



**CIFAR**

**ACTION PLAN ON EQUITY,  
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

APRIL 2020

CIFAR is located in the MaRS  
West Tower at 661 University Avenue  
in Toronto.

For thousands of years, this area has  
been the traditional territory of many  
nations including the Huron-Wendat,  
the Seneca, the Petun, and most recently,  
the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today,  
this meeting place is still home to many  
Indigenous people from across Turtle  
Island and we are grateful to have  
the opportunity to work, learn and  
share on this land.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>2</b>	Executive Summary
<b>3</b>	What is Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?
<b>4</b>	Why is EDI Important?
<b>5</b>	Why Develop an Action Plan?
<b>7</b>	Our Approach
<b>9</b>	Success Factors
<b>14</b>	Conclusion

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

As a Canadian-based, global research organization CIFAR is committed to creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment so that our community of fellows, scholars, advisors, staff, donors and volunteers can strive for excellence and impact. We acknowledge that these efforts require concrete actions and goals if we are to achieve meaningful change.

We know that systemic barriers faced by women and other underrepresented groups exist in science and more broadly in research organizations and academia. We know that we can do more to ensure our actions, systems and processes have a meaningful impact in removing these barriers.

CIFAR has an opportunity to create a model for international research excellence and collaboration that helps the broader research community make progress towards more equitable, diverse and inclusive practices. We are committed to take deliberate action toward this objective, informed by the best available evidence and data.

In 2018, CIFAR formed an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group comprised of staff from across the organization who set out to assess our gaps and consult with staff, Board members and researchers. This Working Group then sought

external expert advice to design an action plan that would help us make measurable progress. Beginning in 2019, we launched stakeholder surveys that provided the data we needed to make evidence-based decisions. The action plan detailed in this document formalizes and operationalizes our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

There are many positive changes currently taking place in the broader research landscape, such as the Government of Canada's launch of the Dimensions Pilot Program and the Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Canada Charter. We are pleased to contribute to and further advance this momentum building in Canada and around the world, and are confident that these efforts will strengthen the impact CIFAR has on global research collaboration.

## CIFAR'S EDI STATEMENT

CIFAR is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion. We recognize that bringing together individuals from multiple backgrounds, perspectives and experiences is integral to advancing excellence and increasing the impact of our organization. Ensuring that every person feels valued and welcome is vital to achieving our mission, and embodies our values of diversity, creativity, excellence, risk taking, respect and collaboration. CIFAR strives to foster the active participation and inclusion of all, including those from underrepresented groups in research, such as but not limited to women, members of racialized groups, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, members of sexual and gender minority groups – across geographic borders, disciplines, and career stage. In the pursuit of excellence, CIFAR embraces diverse ideas and perspectives, and proactively seeks to increase equity, diversity and inclusion within our community. CIFAR aims to create a culture that embodies these principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work.

# WHAT IS EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION?



Women in Science  
Leadership Workshop

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are topics that are garnering worldwide attention – in workplaces, teams of all kinds, and public discourse more broadly. Although equity, diversity, and inclusion can mean different things to different organizations, we have defined EDI as follows:

- Equity means recognizing that there are systemic reasons for discrimination and marginalization (which in research is most often seen in the form of underrepresentation), and taking action to remove barriers to ensure adequate opportunities and benefits. While equality refers to treating all people the same, equity refers to understanding distinct experiences, removing/addressing barriers, and taking a proactive approach.
- Diversity refers to the various dimensions of difference expressed amongst individuals and groups. Dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to: race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, class, place of origin, immigration status, Indigenous identity, and more. A commitment to diversity means understanding that CIFAR must reflect the diversity of our society, including those communities that have been historically underrepresented.
- Inclusion can be understood as a set of practices or policies that are deliberate in their efforts to ensure all individuals or groups can meaningfully participate. Inclusion can take many forms, including changing workplace culture, shifting decision-making structures to include those who experience systemic discrimination, and working to ensure individuals feel valued.

While these three terms are most often used in the discussion, another important topic is intersectionality. This term was coined by Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, and it is a critical lens and approach to understand the ways systems of power and discrimination overlap with one another, and how they mutually enforce one another.

