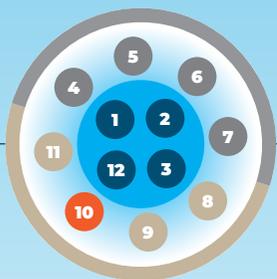
Supporting equitable access to writing and publication mentorship

What it is: Rising Scholars (formerly AuthorAID) is a free global network that supports researchers in the Global South through mentoring, training, and resources. It offers personal mentoring by experienced researchers and editors, online workshops on scientific writing, and access to tools and resources on writing and publication. The network also partners with institutions to build local capacity.

Use it for: Supporting grantees—particularly early career researchers—with equitable access to opportunities for strengthening writing skills, navigating the publication process, and building confidence through mentorship and peer learning.

Access here:

- ◆ [Rising Scholars](#)



Domain 10

Research uptake and use

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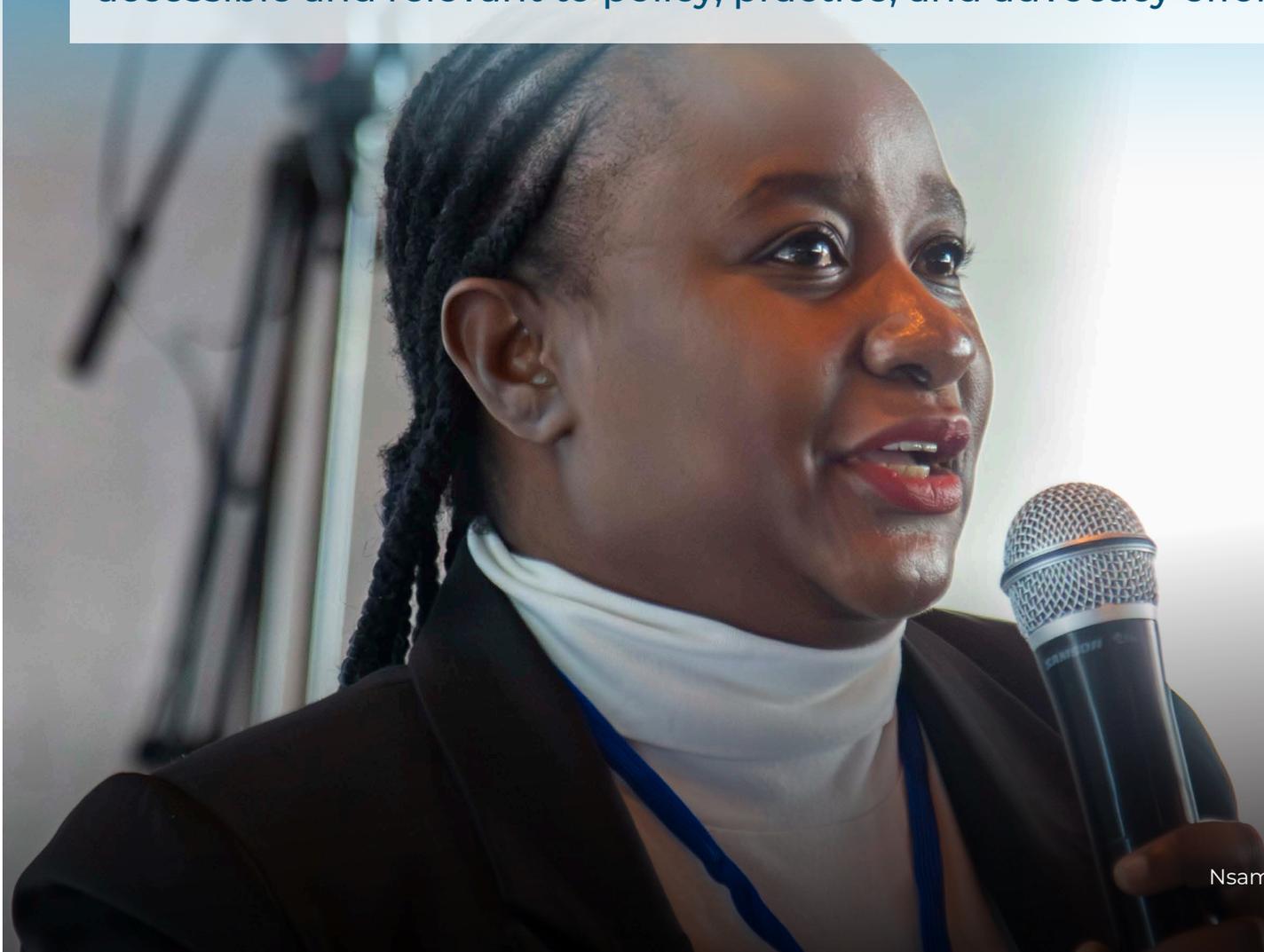
RESOURCES

Principle: Support equitable uptake of research by making findings accessible and relevant to policy, practice, and advocacy efforts.

