

2026

Advancing Equity in the Nonprofit Sector, Funding and Policymaking

Research by Ashlee Christoffersen, PhD, and equity-seeking organizations

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ISBN: 9781550147117

Suggested citation: Christoffersen, Ashlee. (2026) Advancing equity in the nonprofit sector, funding and policymaking. Toronto: York University.

Report design by Alyssa Cootauco

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Summary

This briefing for nonprofit leaders and practitioners, funders and policymakers reports on results of research with experts in equity, namely equity-seeking nonprofit practitioners. The research was about the different equity frameworks (e.g. intersectionality, Indigenization, antiracism) that they use in their work, and how they understand and use them. Policy actors have much to learn from those with specialist knowledge working in equity-seeking nonprofits about the operationalization of intersectionality, among other equity-related frames. Based on the findings, the briefing provides recommendations for other nonprofits, funders and policymakers to advance equity and intersectionality.

Key Findings

- For some organizations, 2020 sparked renewed interest in racial and Indigenous justice and intersectionality, but these struggles were being waged in Canada long before that. Many changes made after this were performative, and didn't last. Whiteness is still pervasive.
- The framework of intersectionality doesn't necessarily do everything on its own. Equity specialists use multiple, complementary frameworks to guide their work.
- Equity frameworks are understood differently by different people, organizations, and sectors. There are more and less authentic ways to use equity frameworks.
- Equity frameworks need to be applied both externally (e.g. in policy advocacy) and internally within organizations.
- Increasing diversity within organizations is important, but doesn't solve all problems of inequity or necessarily create structural changes within organizations. Not all members of a group are the same and can speak for the group. Equity work needs to be shared within organizations.
- Equity-seeking nonprofits experience solvable funding barriers to innovation in intersectional practice.

Acknowledgements

The research and recommendations presented here are based on the generous sharing of experiences and perspectives of expert equity-seeking nonprofit practitioners.

This report draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Document analysis was conducted by Angela Natial.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

“Even though the word intersectionality is used in... all of the Federal Government’s policy work...I don’t think that the understanding of what that truly means and how it is operationalized...I don’t think we’re there yet.”

Introduction: Policy Context

Canada is among few countries to have made high-level political commitments to operationalizing the Black feminist theory of intersectionality, which recognizes that different inequities shape one another. Grappling with how to apply intersectionality is important because amidst increasing inequity, and increased mobilization of movements for racial, and Indigenous, justice, the Canadian government faces many different calls to remedy injustices.

Indeed, recent years have brought genocidal atrocities committed against Indigenous peoples, anti-Black police violence, and growth of white supremacist movements in Canada to international attention. As such, organizing for racial and Indigenous justice has been more visible, while it builds on ongoing work over many decades. The intersectional politics of these social movements¹ has placed pressure on nonprofits, policymakers and funders to engage with intersectionality. Engaging with intersectionality is challenging because of the dominance of siloed approaches (isolated movements, organizations, laws, policies, institutions, and funding programs focused on single-issue inequities, for example by treating race and gender as separate categories). Moreover, engagement with intersectionality occurs in contexts of growing populism, and far right resistance and backlash.

Although Canada has important legislation that applies to differently marginalized groups (e.g. the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Human Rights Act), the equity policy “architecture” (including government departments, parliamentary committees, funding programs) is still largely separate and single-issue, inhibiting an intersectional approach. In the face of increased intersecting inequities, raised awareness of these due to the pandemic, and new political commitments to addressing racial and Indigenous injustice, the official approach to inequities in Canadian policymaking remains ‘Gender Based Analysis Plus’ (GBA Plus), overseen by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). The ‘Plus’ (introduced to GBA in 2012) is intended to address the limitations of a gender only lens, incorporating consideration of other intersecting markers of difference.²

However, scholars increasingly argue that GBA Plus is inconsistent with what an intersectionality-informed policy approach suggests, because it prioritizes gender above other factors.³ Approaches that privilege gender above other categories have been found to be additive ones (where instead of being viewed as always shaping one another, other inequities are ‘added onto’ (and subtracted from) gender) that best serve the needs and interests of more advantaged women.⁴ Increasingly, GBA Plus is seen as ‘insufficient to drive ambitious and

1 Thompson, D. 2020. “The Intersectional Politics of Black Lives Matter” In *Turbulent Times, Transformational Possibilities?: Gender and Politics Today and Tomorrow*, edited by Fiona MacDonald and Alexandra Dobrowolsky, 240–57. University of Toronto Press.

