Building a data collection culture with Dimensions: equity, diversity and inclusion Canada

Karine Morin
Director, Policy and Interagency Affairs, NSERC

Nathalie Podeszfsinski
Project Manager, Dimensions

Next Generation EDI Data Symposium – University of Calgary
April 11, 2022
Dimensions: A Tri-agency initiative

- CIHR IRSC: Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- NSERC: Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada
- SSHRC: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Dimensions
Equity, diversity and inclusion Canada
What is Dimensions?

2 parts:
- Charter of 8 principles
- Recognition scheme

“To advance institutional equity, diversity and inclusion, specific, measurable and sustainable actions are needed to counter systemic barriers, explicit and unconscious biases, and inequities.”

*Dimensions Charter (Principle 2)*
A broad scope

Equity-deserving groups including, but not limited to:
- Women
- Indigenous Peoples
- Persons with disabilities
- Members of visible minority/racialized groups
- Members of LGBTQ2+ communities

- Colleges
- Cégeps
- Polytechnics
- Universities

- Sciences
- Engineering
- Humanities
- Health
- All!
Objectives

- Foster transformational change within the research ecosystem across Canadian post-secondary institutions by identifying and eliminating obstacles and inequities.

Specifically:
- Create a culture of critical self-reflection related to EDI;
- Support evidence-based EDI work, using both qualitative and quantitative data;
- Address key challenges that present barriers to research career progression;
- Foster a community of practice that shares promising practices and resources.
140 charter endorsements

- 75 universities
- 25 colleges
- 1 polytechnic
- 29 other (organizations/networks)
- 10 government departments
- Representation from across the country
An Inclusive Assessment Approach

3 principles:

1. **Voices**

2. **Mutuality**
   - Central to participation in the Dimensions program
   - An institution’s commitment to this work is not just a commitment to itself, but to the research community as a whole

3. **Context-specific**
Voices

• Meant as a metaphor
• At the center of the engagement strategy
• Representatives of underrepresented groups should be involved in the application process
Quantitative and qualitative tools building evidence and storytelling

- Different tools should be used as the voices are different.
- More tools will bring a better picture of the institution.
- Should be employed with the goal of telling stories, drawn from the institution’s research community.
Institutions should then use various tools to build the evidence and tell the story.

Provides not only a numerical but an experiential picture.
Throughout the Dimensions process the context in which an institution is operating is considered.

Inclusive of institutions of varying types, sizes, and locations confronting different challenges and opportunities.
Inclusive Assessment

• Created using an ‘inclusive-by-design’ process.
• Holistic approach.
Recognition Scheme

• Institutions will be able to apply to four recognition stages
• Increasingly comprehensive data requirements

• Four stages:
  o Stage 1 – Foundation
  o Stage 2 – Construction
  o Stage 3 – Consolidation
  o Stage 4 – Transformation
EDI data is driving the Dimensions program

“Institutions require qualitative and quantitative data to measure, monitor, understand and publicly report on challenges and progress made.”

*Dimensions Charter (Principle 3)*

- **Significance of demographic data**
  - Tri-agency self-identification questionnaire
Reporting data and using it to take action

• Dimensions action plan
  o Data and engagements as the basis for initiatives and activities
  o Communication findings to internal and external communities
Data-related challenges

Preliminary insights from the Dimensions cohort

• Benchmarking and comparing data
  o Metrics changing over time
  o No framework or established baseline to compare data across the Canadian post-secondary system

• Where data is located in institutions
  o Centralized vs. decentralized
Data-related challenges
Preliminary insights from the Dimensions cohort

• Data governance and privacy
  o How data is collected, managed, used, and stored

• Emotional labour/overburdening communities

• Communicating data
Data-related opportunities of Dimensions

- **Community of practice**
  - Sharing of promising practices across institutions

- **Knowledge-sharing on EDI data**
  - Dimensions handbook
  - Workshops, working groups, and webinars

- **Expansion of UCASS (Universities and Colleges Academic Staff System)**
Questions?

Email us | DimensionsEDI@nserc-crsng.gc.ca