

50-30 Challenge Guidebook for Co-operative Leaders



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INTRODUCTION

Message to the Reader

Welcome to the 50-30 Challenge Guidebook for Co-operative Leaders. Whether you are a key decision maker, a leader shaping strategy, or an individual committed to fostering change, you'll find insights for establishing meaningful diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives and links to further resources.

Structured into three primary sections:

1 Setting Context

2 Taking Action

3 Sustaining Change

This guidebook is tailored to support you and your organization to understand the current situation for diversity, equity, and inclusion in co-operative leadership in Canada and navigate resources effectively.

This guidebook integrates key insights and tools resulting from the 50-30 Challenge, a national initiative to promote diversity in leadership. The information provided in this guidebook serves as a starting point for those who want to become agents of change and contribute to the shift needed to achieve gender and racial equity in co-operative leadership.




The 50-30 Challenge

The 50-30 Challenge is an initiative co-created by Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada (ISED), Canadian businesses, and civil society organizations that aims to attain gender parity and significant representation (30%) of underrepresented groups on boards and senior management positions in order to build a more diverse, inclusive, and vibrant economic future for Canadians.

The initiative encouraged Canadian organizations to sign up to the Challenge and aspire to two goals:

- Gender parity (50% women and/or non-binary people) on Canadian boards and/or in senior management
- Significant representation (30%) on Canadian boards and/or senior management of members of other equity-deserving groups, including those who identify as Racialized, Black, and/or People of colour, People with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ and/or gender and sexually diverse individuals, and Aboriginal and/or Indigenous Peoples. The program and participants recognize Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit, as founding Peoples of Canada and underrepresented in positions of economic influence and leadership.





Launched in 2022, the five ecosystem partners were tasked with creating training programs and resources to support the 50-30 Challenge initiative and promote the What Works Toolkit (WWTK) which includes information and resources for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Women's Economic Council (WEC), identified as one of the five Ecosystem Partners, engaged with partners from the co-operative sector (including CMC) and organizations representing equity deserving groups (EDGs) across various specialty areas from across Canada to form an advisory committee, the Challenge Council, to collectively work toward the goals of the 50-30 Challenge initiative. WEC and Challenge Council partners developed training streams, activities, and resources in support of the initiative.



Part 1: Setting Context

This section provides information on the Canadian co-operative diversity, equity and inclusion context, language such as Gender, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) that was used in the initiative, and strategies for reframing the conversation going forth.

Call to Action

Understanding the historical and contemporary context in which your organization operates, and how your organization is performing in relation to this context, is crucial.

Organizations can use various approaches, such as building internal libraries, incorporating context into meeting check-ins, conducting training, and more, to educate their staff and communities.

1.1 The Canadian Context

To develop governance and leadership strategies that promote equity, we must challenge the ingrained assumptions and dynamics that shape our work and boardroom cultures in Canada. Sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression permeates systems in Canada, affecting hiring practices, support for oppressed job seekers, and training programs. Many systems in Canada are built on colonial, patriarchal, and white supremacist legacies, and their pervasive nature often normalizes discriminatory practices in workplaces.

When asked about challenges and pain points, and ‘why has progress been so slow’ in making progress towards equity and inclusion, leaders and staff teams have noted or asked the following:



WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

This is an opportunity to check our biases and explore how our thoughts and behaviors maintain inequities.



ARE WE DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY?

Good intentions need to become planned actions which effect and sustain meaningful change.




WHERE DO WE START?

We need capacity for conversations about power and privilege with vulnerability, learning, and empathy.

The legacy of colonization and systems of oppression continues to impact Canadian society. There is a prevailing belief that we have overcome these issues, and while there is a strong emphasis on diversity, there is often a lack of focus on a more holistic picture of equity, inclusion, power, and privilege. Gender equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression efforts have not been fully integrated or embedded into our daily work practices, highlighting the need for more comprehensive and sustained efforts to address these deep-rooted issues.

The Canadian government introduced the 50-30 Challenge as an initiative to build on the 2018 amendments to the Canada Business Corporations Act which require distributing companies to report on leadership diversity. In Canada, representation of equity deserving groups in leadership remains a significant issue, including for women, racialized individuals, LGBTQ2+ persons, First Nations, Inuit, Métis peoples, and people with disabilities.



