

UBC Sauder EDI Committee: Guidelines for Consultation with Marginalized Communities

Introduction and Background

These guidelines outline a set of recommended practices for including historically, persistently, or systematically marginalized communities in decision-making and projects. The goal of these guidelines is to inform UBC Sauder decision makers on how best to consult with marginalized communities at UBC Sauder as an ongoing and standard practice.

The term “marginalized” refers to the fact that individuals from certain communities have been historically, systemically, and persistently (intentionally or unintentionally) distanced from access to opportunities, power, and resources, and have been given less voice in decision-making. The consequence of this is that those with privilege benefit from what is being designed, enabling them to flourish – while marginalized groups remain at the periphery to what is often designed and face barriers to full participation. Barriers to full participation have significant and deleterious impacts on the health and well-being of members of marginalized communities including mental, physical, emotional, psychological, and economical health.

Marginalized communities include, but are not limited to: Indigenous peoples including First Nation, Inuit, and Métis; racialized communities and people of colour; 2SLGBTQIA+¹² communities; women; people with disabilities; individuals with low income and facing poverty; people from certain religious backgrounds, and immigrants.

Intersectionality: Marginalization might not be experienced similarly across all individuals and communities. For example, some individuals belong to more than one marginalized community and experience multiple and different forms of discrimination and exclusion simultaneously. Racialized women with disabilities, for example, face misogyny, sexism, ableism, and racism, and their experiences of exclusion cannot be attributed to one form of oppression alone. Getting to know our communities helps us more deeply understand nuances, overlapping identities, and experiences related to oppression and privilege, which in turn helps to render visible particular experiences of marginalization and helps us better design projects and make decisions.

¹ 2SLGBTQIA+ stands for: Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer (or Questioning), Intersex, Asexual. The plus sign (+) represents all the different, new and growing ways that people might identify with, as well as the ways that we continually expand our understanding of sexual and gender diversity. Terms like Trans/Transgender and Non-Binary refer to the diverse communities of people whose gender identity is different from the sex that they were assigned at birth. Please note that gender identity is distinct from sexual orientation, which refers to who a person is sexually or romantically attracted to.

² Two-Spirit is a cultural concept specific to some Indigenous communities and its meaning encompasses cultural, spiritual, sexual and gender identity. It reflects complex Indigenous understandings of gender roles, spirituality, and the long history of gender diversity in Indigenous cultures, and as such should only be used by Indigenous people.

“Inclusion by design” means we center the voices of marginalized communities in decision-making, project planning, and implementation to benefit *everyone*, and in particular, to benefit communities who have not been historically given equal access and opportunities at UBC Sauder. Inclusion by design requires us to deeply understand the experiences and realities of marginalized communities within the UBC Sauder and UBC context more generally, so that we can identify and remove barriers to participation and design more inclusive strategies. Centering the voices of marginalized groups means their experiences and realities help drive the best outcomes of the decision or project.

The practices outlined in this set of guidelines are well situated within the UBC Sauder Strategic Plan and the School’s values. Within the collective values of the School we strive to reduce and eliminate barriers while fostering inclusion and equity and strengthening the health of our communities. Here are our objectives and actions around EDI in Momentum: 2023-2028 Strategic Plan:

Equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging across UBC Sauder’s diverse communities

- Promote and support commitment and capacity for ongoing progress on equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives
- Attract and retain students, staff, and faculty who represent diverse perspectives, experiences, and identities
- Create support structures that meet the unique needs of our diverse communities and that enhance belonging and well-being
- Work to dismantle historical inequities and eliminate barriers to access for all in a way that amplifies the perspectives of our marginalized communities

We may not be aware of what barriers might exist for marginalized communities and how our decisions and projects might affect a particular community, so the prevailing theme around these practices is to consult early and often in ways that enable our communities to share their realities related to the decision or project.

Consultation is a process. Consultation is not a one-time experience within a decision or project, and proper consultation takes intention, planning, time, and care. Consultation will need to take place *throughout* your project and even requires following-up with communities after implementation to get a sense of how the decision or project is impacting them once it is underway.

If you are not sure about the process or have any questions, you can ask the Senior Associate Dean of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Sustainability (Katherine.White@sauder.ubc.ca) and the EDI Committee for advice or help with reaching out. If you are consulting with Indigenous individuals or groups, you may reach out to Dennis Thomas-Whonaok, Executive Director, Indigenous Business Initiatives and Engagement (whonoak.thomas@sauder.ubc.ca).