# WHY IS EDI IMPORTANT?

Equity, diversity and inclusion matter to CIFAR's vision and mission.

CIFAR strives to maximize the potential of our networks and adopt inclusive and unbiased definitions of excellence and quality when forming teams and recruiting researchers from across the global research community.

We know that systemic barriers, biases and imbalances have prevented many groups from being fully engaged in research and academia. Looking first at gender, UNESCO reports that in 2016 only 29.3% of recorded scientists in the world were women.<sup>1</sup> In Canada, in 2018/19, 41% of full-time academic teaching staff at Canadian universities were women, up from 36.6% in 2010.<sup>2</sup> The field of artificial intelligence has even deeper challenges with respect to EDI, with women representing only 18% of authors at major international scientific conferences in 2018, and among Canadian authors, the percentage of women sinks even further to 14%.<sup>3</sup> Recent studies show that challenges persist for individuals who identify as women or visible minorities, as their proportions dwindle as they move up the ranks of

senior academic leadership in Canada. Progress is being made to adapt many systems and structures in higher education to ensure more equitable outcomes in research careers. At CIFAR, we have a role to play in advancing the research community by drawing on contributions from researchers around the world to pursue the most important questions of our time.

CIFAR is motivated to improve EDI because it matters to research, from the questions we pursue to the quality of international collaboration at our program meetings. Efforts to improve equity, diversity and inclusion help research communities attract and retain the best possible pool of researchers, enable scholars to reach their full potential, and support research outcomes that are stronger and more globally relevant. Our goal is to not only to push ourselves forward, but also to be a catalyst that stimulates change in entire research and academic systems around the world.

## CIFAR'S GUIDING BELIEFS

CIFAR's approach to EDI, as with all of our initiatives, will be shaped by and will reinforce our guiding beliefs as an organization:

- We believe that our understanding of the world can be transformed by providing the world's most brilliant minds with the time and freedom to explore important questions facing science and humanity as a global community
- We believe diverse perspectives are critical in creating new understanding
- We believe in providing career-enrichment opportunities for the next generation of research leaders
- We believe the infrastructure needed to support brilliance must be global in scope.
- We believe new understanding should be shared with the world, especially the stakeholders who can apply that knowledge immediately in the public and private sectors for broad and positive societal impact.

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), June 2019, UIS Fact Sheet No. 55, <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs55-women-in-science-2019-en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, November 2019, Number and salaries of full-time teaching staff at Canadian universities (final), 2018/2019, [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/191125/dq191125b-eng.htm](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/191125/dq191125b-eng.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Global AI Talent Report 2019 - <https://ifgagne.ai/talent-2019>

<sup>4</sup> Council of Canadian Academies, 2012, *Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension*.

# WHY DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN?

## THE PURPOSE OF THE ACTION PLAN

The purpose of the EDI Action Plan is to:

- Report on the extensive consultation and strategy development process.
- Develop goals and actions that advance CIFAR's EDI efforts across all of our programs and initiatives.
- Develop a framework that identifies key success indicators, accountability, actions and timelines.
- Commit CIFAR to monitoring, measuring and evaluating our EDI efforts, reporting on our progress and updating our plan, as necessary.

## HOW WE DEVELOPED THE PLAN

CIFAR has always held a commitment to diversity, but began to deepen its commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion in 2018 by developing an EDI statement as a tool to bring to light potential bias in selection during our calls, such as our Global Call for Ideas, CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholars programs and Canada CIFAR AI Chairs nominations. While a valuable first step, we agreed at a staff retreat to establish and fund an EDI Working Group, including staff representation from departments across the entire organization, to assess our EDI efforts in all that we do. The Working Group's objectives were to:

- collect data about our current community of fellows, staff, donors and Board members;
- research, understand and share best practices and lessons learned from the global research institutions that have instituted EDI strategies;
- recommend a multi-year action plan.

In June 2019, CIFAR hired consultants Optimus SBR to support our action plan development. Over a six-month period, Optimus SBR led CIFAR through an initial project launch and discovery phase, the development of a research and stakeholder engagement plan, a current state assessment, as

well as a facilitated all-staff EDI strategy and action plan session.