The Canadian government collects and releases data which gives a snapshot of the Canadian landscape, baseline information for monitoring goals, and comparative information for the co-operative sector:

Diversity of Boards of Directors and Senior Management of Federal Distributing Corporations – Canadian Business Corporations Act Distribution Corporation - ISED, 2023

- According to the Canada Business Corporations Act (CBCA), distributing corporations must report to shareholders and Corporations Canada on the representation equity deserving groups within boards and senior management.

Financing and Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises – ISED, 2020


- Majority ownership by diverse groups:

-Indigenous persons: SMEs 1.1% / Co-op 5.0%
-Visible minority: SMEs 9.3% / Co-ops 2.3%
-Person(s) with a disability: SMEs 0.6% / Co-ops 0.6%

- Majority ownership by gender:

-Majority men-owned: SMEs 68.9% / Co-ops 67.9%
-Equally owned: SMEs 14.3% / Co-ops 20.6%
-Majority women-owned: SMEs 16.8% / Co-ops 11.5%

Organizations, such as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce release reports analyzing Government data and other reliable sources:



Barely Breaking Ground: The Slow Stride of Progress for Women in Business Leadership and Entrepreneurship – The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 2024

- Only 20% of board seats and 36% of senior management positions are held by women despite women making up nearly 50% of the workforce. This same data showed that visible minorities hold approximately 16% of board positions, which is below their representation in the general Canadian population.

1.2 The Co-operative Context

The co-operative model offers an alternative to traditional shareholder business models, yet most non-worker co-operatives use conventional management structures, which can result in similar barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion in leadership as other types of organizations in Canada. The Co-operative Principles maintained by the International Cooperative Alliance, provide a shared identity for co-operatives, and some of these features are reflected in the Canadian Co-operative Act.

The data available highlights disparities for equity deserving groups in meaningful leadership positions in co-operatives. The co-operative model has features that align with diversity, equity, and inclusion goals, such as principles for shared ownership, inclusive governance, and education. In some cases, the data available displays co-operatives outperforming traditional SMEs in some aspects of diverse group ownership.

In addition to some of the data sources mentioned above, there are organizations releasing reports tailored for the co-operative sector:

Co-ops and Credit Unions, Report from the Board Room – Canadian Center for the Study of Co-operatives; University of Saskatchewan, 2023

- Questions pertaining to GEDI are included, this data from 2023 reflects only the 114, majority consumer co-operatives from Western Canada.

- 33% reported had diversity targets for the board
- 91% report having no persons with disabilities on their boards
- 81% reported having no one who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, nonbinary, or two-spirited
- Average of 3 female members on their boards of directors which would equate to about 33% of an average co-op board
 - This is higher than an average of 21.6% of a corporate board (Statistics Canada 2022)
- 77% reported having no directors who are part of a visible minority group; 19% reported only 1 director
- 81% reported having no Indigenous directors
- 21 % reported evaluating gender representation on the board, the least common indicator evaluated

Despite a co-operative advantage at times, gaps remain in diversity, equity, and inclusion in co-operative leadership in Canada. By leveraging the data available and investing in improved data, co-operatives can access meaningful baseline and comparative information for monitoring ongoing goals.





1.3 The GEDI Context

Reviewing GEDI terminology as a team helps to build a common language and understanding of the concepts in relation to the context of your work. There are many ways to explain and describe these concepts, as a result you and your team are encouraged to research alternative definitions or visuals that better align with your work. It is recommended that you refer to the list of references The Canadian Center Diversity Institute's [Glossary of Terms](#) and Appendix C for more examples of sources.

GEDI is a framing of the more widely known JEDI – Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, which was adopted by some of the ISED 50-30 Challenge Partners to highlight the gender equality emphasis of the project.

Gender

Broadly, gender is a set of socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate.


(Source: [racialequitytools](#))

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society deems masculine, feminine, or androgynous. The concept of gender is often confused with the concept of sex. These are two distinct yet related facets of a person. Ideas around gender vary throughout history, cultures, and contexts. Neither sex nor gender is binary.