Consultation Guidelines

1) Consult early in the process.

After you have been deliberative and thoughtful in terms of identifying groups or individuals that might be particularly impacted by a given initiative or decision, reach out early for input. It is important to keep in mind that a thoughtful and comprehensive process of consultation is more important than trying to get quickly to a given outcome. Take the time to consult fully, rather than rushing to get fast results.

Keep in mind that this is a process and that one respondent might refer you to other individuals or groups that might be important to talk to. Especially in cases where the decision directly impacts given individuals or particular groups, consult early, before the more formal planning has begun and definitely before any decisions have been made.

Give the relevant community members advance notice that the planning for a given initiative or project will be taking place, while understanding that the more advance notice of an idea or upcoming decision or project, the better.

Also consider that there may be cases where a partnership might be more appropriate than a consultation process. In many cases, it may make sense to start with asking communities what they need to thrive and build the project with them, rather than coming to them with a pre-conceived notion of what initiatives will be helpful.

2) Connect to communities with care and respect for their time.

Connecting with care means approaching and consulting with communities in a way that is informed and respectful. Doing advanced learning on appropriate and respectful language, practices, and norms particular to the communities you intend on consulting with will help you connect in with care. Advanced learning will help you strengthen the relationships you intend to foster, rather than potentially perpetrating harms (even if unintentional) in the ways that you interact and how you approach the consultation process. If in doubt, it is recommended you seek out guidance from partners such as the UBC Sauder EDI Committee and the UBC Equity & Inclusion Office. In addition, be aware of best practices in terms of inclusive language (see Helpful Resources section below).

Being respectful of time, firstly means that you take the time to make use of any relevant recommendations from existing reports, task forces, and action plans (see Helpful Resources section below). This distributes the labour of consultation more evenly and reduces the number of times your community members have to repeat exactly the same recommendations again. In addition, being respectful of time means you give the individuals and communities advance notice that you will be requesting their help to advise on a decision or project. Never request immediate

advice: Always frame consultation as an invitation and give the individuals and groups you're connecting in with time to decide if they are able to participate. Consider what the individuals and communities are already being asked to do and if they might get frequent invitations to consult on issues related to EDI, which might mean you need to shift project timelines and/or consult more broadly.

Respecting time also means you are mindful that *your* project timelines might not exactly match what the communities are able to give you at the exact time you need it. Embedding early consultation into the project planning timelines will help you reach your project timelines on-time while understanding that consultation is not a one-time milestone in your project, but should happen throughout the decision-making process and project planning.

3) Consider additional compensation for the time and energy of participants involved in the consultation process.

Consultation is labour-intensive. For marginalized communities, consultation involves several types of labour including emotional labour. (Re)-sharing experiences of harm, experiences of marginalization, and barriers as part of the consultation process can have negative health impacts. Moreover, individuals from marginalized communities are often asked to do more relative to nonmarginalized peers. Due to the existence of a power dynamic related to the context within which they're asked to advise and consult, sometimes individuals feel like saying no to requests for additional labour is not an option.

Therefore, in cases where the request to consult would be above and beyond normal service expectations or might incur emotional labour, plan to compensate for consultation at the very outset of the project.

Compensation may involve direct monetary compensation (e.g., honoraria, cash, paid contract work, gift cards, reimbursing participant costs for related expenses such as transportation and parking) and non-monetary compensation (e.g., food, incentives, prizes, paid time off).

Some form of compensation should be considered when:

- The individual is often and repeatedly asked to engage in consultation activities because of their identity as a marginalized group member and/or their lived experience.
- The consultation does not fall within the scope of the participant's normal work duties or job description.
- The consultation is a substantial ask and requires a high degree of time and commitment from the participant.
- The participant will be asked to share challenges, emotional events, or past experiences of harm and discrimination.
- There are some unique barriers to participation for the individual regarding the consultation process.

4) Be transparent.

Inform the individuals and groups you wish to consult with at the start of the consultation process how you intend to incorporate their feedback into the decision-making. Share to what extent their feedback will drive the project, what decisions have already been made to date, and what subsequent decisions will be driven by the consultation.