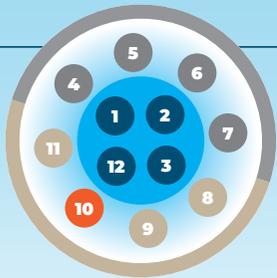


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Nsama Mataka—NSTC, Zambia



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Why this matters

Research has the greatest public value when its findings inform decisions, shape practice, and contribute to social change. However, without intentional strategies for uptake, valuable knowledge often fails to reach those best positioned to act on it—or those most affected by the issues under study.

Science Granting Councils are well positioned to advance inclusive and equity-responsive dissemination as publicly funded institutions

operating at the intersection of research, government, and policy. This includes supporting the accessibility of research findings for diverse user groups, including those historically marginalised in knowledge systems; facilitating meaningful engagement between researchers and decision-makers; and strengthening national frameworks that enable evidence use in ways that reflect social, gendered, and structural inequalities (Alvarez et al., 2019; Charani et al., 2022).

“ Many people within the council had not fully embraced the concept of gender. As council members, we needed to first strengthen our own capacities and better understand the concept of gender so that we can convey it at all necessary levels.

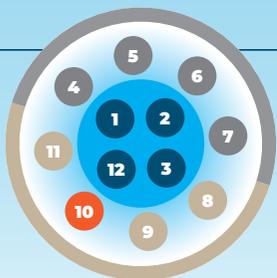


INOUSSA ZONGO—FONDS NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE ET DE L'INNOVATION POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT, BURKINA FASO



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Key actions

10.1 Promote equitable ownership of the data produced, ensuring all contributors have appropriate access and recognition.

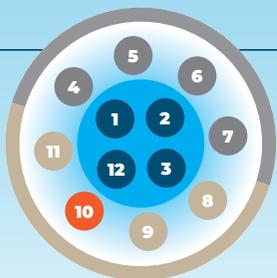
Action: Establish and enforce policies that uphold fair and transparent data governance, including co-ownership arrangements, clear recognition of all data contributors, and accessible data-sharing mechanisms. This strengthens trust and supports more equitable knowledge ecosystems.

On the ground: South Africa's standardised Data Transfer Agreement (SA DTA 1.1) supports equitable data sharing in collaborative research. It clearly defines ownership rights and access, for example, assigning ownership of raw data to one partner and analytical data to another, or enabling co-ownership between institutions (Thaldar et al., 2024). This framework ensures fair recognition and access for all contributors, promoting transparent and equitable data governance.

10.2 Fund publication of research findings in open-access journals.

Action: Make open-access publication a funding priority to ensure that research findings are freely available to diverse audiences, including policy actors, practitioners, and community organisations. This reduces barriers to knowledge use, especially in under-resourced contexts, and supports more inclusive and equitable research uptake.

On the ground: UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) supports its open access policy by providing funding to cover publication costs. Research organisations receive open access block grants to fund article publications, and UKRI also offers a dedicated fund to cover open access fees for long-form publications such as monographs and book chapters (UKRI, 2025). This approach ensures broader dissemination of publicly funded research.



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10.3 Fund dissemination activities that tailor knowledge translation to reach marginalised communities and address their specific needs.

Action: Resource context-sensitive dissemination strategies that go beyond academic outputs to include translation into local languages, accessible formats, and culturally resonant materials. This enables research to inform action among communities often excluded from policy processes and knowledge flows.

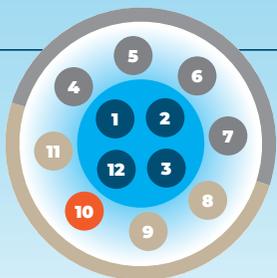
On the ground: As part of the Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women program, IDRC invested in a year-long process of collaborative knowledge translation. They worked alongside women in local communities, research partners, and documentary filmmakers. Together, they designed and produced three short films that portray women’s lived experiences with childcare access in Nairobi’s Korogocho informal settlement, mobility challenges in Pakistan, and early marriage in Bangladesh (Mullinax et al., 2018). This process moved beyond traditional academic dissemination by centring storytelling as a form of evidence, privileging women’s voices and

narrative agency. Crucially, IDRC backed this approach by resourcing the time and creativity required for inclusive and accessible translation of research findings—recognising that meaningful dissemination often requires innovative formats and sustained engagement.