2 Women and Gender Equality Canada. 2022. “Departmental Results Report 2021-2022.”

3 Christoffersen, A., & O. Hankivsky. 2021. “Responding to Inequities in Public Policy: Is GBA+ the Right Way to Operationalize Intersectionality?” *Canadian Public Administration* 64(3): 524–31.

4 Christoffersen, A., & A. Emejulu. 2023. “‘Diversity Within’: The Problems with ‘Intersectional’ White Feminism in Practice.” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 30(2): 630–53.

progressive policy’.⁵ In 2021 the Canadian government established the Reconciliation, Treaties and Engagement Branch of Canadian Heritage which aims to promote an Indigenous-centred GBA Plus approach.⁶

Racial inequity in Canada has tended to be addressed in a siloed way separate from efforts concerning gender equity. Antiracist activism in Canada, both before and after 2020, propelled policy action to address racism. In 2019 an Anti-Racism Strategy was released, renewed in 2024. In addition to the overarching anti-racism strategy, there are initiatives within specific policy areas, some of these addressing particular forms of racism such as antiBlackness, in direct response to events of 2020 and corresponding organizing.⁷ Moreover, efforts to address racism within the civil service are also important in their potential to increase the numbers and status of racially minoritized people within policymaking roles. The Anti-Racism Secretariat has developed a federal Anti-Racism Framework to enable the federal public service to create and review existing and new initiatives from an anti-racism, equity and human rights perspective.

Moreover, the Canadian government has made multiple other commitments to creating greater equity for marginalized groups in recent years. An action plan concerning 2SLGBTQI+ equality was published in 2022. This Action Plan states that it was developed using an intersectional approach in the form of GBA Plus, specifically that it considered the disproportionate inequities experienced by some 2SLGBTQI+ communities, understood to be exacerbated by colonialism, systemic racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, classism, and other interconnected factors that inhibit the inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canadian society.⁸

Similarly, numerous separate funding streams now direct resources to equity-seeking initiatives by provincial and local governments as well as nonprofits concerning particular identity factors, for example WAGE’s Women’s program and Equality for Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Program, Canadian Heritage’s Anti-Racism Action Program, Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program, and Employment and Social Development Canada’s Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative.

While these laws, strategies and funding programs are federal, the context is further complicated by evolving multilevel governance structures and wide variation in political commitment to equity at provincial and territorial level. Indeed, some provinces are backtracking on equity gains for some groups, particularly trans people.

5 Cameron, A. I., & L. M. Tedds. 2023. “Canada’s GBA+ Framework in a (post)pandemic World: Issues, Tensions and Paths Forward.” *Canadian Public Administration* 66: 7–27.

6 Canadian Heritage. 2023. “Departmental Plan 2023-2024.”

7 Gintova, M. 2023. “Anti-Racism in the Public Service of Canada: How Can Critical Race Theory Inform Research and Practice in Canadian Public Administration?” *Canadian Public Administration* 66: 574–580.

8 Women and Gender Equality Canada. 2022. “Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan 2022.”

While unprecedented focus and resources dedicated to particular inequalities (e.g. 2SLGBTQI+ equality) is positive, the risk of increasing numbers of initiatives concerning different inequities is that they will be delivered in a separate and single-issue way, lacking oversight or collaboration, that best serves the interests of the most advantaged within-groups (among women and gender diverse people, racialized and Indigenous people and 2SLGBTQI+ people, respectively). These groups are fundamentally overlapping, but this is not necessarily accounted for in policy and program delivery. Indeed, these initiatives are housed within different government departments. Together, growing numbers of equity initiatives present both opportunities and challenges for advancing an intersectional approach in policy. The question raised by theories of intersectionality⁹ is to what extent separate and single-issue approaches may privilege the more advantaged within groups – whether intentionally or not.

What is clear is that policy actors have much to learn from those with specialist knowledge¹⁰ working in equity-seeking nonprofits about the operationalization of intersectionality, among other equity-related frames, which is what this research addressed. Many Canadian nonprofits have made commitments to furthering racial and Indigenous justice and intersectionality in recent years, but how this translates to practice has been largely unexplored.

What Are Equity-Seeking Nonprofits?

