

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum

Inclusivity Guide

Purpose of guidelines

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF-FCA) is committed to promoting equity and inclusion in all activities undertaken by the organization and as such has developed standards to guide stakeholders in engaging with each other in a way that is respectful and promotes constructive communication. It is our expectation that those who participate in our programs and activities, will strive to adhere to the following guidelines.

Confidentiality attestation

As a participant in CAF-FCA activities, I understand that I may hear sensitive information shared by other participants, members, or CAF-FCA staff. I commit to maintaining confidentiality and not sharing this information with anyone outside of those involved in the conversation. By participating in CAF-FCA activities, I agree to respect the privacy and boundaries of others and to uphold these guidelines.

Communication Guidelines

Participants in CAF-FCA activities will take every step to interact respectfully and without judgement

During your interactions with CAF-FCA, its members, and members of the community at a CAF-FCA event, it is important to interact with others in a respectful and non-judgmental manner. You may encounter sensitive information shared by other participants, which may not align with your own values or experiences. It is important to listen actively and provide feedback that is constructive and empathetic. When in doubt, remember to show respect for others by listening carefully and speaking kindly. Remember that validating someone's experience by statements such as "I can see that you are very (upset, sad, frightened, scared)" or "I can see how hard you are working." This helps to show you were actively listening and contributes to a safe space.

Inclusive Language Guidelines

It is important to use inclusive language when communicating with others as it promotes respect and understanding towards individuals of diverse backgrounds and identities. Inclusive language helps to create a safe and welcoming environment for everyone and can help to reduce marginalization and discrimination. This includes, but is not limited to, using gender-neutral language, avoiding stereotypes and not using derogatory language about any group. Following these guidelines is crucial to creating a positive and inclusive environment for all stakeholders.

Use gender-inclusive language

1. **Use the pronouns provided by others and, when possible, provide your own.** By providing your own pronouns, you allow for others to feel comfortable providing theirs. For example, “My name is Ann, my pronouns are she/her”. Be sure to use the pronouns provided to you by others, and it is best practice not to make assumptions. If you don’t know, refer to the person by name. If you make a mistake, apologize briefly, correct yourself, and move on. Use gender neutral terms when referring to people in general. “They/their/them” is the most commonly used gender-neutral pronoun. “Someone left their book” “We should find out who is in charge and speak to them”

Here is a helpful resource guide: <https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/gender-diversity/pronouns/>

2. **“Female” is a scientific biological term that refers to sex and needs to be followed by the word “human” to be accurate.** Female can apply to any species, while “woman” refers specifically to humans. Not all women are biologically female- when you use the word “woman” instead, you include all people who identify as women.
3. **When referring to skilled trades workers who are women, adding the phrase (including trans women) is recommend.** Transwomen ARE women. Any person who identifies as a woman is a woman. Adding (including transwomen) to a sentence or phrase is inclusive because it acknowledges and includes the existence of trans women, who are often overlooked and marginalized in society. By specifically mentioning trans women, it sends the important message that they are valued and included in the group being discussed. It also helps to combat the common assumption that all women are cisgender (identify with the gender they were assigned at birth) and that trans women do not exist or do not belong in the discussion.
4. **Do not use “traditionally” as a modifier for underrepresented**
Working class women have long worked on tools, as have women in many parts of the world; the concept of the trades being non-traditional for women is a modern, post-war, North American concept that serves to validate the exclusion of women as newcomers asking for something special and going against the standard way of doing things, as opposed to taking their rightful place as members of a diverse workforce. Using the term “traditionally” as a modifier for underrepresented groups implies that the current underrepresentation is natural or normal, and that it has always been this way. However, the underrepresentation of certain groups in certain fields is not a result of inherent differences in ability or interest, but rather a result of systemic discrimination and bias. Using the term “traditionally” can also perpetuate the idea that the status quo is acceptable, and that change is not necessary. Instead of using the word “traditionally,” it is better to use words such as “historically” or “systematically” to acknowledge that the underrepresentation is a result of past and ongoing discrimination and bias, and that change is necessary to create a more inclusive and equitable field

5. Move away from using “male dominated” when referring to skilled trades occupations

This term could be perceived as reinforcing the notion that males are superior. Using the phrase "male dominated" when referring to skilled trades occupations perpetuates the idea that men are the only ones capable of performing these jobs and reinforces the stereotype that these occupations are not suitable for women and other underrepresented groups. This language can discourage people from exploring these fields and can contribute to the underrepresentation of certain groups.

6. Use “equity-priority” instead of “equity-seeking” or “equity-deserving”

Using language such as "equity-seeking" implies that those within the defined groups are asking for something special for themselves as opposed to something which is normal and their right. Equity means we have different needs, and we all deserve to have them met. There is no such thing as a group that does not deserve equity. The term “equity-priority” is a better term because it more clearly emphasizes the importance of focusing on those populations that are most in need of equity.

These guidelines were developed based on feedback around activities related to the Supporting Women in Trades Conference (SWIT) from the CAF-FCA Member Standing Committee for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI)