

CSEE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Draft Terms of Reference

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Note: This document was drafted with the help of DEI Consultant Valerie Pruegger, Ph.D., and is to serve as the starting point for the DEI Committee. Once formed, the Committee will finalize the terms of reference.

A. PURPOSE

The CSEE Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee is established to act as the main discussion and advisory body of the CSEE in relation to issues of equity, diversity and inclusion (i.e., its “Mandate”). Equity, diversity and inclusion are concepts explained by actions intended to ensure that the CSEE (including all members and the society’s leadership) is reflective of society served, including with regard to Indigenous peoples, women, people with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities and Racialized Persons/Persons of Colour.

The purpose of the DEI Committee for the CSEE is to assist the Council and the Membership in ensuring that the goal of the Society to “embrace diversity and inclusivity and to treat everyone with respect, dignity and kindness” will be met. The CSEE has committed to work to foster an environment free from discrimination in any form and recognizes that all of our members have a role to play in promoting diversity and encouraging inclusivity in the Society’s activities. This committee will proactively work to serve as a leader, a knowledge network for connecting people and initiatives around diversity and equity, and work to identify and dismantle barriers to equitable participation in all of our endeavors.

B. COMPOSITION AND OPERATIONS

1. The Committee shall be composed of seven to ten Members. A Council member shall serve as an ex-officio non-voting member of the Committee.
2. The Committee will appoint two co-chairs. Terms for co-chairs will normally be two years, but one of the initial co-chairs will serve a one-year term, in order to stagger renewal of the two positions.
3. The Committee shall initially meet at least monthly, but may move to quarterly meetings once established depending on demand.
4. A majority of the Committee members shall represent a quorum.
5. The membership of the Committee may also include non-voting external independent advisors engaged to expand the experience and expertise of the Committee.
6. The Committee shall appoint a Secretary to serve a 2-year term.
7. Committee members will be expected to devote 2-4 hours bi-weekly on Committee activities/business. This time commitment may diminish once the Committee is established.

C. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Provide high-level oversight review of the CSEE's organizational culture, practices, policies and processes through a diversity and inclusion lens. This review may be conducted by an external reviewer with oversight by the Committee.
2. Develop a strategic plan after consideration of recommendations contained in reviews or reports of the previous DEI working group, recognizing that the fight against systemic racism, homophobia, sexual harassment and other forms of oppression must be ongoing, and must be a priority.
3. Monitor and provide accountability for the Society's compliance with implementing the strategic plan referenced above.
4. Work with Council, other CSEE committees, and the membership to initiate and collaborate on DEI activities and educational opportunities. This work involves everyone in the membership but can be steered and/or resourced by the Committee.
5. Act as the Council's champion to promote a bias-free environment and a fully welcoming Society for all members, community partners, conference and event attendees, donors, and board members.
6. Explore Society membership strategies to increase representation across equity-seeking groups (defined by the Government of Canada (GOC) as women, racialized persons, Indigenous persons and persons with disabilities), as well as diversity in career status, discipline and knowledge traditions.
7. Serve as a Forum for sharing information, issues and concerns.
8. Highlight DEI best practices across similar groups and organizations.
9. Serve as an advocacy group to champion diversity/equity issues in CSEE.

D. COMMITTEE MEMBER SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

Committee members and external advisors should have experience or demonstrate a clear commitment to working on diversity and inclusion issues. They should be committed to continuing the process of self-understanding and education and should be comfortable talking about race and other discrimination issues.

While the Committee will aim to include women, members of Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ2+, racialized and disability communities, all interested members of the Society are encouraged to apply, including members at different career stages, and representing diverse career paths and socio-economic backgrounds.

While Committee membership is limited, additional CSEE members may be appointed as ex-officio advisors, and/or be encouraged to participate in other ways. For example, to serve on working groups established on a project-by-project basis.

E. ACCOUNTABILITY

The Committee shall report on its discussions through minutes or meetings between the Committee Co-chairs and the ex-officio Council Member. Regular updates via meeting minutes or meeting summaries will also be shared with CSEE members.

The Committee will submit a report to Council twice annually (associated with council meetings) and annually to CSEE membership as part of the AGM. Reports shall outline the committee's activities and ongoing/future goals and priorities.

F. TERMS, ROLES, DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

F1. Frequency, Location and Conduct of Meetings

The Committee at its inaugural meeting shall establish the meeting schedule. It is recommended that the Committee meet four (4) to six (6) times a year or monthly while getting established. Meetings will usually be remote (via phone or video conferencing), but an in-person meeting may be planned to coincide with the annual conference.