10.4 Take an active knowledge broker role to promote inclusive and evidence-informed policy.

Action: Leverage a knowledge broker mandate to facilitate dialogue and sustained connections between researchers and decision-makers. Support researcher-policy engagement efforts that contribute to inclusive development and more equitable policy outcomes.

On the ground: The Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology in Ghana is strengthening its role as a knowledge broker between research and policymaking. Research funded by the Ministry is increasingly expected to generate actionable policy insights, particularly on the country’s inclusive development priorities.



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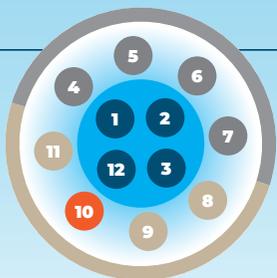
10.5 Strengthen national or sectoral frameworks to embed gender and equity in research uptake and impact.

Action: Support the development and implementation of national or sectoral frameworks that institutionalise gender and equity considerations in research dissemination, uptake, and impact assessment. This helps create an enabling environment for research to contribute meaningfully to inclusive development and transformative social change.

On the ground: The Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology secured Board approval to implement the National Framework for Mainstreaming Gender, Equality, and Equity in Research and Innovation. Among other objectives, the framework seeks to address systemic gender-based biases that limit access to and retention in research careers, influence resource allocation, and constrain participation across the entire research and innovation value chain. The framework ultimately aims to ensure a more equitable impact of research findings on policy, practice, and advocacy.

Reflection questions

- Who is currently benefiting from the research your institution supports?
- Whose voices might be missing in how findings are shared and used?
- How well equipped are researchers and partners to communicate their findings in ways that are meaningful and accessible to diverse audiences?
- In what ways does your organisation foster sustained, equity-oriented dialogue between evidence producers and those positioned to act on it in policy or practice?
- What formal or informal policies guide how your institution promotes the equitable impact of research beyond publication?
- Are these policies enough to drive lasting change?



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Applying a political economy lens to understand how power dynamics shape evidence use

What it is: Learning Brief 1 in this series—‘Understanding the demand and use of evidence in Ghana, Uganda and Pakistan through a political economy approach’—offers funders a practical methodology. This methodology can be applied to uncover how power dynamics influence whose evidence is considered credible, whose voices are prioritised in policymaking, and who ultimately benefits or is excluded from policy outcomes (Menon et al., 2021).

Use it for: Guiding internal reflection and strategic conversations to strengthen decision-making on partnerships, proposal assessments, funding priorities, and programme design—ensuring these are politically smart, equity-focused, inclusive, and grounded in the realities of institutions, systems, and power.

Access here:

- ◆ [Understanding the demand and use of evidence through a ‘political economy +’ approach: the SEDI experience in Ghana, Pakistan and Uganda](#)

Understanding systemic barriers to the effective use of inclusive evidence

What it is: Learning Brief 2—‘The political economy of evidence use in Ghana, Pakistan, and Uganda’—provides research funders with insights into how political, institutional, and cultural dynamics influence the production, use, and dissemination of evidence in three low and middle-income countries (Shaxson et al., 2021). It highlights the limitations of current approaches, including communications that treat marginalised groups as isolated categories, the weak integration of intersectionality, and the systemic barriers to the effective use of inclusive evidence.

Use it for: Strengthening strategic conversations within your organisation that explore how political, institutional, and cultural dynamics in your context influence the uptake of research. Use these insights to design research, dissemination, and uptake strategies that ensure evidence informs policy in ways that address structural inequalities and advance equity.

Access here:

- ◆ [The political economy of evidence use in Ghana, Pakistan, and Uganda: What SEDI has learned](#)



Domain 11

Project reporting and evaluation

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Principle: Use reporting as a learning tool by requiring and enabling grantees to reflect on intersectional gender and equity outcomes through meaningful, disaggregated data.