(Source: [Feminuity](#))

Equity

Equity involves the creation of opportunities for historically, personally, or



systematically marginalized populations to have equal access to education and growth opportunities for closing achievement gaps.
(Source: [UBC](#))

Diversity

Diversity is meant to convey the existence of difference. Diversity is created when people who are different from one another come together and includes everyone in the room.
(Source: [UBC](#))


Inclusion

Inclusion is an active, intentional, and continuous process to address inequities in power and privilege, and build a respectful community that ensures welcoming spaces and opportunities to flourish for all.
(Source: [UBC](#))

1.4 Reframing the Path Forward

Leaders have long directed their attention on enhancing diversity and representation as the means to address inequities. Despite these efforts, the desired equitable outcomes have not been realized. It is imperative to recalibrate our mindset, strategies, and practices related to gender and racial equity. Despite these efforts, the desired equitable outcomes have not been realized.

It's time to reframe the path forward by focusing on:

- 
- Language and understanding of GEDI,
 - Approaches to GEDI,
 - Maintaining meaningful and empathy centered relationships,
 - Taking accountability.

1.4.1 Reframing our language and understanding of GEDI


Creating and using shared language and glossaries is essential for ensuring that your team or organization can communicate effectively and discuss the context and nuances of current situations and the structures, practices and systems you are trying to change.

It's important to acknowledge that language and terminology are always changing, thus conversations about terminology and concepts are also ongoing and evolving. This means embracing a more inclusive and nuanced dialogue that recognizes the diverse experiences and identities of individuals. By acknowledging the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, we can better address the systemic inequities that impact marginalized communities.

1.4.2 Reframing our approach to GEDI

Understanding our own biases and perspectives is key to fostering inclusivity. Self-awareness allows us to question our assumptions, challenge prejudices, and foster empathy, allowing us to better advocate for systemic changes and equitable practices in our communities and workplaces.

Fostering an environment of continuous learning and unlearning is crucial. This means engaging in ongoing education about the histories and current realities of oppressed groups and being open to challenging our own power and privileges. Leaders must model this behavior and encourage their teams to do the same.



Policy changes are also essential to advancing equity. Institutions must implement and enforce equitable practices to ensure that equity deserving groups are represented, heard and valued. This includes revisiting hiring practices, promoting diverse leadership, and building inclusive environments.

1.4.3 Reframe our relationships

Community involvement is another vital component. Marginalized communities must not only be heard, but have their experiences centered and respected, and be actively included in decision-making processes. Building trust and mutually beneficial relationships with diverse populations involves actively listening, participating in community events, and sharing organizational goals.

Striving for mutually beneficial or community benefiting relationships can mitigate extractive relationships. Maintaining an ongoing connection, by sharing how contributions are used and ongoing engagement, can create positive feedback loops.

1.4.4 Reframing accountability

When working towards GEDI, leaders and teams are encouraged to explore individual and collective accountability as part of an ongoing practice. This might include setting measurable goals, regularly reviewing and reporting on these goals, holding ourselves and our institutions accountable for making improvements, being transparent about both progress and setbacks, and seeking feedback from those who are most impacted by inequity.

To create a sustainable and ongoing GEDI practice, leaders and staff teams need to be aware of their personal “why” and their organizational “why” for prioritizing this work.



1.5 Examining Unconscious Bias and Microaggressions

While we have explored some broad contexts, such as the Canadian and co-operative landscapes, it is equally important to address how these systemic factors manifest in daily life through unconscious bias and microaggressions. If we don't pause to explore our thoughts and behaviors, then we are likely to perpetuate harmful and exploitative practices.

As noted in this guidebook, self-reflection or self-awareness might include a review and dialogue about the power and privilege you hold, your social location, your relationships to a diversity of groups, and how and where bias and (micro)aggressions show up in your life. It is important to not just pause and reflect on these things, but to also create a plan and rituals to help you to identify, stop and shift into new behaviors that create equity and inclusion. There are different types of bias, below are a few of the biases that impact workplaces and leadership decisions.

Unconscious Bias

“Neuroscience has shown that people can identify another person's apparent race, gender and age in a matter of milliseconds. In this blink of an eye, a complex network of stereotypes, emotional prejudices and behavioral impulses activates.”

- Susan T. Fiske, Ph.D.
(Professor of Psychology, Princeton University)

Bias

A conscious (explicit) or unconscious (implicit) opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination, formed without reasonable justification, that prevents a balanced or even-handed judgement.

