



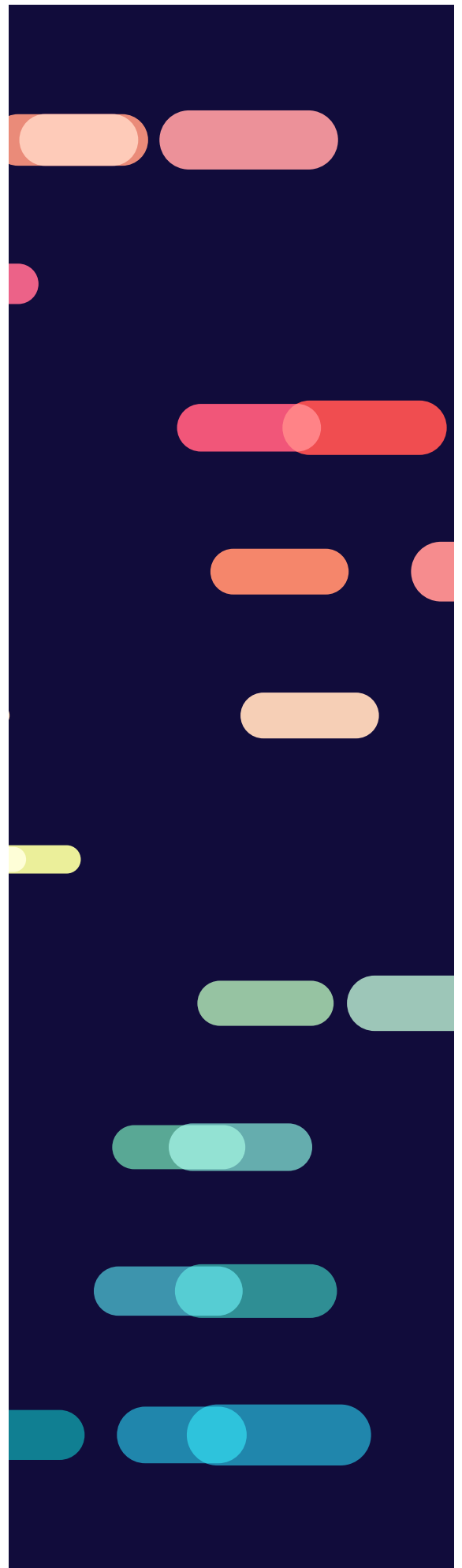
Canada's national platform for genome sequencing and analysis

**2023-2025**

**Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility  
Strategic Action Plan**



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# CGEn IDEA Strategic Action Plan

## CGEn

CGEn is a federally funded national platform for genome sequencing and analysis. Established in 2014, CGEn employs over 200 staff, and is funded primarily by the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) through its Major Science Initiatives Fund (MSI), leveraging investments from the provincial governments of Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia, Genome Canada and others. CGEn operates as an integrated national platform with nodes in Toronto (The Centre for Applied Genomics at The Hospital for Sick Children), Montréal (McGill Genome Centre at McGill University), and Vancouver (Canada's Michael Smith Genome Sciences Centre), providing genomic services, including genome sequencing and analysis, that enables research in agriculture, forestry, fishery, the environment, health sciences, and many other disciplines of interest to Canadians.

## Preamble

CGEn is committed to promoting the diversity of staff, partners, and the research communities we support with our services and expertise. Embracing the diversity of identity, experience, and thoughts bolsters the research excellence of CGEn staff and trainees and fosters inclusion. By continuing to endorse core values of equity, CGEn strives to create a respectful environment that positions our enterprise as a global leader where diversity, inclusion and accessibility are key drivers of excellence in scientific outputs and outcomes. CGEn also understands that the path toward an equitable, diverse, and inclusive workplace is a shared responsibility. The journey towards achieving the highest standard of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IDEA) requires ongoing commitment from both CGEn leadership and staff.