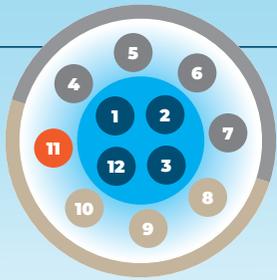


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GEI Workshop, July 2023, Cape Town



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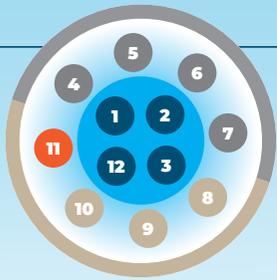
Why this matters

Project-level reporting and evaluation are crucial for Science Granting Councils to understand how intersectional gender and equity dynamics impact research outcomes within specific contexts. Councils can uncover inequities and unintended consequences that might otherwise remain invisible by collecting and reflecting on disaggregated data through grantee reporting. Grantee reporting also enables funders to ensure that grantees conduct research in a manner that is responsive to relevant gender and equity considerations.

Unclear grantee guidance, inflexible reporting templates, or indicators that fail to reflect local realities may reduce the impact of the proposed gender-integrated research (Alvarez et al., 2019; Schmidt & Graversen, 2020). Science Granting Councils should therefore establish precise, context-sensitive reporting requirements and actively use this data to inform ongoing evaluation. Doing so promotes continuous learning and improves future funding practices. When these efforts align with broader equity goals, project-level reporting and evaluation can significantly increase impact and help improve understanding of how to apply intersectional gender and equity principles effectively.



Djibril Yonli—FONRID, Burkina Faso



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Key actions

11.1 Make project-level reporting responsive to context-specific gender and equity dimensions.

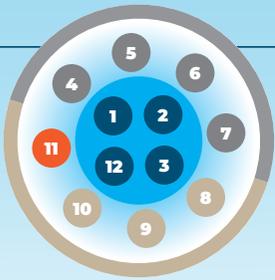
Action: Develop reporting and evaluation approaches that are adaptable to the varying intersectional gender and equity dynamics across project contexts. Build in enough flexibility for grantees to identify and reflect on the gendered and social factors most relevant to their setting. This flexibility will allow for meaningful engagement with local patterns of inequality and their influence on research processes and outcomes.

On the ground: The Climate Adaptation and Resilience research programme encourages each project to develop its own gender and equity objectives based on the social dynamics most relevant to its context—such as rural women’s access to informal livelihoods, the compounded exclusion of youth with disabilities, or barriers faced by displaced communities. A small set of shared indicators supports comparability across projects without limiting flexibility (FCDO & IDRC, 2025).

11.2 Provide clear and practical guidance for equity-focused reporting.

Action: Equip grantees with accessible, context-sensitive guidance on how to collect and report gender-related and equity-disaggregated data. Include illustrative indicators and examples and allow for both qualitative and quantitative data to reflect complex processes, experiences, and outcomes.

On the ground: The Canadian International Food Security Research Fund integrates equity considerations into project reporting by providing structured templates and tailored guidance. Grantees are prompted to report on gender-related data relevant to both research participants and research teams, such as women’s involvement in project activities and participation in gender training. The Fund also offers guidance on collecting and presenting data disaggregated by sex and other equity-relevant factors, such as age, disability, and income level (Wong et al., 2018).



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11.3 Align project reporting with broader program and institutional equity goals.

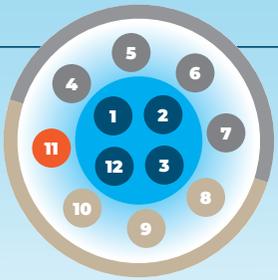
Action: Design project-level monitoring and evaluation tools to reflect and contribute to the gender and equity goals articulated in program strategies and institutional frameworks. This alignment ensures that context-specific insights feed into coherent program-wide learning and reinforce accountability for equity commitments.

On the ground: The Climate Adaptation and Resilience research programme aligns project-level reporting and broader programme equity goals through a multi-layered monitoring framework. This includes shared indicators and outcome markers, and a logframe embedded within the overall monitoring system. Projects report against their own GESI-related objectives, while contributing to programme-wide learning on equity by linking local strategies to shared performance metrics (CLARE, 2023).

11.4 Use reporting to support reflection and adaptive learning.

Action: Position project-level reporting and evaluation as opportunities for learning and adaptation—not only compliance. Use these processes to prompt critical reflection by grantees and councils alike, enabling course corrections, deeper insights, and more impactful equity integration over time.

