

Act Together for Inclusion Fund (ACTIF) Advisory Committee (AC) Terms of Reference

Background and Context

The Act Together for Inclusion Fund (ACTIF) was created to promote and protect the human rights and socio-economic outcomes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two-spirit and intersex (LGBTQ2I) persons in countries eligible for overseas development assistance (ODA). The creation of ACTIF resulted from sustained engagement of Dignity Network Canada (DNC) members with the Government of Canada (GAC) **to address important gaps in funding for advancing LGBTQ2I rights internationally**. Based on its track record of working on international human rights-based programming and with LGBTQ2I partners in the Global South, Equitas, in partnership with DNC, was awarded funding by GAC for ACTIF.

ACTIF supports **projects proposed by Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) designed in collaboration with LGBTQ2I CSOs/movements in the Global South**. This model aims to strengthen solidarity between organizations in Canada and in the Global South to further the human rights of LGBTQ2I persons internationally. Given that trans, two-spirit, intersex, bisexual and lesbian people are marginalized within LGBTQ2I communities, these groups often face greater difficulty accessing funding. ACTIF, which is aligned with [Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy \(FIAP\)](#) and applies [gender-based analysis plus \(GBA+\)](#) and a [human rights-based approach \(HRBA\)](#), will develop inclusive processes, capacity building, and knowledge sharing activities to support these groups in accessing and benefiting from the Fund.

Equitas and DNC recognize how power and privilege are inherent to global grant-making and the importance of destabilizing colonial funding dynamics. This is why we are strong proponents of feminist and participatory approaches that shift decision-making power to communities themselves. In line with the principles of "nothing about us without us" and "the process is as important as a result," we believe that local LGBTQ2I human right defenders and organizations are experts of their own realities and should be at the heart of decision making.

Engaging a diversity of Southern LGBTQ2I communities in funding decisions is critical to more robust LGBTQ2I networks, trust, and solidarity — the building blocks for powerful collective action and vibrant movements. The leadership of LGBTQ2I activists and grantmakers in the Fund's governance also allows for more informed, equitable, and effective investments and outcomes under ACTIF. The ACTIF Advisory Committee and **Project Selection Committee**, guided by principles of inclusion, intersectionality, indivisibility and do no harm, are critical to this participatory approach.

Mandate and Responsibilities of the Project Selection Committee

The Advisory Committee advises on and validates the strategic direction of the Fund, monitors its implementation and advises on any necessary changes in response to new developments to ensure the needs of the target groups and local communities are addressed and the impact is achieved. Equitas and DNC are strong proponents of feminist and participatory approaches to grant making that shift the power of decision-making to local communities and actors. In line with principles of “nothing about us, without us” and “the process is as important as the result”, the Advisory Committee is at the heart of the Fund’s governance structure. While some funding parameters are set, the Advisory Committee is an essential oversight body, whose council will guide the vision and implementation of the fund. The role of the oversight body is to:

- 1) Advise on:
 - Governance, high level oversight and strategic development of the Fund (guiding principles, vision on growth or sustainability, risk management strategies, inclusion and intersectionality)
 - Orientation of calls for proposals and project selection (objectives of calls, eligibility/selection criteria, responsibilities of project selection committee)
 - Stakeholder engagement and learning (for example, monitoring, evaluation, and learning strategies, community of practice and capacity building)
- 2) Select members of the Project Selection Committee

MEMBERSHIP

The Advisory Committee is composed of **10 members** selected on the basis of the experience and competencies they can contribute to the success of the Fund. The composition is as follows:

- 2 members from Canadian stakeholder organizations from the LGBTQ2I sector or with expertise working on LGBTQ2I issues internationally.
- 8 international members (at least 4 members from Southern LGBTQI organizations and movements, and the remainder from other Southern and Northern regional, international or intermediary LGBTQ2I organizations and funds).

The Fund Director at Equitas and the Executive Director of Dignity Network Canada will sit on the Executive Committee ex-officio, without vote. GAC representatives, as well as other representatives of Equitas or DNC, will be invited to attend meetings on an adhoc basis to foster communication and learning.