Equity-seeking nonprofits were defined in this project as formally constituted, funded organizations that emerged in response to persistent inequalities relating to markers of identity, including racial justice, feminist, disability rights, 2SLGBTQI+ rights, migrants' rights organizations, and intersectional combinations. They have missions to advance equity and are led by and for their target group. In this project, this sector is considered to be different from the grassroots. Equity-seeking nonprofits emerged from social movements, but are now formally constituted and funded, and have varied and complex relationships to the grassroots.¹¹ Nonprofits experience various legal and funding constraints to political action (especially if they are registered charities), so many use very different tactics to influence policy than those of grassroots movements. Many equity-seeking nonprofits are funded by the government funding streams mentioned above, while some make deliberate decisions not to be funded by government. Government funding streams to a large extent prescribe intended outcomes in line with government policy. Nonprofits may thus use frameworks such as intersectionality and GBA+ in order to secure funding. Nonprofits that are not funded by government are

9 Crenshaw, K. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Colour." *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241–99.

10 Christoffersen, Ashlee. 2024. *The Politics of Intersectional Practice: Representation, Coalition and Solidarity in UK NGOs*. Bristol University Press.

11 Incite! Women of Color Against Violence. 2017. *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*. Duke University Press.

mainly funded by private and corporate foundations, sources which have their own distinctive constraints. In other contexts, funding structures have been shown to influence the particular ways that nonprofits understand and use intersectionality.¹²

The nonprofit sector is important in terms of advancing equity for several reasons. First, it plays an important role in serving and meeting needs of groups experiencing intersecting inequalities through service provision. Second, it is an important employer of these groups.¹³ Third, the nonprofit sector plays a key role in policy advocacy, the main focus of this project. For example, nonprofits are part of numerous ‘consultative’ fora with civil servants, primarily concerning single-issue inequities, that input into policy development.

The equity-seeking nonprofit sector experiences inequities as compared with the ‘mainstream’ (non-equity seeking) sector on the whole, while there are also important differences within it along lines of intersecting structures of power. For example, Black organizations were shown to receive as little as 7 cents for every \$100 donated to large charities.¹⁴ Certain sub-sectors (e.g. the feminist/women’s sector) have been subject to far more research than others.

There is a lack of academic research concerning equity-seeking nonprofits in Canada, even though they play a vital role in equity policymaking. There is also a lack of research exploring their conceptualization and operationalization of intersectionality and other equity-related frames, yet equity practitioners have expert knowledge that can inform policymaking and other fields. Therefore, there is great potential for knowledge coproduced with specialist nonprofit practitioners to advance intersectional approaches in policy and practice, which is what is shared in this briefing.

While leading organizations in the sector have more recently made commitments on antiracism and decolonization, it is important to note that racially minoritized women have been working from within the sector to address racism and make it more inclusive for a long time, especially in the feminist sector.¹⁵ Yet these contributions have lacked recognition, and these roles have often been less powerful ones within organizations.¹⁶

In the remainder of this briefing, an overview of the research is provided, followed by an explanation of key findings, and important recommendations for nonprofits, governments, and funders.

12 Christoffersen 2024.

13 The sector employs 1 in 10 Canadian workers, 70% of whom are women. <https://imaginecanada.ca/en/About-the-sector>

14 Network for the Advancement of Black Communities. 2021. *Unfunded: Black Communities Overlooked By Canadian Philanthropy*.

15 Agnew, V. 1996. *Resisting Discrimination: Women From Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and the Women’s Movement in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.

16 Hossein, C. S. 2018. “A Black Perspective on Canada’s Third Sector: Case Studies on Women Leaders in the Social Economy.” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 51(3): 749–81.

Research Approach

This research, conducted between 2023-2025, explored the following questions: How do equity-seeking nonprofits conceptualize and operationalize intersectionality, among other equity-related frames? What policy responses do they advocate for?

The aims were to describe, analyze and understand the influence of recent public discourse about racial and Indigenous injustice on the opportunities and challenges for operationalizing intersectionality in Canada, with a unique focus on nonprofits; and to coproduce knowledge that can be usefully exchanged with policymakers.

The following methods were used: Document analysis (organization publications, mentions of nonprofits in parliamentary and committee proceedings), observation of public events, interviews (15 practitioners, 12 organizations), and workshops (2) at which interview participants debated interview findings and developed recommendations.

Participants in the research were given the option of whether they wished to be acknowledged or would prefer to remain anonymous. Those that wish to be acknowledged are listed below, and more information on the organizations is included in Appendix 1.

