



Guiding Principles & Common AVA Definitions

AVA's Objectives

- **Strengthen and build capacity** to transform population (community) health and social services to promote the health and wellness of girls, women, and gender-diverse¹ people, at risk/affected by violence and adversity² over the lifecycle;
- **Use a collaborative, innovative**, cross-sectoral/disciplinary/jurisdictional training platform to train hundreds of Canadian service providers and academics in the social services/community health field working with this population; and
- **Make intergenerational and population impacts**, and promote a positive lifespan for girls, women, and gender-diverse people.

The following Guiding Principles outline the AVA team's commitment to fair and equitable policies and practice.

What are AVA's Guiding Principles?

- AVA is committed to addressing inequities and health disparities disproportionately impacting girls, women, and gender-diverse people with intersectional identities. This includes, but is not limited to, (dis)ability, race, and gender identity. AVA relies on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA)³ initiatives, and Sex and Gender-Based Analysis (SGBA+)⁴ is at the core of reaching AVA's objectives.
- AVA seeks to ensure EDIA in all aspects of the AVA Training Platform by engaging with Patient Partners⁵ and AVA designated Champions who specialize in EDIA, Indigenous Knowledge⁶, SGBA+ and Black and Other racialized people.
- AVA aims to strengthen and build capacity to address the intersections⁷ between sex, race, (dis)ability⁸, social locations, gender-diversity and other identities, while acknowledging (to the degree possible) the impacts of colonialism, classism, racism, and Canadian culture (albeit recognizing that AVA may influence, but cannot itself change, these things).
- AVA recognizes that diverse voices from community experts, as well as Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Metis), Black, and other racialized people, continue to be minimal and minimized in academic research; hence, our aim is to have academic, community, Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people, as partners, co-creating culturally safe, supportive, and reciprocal learning for all team members.
- All team members whether academic or community partners, or mentees, are considered trainees engaged in reciprocal learning.

How will AVA do this?

- AVA seeks to ensure EDIA in all aspects of the AVA Training Platform by engaging with Patient Partners and AVA designated Champions who specialize in EDIA, Indigenous Knowledge, SGBA+ and Black and Other racialized people.
- EDIA will influence selection of participants to take part in AVA programs (e.g. Community Agency Internship; Early Career Researcher Teaching Release).
- All AVA team members will be asked to attend mandatory annual EDIA training.
- AVA Online⁹ includes courses specifically designed to enhance trainee and team members' knowledge and practice related to EDIA.
- SGBA+ and intersectionality are core AVA Online curriculum components. AVA team members, especially leadership, have training in SGBA+, intersectionality and research knowledge that address racialized people.
- AVA prioritizes the inclusion of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people on the AVA team and in trainee recruitment.
- In all training activities, including experiential learning activities, internships, networking and/or other innovative training opportunities, attention will be paid to ensure that the Guiding Principles of AVA are upheld (e.g. by including EDIA assessments in meeting agendas)
- The EDIA, Indigenous Knowledge, and Black and Other racialized people Champions are represented at the highest level by being part of the Platform Advisory Committee (PAC). These Champions' opinions are sought frequently and as appropriate.
- The call for applicants will prioritize racialized, (dis)abled, gender-diverse and other identities.
- We will employ best practices in EDIA recruitment and application adjudication, with our EDIA, Indigenous Knowledge, and Black and Other racialized people Champions reviewing/providing input into the process and written materials in every form.
- We will seek equity by removing systemic barriers and biases to recruitment by ensuring all PAC members, who will approve calls for applicants and approve final adjudication of applications, have training on unconscious bias (individual) but also from a systems approach (systemic).
- The AVA training platform will develop a broad range of research skills and provide training on emerging approaches to advance rigorous and responsible research (e.g., sex- and gender-based analysis (SGBA+), research data management, research involving Indigenous Peoples, ethics, unconscious bias).
- AVA trainee recruitment efforts will aim to ensure that diverse perspectives and lived experiences (e.g. race, place of origin, religion, immigrants and newcomers, ethnic origin, ability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and age) are represented among AVA trainees. An example of how this will be done is by advertising training opportunities via community partners and academics that provide services and support to diverse people.
- AVA's mandatory core activities will address EDIA (including unconscious bias assessed with the Harvard Implicit Association Test and training with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, which includes unconscious/implicit bias recognition training), Sex and Gender-Based Analysis (SGBA+), and intersectionality, and Indigenous research methods.
- AVA Team Champions will review and edit these principles and definitions annually.

Definitions

¹ **Gender-diverse:** The term gender-diverse reflects a broader, more flexible understanding of gender identity and expression, rather than rigid, societally imposed concepts of gender as a binary construct (The Canadian Centre of Gender and Sexual Diversity, 2020). AVA is a Health Research Training Platform whose focus included gender-diverse and -fluid individuals who are at risk or who have lived experience with violence, adversity, and disadvantage related to gender identity and expression.