Affinity Bias

People's tendency to connect with individuals most like themselves.

Confirmation Bias

Only noticing or accepting information that aligns with current beliefs.

Ingroup Bias/ Ingroup Favouritism

People's tendency to favour, prefer, and uplift the group that they are a member of.

Outgroup Bias

The tendency to view people from outside of one's group unfavourably.

(Source: [CCDI](#))

Research in behavioral science and cognitive psychology identifies the following list of 4 Key Conditions which Contribute to Biases in Decision-Making:



STRESS

Clouds judgment and leads to impulsive decision-making. Individuals may rely on shortcuts and heuristics, increasing the chance of biases influencing decisions.



MULTI-TASKING

Overwhelms the brain's cognitive resources and makes it more susceptible to biases. Can lower attention to each decision, leading to suboptimal choices.



NEED FOR CLOSURE

Drives individuals to overlook or not seek relevant information or perspectives instead of using more information and time for deliberation.



TIME CONSTRAINTS

Expedites process and individuals may rely on mental shortcuts or previous experiences instead of analysis and consideration of all factors.

By understanding these key conditions that contribute to biases in decision-making, individuals and organizations can try to make more informed choices.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions

The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

(Source: [racialequitytools](#))

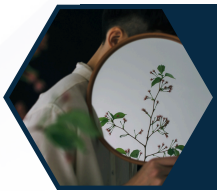
Microaggressions

Small interactions with people or the environment that expose bias towards marginalized groups. While microaggressions may be unintentional, they can have cumulative negative effects on an individual's well-being and sense of belonging. Examples include asking a person of colour, "where are you really from?" or a woman in a meeting being repeatedly spoken over or dismissed by a male colleague.

(Source: [CCDI](#))

Addressing Bias and Microaggressions

Build a habit of Identifying, Observing and Removing Biases and Microaggressions. Consider learning more about how bias and microaggressions show up in workplaces. Resources such as 'The Micropedia' can be used to explore microaggressions and their impact.



ONGOING REFLECTION

Establish a culture of ongoing reflection on diversity, equity, and inclusion.



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Provide training opportunities for staff and board members on anti-racism and inclusion.



FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Implement feedback mechanisms for board members, staff, and applicants to provide input on the recruitment process.

Actively exploring unconscious bias and microaggressions, and practicing behaviors that remove these behaviors from decision-making and program design promotes inclusivity, and can have an impact on equity goals, professional relationships, team culture, and productivity.



Reflection Questions - Part 1: Set Context

1.1 The Canadian Context

- How is your organization responding to Canada's legacies of colonialism and systematic oppression? How would you like to see your organization respond?

1.2 The Co-operative Context

- What does the leadership in the management and Board look like in your co-operative demographically? Does your organization meet the 50-30 goals?

1.3 The GEDI Context

- What are strategies that you can use to remain alert and observant to power dynamics, privileged narratives, and societal norms?
- Is your organization employing any tactics or initiatives to dismantle the status quo?
- What opportunities and challenges exist? What do you need to advance your work?

1.4 Reframing the GEDI Path Forward

- What is your why for building an equity and inclusion practice?
- What is your collective "why"?

1.5 Examining Unconscious Bias and Microaggressions

- How have you seen unexamined bias show up in recruitment, hiring, retention, decision making or succession planning?
- How might you collectively mitigate bias and microaggressions?

Part 2: Take Action

With context covered about Canada, co-operatives and GEDI, Part 2 will delve into areas to Take Action and provide you with strategies, tools, and links to further reading. This section will provide you information on Allyship, Active Engagement, Inclusive Recruitment, and Inclusive Retention as actionable steps toward GEDI in your organization.

Call to Action

Planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating create a multi-step feedback process for designing meaningful activities to promote GEDI in organizations. Organizations must first consider how they are performing and then create tangible and trackable plans to reach goals.

Organizations can use various approaches, such as hosting workshops, developing mentorship and sponsorship programs, reviewing recruitment materials and policies, providing bias training for hiring teams, working with organizations that support equity-deserving communities, and promoting professional development.





2.1 Allyship and Active Engagement

The leadership skills that will be prioritized over the next ten years include the ability to create greater inclusivity, belonging and equitable outcomes in the workplace, empathy, the ability to facilitate complex conversations, and the capacity to sustain collective equity actions and accountability.