Participants¹⁷



Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah (CCGSD)
 Fae Johnstone (Momentum)
 Joanne Owuor (Uzima Network)

¹⁷ 5 organizations elected to remain anonymous.

Research Findings

1. For some organizations, 2020 sparked renewed interest in racial and Indigenous justice and intersectionality, but these struggles were being waged in Canada long before that. Many changes made after this were performative, and didn't last. Whiteness is still pervasive.

For some white-led and predominantly white organizations (e.g. in the 2SLGBTQIA+, feminist, and disability sectors), events of recent years have propelled some work on racial and Indigenous justice, for example, adopting new policies, and seeking to hire Black, Indigenous or racially minoritized staff. However, these changes have not always become embedded within organizations and stood the test of time. White organizations have more work to do, both internally and externally. As one participant observed:

“

“Organizations that are looking to bring in Black, Indigenous leadership...they need to do the homework at home, or do the house cleaning or preparations. Oftentimes not doing that work, creates an environment where...that demographic [white cisgender women overrepresented in the nonprofit sector] thrives.”

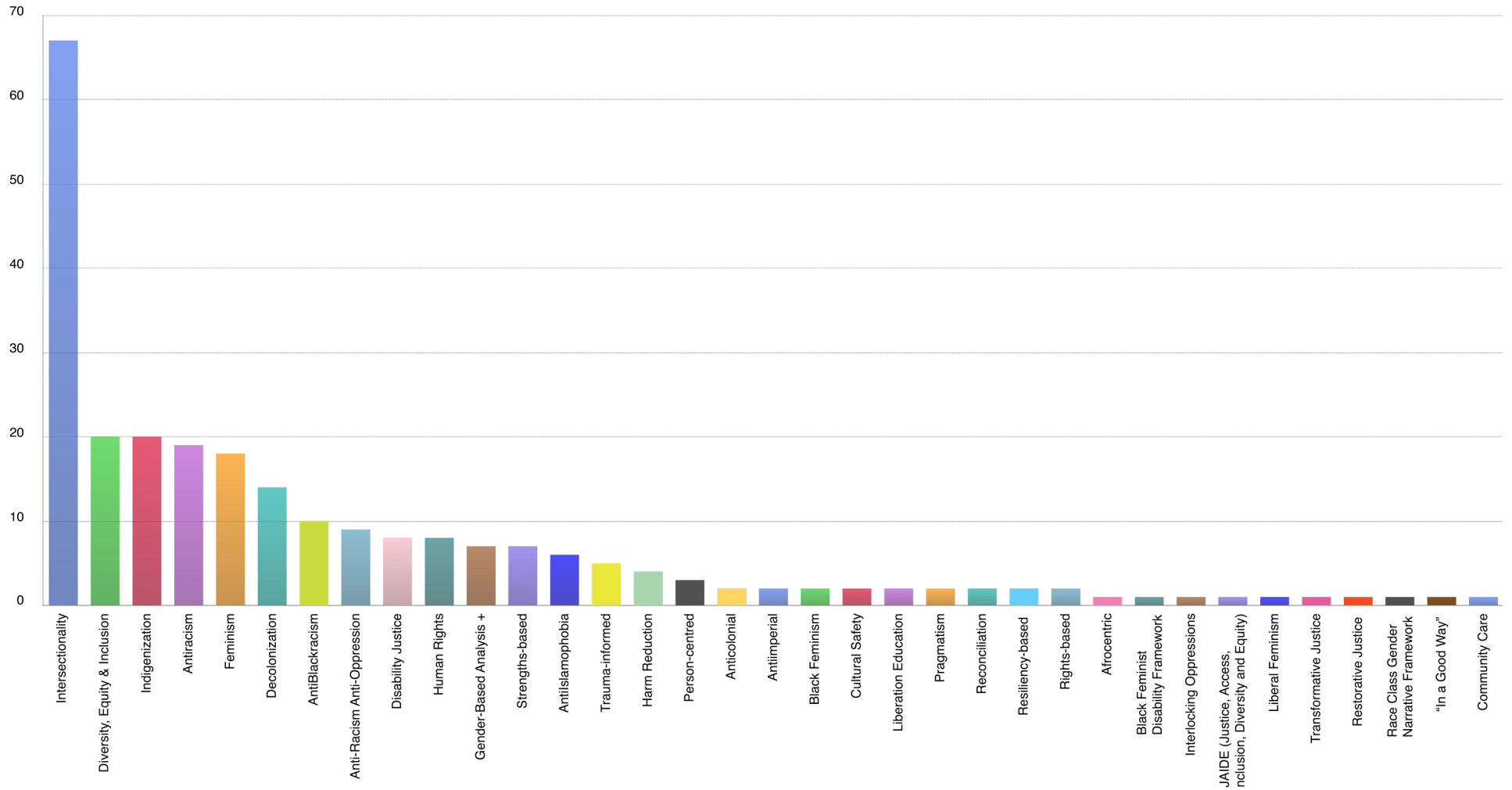
2. The framework of intersectionality doesn't necessarily do everything on its own. Equity specialists use multiple, complementary frameworks to guide their work.