We acknowledge that in recent years, there has been mounting awareness of various forms of discrimination that exist in Canadian institutions, and the subsequent impact this has had and continues to have in both employee experiences and research. The purpose of this Strategic Action Plan is to have a reference guide and tool that will build on existing IDEA structures and initiatives and will enable CGEn to promote intentional change in both the workplace and in genomics research. As such, a focus on intersectionality, anti-oppression, allyship, and accountability will remain central to our actions. We must also note the complexities associated with national platforms. CGEn has the capacity for broad, Canadian-wide impact, but must also navigate the potential challenges of working with three host institutions with varying priorities and focuses in relation to IDEA. With this in mind, CGEn will strive to align its actions across the CGEn nodes and continually assess organizational readiness for IDEA advancements.

## Definitions

CGEn has adopted the IDEA acronym to replace the previously used Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) acronym. The inclusion of accessibility more accurately reflects the values of CGEn. It is important to note that some CGEn affiliated institutions and documents may continue to use EDI.

The following definitions have been adapted from the University of British Columbia's [Equity & Inclusion Office](#) website.

**Inclusion.** Inclusion is an active, intentional, and continuous process to address inequities in power and privilege, and build a respectful and diverse community that ensures welcoming spaces and opportunities to flourish for all.

**Diversity.** Differences in the lived experiences and perspectives of people that may include race, ethnicity, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical disability, mental disability, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, class, and/or socio-economic situations.

**Equity.** Equity refers to achieving parity in policy, process and outcomes for historically and/or currently underrepresented and/or marginalized people and groups while accounting for diversity. It considers power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes, in three main areas: Representational equity, resource equity, and equity-mindedness.

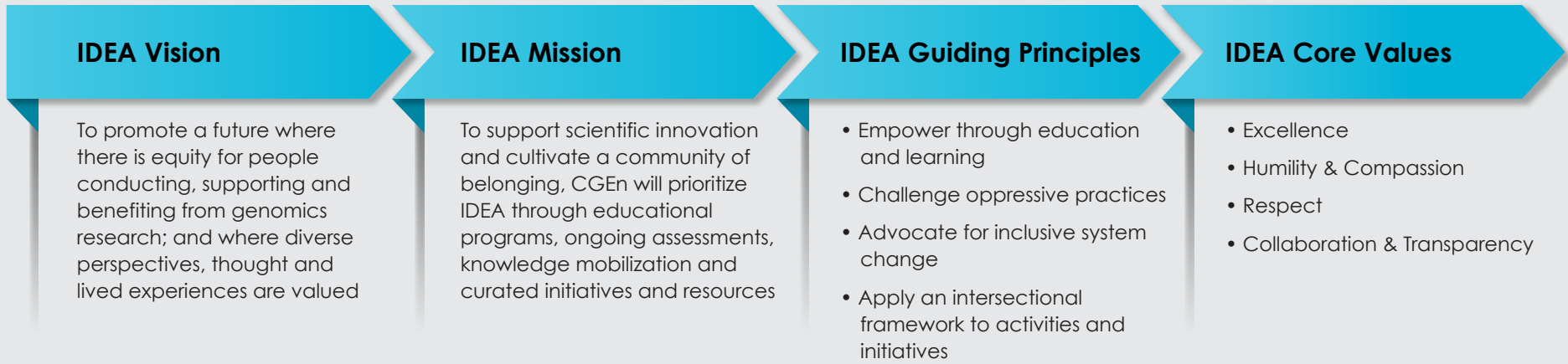
**Accessibility.** Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people with disabilities.

## Methods

Three main data sources informed the development of this Strategic Action Plan. First, a review of current and relevant literature (e.g., peer-review articles), other Canadian sources (e.g., CIHR Equity Strategy, CFI's EDI policies) and international sources (e.g., NHGRI EDI materials) was conducted. Second, CGEn drew from IDEA best practices at the host institutions ([SickKids](#), [McGill](#), and [UBC](#)). Finally, a CGEn-wide survey was developed and distributed to staff across all three CGEn nodes to collect baseline self-identification and employee experience data. The purpose of collecting and analyzing this data was to build on the existing CGEn IDEA action plan with recent data, and to have a reference for measuring change overtime. The survey was created using an [intersectional](#) framework and distributed in Spring 2023. Although the survey data reflects only a portion of CGEn staff identities and experiences (response rate to the survey was 50.6%), the results provided valuable insights and next steps in our ongoing efforts to advance IDEA.