Working groups, established on a project-by-project basis, shall meet as required.

1. All Committee meetings will be limited to members only, unless the Co-chairs otherwise approves attendance for certain individuals for all or a portion of the meeting. This may include members of the Advisory team or others brought in for their expertise.
2. The Co-chairs may additionally consult with Committee members by email, phone, etc., as the circumstances may require.
3. All Committee members, resource persons, consultants, guests, and Council persons who may be in attendance at a committee meeting or privy to committee information, are required to protect and keep confidential any protected information (e.g., classified or privileged information) received through participation on the Committee, unless such information is otherwise approved for public information.
4. Minutes are to be taken of business occurring during Committee meetings. However, the Committee may move "in camera" to deal with certain items if the subject matter being considered relates to personal and confidential matters that are exempt from disclosure under applicable access and privacy laws and CSEE policies. Once approved by the Committee, meeting minutes shall be made available, in accordance with applicable access and privacy laws and CSEE policies.

F2. Term of Appointment and Remuneration

Members shall be appointed for two (2) years. They may be re-appointed upon application for a total of a one (1) additional year. Six (6) months before a term ends, the Committee will create an application process to appoint new members. Terms for members should end on a staggered basis, to maintain continuity and experience.

A Chair and a Secretary shall be elected by the members for a two- (2) year term.

Members of the DEI Committee are volunteers and will serve without remuneration.

The DEI Committee shall be disbanded through a consensual and/or majority agreement between the Committee and the Council.

F3. Vacancies and Resignations

Should a member resign or be unable to complete the term, a call will go out for a new member. A selection committee consisting of the current DEI Committee Co-Chairs, two (2) current DEI Committee members, and the Ex-Officio Council member will review and appoint new members.

Members who vacate their position before their term is complete shall provide written notice of resignation to one or both of the DEI Committee Co-Chairs.

F4. Attendance Management

After two (2) consecutive absences by any member of the committee at regularly scheduled meetings, one or both of the DEI Committee Co-Chairs shall contact the absent member to determine if they plan to attend the next regularly scheduled meeting, noting any reasonable or compassionate circumstances which would prohibit their attendance.

If no reasonable or compassionate response is provided, the Committee Co-Chairs will inform the absent member that if they are absent from the next regularly scheduled meeting (the third meeting), the DEI Committee will declare their seat vacant and the recruitment and selection process for a new member will be initiated.

F5. Duties and Conduct

Members shall model respectful, inclusive and non-discriminatory behaviour in all of their contacts as a representative of the DEI Committee or CSEE. Should a member of the committee exhibit a pattern of inappropriate conduct, the Committee or the Council may rescind the member's appointment.

1. The Committee Co-chairs are expected to:

- Preside over all committee meetings and ensure smooth functioning of the meetings, with support from the Secretary.
- Prepare agendas for meetings in consultation with the Secretary.
- Participate as active members, encouraging participation by all DEI Committee members.
- Provide leadership to manage potential conflict among Committee members.
- Direct decision-making processes using a consensus model to ensure that all voices are included in actions and decisions.
- Be the points of contact with the Council in all DEI Committee matters.

2. The Secretary is expected to:

- Work with the Co-chairs to develop the meeting agendas.
- Maintain the Committee membership list, and lists of membership on any working groups.
- Take charge of any web-content to be posted, including forwarding materials for posting to the CSEE web master.
- Take and maintain an archive of meeting minutes and disseminate to Committee members, Council and Society membership.

3. Committee Members are expected to:

- Attend and actively participate in all DEI Committee meetings and any working group meetings as required.
- Recognize that this is a working committee, not merely an advisory committee, with members expected to contribute to initiatives and activities.
- Attend DEI events and initiatives of the Committee, where appropriate and available
- Contribute time, knowledge, skill and expertise to the fulfillment of the Committee's responsibilities.
- Understand their role and expectations and follow the mandate of the DEI Committee.
- Undertake work necessary to implement the committee's work plan.
- Develop and maintain a climate where mutual support, trust, respect, courtesy, teamwork, and creativity are valued.
- Maintain a high degree of professionalism.
- Respect the individual worth and dignity of other members and, at all times, work together to achieve a common vision for the organization, that makes space for the diverse knowledge, expertise and talents of all members to optimal advantage.
- Challenge ideas and not people, creating a climate where it is okay to disagree.
- Communicate directly, concisely and honestly, listening without interruption, and be open-minded, allowing a variety of opinions to be heard.
- Communicate using inclusive and non-discriminatory language, respecting the spirit of the Canadian Human Rights Code.
- Refrain from criticizing individual members in a way that casts aspersions on their professional competency and credibility.
- Respect and promote all decisions made by the DEI Committee.
- Serve as an ambassador for DEI across the CSEE and within their own spheres of influence.