For our current state assessment, we sought to collect information and perspectives through interviews and surveys from our community on what it considered our EDI efforts should entail. The interviews were conducted with representatives from three key groups: CIFAR's Board, CIFAR's Executive, and CIFAR's staff.

In October 2019, we distributed confidential surveys to CIFAR's internal community (staff and Board members) and external community (fellows and program members, Canada CIFAR AI Chairs, and CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholars). We designed the survey questions by employing leading practices in EDI survey techniques, although our demographic questions were designed to be more extensive than some leading practices in our desire to be progressive and thorough. The intention was to gather socio-demographic data that would help identify our "baseline" along various axes of diversity and to provide advice on our Action Plan. We received 48 responses (of approximately 60 surveyed) to the internal survey, and 228 responses (of approximately 400 surveyed) to the external survey.





CIFAR Azrieli Global  
Scholars Annual Meeting

Optimus SBR also conducted online research and interviews with leaders in the academic and research sectors to understand how similar organizations incorporate EDI principles in their organizations. Organizations interviewed included: University of Toronto, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Royal Academy (UK).

The survey results and trends, as well as information from the comparator scan, were shared in an Optimus SBR facilitated session for all CIFAR staff. In this session, we discussed how our values as an organization can direct the development of a strategy and action plan, what practices we want to emulate from other organizations, and how we will hold ourselves accountable and track our progress.

The key themes that emerged from this research, from both our internal and external communities, were:

- fostering inclusive spaces – focusing on collaboration, respecting each other, and providing education on EDI principles;
- providing equal opportunities for all – removing systemic racism and providing more opportunities for underrepresented groups;
- removing unconscious bias from decision-making
- providing training and awareness, recognizing diversity as a strength, and considering merit-based acceptance into CIFAR’s community; and
- committing to diverse groups – building on CIFAR’s strengths with an intersectional approach to researcher selection, and having equal representation at leadership levels in research programs.

# OUR APPROACH

After engaging our research community and staff, we developed an approach for our EDI Action Plan that supports CIFAR’s overall Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

## OUR VISION

CIFAR’s mission: To bring together outstanding researchers from across disciplines and borders to identify and address the most important questions facing science and humanity.

CIFAR’s vision: New knowledge for a better world.

CIFAR’s EDI vision: We will enhance our research excellence, global collaboration, and operational leadership, through a sustained commitment to,

and strategies and actions on, equity, diversity and inclusion.

This commitment enhances CIFAR’s mission. The actions and goals outlined in this action plan (see 6.3) will strengthen us as an organization and help us to raise our sights beyond the goals set out in our Strategic Plan 2018-2022. These efforts work in tandem and enable us to be at the forefront of EDI and science.

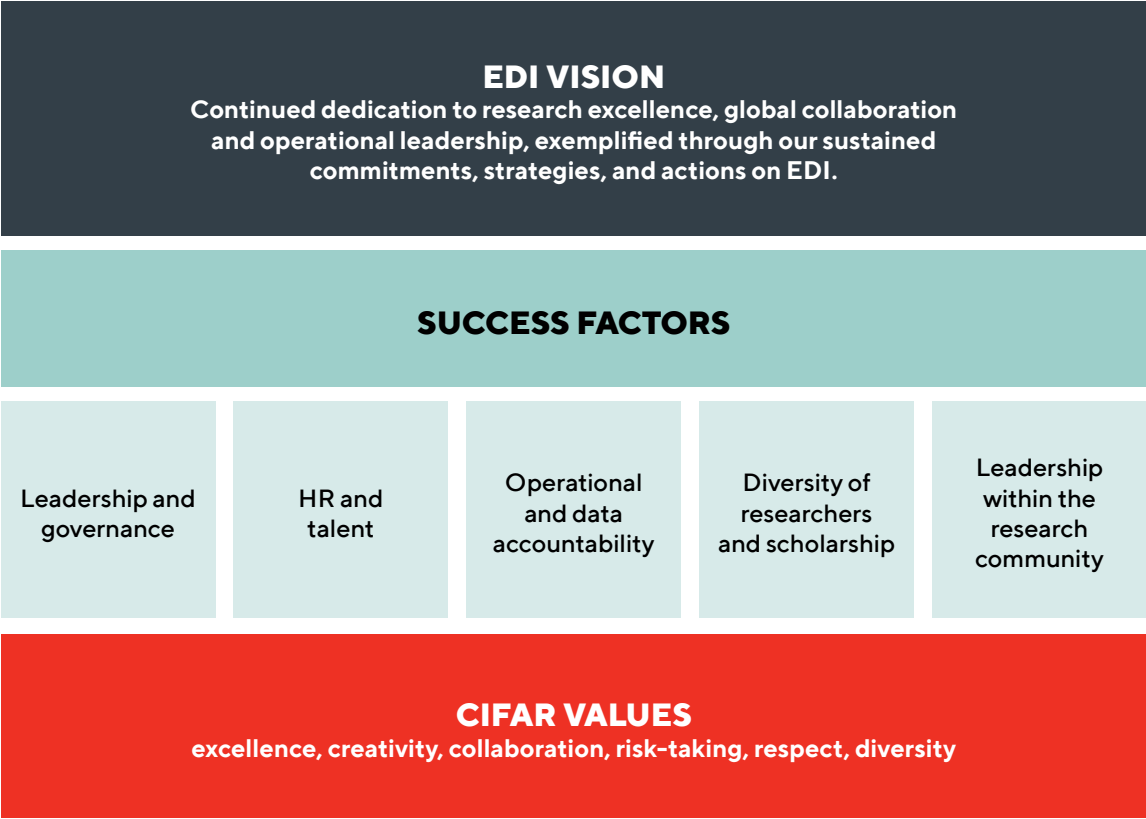
## OUR VALUES

While Diversity is one of our core values as outlined in the CIFAR Strategic Plan FY2018-FY2022, we recognize that a commitment to EDI strengthens all of our values, and supports our ability to deliver on our mission and vision.

VALUE AS OUTLINED IN OUR STRATEGIC PLAN	EDI COMMITMENT
<b>Creativity:</b> We encourage bold new ideas and unique approaches to address important questions	EDI enhances the quality of our research and enables us to take on bold new ideas
<b>Collaboration:</b> We work together in partnership with colleagues, researchers, thought leaders and supporters – sharing ideas and resources to generate better outcomes	EDI ensures that we work with a global and diverse set of colleagues, researchers, thought leaders, and supporters to generate better outcomes
<b>Diversity:</b> We value diversity and aspire to be inclusive in all aspects of our work	EDI ensures that we are transparent and accountable in our commitment to diversity across all aspects of CIFAR.
<b>Excellence:</b> We strive for the highest quality in everything that we do. We expect the very best of ourselves and others	EDI enhances the quality of everything we do, supporting us in reaching our goal of excellence
<b>Respect:</b> We foster an open and trusting culture, where each person’s expertise is respected, and individuals openly share ideas and new approaches	EDI enhances our ability to have an open, trusting, and respectful culture
<b>Risk-Taking:</b> We are prepared to take risks, accept setbacks, and move forward to reach our ambitious goals	EDI is not a risk – but our ambitious approach to EDI will involve pushing ourselves and our research community in new directions.



The graphic includes our EDI Vision at the centre, with our Success Factors surrounding it, representing the areas we wish to focus on to ensure our success moving forward. All of this is underpinned by our organizational values, which guide us in all of the work we do.



# THE SUCCESS FACTORS

## LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

### Leads: President & CEO, Board Governance Committee

For CIFAR, this means:

- We will have a Board and senior leadership team that is meaningfully involved and champions EDI efforts
- We will seek to have a Board that reflects diversity and equity
- We will champion EDI, leading by example and showcasing our efforts

The ways in which we will achieve this include:

#### **1. Board and Senior Leadership Action: Enhancing how the Board and senior leadership directly engage with EDI principles to ensure our commitment is at all levels of the organization**

- Review and update the terms of reference and responsibilities of Board members and the senior leadership team to add explicit commitments to EDI
- Develop a Board recruitment strategy/approach (and enhance the Board competency matrix) that understands the benefits of EDI on governance
- Create a standing agenda item on EDI for Board and senior leadership team meetings, and include EDI related activities in Board materials
- Create a standing EDI Committee to seek advice from volunteers, staff and external communities (researchers, knowledge mobilization participants and other groups) on CIFAR's EDI plans and activities