For a visual representation of the IDEA strategy, along with CGEn's IDEA vision, mission, guiding principles, and core values, see Figure 1.

# Figure 1. CGEn IDEA Strategy



## Key Objectives



## Key Objectives



### Objective 1 – Champion Inclusion

With new insights from the IDEA survey, and identified opportunities for growth, we will work to support a safe(r) and more inclusive workplace. For example, we will communicate resources and services available to staff (IDEA-related documents and institutional policies). Other activities to support a sense of belonging will include identifying and suggesting solutions to mitigate barriers to staff recruitment and retention. These efforts will be coupled with ongoing assessments, to maintain accountability as we work to support equity and inclusion.



### Objective 2 – Advance Talent Development

By leveraging the relationships and resources across all three CGEn nodes, we will develop IDEA educational opportunities using an advocacy-centred approach for all staff. We will situate diverse voices at the forefront of this staff development to cultivate an understanding of systemic barriers/forms of discrimination that impact inclusive workplace experiences and an appreciation for diverse knowledge systems.

To establish succession plans that place value on diverse identities, lived experiences and thought, we will develop programs that sponsor underrepresented persons. CGEn acknowledges the important role that sponsorship and championing play in promoting excellence from within, and the strength diverse thought yields in genomics research. By establishing frameworks for mentorship and networking opportunities, CGEn intends to remain accountable to promoting IDEA from talent identification through to securing leadership positions.



### Objective 3 – Promote Diversified Research

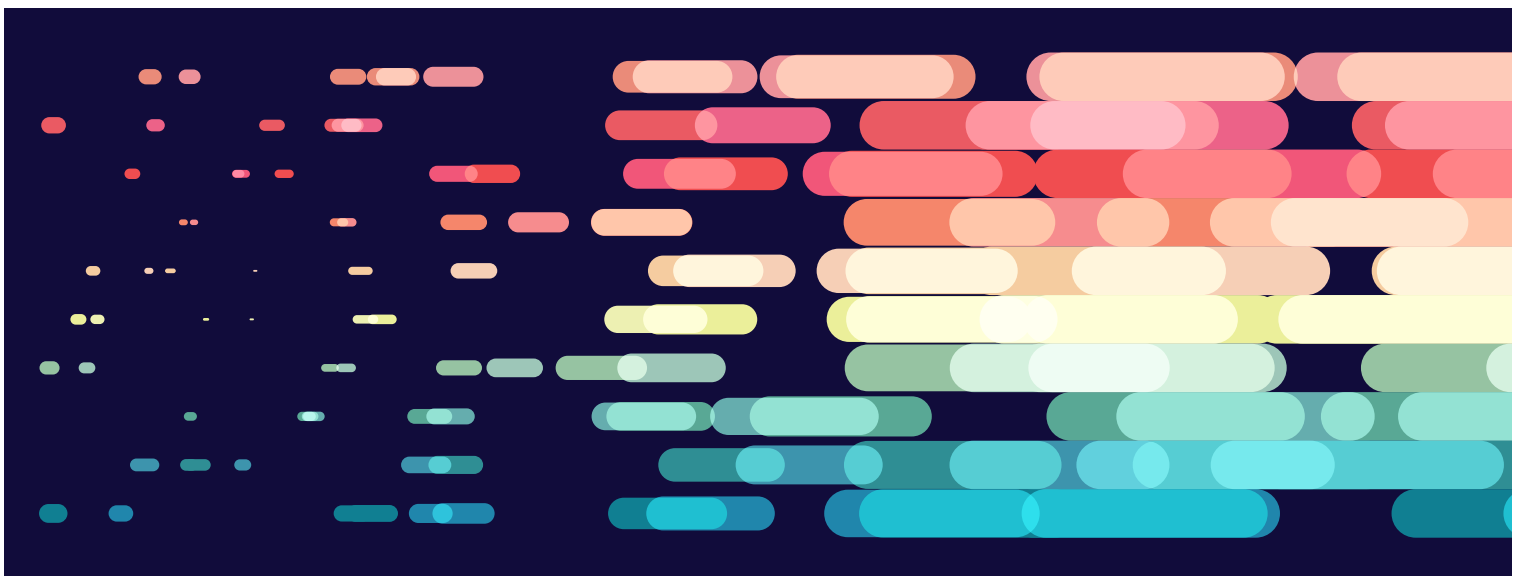
As the field of contemporary genomics continues to advance, innovation is dependent on the integration of IDEA in research from inception through to dissemination. Therefore, CGEn will remain intentional in fostering trusting relationships with underrepresented and underserved communities, to create partnerships that promote self-determination in research. Through educational opportunities, we will discuss inclusive practices that mitigate barriers to research participation, the use of thoughtful identity descriptors, and the use of culturally appropriate methodologies. Additionally, CGEn will collaborate with other Canadian organizations supported through CFI's (MSI) Fund, as an opportunity to share experiences and learn from one another, to further strengthen our capacities to support and conduct inclusive genomics research. Finally, to build on current practices for assembling diverse research teams, we will