The Advisory Committee aims to reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. This includes diversity in languages spoken, culture, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, as well as geographic representation. This also includes individuals with a diversity of experiences, such as human rights defenders and activists, as well as representatives from regional organizations, networks and funders with expertise in similar funding mechanisms.

Collectively, the Advisory Committee has the following list of competencies/ experience. It is not expected that Committee members will have all of the below-mentioned competencies/experience:

- Engagement in LGBTQ2I activism and knowledge of the realities at the local, regional and/or international level
- Experience in trans-led, indigenous-led or intersex-led organizing
- Global perspective on current trends affecting LGBTQ2I communities
- Experience in managing similar grantmaking initiatives
- Knowledge of Canadian LGBTQ2I sector
- Ability and willingness to work in a diverse group that includes activists and funders
- Ability to communicate in at least one of the Fund's working languages (English or French)

Members of the Advisory Committee may serve in their individual or institutional capacity and are expected to act in the best interest of the Fund. To avoid any conflict of interest or unfair advantage, members of the Advisory Committee will not apply for funding during their term. Members of the first Advisory Committee were nominated by a Selection Committee of 6 people, including 2 members from Equitas, 2 members Dignity Network Canada and 2 external experts. The Advisory Committee will be responsible for recommending new members and renewing its membership, with support from the ACTIF Team.

MEETINGS

The Advisory Committee will establish its own schedule of meetings with an expectation of one face-to-face meeting per year, and approximately four meetings per year. It is anticipated that it will need to meet more frequently at the beginning stages of the Fund. Members will be expected to provide input to documents or participate in smaller committees between official meetings.

TERM

The Advisory Committee members will serve for staggered terms of three years. In the first round of appointments, half the members will be appointed for 2 years and the other half for 3 year terms. A member who is absent from more than two consecutive formal meetings without a leave of absence is deemed to have resigned.

QUORUM

Quorum for the meeting shall be simple majority (50%+1) of the voting committee members— present either in person or by teleconference. To ensure adequate representation and participation in decision making, the Advisory Committee will be mindful of which voices are present and/or absent if a small group has formed a quorum.

DECISION-MAKING

The Committee shall strive for consensus (i.e. “you can live with the decision/idea”) when making decisions. If consensus cannot be achieved, the Committee members must agree on how to deal with the outstanding issue (i.e. vote, continue discussion, table the issue to another meeting or refer the issue to Equitas through the Fund Director). If it is referred to Equitas, the Committee will share the conflicting viewpoints with the Fund Director who is accountable for making decisions in the best interests of the Fund while weighing the viewpoints of Committee members. In such circumstances, the Fund Director will communicate the final decision to members of the Advisory Committee as well as the rationale for the decision that was taken.

When naming members to the Selection Committee, if consensus is not reached, a majority (50%+1) of members can make the decision if quorum has been made. There shall be no proxy or email voting unless explicitly determined by the Committee in advance of a vote.

COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Co-chairs will be elected for a 3-year term. With the support of the ACTIF Team, the co-chairs shall:

- Call and chair meetings, and set the agenda in consultation with the ACTIF Fund Director, DNC Director and members of the Advisory Committee
- Ensure follow up of recommendations with ACTIF Fund Director

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Advisory Committee is accountable to Equitas. Equitas and Dignity Network Canada are committed to active listening and abiding by the recommendations and council of the Advisory Committee. Furthermore, the ACTIF Fund Director will communicate to the Advisory Committee how it is responding and putting these recommendations into practice. However, given the contractual constraints and fiduciary responsibility stemming from the structure of ACTIF, final decisions will be made by Equitas.