In interviews and workshops, participants identified 35 different equity-related frameworks that they use in their policy advocacy and related work. This finding is important, since some existing tools such as GBA+ operate on the assumption that intersectionality (albeit approached through a gender lens) does everything, or that everything can come under the umbrella of GBA+. Indeed, not all participants named intersectionality as an important framework. Other frameworks such as Indigenization, decolonization, and harm reduction are also important and can't be reduced to intersectionality.

The following quotes illustrate understandings of two of the most frequently mentioned frameworks, intersectionality and Indigenization.

Intersectionality “Power dynamics and privilege still exist. Even within marginalized communities...some people will be more marginalized than others, even within the same community because of the different identities that they carry. And that's a really important recognition. And the only way that you can combat that and support that effectively is by first recognizing that it exists, and that it's real and understanding it.”

Equity-related Frames



Indigenization “We want to be true to who we are as Indigenous women. We want to be able to work within a system that’s not meant for us. And some of that is decolonizing the work that we do. ...We utilize our knowledge holders, our grandmothers. Because, traditionally, as Indigenous women, we were the decision makers, so we’re reclaiming that role within our organization.”

Some participants also held critical views of intersectionality and other frames.

Different frameworks are appropriate to different contexts. For example, the Race Class Gender Narrative Framework is used for communications. On the other hand, some frameworks like GBA+ and liberal feminism are, at times, imposed by funding (explicitly and implicitly). **However, participants identified most frameworks as highly complementary to one another.** Some other frameworks can also be understood as **more specific** intersectional frameworks attuned to specific lived experiences (for example, the Black Feminist Disability Framework).

Complementarity “I think if you view [different frames] holistically and globally, they’re very complementary. I think if you get very caught into a Western paradigm, and how we teach things in like a Canadian academic...context that then it becomes a little bit more difficult, and then they can be at odds depending. Because I think...there can be a tendency in a lot of spaces that are from a more Western academic lens to really police language and concepts in a way that is not really going to create inviting or welcoming spaces for people who are from outside of North America, and sometimes Europe.”

One participant commented on how, for their organization, **AntiBlack racism & Disability Justice are complementary frameworks:**

““The conditions of anti-Blackness, structural conditions that anti-Black racism [has] caused are disabling right? We’re more likely to be working precarious jobs, to be living in areas that...have been impacted by environmental racism...the system, is disabling. It creates conditions to disable.”

3. Equity frameworks are understood differently by different people, organizations, and sectors. There are more and less authentic ways to use equity frameworks.

““There [have] been times when...people have had very different ideas of what that [anti-racist, anti-oppressive intersectional feminist] means.”

“

“I am a staunch advocate of keeping to the true essence of intersectionality as a framework for understanding, positioning power...what has happened is that, of course, people have used it as maybe a cooler term to speak to diversity or using it as a way to speak to identity markers. I understand intersectionality for giving me the language to understand the ways in which I am, or can be, both, an oppressor and oppressed at the same time.”

4. Equity frameworks need to be applied both externally (e.g. in policy advocacy) and internally within organizations.

Participants identified that it’s important for organizations to model the changes they would like to see in the wider world within their organizations, including by creating meaningfully inclusive workplaces for staff that have been traditionally excluded by their organizations.

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“It’s important that we are...modelling what we want to see in the larger community.”

This doesn’t always happen:

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“While there are many organizations that...have taken up the mantle of publicly supporting trans folks and denouncing the legislation that’s happening [in some provinces] ...they don’t walk their values as well as they speak them...there’s a big resistance when it comes to an established organization... actually changing things that are structural that would help employees, that would help community members.”