5) Consult more broadly if required.

Once any initial consultation has taken place, depending on the project or initiative, you may want to consider a more fulsome assessment that accesses a larger group of voices, such as using techniques like surveys, focus groups, listening sessions, etc.

In fact, wherever possible, a *public consultation process* is a best practice to be able to reach the widest range and diverse community voices informing your decision or project. Publicizing ways to participate in the consultation process through multiple channels (e.g., social media promotion, email listservs, newsletters, meeting announcements, etc.) can help ensure no voices are left behind when it comes to informing your initiative.

Public consultation is particularly important because although you may already have ideas in mind for whom to consult, one individual or a small group of community members tied to a club for example, does not necessarily represent the experiences of the overall community. A more public recruitment and consultation process can help ensure that even the most marginalized voices within particular communities are included in the process. Within a public consultation process, it is helpful to employ specific and directed strategies to ensure that you reach communities that are underrepresented and/or small in numbers

6) Consider power dynamics and provide multiple ways to participate.

Consider the power and privilege of who is asking the questions and if this might impact respondents' willingness to engage or the answers they might give. A best practice is to provide multiple ways to participate: examples include anonymous survey feedback, focus groups, interviews, etc. This way, participants can choose the setting for consultation which aligns with what they want and are able to provide.

Similarly, there may be times when it is appropriate to outsource consultation to a third-party or consulting group. This is because participants may feel safer giving feedback about their experiences with individuals who are not tied to their employment or studies for example, and it helps to remove some of the power dynamics at play.

7) Be open to what you hear.

Don't decide the best course of action before consulting, and integrate the input that you gather into the decision and project.

Rather than approaching consultation with a pre-conceived decision, approach the consultation from a place of curiosity and openness in the questions that will inform the outcome. Rather than, for example, "Sauder's decision is X. What do you think?" instead approach the consultation process early with the use of open-ended questions. For example:

- What, if anything, is important to you with regards to X?
- If Sauder was to move forward with X, what do you want to see embedded within this initiative?
- What barriers, if any, do you see related to X?

Being open means you're also flexible: the participants may share new information which may require you to pivot the project or decision to ensure it is more inclusive and reduces barriers to marginalized communities.

8) Follow up.

Circle back to share with those who have given input, thank them for their contributions, and inform them what the final outcome of the process was. Follow up with contributors to communicate that their input was received and considered. If that input leads to action steps in line with feedback, you can communicate this. If the final direction takes another approach, then that should be communicated as well—you can acknowledge that the feedback was valued and an important part of the decision-making process. Follow-up relates in a lot of ways to transparency (# 3): be transparent with the outcome with those you have consulted, as a way to respect their time and energy and to keep them informed of how the final decisions affect them.

In addition, follow-up recognizes that we are in relationship with each other in the school and in the university, and can be an important part of building that relationship, rather than simply extracting information/ideas and/or providing a written report (more transactional).

Follow-up also means incorporating into project timelines touchpoints for future consultation with marginalized groups after the decision or project has been implemented. Consultation at this stage will enable you to get a sense of what tweaks might be needed to continue to reduce barriers. Again, asking open-ended questions will help, such as:

- Now that X is underway, how has this initiative impacted you?
- What barriers, if any, have you experienced related to this initiative?

Helpful Resources

General Resources

UBC Equity and Inclusion Glossary of Terms

<https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/equity-inclusion-glossary-of-terms/>

UBC Activating Inclusion Toolkit

<https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/activating-inclusion-toolkit/>

Inclusive Language Resources

UBC EIO Inclusive Language Resources:

<https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/inclusive-language-resources/>

Government of BC Inclusive Language Guide

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/careers/all-employees/working-with-others/words-matter.pdf>

BC Law Society Inclusive Language Guide

<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/Website/media/Shared/docs/practice/resources/InclusiveLanguage.pdf>

Indigenous Resources

UBC Indigenous Strategic Plan

<https://indigenous.ubc.ca/indigenous-engagement/indigenous-strategic-plan/>

Anti-Racism Resources

<https://antiracism.ubc.ca/task-force/>

Gender Identity Resources

Trans, Two-Spirit and Gender Diversity Task Force Final Report

<https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/policies-reports/trans-two-spirit-gender-diversity-task-force-and-gender-diversity-audit-reports/>