The Inclusive Leadership Report by Catalyst underscores the importance of leaders who actively cultivate environments where diverse perspectives are valued and integrated into decision-making processes.

Key Characteristics of Inclusive Leaders

- **Empathy and Understanding:** Sensitive to diverse viewpoints and customize their approach.
- **Courage to Challenge the Status Quo:** Questions and disrupt existing norms that may obstruct inclusivity, even when it involves risks or potential pushback.
- **Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion:** Ensures that diversity is woven into the fabric of their organizational practices.
- **Awareness of Bias:** Fosters an environment that encourages open discussions about bias and discrimination, allowing team members to engage in honest dialogue.
- **Active Listening:** Incorporates a wide array of viewpoints into the culture and decision-making.
- **Sponsorship and Mentorship:** Prioritizes giving mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, especially for equity deserving groups, for professional advancement.

(Source: [Catalyst](#))



Ultimately, the report emphasizes that inclusive leadership is essential for creating diverse, equitable, and innovative organizations where all employees feel valued and empowered to contribute. We can also look at these inclusive leader characteristics from a lens of allyship, as there are similarities.

Allyship

Rooted in the term “alliance”, and ally is an individual in a position of privilege or power who makes consistent efforts to understand, uplift, empower, and support equity deserving groups. An ally is not a member of the group, but seeks to stand in solidarity with an equity deserving group to end oppression, discrimination and/or prejudice.

(Source: [CCDI](#))

Advocacy

Acting in service of a cause, and the people it affects, to influence decision-makers and decision-making.

(Source: [Catalyst](#))

The terms "Ally," "Allyship," and "Advocacy" share a consistent focus on the commitment to support and uplift groups denied equity. Each term emphasizes the importance of awareness of privilege, which involves recognizing personal privilege and the responsibility that accompanies it. They also highlight the necessity of active engagement, requiring active participation and consistent effort, and solidarity, working collaboratively towards justice and equity. Ultimately, all these ideas underscore the importance of using one's privilege to support others and drive social change.



2.2 Inclusive Recruitment Strategies

Implementing inclusive recruitment practices is critical to increasing the diversity of members on boards and in leadership teams. When considering equity-deserving groups, we must acknowledge the individual, organizational, and systemic barriers that impact their career options and experiences of inclusion in the workplace. Inclusive recruitment strategies help identify and address these barriers, challenge hiring processes informed by unconscious biases, and redefine power and leadership. Below is a brief list of considerations and promising practices related to inclusive recruitment.


2.2.1. Language Matters

- **Clear Language:** Avoid jargon and technical terms that can intimidate candidates. Use neutral and thoughtful language to enhance outreach efforts.
- **Review for Bias:** Regularly review recruitment materials and communications for biased language.
- **Tailor Messaging:** Involve diverse individuals in creating job ads to uncover and remove deterrent language. Tailor messaging to resonate with diverse communities.

2.2.2 Remove Unnecessary Qualifiers

- **Core Competencies:** Prioritize relevant experience and specific skills over rigid requirements like specific degrees or years of experience.
- **Transferable Skills:** Emphasize transferable skills from various experiences to widen the applicant pool.

2.2.3 Accessibility

- 
- **Options and Accommodations:** Ensure recruitment materials and processes are accessible by offering multiple formats. Ask about interview accommodation needs and offer alternative formats like video or phone interviews. Include remote work options in postings to increase accessibility for candidates with mobility challenges.

2.2.4 Train the Hiring Team

- **Bias Training:** Developing systems and training for recruitment teams to recognize and mitigate biases during the hiring process.
- **Structured Interviews:** Use standardized questions and evaluation criteria to ensure fairness and consistency.
- **Transparency:** Clearly communicate timelines, stages, and expectations throughout the hiring process.

2.2.5 Develop partnerships

- **Build Trust:** Partner with organizations that have close ties with equity-deserving communities and build meaningful relationships. Use insights from partners to develop tailored recruitment strategies.
- **Outreach:** Actively reach out to diverse communities through various channels (e.g., social media, job fairs).