However, transformative equity practice does not stop at internal changes or “Equity, Diversity and Inclusion” (EDI), and it’s important that it is applied in all aspects of organizations’ work, including policy advocacy. Indeed, the language of EDI can serve to depoliticize the work of equity-seeking nonprofits.

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“Funding is being attached to organizations being able to demonstrate that they...have EDI principles, or that they are doing decolonization...within the immigrant refugee serving sector, there are a lot of fantastic organizations who are actually doing incredible work that is antiracist, that is about advocacy and changing systems. That is about providing antiracist and culturally competent services to their communities. I think [EDI] is down [to a] push towards the depoliticization of what antiracism work is. It’s also providing a new set of language...and a way of thinking about things that has not emerged from resistance...whether it’s feminist, Black, Indigenous.”

Analysis of organizations' input into parliament and committees shows that many continue to speak of their constituents in a homogenous way, in spite of commitments to intersectionality, decolonization and antiracism.¹⁸ Therefore it is important to apply equity frameworks including intersectionality not only internally, but in all aspects of organizations' work.

5. Increasing diversity within organizations is important, but doesn't solve all problems of inequity or necessarily create structural changes within organizations. Not all members of a group are the same and can speak for the group. Equity work needs to be shared within organizations.

“You can speak to what you've heard from other people, but you can't speak for other people.”

As one participant noted, sometimes there is

“too much onus on the people within their organizations who have those identities to do the teaching and guiding, which is unfair and burdensome and shouldn't happen.”

¹⁸ This was a different sample of organizations than those that participated in interviews and workshops. This analysis was conducted by Angela Natial.

Using frameworks: how can organizations advance equity? Learning from experts

Some applications of equity frameworks are relatively minor, while others are very ambitious. Internal and external practice are related to one another. Below are examples of how organizations apply equity frameworks both internally within their organizations, as well as in their externally facing work.

USING FRAMEWORKS INTERNALLY	USING FRAMEWORKS EXTERNALLY
<p>Increasing diversity within organizations (e.g. reserved seats)</p> <p><i>“I deliberately, from day one made sure that we engage racialized people with disabilities, that we have visible representation of diversity.”</i></p> <p>Doing the preparatory work to enable diversity is important (e.g. training all staff), as well as offering appropriate supports tailored to individuals, and ensuring that equity labour is shared</p>	<p>Forming coalitions (this involves relationship building; identifying common issues, e.g. bodily autonomy; building common values; including intersectional organizations in coalitions)</p>
<p>Changing policies to explicitly include new constituents (e.g. 2Spirit, trans and gender diverse people)</p>	<p>Engaging in acts of solidarity (e.g. with missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, trans communities, Palestinian Canadians) – such acts might include public statements</p>
<p>Creating new intersectional organizations (with missions at the intersection of different inequities, led by and for their target group)</p> <p><i>“I don’t want to be at tables anymore. We don’t want to be at people’s tables. We’re either building our own tables, or we want the table-making factory, right?”</i></p> <p><i>“Our work is done with the idea that our identity contains multitudes, and that we are working to make sure that that entirety is taken into consideration and is respected.”</i></p>	<p>Movement building, organizing</p> <p>Creating spaces where,</p> <p><i>“critique, disagreement, is held as a positive contribution; supporting our people who are... coming from places of relative privilege to engage and organize in a way that brings others with them.”</i></p>
	<p>Policy advocacy – spotlight on this below</p>

Advancing equity in policy advocacy

Organizations have a range of policy priorities. Some are specifically focused on one policy, while others are interested in all policy areas that affect their constituents. Organizations had successfully influenced policy, and some had done so intersectionally, using a range of strategies detailed below.