² **Adversity:** As referenced throughout the AVA Training Platform, adversity refers to experiences that have the potential to negatively impact the health and wellness of girls and women. This includes Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), defined as a set of exposures to abuse (e.g. physical, emotional, sexual), neglect (e.g. physical, emotional) and household dysfunction (parental mental illness, substance abuse, divorce, intimate partner violence) prior to 18 years of age.

³ **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility (EDIA):**

Equity: Means fairness; people of all identities being treated fairly. It means ensuring that the processes for allocating resources and decision-making are fair to all and do not discriminate on the basis of identity. There is a need to put measures in place to eliminate discrimination and inequalities which have been well described and reported and ensure, to the best degree possible, equal opportunities. Equity is needed to achieve equality. For example, treating people as equals in an environment in which historical and systemic disadvantages prevent people from operating as equals can be inequitable – it lacks the fairness of a truly equitable situation (NSERC, 2017)

Diversity: Consists of the conditions, expressions and experiences of different groups identified by age, education, sexual orientation, parental status/responsibility, immigration status, Indigenous status, religion, disability, language, race, place of origin, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic status, and other attributes. Recognizing and valuing diversity must be accompanied by concerted efforts to ensure inclusion of diverse populations, meaning that individuals are and feel valued, respected, and equally supported (NSERC, 2017).

Inclusion: Requires creating an environment in which all people are respected equitably and have access to the same opportunities. Organizationally, inclusion requires the identification and removal of barriers (e.g., physical, procedural, visible, invisible, intentional, unintentional) that inhibit [applicants'] participation and contribution. Inclusion values and principles include fairness, justice, equity, and respect, by being open to different voices and perspectives, developing an understanding of different cultures, experiences, and communities, and making a conscious effort to be welcoming, helpful and respectful to everyone (NSERC, 2017).

Accessibility: "The provision of flexibility to accommodate needs and preferences, and refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities. It can also be understood as "a set of solutions that empower the greatest number of people to participate in the activities in question in the most effective ways possible"" (Baker & Vasseur, 2021).

⁴ **Sex and gender-based analysis plus (SGBA+):** SGBA+ is used to assess the potential impacts of policies, programs, services, and other initiatives on diverse groups of women, men and people with diverse gender identities, taking into account multiple identity factors. The "plus" in the name highlights that GBA+ goes beyond gender, and includes the examination of a range of intersecting identity factors (such as age, education, sexual orientation, etc.). SGBA+ is an approach that systematically examines sex-based (biological) and gender-based

(socio-cultural) differences between men, women, boys, girls and people with diverse gender identities. (NSERC, 2017)

⁵ **AVA Patient Partners:** These are women and gender-diverse individuals who have: (1) lived experience, exposure to, or awareness of being a girl/woman exposed to adversity, including childhood experiences, especially violence, and (2) expertise in patient engagement.

⁶ **Indigenous Knowledge:** Indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge are used interchangeably to refer to Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing. The term traditional knowledge is used to describe information passed from one generation to the next. Ways in which this is done is storytelling, ceremonies, traditions, dances, medicines, etc. or a combination of these methods. Traditional knowledge is collective knowledge (Crowshoe, 2005).

⁷ **Intersectionality:** "Recognizes that inequities are never the result of single, distinct factors. Rather, they are the outcome of interactions of different social locations, power relations and experiences". (NSERC, 2017)

⁸ **(Dis)ability:** AVA recognizes (dis)ability as an evolving term representing the interaction between physical, mental, intellectual and/or sensory and environmental barriers that may interfere with full and equitable participation in society (United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2007). Further, it is acknowledged that these impairments or barriers do not detract from other strengths and abilities an individual may have.

⁹ **AVA Online:** AVA Online is one of the 6 AVA Training Platform's programs. It includes the curriculum and its online learning on the online Learning Management System called Raising Interdisciplinary Scientist Excellence (RISE), and other learning material found on the AVA Member Portal found at www.avatraining.ca.

References

Crowshoe, C. (2005). *Sacred ways of life: Traditional knowledge*. First Nations Centre National Aboriginal Health Organization. https://fnim.sehc.com/getmedia/da4b6263-a624-403c-ace1-5f914419a686/Traditional_Knowledge_Toolkit_2005.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf

National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), 2017. *Guide for applicants: Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in your application*. Government of Canada. https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/EDI/Guide_for_Applicants_EN.pdf

Baker, J., Vasseur, L., (2021). *Inclusion, diversity, equity & accessibility (IDEA): Good practices for researchers*. Canadian Council for UNESCO. https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAQQw7AJahcKEwjo7OfT_rf5AhUAAAAAHQAAAAAQAg&url=https%3A%2F%2Fen.ccunesco.ca%2F%2Fmedia%2Ffiles%2Funesco%2Fresources%2F2021%2F09%2FToolkitIDEA.pdf&psig=AOvVaw0lZTB6EjMf5c2x-yn9Hx9W&ust=1660070815901530

First review by AVA Team Champions completed August 15, 2022

Approved by AVA Lead:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mason", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.