strive to identify additional opportunities to increase equitable and full participation in research projects to both develop talent and respond to the complexity of challenges in generating, analyzing, interpreting, and returning complex genomic information.

## Objective 4 – Support User Equity and Accessibility

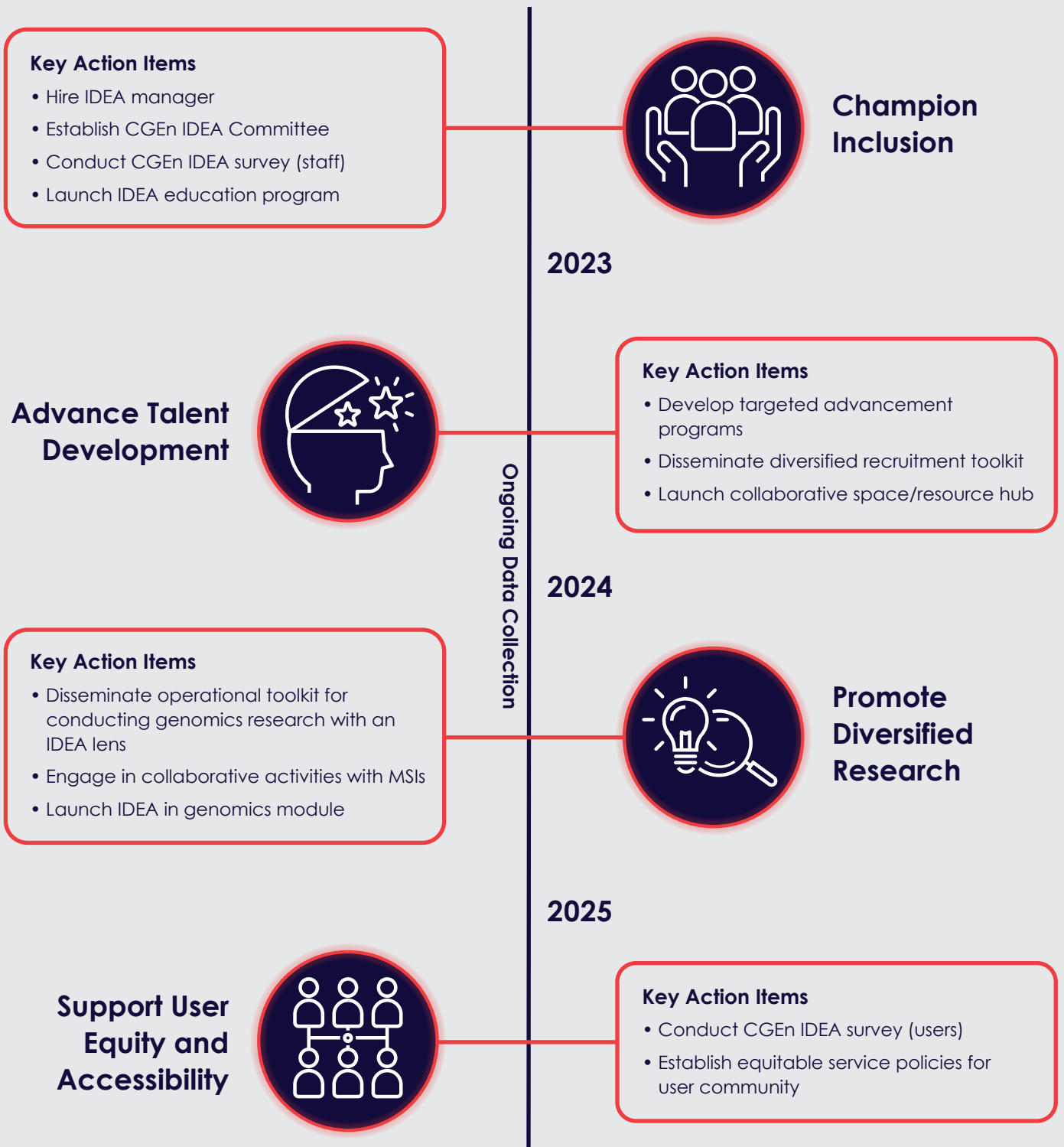
As a service provider to the research community, CGEn is committed to offering equitable access to sequencing and analysis services. CGEn is a fully open architecture, providing consultation, experimentation and analysis to users in the public, private, and government/NGO sectors, following the general philosophy that: 1) all researchers are welcome, 2) no project should be either too large, or too small, for consideration, and 3) projects are performed on a first-come, first-served basis. Genomics, and the need for CGEn services, is ubiquitous across all biological studies, and support is provided to investigators who may not have the genomics background to appropriately plan their projects or analyze their data. CGEn aids investigators during grant preparation (e.g., study design, technology selection, research ethics protocols) to help remove barriers and enable research. With an IDEA lens, where possible, we will collect self-identification/demographic information from our current users, to gain a stronger sense of who is accessing CGEn services and who is missing. This information will be instrumental in developing recommendations to remove barriers and to expand CGEn’s reach through targeted campaigns and initiatives that increase awareness and equity in access.