The Advisory Committee, Equitas and DNC are also accountable to its stakeholders and partners, which include the LGBTQ2I movements and organizations of the Global South. We maintain A high level of integrity and transparency that is consistent with Equitas and DNC’s human rights principles and values will be maintained. Commitments will be respected and Equitas and DNC will communicate openly about recommendations of the Advisory Committee and how they are responding to these. Equitas and DNC will also undertake periodic and participatory evaluations of the ACTIF grant making processes and projects, in collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

REMUNERATION

Advisory Committee members will receive a modest honorarium of 500 Canadian dollars per year. Additionally, co-chairs will be awarded an extra 500 Canadian dollars per year. Pre-approved travel expenses will also be covered.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

INTERSECTIONALITY

Equitas and DNC recognize that it is not only transphobia, biphobia, and homophobia that impact LGBTQ2I people. Rather, these systems of power intersect and compound with colonialism, racism, classism, patriarchy, ableism, and ageism, among others. These power systems exist both within and between LGBTQ2I communities, partners, and funders. The Fund and its projects integrate an intersectional analysis and approach to addressing the human rights of LGBTQ2I persons.

INCLUSION

Historical and current power dynamics and inequalities within LGBTQ2I communities require intentional measures to ensure marginalized groups inform, access, and benefit from the Fund. ACTIF maintains a commitment to deliberate practices of inclusion and power redistribution through its operations and in its portfolio. In particular, ACTIF prioritizes the leadership of two-spirit, trans, and intersex people, as well as bisexual, queer, and lesbian women from around the world in its governance and programming.

INDIVISIBILITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are all human rights and inherent to every human person's dignity, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics.

These rights are equal in status, and one cannot be prioritized over another. Work to advance specific rights must not undermine others. Socio-economic outcomes for LGBTQ2I persons are explicitly linked to the advancement of their other rights.

DO NO HARM

The Fund is guided by the principle of 'do no harm' in both partnerships and programming. ACTIF aims to challenge colonial funding dynamics and work in solidarity with marginalized LGBTQ2I groups in both Canada and the Global South to minimize harm. ACTIF will also pay particular attention to the security and well-being of Canadian partners, Southern partners, and local communities to ensure that interventions do not exacerbate risks of discrimination or violence. Information about project partners and individual activists will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All staff and Board Members of Equitas, staff and Board Members of DNC, Members of the Advisory Committee, and Members of the Selection Committee are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity and avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest. ***A conflict of interest is defined as an actual or perceived interest in an action that results in or has the appearance of resulting in a personal, organizational, or professional gain.*** Everyone involved in managing the Fund and project selection is obligated to act in the Fund's best interest, its stated objectives, and mission. Staff and Board Members of Equitas, staff and Board Members of Dignity Network Canada, Members of the Advisory Committee, and Members of the Selection Committee working

with the Fund are prohibited from using their role, or the Fund's name or property, for private profit or benefit at all times.

All members of the Advisory and Selection Committees will be required to sign the Equitas conflict of interest policy, make a declaration of neutrality upon joining a committee and complete a disclosure form identifying any relationships, positions or circumstances in Canada or in the Global South in which the person's involvement could contribute to a conflict of interest arising. Suppose the potential for a conflict of interest arises. In that case, they will be expected to inform the Fund Director and may be asked to recuse themselves from decisions relevant to their interest.

The Project Selection Committee operates at arms' length from the Advisory Committee, Equitas and Dignity Network Canada. This Committee must be independent to avoid conflict of interest or perceptions of conflict of interest. Likewise, organizations with a representative (i.e. paid employee or volunteer member of the Board of Directors) serving at the time on the Project Selection Committee are not eligible to apply for funds.

TRANSPARENCY

Project selection criteria will be established and made publicly available online to any interested applicants. Unless security concerns prevent the public dissemination of information about projects, a list of the organizations that have successfully secured funding for their projects will be made publicly available. The timelines for project applications will be established in advance and made publicly available online. Unless there are security reasons not to do so, the names of members of the Advisory and Project Selection Committees will be made publicly available online.

By signing these ToRs, I hereby acknowledge that I have read, understand and agree with all of the above-stated information. I agree to abide by the terms of reference of the Acting Together for Inclusion Fund (ACTIF) for the Advisory Committee.

Signature of committee member: _____

Name (please print): _____

Date: ____/____/____