STRATEGY	EXPLANATION
<p>Selecting issues intersectionally</p>	<p>Organizations can advance intersectionality by prioritizing issues that affect members of their communities that experience intersecting inequities.</p> <p>For example, one 2SLGBTQIA+ organization developed work on the provision within legislation banning conversion therapy, that it is now illegal to take someone outside of Canada to undergo a conversion practice. This issue:</p> <p><i>“most likely [impacts] those of us who still have a connection to another country. Probably a country where LGBTQ rights are not protected. And also probably those of us who are racialized. And so we decided to develop a project that specifically looked at that experience where we would be then bringing in other racialized organizations, faith-based organizations specifically those that work with Christians and Muslims...so taking that policy and making it accessible to all Canadian LGBTQ people. But specifically those who are most...at risk of that particular crime. Who are probably QTBIPOC. That is how, from a programmatic perspective, intersectionality has kind of informed our way, our ability to be innovative, in how we do this work.”</i></p> <p>This is a lot harder to do than simply having diversity in campaign materials.</p>

STRATEGY	EXPLANATION
<p>“Asking the other question” in policy spaces</p>	<p>Participants also advanced equity frameworks by bringing other inequities into conversations about particular inequities.</p> <p><i>“Intersectionality in practice is...the ability to ask different questions because of where or how our vulnerability is informed by our society”</i></p> <p><i>“When you ask people questions related to something else that’s equity-seeking, but not directly related to why you’re there. You very often get very eye-opening answers from them.”</i></p> <p>For example, participants questioned policymakers on how the Accessible Canada Act and GBA+ were being implemented into employment pathways for refugees. Responses received indicated that policymakers have much to learn from the expertise of equity-seeking nonprofits.</p>

Participants used a range of tactics to try to influence policy:

- Participating in committees
- Writing letters
- Engaging with political parties, MPs and Ministers
- Encouraging constituents to vote at elections
- Legal advocacy

6. Equity-seeking nonprofits experience solvable funding barriers to innovation in intersectional practice.

Funding-related barriers include:

- Not enough funding for certain sectors
- Siloed funding and reporting that can prevent intersectional work from happening, or from being recorded as such, in some areas
- Awarded funding being slow to start, and inflexible
- Funding being short-term, project-based
- Lack of funding for capacity building and professional development of staff
- Funding imposing certain frameworks (e.g. GBA+) even when organizations employ more advanced approaches
- Implementation of equity funding inadvertently disadvantaging intersectional organizations.

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“A scarcity mindset, inter-organizational, intersectoral competition - tweaking those things is a lot harder to do than to receive a nice policy announcement.”

Not enough funding and competitive siloed structures prevent the collaboration that intersectionality requires.

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“The funding model that’s out there is kind of like everybody for themselves, and kind of can ...pit community against one another, because the funding is so scarce.”

Short-term funding cycles are vulnerable to changes in government, prevent responsiveness in program delivery, and inhibit cross-sector partnership relationship building.

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“We put together projects and people come to rely on those services. But the project is time-limited.”

Funders are changing to place greater emphasis on “equity-deserving” communities and “led by, serving, focused” organizations, but the way that this is being implemented sometimes reproduces inequities, by disadvantaging under-resourced intersectional organizations. Funding structures don’t always value the expertise of specific communities.

Some organizations that are not historically “led by, serving, focused” on particular communities are, at the encouragement of staff in funding organizations in some cases,

making rapid changes in order to meet funding criteria. Organizations that are and have always been “led by, serving, focused” on those communities, already disadvantaged in the funding process, are in some cases not being awarded this funding.

“

“Organizations with more resources, will find loopholes so...even though language on that for future grants were added. People find loopholes. People find ways to tokenize. People who weren't doing the work will find ways to tokenize the role or tokenize programming just so that they can fit into the scope of whatever fund.”

“Slip somebody in, check a box and got the money.”

“The government's...funding organizations that say they're inclusive, but they're inclusive in a “yeah...you're technically under the umbrella”. But they're not really doing enough work. And then we're fighting those organizations that oftentimes are bigger, too, than us, or have longer histories.”

Recommendations

For Nonprofits

Select and Apply Equity Frameworks

- Intentionally select appropriate equity frameworks for your organization and context, and learn from experts. Apply equity frameworks both internally within your organization and in your external outward-facing work.

Embed equity frameworks

- When seeking to appoint staff from communities that your organization has historically excluded, ensure succession planning beyond project funding. Prepare the organization and support new staff.
- Assess organizations that you partner with or take money from through equity frameworks. Partnership funding with other equity-seeking sectors can provide an opportunity to advance equity and intersectionality.
- Develop a strong giving policy with equity values at the forefront to avoid donors preventing solidarity on particular issues
- Where appropriate, diversify funding sources beyond governments to enable movement building
- Practice transparency and accountability in funding. If your organization received funding to work with specific communities (that your organization is not led by, focused on and serving by mission), report back to those communities on the use of that funding.
- Protect your intellectual property – make sure you include a suggested citation in all publications as well as copyright information.

For Funders (governments, foundations, all types of funders)

Longer, improved funding cycles for equity work

- Introduce longer funding cycles of seven years (as there is in international funding from Global Affairs Canada) that will enable cross-sector relationship building and partnerships, and offer resilience to political change
- This should include core funding, be in the form of a grant, not a contribution agreement, and cover the duration of work (i.e. there should be no expectation for an organization to begin projects or programming before funding arrives, and funding should cover reporting periods). This should include professional development funding for staff. Funding should be flexible to enable responsiveness to the wider context.

Increasing equity in equity funding

- **Increase equity in the funding process.** Train all staff, especially those involved in assessment of applications, in equity. Consider introducing blind review processes. Diversify staff involved in assessment.
- Target funding (e.g. development of new programs) based on the evidence of who experiences the greatest inequities.
- Prioritize funding for “led by, focused, serving” organizations, rather than organizations that have historically excluded communities conducting outreach to/on those communities
- Build intersectionality into single-issue funding programs, ensuring dedicated funding for particular intersections.
- Earmark funding for specific groups who may fall under the banner of other organizations (more recently), such as 2Spirit and trans, but are not necessarily well-served or represented by either; Earmark funding for specific communities, e.g. 2Spirit people, rather than placing those communities under wider umbrellas
- Provide funding for accommodations for project-based staff with disabilities – this should be built in, and separated from project funding
- Provide extra support for new and intersectional organizations, who experience unique challenges in working across different communities and have a unique capacity for expertise in intersectionality’s operationalization. This could include support with professional services (law, accounting) such as facilitating cost-sharing between organizations. Work with organizations on what they are promising to deliver to ensure it is reasonable and to avoid burnout among staff.
- Work to ensure equitable funding split to provinces, being mindful of where there is resistance provincially to equity work, and providing more funding to counterbalance this
- Provide more funding for nonprofits based in rural and remote areas. Note that not all equity-seeking communities are covered by organizations led by and for them in rural and remote areas, so this recommendation is inclusive of nonprofits that serve and represent equity-seeking communities, but are not necessarily led by and for their target groups.
- Work with other funders (both government and foundation) to ensure equitable funding within specific sectors (e.g. feminist, disability rights, 2SLGBTQIA+), to enable a plurality of voices and mitigate hierarchies within sectors
- Recognize the intellectual property of funded organizations’ work. While this may be intended to inform future programming more widely, ensure that organizations are appropriately credited for their intellectual labour
- Remunerate lived experience expertise.

Increasing transparency and accountability in equity-related funding

- Perform due diligence on organizations as to whether they are led by, focused on and serving particular communities (see suggested guiding questions below).
- Increase reporting on use of funding, to increase accountability for and transparency concerning equity-related and intersectional funding – funders that fund, and organizations that receive funding, to work with specific communities (especially if they are not led by, focused on and serving that community by mission) should be required to publicly report back on use of that funding to the affected communities
- Monitor application outcomes by the specific group the organization is led by and for, and whether the organization is intersectional or single-issue. Adjust programs based on observed disparities.

Guiding questions for funder due diligence and equity

What is the history of this organization? Has it always been ‘led by and for’ a particular community? How is this measured?¹ Did it appoint some token people just to be eligible for this funding opportunity? If so, why? Is there not adequate funding? What expertise is excluded if you fund this organization and not others? Am I accounting for differences in age and resource of organizations when evaluating applications? Am I talking to members of the community that this organization serves or represents?

19 See criteria of SBCCI <https://africacentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SBCCI-2023-FALL-PROGRAM-GUIDELINES.pdf>

Appendix 1 Participants

Table 1 Sector of Participating Organizations

SECTOR OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS	NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS
2 Spirit	1
2SLGBTQIA+	2
Black and racially minoritized immigrant	1
Black Disability (led by and for)	1
Disability (led by and for)	2
Indigenous women & gender diverse	1
Multiple inequalities	1
Racially minoritized refugee and immigrant women	1
Racially minoritized women of faith	1
Trans (2STNBGN)	1
Total	12

Ten organizations work at national level, while 2 work at provincial/regional level in areas that national organizations do not tend to be based (the Prairies and Atlantic Canada). However, a limitation is that no organizations based in Northern Canada were included. While many participants have affiliations with multiple organizations of different sub-sectors, the above table shows only the organization that the participant was recruited through.