2.2.6 Learn and evaluate

- **Continuous Improvement:** Design a platform for candidates to provide feedback on their hiring
- **Regular Assessments:** Conduct regular assessments to identify and address biases in the hiring process.



2.3 Inclusive Retention Strategies

The following sections combine insights on professional development strategies, mentorship, and sponsorship to create a comprehensive approach to building inclusive environments. By implementing the strategies outlined in this toolkit, organizations can cultivate a culture of support, learning, and advancement for all individuals. .

2.3.1 Professional Development Strategies

- **Prioritizing Courses:** Identify key areas for professional development based on organizational goals and individual needs. Explore diverse sources of knowledge and platforms for learning, including online courses, webinars, and workshops.
- **Transparent Communication:** Establish clear channels for communicating professional development opportunities to all staff and volunteers. Ensure that resources and processes for accessing opportunities are easily accessible and well-communicated.

2.3.2 Mentorship and Sponsorship

- **Understanding Mentorship and Sponsorship:** Mentorship is an advisory relationship focused on sharing knowledge and problem-solving. Sponsorship is an endorsement and advocacy relationship aimed at promoting career advancement.
- **Types of Mentorship:** Explore various forms of mentorship, including one-on-one, group mentoring, reverse mentorship, manually matched, and self-matched mentorship. Highlight the benefits and considerations of each type to help organizations determine the best fit for their context.
- **Sponsorship Tactics (ABCD):**



Amplify: Spread awareness and speak positively about sponsorees' accomplishments and interests.

Boost: Provide formal support by writing recommendation letters, nominating sponsorees for opportunities, and facilitating networking connections.

Connect: Introduce sponsorees to new networks and opportunities to increase their visibility and connections.

Defend: Stand up against microaggressions and address issues of harm to ensure the well-being and advancement of sponsorees.

Reflection Questions - Part 2: Take Action

2.1 Allyship and Active Engagement

- How does the definition of Inclusive Leadership or Allyship inform your thinking and practices related to leadership?
- Can you share any recent examples of allyship that you have witnessed in your workplace or in the sector?
- When we think about workplace norms and expectations, what does active allyship look like? What specific practices might we consider?

2.2 Inclusive Recruitment

- How can your organization improve its recruitment practices to be more inclusive?
- What biases might exist in your current hiring process?

2.3 Inclusive Retention

- How can your organization support professional development for all employees?
- What types of mentorship would be most beneficial for your team?
- How can sponsorship help address barriers faced by equity-deserving groups? Have you seen it in action?

Part 3: Sustaining Change

Snapshots from Co-operatives

With actionable steps toward meaningful work on diversity and inclusion in organizations covered, this next section will draw from Canadian co-operatives to provide snapshots of meaningful actions that sustain change through Leadership Buy In, Growing the Community, and A Networked Approach. Organizations need to consider a change management approach to GEDI work to ensure the momentum for change is maintained.

Call to Action


Maintaining the momentum of this work is crucial for sustainability and contributing to larger systems change over time.

Organizations can do this through various activities, such as ensuring regular time at leadership meetings being dedicated to discussing GEDI, developing accountability structures, regularly communicating milestones, investing in community engagement and local initiatives, and leveraging co-op and GEDI networks for support, collaboration, communities of practices, or peer to peer learning.

3.1 Leadership and Member Buy In

Prioritizing GEDI through co-operative governance, management, and membership requires understanding and buy-in at leadership levels.





Using the 50-30 Challenge as an example, signaling and resources by the Government and wider economy can be a powerful tool for justifying action to leaders. Throughout the program, there have been various examples of ways to promote leadership buy-in led by Challenge Council Members, such as communities of practice, training tailored for co-op leaders, and 1:1 support tailored to specific co-operatives' needs.

Snapshot: Modo

Modo, a car-sharing co-operative in British Columbia, can be reflected on as an organization who has worked to ingrain a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens throughout their organization. They actively participated in 50-30 Challenge activities and achieved the 50-30 goals. Modos has shared reflections on their experience working toward more meaningful action on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Board: Met 50-30 goals; Revised recruitment and screening processes from a DEI lens
- Senior Management: Met 50-30 goals; Revised job postings and interview process from a DEI lens
- Members: Reviewed engagement, experience, and public facing channels from a DEI lens

3.2 Growing the Community

For meaningful work and succession of positive change, it is crucial to dedicate resources to meaningfully engage equity deserving groups. As detailed in the 'Recruitment' section above, 'Building Relationships with Equity-Deserving Groups' is crucial for improving recruitment cycles over time.