G. OPERATING PROCEDURES

G1. Quorum

Quorum shall be a simple majority of the total existing committee members, including any vacancies. In the case that quorum is not met committee members can continue the meeting, but no decisions will be enacted until quorum is met.

G.2 Conduct of Business

The following applies to the DEI Committee:

1. If neither of the Co-chair is present within the first ten (10) minutes of a committee meeting, or have previously sent regrets, the members present shall appoint, by consensus another member as Acting Chair, who will preside for the duration of the meeting.
2. Decisions will be made by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, simple majority vote by the members present shall be followed.
3. The Co-chairs shall preside over the conduct of the meeting, including the preservation of good order and decorum and deciding all questions relating to the orderly procedure of the meetings.
4. Meeting agendas will be available to members a minimum of one (1) week prior to the upcoming meeting. Meeting agendas will be emailed to members or posted in a file repository set up by the committee's secretary.
5. Meeting Summary Notes shall briefly outline the substance of each of the items listed on the agenda, including actions taken and recommendations. Minutes will be approved by the committee at the next meeting.

G3. Budget

An annual budget will be allocated by the CSEE Council for the DEI Committee's use. Additional requests for funds to deliver projects can be made to council, and will be subject to CSEE Council approval. The Committee will include an accounting of the use of funds as part of its reporting to CSEE Council.

G4. Guiding Principles

The Committee will:

- Reflect the diversity of the equity seeking groups in the CSEE.
- Develop and promote a vision of inclusion based on the CSEE's Diversity and Inclusion Statement (2017). See <http://www.csee-scee.ca/diversity-and-inclusivity-statement/>.
- Be committed to operating with effective, respectful and inclusive communication strategies and styles.
- Promote and operate through a consensus decision-making process.
- Where possible, foster collaboration and partnerships with other scientific societies within Canada and internationally.

- Inject intersectionality into strategies.
- Be responsive to the Society membership’s DEI needs.
- Promote ongoing DEI learning opportunities for Committee members, for Council, and for the Society membership.

H. AMENDMENTS TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

Amendments to these Terms of Reference may be proposed by the Committee and submitted to the CSEE Council for approval.

I. DATES OF APPROVAL, REVIEW AND REVISION

Date approved: [to be completed by the committee]

Review: Formal review of these terms will be conducted every [insert time frame]. In the interim these terms may be revised or rescinded if the Chair and Members of the Committee Deem Necessary.

J. ADDENDUM: EX-OFFICIO ADVISORS TO THE COMMITTEE

J1. Mandate

The DEI Committee may seek advice, consultation or participation in activities and initiatives from the ex-officio advisors to the Committee on an ad-hoc basis.

The Ex-Officio representative from the CSEE Council will serve as a liaison between the Committee and the Council, will provide leadership advice and resources as needed and available for the work of the Committee. The CSEE Council member of the DEI Committee may establish a proxy.

J2. Membership of the Ex-Officio Advisory Group

A minimum of (5) and maximum of fifteen (15) advisors from the larger membership will be appointed representing a broad range of under-served and equity seeking groups, and the intersectionality of these group identities such as, but not limited to:

Indigenous peoples	Newcomers, new Canadians
Faith-based groups	Persons with disabilities
LGBTQ2S+ individuals	Racialized people, people of diverse ethnic or cultural origin

Persons living in poverty	First generation academics
Women	Early, Mid and Later Career status individuals

The DEI Committee can appoint a member of the Advisors group to attend DEI meetings and share information with the other Advisors.

J3. Ex-Officio Advisory Member Qualifications

Advisors must be CSEE members and be committed to serving as a change-agent in diversity, equity and inclusion matters in ecology and evolution in Canada. This may include being involved in or leading initiatives, activities, learning events, and also sharing information about DEI throughout their networks.

J4. Term of Appointment and Remuneration of Ex-officio advisory group members

Advisors shall be appointed for two (2) years. They may be re-appointed upon application for a total of four (4) years. Advisors of the DEI Committee are volunteers and will serve without remuneration.

Advisors may leave this role at any time and the DEI Committee will vote on whether or not to replace the Advisor following the same procedure as that used for a committee member who resigns or vacates the position.