On the ground: The Ford Foundation embeds learning into every stage of its gender and equity work. They implement annual reflection sessions and developmental evaluations to test assumptions, adapt strategies, and refine theories of change—starting at the programme level, where teams examine what worked, what did not, and why, based on lived experience and evidence rather than compliance. This learning is then shared across programmes through engagement with grantees and external experts, fostering a culture of reflection that deepens understanding and drives more impactful, equity-focused outcomes across the institution (Ford Foundation, 2025).



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Reflection and Resources



Reflection questions

- Which specific groups or identities are currently captured in project reporting data?
- Which relevant groups might be missing or overlooked due to reporting formats, data collection methods, or capacity gaps?
- How does your institution use project-level reporting to surface unexpected lessons about equity, power, or inclusion, rather than only tracking pre-set indicators?
- To what extent are reporting and evaluation processes enabling meaningful dialogue between grantees and your institution about what sector or discipline-specific intersectional gender and equity considerations look like in practice?

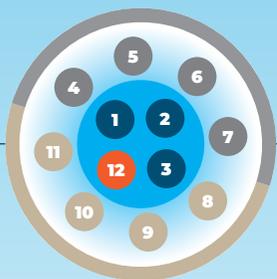
Framework for the integration and evaluation of inclusive gender analysis in research and innovation content

What it is: A European Commission guide for funders on policy measures to effectively integrate and evaluate gender and equity in research and innovation content, with an intersectional lens (European Commission, 2025). It covers the grant-making process, institutional change, and stakeholder engagement.

Use it for: For Domain 11, refer to Annex 2 for a helpful flowchart on integrating inclusive gender analysis into monitoring and evaluation during the project life cycle.

Access here:

- ◆ [Framework for the integration and evaluation of inclusive gender analysis in research and innovation content](#)



Domain 12

Grant-making strategy impact evaluation

WHY THIS MATTERS

KEY ACTIONS

REFLECTION

RESOURCES

Principle: Advance structural change in the research ecosystem by tracking and reflecting on the long-term impact of institutional strategies and funded projects.



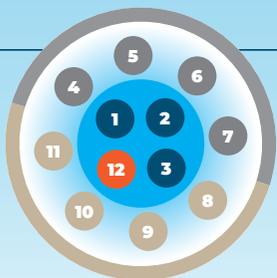
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Titus Kisangau—NRF, Kenya

DOMAIN 12



WHY THIS MATTERS

KEY ACTIONS

REFLECTION

RESOURCES

Why this matters

Robust impact evaluation enables Science Granting Councils to comprehensively assess how their institutional grant-making strategies contribute to advancing intersectional gender and equity integration across the research ecosystem. Councils can evaluate their influence on deeper structural shifts in research culture, institutional practices, and national policies by looking beyond short-term outputs and individual projects (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022; Hunt et al., 2022; King et al., 2024). This holistic understanding strengthens accountability, supports strategic learning, and guides continuous improvement of funding approaches.

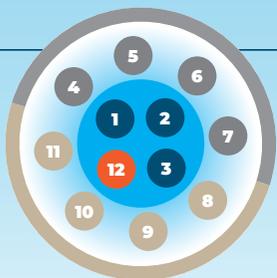
An evidence-based impact evaluation also enables councils to demonstrate measurable progress, refine priorities in response to emerging challenges and opportunities, and advocate effectively for sustained investment in equity-driven, transformative grant-making. Moreover, it fosters governance that is responsive to the evolving landscape of gender and equity considerations in science and innovation (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

As one of the framework's four institutional enablers, this domain supports long-term, system-wide and sustainable integration of intersectional gender and equity considerations.



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WHY THIS MATTERS

KEY ACTIONS

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Key actions

12.1 Monitor institutional change processes and outcomes in grant-making practices.

Action: Integrate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track how intersectional gender and equity commitments influence internal policies, practices, and decision-making within the funding institution—capturing progress, challenges, and adaptations over time.

On the ground: Research Ireland (formerly Science Foundation Ireland) published a review of gender-focused initiatives across its funding programmes since 2011. The review highlights those initiatives that have strengthened the representation of women in STEM (Fritch et al., 2019). The insights are used to track progress, inform ongoing improvements, and contribute to international best practice on gender equity in research funding.

12.2 Incorporate quantitative and qualitative data to track institutional progress.

Action: Use a balanced mix of quantitative metrics (e.g. disaggregated funding allocations) and qualitative insights (e.g. stories of organisational learning, shifts in power dynamics) to capture a

holistic picture of organisational progress and challenges.