For a timeline of key activities to action the strategy between 2023 and 2025, see Figure 2.



# Figure 2. CGEn IDEA Action Plan

## Timeline 2023-2025



### CGEn's Commitment to Lifelong Growth

The following figure provides a projected timeline to initiate the four IDEA objectives. It is important to note, that the nature of IDEA work is complex and constantly evolving. Therefore, it is expected that the timeline will change as gaps are identified and ongoing assessments are conducted. This timeline is a visual tool to foster accountability and monitor our goals as they grow and advance.



# Measuring Change

As initiatives and activities are executed, there will be ongoing assessments to measure change and identify opportunities to better meet the needs of the CGEn community. A 2023-2025 IDEA Measurement framework has been developed to guide this work (see Appendix A).

Examples of assessment strategies include the following:

- Key Performance Indicators
- Document/Critical Analysis
- Biennial Staff-Wide Survey
- Post-Education Session Surveys
- Anecdotal Observations/Conversations
- Semi-Structured Interviews

Examples of data collected through assessments and potential outcomes may include the following:

- Number of IDEA education sessions, activities, initiatives
- Developed/revised IDEA policies and procedures
- Number of research activities initiated that focus on underrepresented/underserved communities
- Increases in the diversity of users accessing CGEn services and equity of access

## References

Kayingo, G., Bradley-Guidry, C., Burwell, N., Suzuki, Sm., Dorough, R., & Bester, V. (2022). Assessing and benchmarking equity, diversity, and inclusion in healthcare professions. *JAAPA*, 34(110), 51-54.