#### **2. EDI Communication: Ensuring that CIFAR's EDI actions are appropriately communicated internally and externally to demonstrate CIFAR's commitment to being a leader in EDI**

- Document and communicate EDI activities to staff and the research community
- Ensure external communication is aligned with EDI principles to increase awareness of CIFAR activities among existing stakeholders and those who are under-engaged or under-represented
- Expand communications as appropriate to external stakeholders through multiple channels (i.e., CIFAR newsletters, Reach magazine, website posts/videos, institutional reports, brochures, and social media)

### MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Evidence of Board and senior leadership commitment and action on EDI
- Diversity of Board members/prospects
- Number of communications materials created to describe CIFAR's EDI work

## HUMAN RESOURCES & TALENT

### Lead: COO

For CIFAR, this means:

- We will create ongoing opportunities for training and education in EDI topics
- We will develop frameworks for recruitment at CIFAR informed by EDI principles
- We will foster a workplace culture where all feel welcome and included
- We will create a workplace where we value professional and lived experience, as well as education
- We will ensure that there are sufficient human, IT and financial resources to support a comprehensive EDI Action Plan.

The ways in which we will achieve this include:

### **3. Staff Recruitment Strategy: Development of a recruitment strategy that supports hiring managers to ensure a more diverse workforce**

- Review and analyse current application processes to understand gaps in the recruitment processes as they relate to EDI principles (role descriptions, minimum qualifications, job posting positions, job aids, bias-free recruitment templates and interview procedures)
- Develop, refine existing tools, supports and training to be aligned with EDI principles

### **4. Workplace Culture: Continue to build on our internal culture to ensure that we are safe, accessible, and welcoming to everyone**

- Continue with Talent and Culture efforts that seek to understand experiences of workplace culture as they relate to belonging, safety and accessibility
- Review the EDI survey results to identify opportunities to further enhance EDI practices across the organization
- Create opportunities for staff to be EDI Champions, building their knowledge and sharing resources within CIFAR, as well as with appropriate networks (e.g. as they relate to programs)

### **5. EDI Training and Education: Build knowledge of EDI by making available EDI training and education opportunities for staff, management, senior leadership and the Board**

- Identify EDI training and education areas for CIFAR, with core training topics established as mandatory sessions
- Identify opportunities for staff, management, senior leadership and the Board to increase their knowledge through external workshops, conferences, online resources (e.g. through CIFAR intranet), and ensure a consistency of training.

### **MEASURES OF SUCCESS:**

- Diversity of applicants and staff
- Evidence of updated recruitment strategy (including % of recruitment processes using bias-free recruiting)
- Staff engagement scores
- % of staff who have completed mandatory EDI training sessions

## OPERATIONAL AND DATA ACCOUNTABILITY

### Leads: COO, VP Research

For CIFAR, this means:

- We will develop an ongoing committee structure to support EDI efforts internally and with the research community
- We will develop and refine policies and practices that reflect EDI principles
- We will have a process of responsibility and accountability by reporting on EDI efforts internally and externally

The ways in which we will achieve this include:

#### **6. Policies and Procedures: Update existing policies and procedures to clearly outline CIFAR's commitment to EDI**

- Conduct a systematic review of existing policies, procedures, and documentation/data gathering processes to identify any historical/systemic biases and identify where CIFAR should explicitly address EDI topics
- Identify the policies and procedures that require updates and confirm the timelines for this to happen
- Communicate changes to any policies and procedures

#### **7. EDI Data: Create an EDI data collection strategy to support EDI reporting**

- Build on work of Senior Director, Research (Performance Management and Evaluation) to create a data collection plan that outlines the type of data to be collected, frequency and source of reporting
- Analyze and report on EDI data to promote a culture of continuous improvement

### MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- % of policy and procedures reviewed and aligned to EDI practices
- EDI data strategy implementation

## DIVERSITY OF RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

**Leads: VP Research, ED Pan-Canadian AI Strategy, VP, Engagement & Public Policy**

For CIFAR, this means:

- We will reach out to researchers from across the globe to enhance diversity and inclusion
- We will embed EDI into our fellowship, application, and program review processes
- We will ensure that all events/gatherings of our research community are informed by EDI principles
- We will ensure that we include diverse perspectives and lived experiences in our Knowledge Mobilization programs, communities and engagements.