Snapshot: Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation (CWCF) Equity Initiatives

The Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation launched two initiatives in 2022 with support from Vancity and under the leadership of the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation's Justice, Equity, Diversity, Decolonization and Inclusion Committee.

BIPOC Training Bursary: Provide up to \$1,000 to support racialized youth to participate in study tours, such as those working with Solid State Community Industries to visit Mondragon, Spain.

Racial Justice Grants: Provide grants of up to \$2,000 per year for two years for projects led by or benefiting BIPOC individuals or groups. Projects focus on promoting racial justice in Canada's worker co-operative sector through education, development, and advocacy.

Eight projects have been supported, including:

- Conversion of Whole Woman Network into a worker co-operative, led by Black women.
- iMove Arts Association's event at Dalhousie Law School during Black History Month, addressing justice and economic equity, and exploring the role of co-ops.
- Panel and workshop by SETSI on cooperative principles and the future of the co-operative movement in Canada.
- Oodenaw Urban Indigenous Co-operative's project, conducting an environmental scan of Indigenous-run co-operatives across Turtle Island and working towards incorporating a co-operative.

Since 2022 this has been a reoccurring initiative.



3.3 A Networked Approach

Co-operatives are well suited for a networked approach to achieve collective goals, and as maintained by the International Co-operative Alliance, Principle 6 is Co-operation among Co-operatives. Co-operatives benefit from supportive networks, such as Vancity providing funding support for CWCF's programming. The following example demonstrates how equity lenses can be incorporated into co-operative development.

Snapshot: Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Co-operatives (NLFC) Co-op Incubator

Launched early in 2024 by NLFC, this program supported four groups interested in starting new co-operatives based in the Northeast Avalon region of NL. This program takes participants from the idea stage to incorporation in 6 months with training, workshops, and 1:1 feedback.

Incorporation of DEI Frameworks into Programming

By offering optional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) trainings the pilot project observed DEI being considered in:

- Incorporation processes,
- Co-op Mission, Vision, Values and Goals,
- Decision-making frameworks, practices, and policies,
- Strategies for outreach and partnerships within the co-op,
- And committees and training.



In the future, valuable lessons were learned to improve the Co-op Incubator:

- Incorporate an introductory mandatory DEI training session near the beginning of the program,
- Ask participants at the beginning of the program if they are interested in learning more about a particular area of DEI (e.g., gender diversity, allyship, 2SLGBTQI+, etc.),
- Include DEI Moments (learning tool) after all learning sessions,
- And follow-up with incubator participants with a survey to learn more about how the DEI education has influenced their co-operative and their feedback.

Reflection Questions - Part 3: Sustain Change

3.1 Leadership and Member Buy-In

- What is the general awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion in leadership, the team in general, and membership?

3.2 Growing the Community

- How can your organization better serve and engage with equity deserving groups and underserved communities?

3.3 A Networked Approach

- How can your organization leverage networks to achieve collective diversity, equity, and inclusion goals?
- If your organization engaged in peer-to-peer learning, what do you think you would teach, and what would you want to learn?

Conclusion

By understanding and implementing the strategies and tactics outlined in this guidebook, your organization can create an inclusive and supportive environment where all individuals can thrive and advance. Co-operatives and like-minded organizations are uniquely positioned to foster inclusivity, leveraging their principles of shared ownership and democratic governance to address gaps and promote equality. As you move forward, keep a few key areas of action in mind:



SET CONTEXT:

Reflect on the general and specific context for your organization relevant to your GEDI goals. Engage your team, members, and community in meaningful conversations about diversity and inclusion.



TAKE ACTION:

Embrace the power of inclusive leadership to foster growth, equity, and excellence within your organization. Review recruitment and retention methods and implement inclusive tactics.



SUSTAIN CHANGE:

Utilize the power of networks to share resources, knowledge, and best practices. Collaborate with other organizations to amplify your impact and achieve collective goals. Establish accountability structures and measure your progress to stay on track.