Romansky, L., Garrod, M., Beown, K., & Kartik, D. (2021, May 27). *How to measure inclusion in the workplace*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2021/05/how-to-measure-inclusion-in-the-workplace>

# Appendix A

## CGEn IDEA Measurement Framework 2023-2025

The purpose of the following document is to provide a two-year Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) measurement framework for CGEn's IDEA initiatives and activities. CGEn has committed to prioritizing IDEA in both workplace and research; to do so, various assessment with qualitative and quantitative indicators will be used regularly to monitor change and adjust practices accordingly. The CGEn community (staff and leadership) are at the heart of this work, and will therefore be guiding the IDEA trajectory through their participation in these assessments. In addition to an ongoing analysis of the assessment data, CGEn will revisit this framework at the two-year mark and make revisions/additions as needed.

According to Kayingo and Colleagues (2022):

A top challenge is a lack of accepted diversity and inclusion benchmarks. To foster a culture of accountability, ongoing self-assessment, and continuous equity and diversity improvement, researchers must develop standardized practices or tools for assessing and benchmarking equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts. Although some progress has been made in measuring and reporting aggregate professional compositional diversity, there are no accepted diversity and inclusion standards or guidance on how to assess program compliance. (p.52)

With this in mind, we anticipate that adjustments will need to be considered to ensure the framework is reflective of the CGEn community's needs and the everchanging landscape of IDEA. In addition, many of the IDEA initiatives and activities will be a first attempt, so we welcome constructive feedback and suggestions, and will adjust our measurements accordingly.

## Committee Engagement

An IDEA Committee comprised of staff from the three CGEn nodes (and/or their host institutions) and CGEn-Central act as an advisory group to support the development of assessment tools and the creation of documents to disseminate results. The Committee members bring a wealth of lived experiences and diverse thought to avoid a singular interpretation.

## Assessment Tools

**Document/Critical Policy Analysis.** All existing IDEA (formerly EDI) documents developed by CGEn are reviewed to determine their relevance to the current IDEA climate. In addition, critical policies including the workplace accommodation policies and harassment/discrimination policies at the three CGEn node institutions are reviewed. This analysis focuses on identifying what the policies include, as well as where they are located, so that their location can be communicated with, and made accessible to CGEn staff.

**Biennial Staff-Wide Survey.** A survey is distributed to all-staff on a biennial basis to collect information regarding the lived experiences and self-identification of CGEn staff, their previous experiences with IDEA, and to identify next steps to support IDEA growth. This enables CGEn to stay abreast of which initiatives and activities are most supportive to the CGEn staff, as well as to provide some learnings for the development and adjustment of a CGEn IDEA Strategic Action Plan.

**Post-Education Session Surveys.** According to Romansky and colleagues (2021) staff feedback is “... the most useful data source for measuring inclusion, especially when leaders can use a “pulse”, a quick survey”. As such, following the facilitation of each IDEA Education session, each participant is invited to complete a short survey to provide constructive feedback regarding the information they learned (or did not learn), along with requests for future topics.

**Anecdotal Observations/Conversations.** To encourage learning and sharing beyond planned initiatives and activities, a virtual, collaborative space (Slack) is available to all CGEn staff. This space has a variety of sections to share resources, such as IDEA in genomics articles, and recent IDEA research. The CGEn IDEA Manager monitors the space and observes the learning interactions. This informal assessment supplies insights into another opportunity for IDEA-related engagement. There may be other forms of anecdotal data collection, such as informal conversations or discussions.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** CGEn staff have the option of participating in a semi-structured interview, to capture a more holistic picture of their experiences with the CGEn IDEA initiatives and other activities in their workplace. Qualitative interviews compliment and supplement the results of some of the other assessment tools.

## Ethical Considerations/Confidentiality

Surveys are administered through SurveyMonkey and do not ask participants to provide their names, although emails are collected. The CGEn IDEA Manager is the only person who has access to the emails. Interviews are not anonymous, however all data collected is kept confidential with the CGEn IDEA Manager who facilitates the interviews. All assessment results are presented through aggregate data with no linked identifiers. Combining these various measurement tools and practices, will provide CGEn with multiple assessment points over two-years to continue growing and changing to support a welcoming and inclusive CGEn community and promote IDEA-focused research.



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