The ways in which we will achieve this include:

### **8. Researcher Diversity: Create explicit practices and strategies to ensure that a more diverse pool of researchers apply and are considered during Global Calls, as Global Scholars, and as Canada CIFAR AI Chairs to improve the diversity of our research community, and our global reach**

- Create a list of existing global networks or associations of researchers that CIFAR could work with to reach a more diverse pool of researchers
- Ensure EDI is a factor in decisions regarding program membership, as well during adjudication processes for all of our work and at all stages of review
- Require a commitment to EDI by research program co-directors, CIFAR's Research Council, Pan-Canadian AI Strategy National Program Committee and International Scientific Advisory Committee and AI Institutes and our review panels and provide mandatory EDI training to all
- Update all application material to include CIFAR's commitment to EDI (see appendix)
- Ensure EDI is a factor in decisions regarding researcher participation in Knowledge Mobilization engagements.

### **9. Inclusive Meetings and Events: Organize and host meetings and events that attract, engage and meet the needs of a diverse pool of scholars, experts outside of academia, and researchers to CIFAR**

- Identify the key challenges (e.g. cultural, geographical, financial, existing schedules, accessibility, family/caregiver responsibilities etc.) that prevent scholars, experts outside of academia and researchers from becoming part of the CIFAR communities
- Develop a meeting/event EDI strategy to ensure all CIFAR events reflect EDI principles from the planning through to the hosting of the event (i.e. planning manuals, invitation lists etc.)
- Develop mechanisms to engage regularly with diverse perspectives and lived experiences to ensure that underrepresented voices inform our work.

### **MEASURES OF SUCCESS:**

- Diversity of applicants
- Diversity of participants in Knowledge Mobilization engagements
- Evidence of barriers identified, with plans to address
- Satisfaction scores of CIFAR hosted meetings/events (with EDI dimensions)
- % of adjudicators, Research Council and co-directors that have completed mandatory EDI training sessions

## LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION COMMUNITIES

Leads: VP Research, ED Pan-Canadian AI Strategy, VP, Engagement & Public Policy

For CIFAR, this means:

- We will identify, participate and represent CIFAR at EDI-focused gatherings both nationally and internationally
- We will seek opportunities to share our EDI efforts in external settings
- We will seek opportunities to learn from others and incorporate leading EDI practices into our day-to-day activities
- We will leverage existing partnerships, and build new ones, to support EDI within the broader research community

The ways in which we will achieve this include:

### **10. Collaboration for Impact: Strengthen relationships with other organizations within the research community to leverage shared understandings, expertise and leading practices of EDI**

- Identify and explore EDI-focused collaboration opportunities with other organizations within the research and knowledge mobilization communities
- Update partnership agreements to reflect CIFAR's commitment to EDI, ensuring shared gatherings or initiatives reflect EDI

### **11. Active Participation in EDI Landscape: Identify opportunities for CIFAR's programs and staff to participate in gatherings (national and international) where EDI is a focus**

- Provide opportunities for programs and staff to participate and represent CIFAR in conferences and forums on topics related to EDI

### **MEASURES OF SUCCESS:**

- Number of collaborations with leading EDI organizations
- Evidence of participation in EDI-focused events





## CONCLUSION

CIFAR will hold itself accountable to its EDI commitment through a transparent implementation timeline, evaluation, and reporting to its communities. Each initiative outlined in this action plan is included in CIFAR's Operating Plan FY 2020-21 with a corresponding dedication of resources, and the expectation that several initiatives will be phased across the next three years.



**CIFAR** is a Canadian-based global research organization that convenes extraordinary minds to address the most important questions facing science and humanity. We are generously supported by the governments of Canada, Ontario, Alberta and Quebec, Canadian and international partners, as well as foundations, individuals, corporations and international partner organizations.