Annex

A. 50-30 Challenge Advisory Committee of the Women's Economic Council

| WEC Challenge Council | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Organization | Website |
| Co-operative Challenge Council Members | |
| British Columbia Co-operative Association | <u>BCCA</u> |
| Alberta Community and Cooperative Association | <u>ACCA</u> |
| Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité | <u>CQCM</u> |
| Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Co-operatives | <u>NLFC</u> |
| Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada | <u>CMC</u> |
| Equity Challenge Council Members | |
| Solid State Community Industries | <u>Solid State</u> |
| DisAbled Women's Network of Canada | <u>DAWN Canada</u> |
| Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers | <u>CANDO</u> |



| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Canadian Council of Muslim Women | <u>CCMW</u> |
| Collective Interchange | <u>Collective Interchange</u> |
| Canadian Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity | <u>CCGSD - inactive</u> |

B. ICA's Co-operative Principles

| Co-operative Principles | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Voluntary and Open Membership | Cooperatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination. |
| 2. Democratic Member Control | Cooperatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner. |
| 3. Member Economic Participation | Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. |



| | |
|---|---|
| | Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership. |
| 4. Autonomy and Independence | Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy. |
| 5. Education, Training, and Information | Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation. |
| 6. Co-operation among Co-operatives | Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures. |
| 7. Concern for Community | Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. |



C. Glossary of Terms

Gender

Broadly, gender is a set of socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate.


(Source: racialequitytools)

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society deems masculine, feminine, or androgynous. The concept of gender is often confused with the concept of sex. These are two distinct yet related facets of a person. Ideas around gender vary throughout history, cultures, and contexts. Neither sex nor gender is binary. **(Source: Feminuity)**

Intersectionality

Per Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw: Intersectionality is simply a prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism, many times, interacts with patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia – seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems actually create specific kinds of challenges. “Intersectionality 102,” then, is to say that these distinct problems create challenges for movements that are only organized around these problems as separate and individual. So when racial justice doesn’t have a critique of patriarchy and homophobia, the particular way that racism is experienced and exacerbated by heterosexism, classism etc., falls outside of our political organizing. It means that significant numbers of people in our communities aren’t being served by social justice frames because they don’t address the particular ways that they’re experiencing discrimination. **(Source: racialequitytools)**

The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity as they apply



to a given individual or group. Intersectional identities create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. **(Source: Equity.ubc)**

An intersectional framework recognizes that identities (e.g. “disabled” and “immigrant”) do not exist independently of each other and that each informs the others. Intersectionality acknowledges that people have overlapping identities and lived experiences complicating their relationship to prejudice and oppression **(Source: Feminuity)**

Patriarchy - Institutional/Structural/Systemic Sexism:

An historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression in which those assigned male, or those exhibiting characteristics that have been assigned male, hold ultimate authority and privilege central to social organization, occupying roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property. It implies and entails female subordination. Can result in gendered outcomes even without specific gendered animus articulated between individuals. **(Source: <https://qmunity.ca/>)**


Power

Power is the ability to control circumstances and access to resources. Types of power include institutional power, structural power, positional power, personal power, people power, expert power, obstructive power, cultural power, and more. People can possess power over others, share power with others, and exercise power within certain contexts, spaces, and situations.

(Source: feminuity)

Privilege

Privilege is a collection of unearned cultural, legal, social, and institutional rights and advantages extended to certain social groups.



For example, someone who is physically non-disabled will not have to worry if an entrance, bathroom, office, transportation system, or city is designed to accommodate their assistive mobility device. Privilege is about acknowledging the advantages that you have, and others do not. Every person possesses some form of privilege. (Source:[feminuity](#))

Reflection Questions

- Given the context of your work, what is most applicable and what is missing in these definitions?
- What does equity look like and feel like in the context of your work?
- How do you distinguish between equality and equity?

Call to Action

- Share this guide with your board, leadership team, and staff.
- Reflect on where your organization stands.
- Start a conversation in your co-op about equity and inclusion.
- Connect with others to learn and share strategies

This guide was created as part of the Government of Canada's 50 – 30 Challenge initiative with support from Co-operatives and Mutuels Canada and the Women's Economic Council. It was co-developed with input from co-operative leaders and organizations supporting equity-deserving groups.

We hope this guidebook supports your journey toward more inclusive and equitable co-operative leadership.