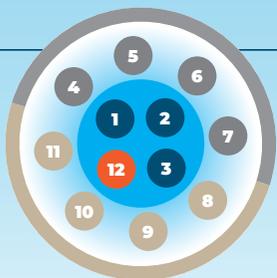
On the ground: The Swedish Research Council uses a qualitative tool—gender equality observations—to assess decision-making processes during grant review meetings. These observations are published and used to identify ways to improve procedures, guidance, and other aspects of the review process that can strengthen gender-equitable assessment of applications (Swedish Research Council, 2024).

12.3 Develop indicators that capture long-term, structural impact in broader research ecosystems.

Action: Establish outcome-focused indicators to measure how funded research and institutional grant-making influence broader systemic changes—including shifts in research leadership diversity, policy adoption, funding flows, and institutional cultures beyond your organisation.

On the ground: The Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology incorporates an assessment of host institutions’ existing gender policies into its pre-award process for prospective research and innovation

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WHY THIS MATTERS

KEY ACTIONS

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grants. This assessment generates data that enables tracking partner institutions' capacity growth over time, supporting continuous improvement in gender equity integration.

12.4 Facilitate collective learning with funders and researcher communities to improve equitable funding practices.

Action: Establish inclusive platforms and processes to share feedback and learning between your council, other funders, and research stakeholders. Use researchers' experiences to collectively inform and improve grant accessibility and equity.

On the ground: The Global Research Council's 2019 case study collection, Supporting Women in Research, emerged from a global process of joint reflection and learning. It brings together real-world examples of gender-focused policies, programs, and initiatives from funders across diverse institutional and cultural contexts. By sharing these experiences, the collection creates a platform for peer exchange and collective learning. This process encourages funders to reflect on their own practices, deepen mutual understanding, and draw lessons from others working at different

stages of gender and equity integration (Global Research Council, 2019).

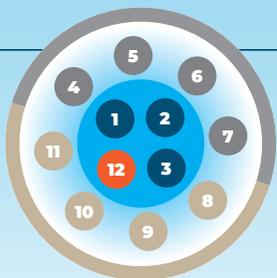
12.5 Conduct regular benchmarking of grant-making practices against peer funders.

Action: Conduct regular comparative assessments of your council's policies and practices against national and international peers. These assessments will identify strengths, gaps, and innovative approaches in embedding intersectional gender and equity principles.

On the ground: At a three-day Gender Equality and Inclusion Learning Workshop, councils participating in the Science Granting Councils Initiative shared their strategies for embedding gender and inclusion in research funding. This open exchange enabled councils to compare approaches, assess their own progress against regional peers, and identify innovative practices to strengthen their equity work. By engaging in this kind of peer benchmarking, councils are better positioned to identify both strengths and areas for growth in developing inclusive and equity-oriented research systems (Human Sciences Research Council, 2023).



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Reflection and Resources

Reflection questions

- How could your council benefit from systematically tracking the long-term impact of its grant-making on intersectional gender and equity?
- What evidence of structural change beyond your council have you observed?
- How can you identify which of your actions are potentially contributing to these changes?
- How actively does your institution engage with peer funders and research communities to challenge and improve your own funding practices around gender and equity?
- Whose voices and perspectives are absent from your impact tracking?
- How might including them deepen your understanding of what counts as progress and what needs improvement?

GEAR step-by-step guide for equity focused grant-making

What it is: A practical guide from the European Institute for Gender Equality to support research funders in applying an intersectional gender and equity lens to grant-making (AHRC, 2023).

Use it for: For Domain 12, refer to Step 5 for guidance on monitoring and evaluating the implementation of your strategy.

Access here:

- ◆ [AHRC equality, diversity and inclusion action plan: research and innovation by everyone, for everyone](#)

Conclusion

This framework brings a powerful Global South lens to transformative grant-making. It recognises that research ecosystems are not neutral but shaped by power and inequality and can be reshaped through deliberate, equity-driven action. Rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions, it provides adaptable principles that institutions can tailor to their priorities and contexts. Change doesn't happen overnight; it takes time, reflection, and persistence, but it starts with a bold commitment to do things differently. Science Granting Councils are in a unique position to lead this shift, transforming not just their internal practices but also the broader cultures of research. By stepping into this role, they can help ensure that public investments in science truly work for everyone.



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