



# Grant Reviewer Background and Guide

---

## Responsible and Inclusive Research Assessment | Equitable Pathways

One Child Every Child (OCEC) | University of Calgary

Prepared by:

The Equitable Pathways Accelerator Working Group and The OCEC Equitable Pathways Team, Malinda S. Smith, PhD, Professor & Equitable Pathways Lead, Jaime Paredes Paez, IDEA Research & Innovation Education  
Olajumoke Oyeboode, PhD, Research Associate, EDI, OCEC, Elodie Boudes, Program Manager, ACHRI

January 2026

## Land Acknowledgement

---

The University of Calgary, located in the heart of Southern Alberta, both acknowledges and pays tribute to the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which include the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprised of the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3.

The University of Calgary is situated on land Northwest of where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, a site traditionally known as *Moh'kins'tsis* to the Blackfoot, *Wichîspa* to the Stoney Nakoda, and *Guts'ists'i* to the Tsuut'ina. On this land and in this place, we strive to learn together, walk together, and grow together "in a good way."

*"Our laws come from the land, and our practices of granting rights and privileges is a process we were born with, that ties us to this land."*

---

**Piikani Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe, Hon. LLD'01, Cultural Advisor at UCalgary**



## Table of Contents

<b>1. Context and Background</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Purpose of this Guide</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Foundations: DORA and Responsible Research Assessment at UCalgary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. The Equitable Pathways Accelerator</b>	<b>5</b>
Stage 1: Equity-Centered Research Design	5
Stage 2: Inclusive Implementation and Knowledge Mobilization	5
Stage 3: Continuous Feedback and Adaptive Practice	5
<b>5. DORA and Equitable Pathways Core Principles</b>	<b>6</b>
A. Focus on Quality, Contribution, and Substance	6
B. Recognize Diverse Forms of Research Output	6
C. Emphasize Societal and Community Impact	6
D. Emphasize Influence, Uptake, Societal and Community Impact	7
E. Prioritize Ethical, Inclusive, and Responsible Research Practices	7
F. Evaluate Contribution to Research Culture	7
G. Considerations of Research Context and Career Stage	7
H. Evaluate Interdisciplinarity, Collaboration, and Team Science	8
I. Using Narrative CVs to Assess Excellence	8
J. Ensuring Transparency, Consistency, and Accountability	8
K. Summary for Reviewers	8
<b>Resources</b>	<b>9</b>

## 1. Context and Background

The University of Calgary's One Child Every Child (OCEC) Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) is a bold and innovative initiative that embeds Parallel Paths in its research, reflecting both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Paths, engaging Indigenous and mistikosiwak peoples alongside a distinct Equitable Pathways framework for each equity-deserving group (EDG). Guided by the principles, “nothing about us, without us” and “one-size-does-not-fit-all,” this framework recognizes differences, intersections, and similarities rather than imposing uniform approaches. It ensures that every child has tailored, culturally safe, and structurally informed pathways to thrive, responsive to the histories, barriers, and determinants unique to each group.

OCEC is organized around 3 grand challenges (GC):

- **GC 1** which is addressed by Theme 1: Better Beginnings – optimizing pregnancy and neonatal outcomes
- **GC 2** which is addressed by Theme 2: Precision Health and Wellness – improving health and wellness outcomes for medically and socially complex children.
- **GC 3** which is addressed by Theme 3: Vulnerable to Thriving – improving the trajectories of vulnerable children so that they thrive.

### Overarching Grand Challenges: Improving Canada's Child Health and Wellness Outcomes

These grand challenges are supported by cross-cutting accelerators, including the Equitable Pathways Accelerator, which provides guidance and resources to ensure research is equitable, inclusive, and impactful. Operating alongside the Indigenous parallel paths, Equitable Pathways create a shared ethical space where Indigenous ways of knowing are respected, and all EDGs advance through meaningful consultation, community-led, culturally grounded pathways. Informed by Elder Dr. Willie Ermine's concept of ethical space and aligned with TCPS2 Chapter 9, the Tri-Agency's Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada, this space enables the negotiation of authority, ethical norms, and decision-making across distinct knowledge and governance systems, while explicitly acknowledging historical and ongoing power asymmetries.

Equitable Pathways complements this work by addressing structural conditions shaping participation, knowledge production, and recognition. Anchored in UCalgary's broader equity commitments—including the Presidential Task Force on EDIA, the 2023 Dimensions EDI Action Plan, and the ii'taa'pah'to'p Indigenous Strategy—the framework aligns with Canadian constitutional and human rights law and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG3, SDG4, SDG5, SDG10, SDG16, and SDG17.

For researchers, it expands definitions of expertise across disciplines and epistemologies, enhances rigour and uptake through community partnership, and ensures innovations in maternal and child health are culturally safe, socially responsive, and ethically robust.

Ultimately, the Equitable Pathways framework fosters a child health research ecosystem capable of addressing persistent disparities in Canada, positioning OCEC as a global leader in inclusive, rights-respecting research.

## 2. Purpose of this Guide

This guide is for review committees evaluating OCEC grant applications. It is aligned with UCalgary's commitment to inclusive and responsible assessment as outlined in the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). It ensures that assessment practices reflect responsible, equitable, and context-sensitive approaches that value inclusive research excellence, societal impact, and diverse modes of knowledge production and dissemination.

## 3. Foundations: DORA and Responsible Research Assessment at UCalgary

UCalgary's DORA implementation emphasizes that research assessment should prioritize quality, integrity, societal impact, and contribution to research culture, not the prestige of journals or quantitative bibliometric indicators. Reviewers must balance or avoid using journal impact factors, citation counts, or h-indices as proxies for excellence. Instead, assessments should draw on qualitative indicators, contextual information, and evidence articulated through narrative CVs or 'Most Significant Contributions' statements.

Within the OCEC-context, where interdisciplinary, community-engaged, Indigenous-led, and translational research is central, DORA principles enable fair evaluation of work that may produce diverse, long-term, or community-focused outputs that do not align with publication-driven metrics.

## 4. The Equitable Pathways Accelerator: Stage-Oriented Framework

The Equitable Pathways Accelerator provides structured support for EDG-focused research across the entire project lifecycle, integrating equity at all stages:

### **Stage 1: Equity-Centered Research Design**

- Embeds inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) principles in proposal development, research questions, methodology, and team composition.
- Provides guidance and mentorship for participatory, culturally responsive, and community-informed research that recognizes diverse lived experiences.
- Supports early engagement with interest holders, including Indigenous and marginalized communities, ensuring research questions are relevant and contextually meaningful.

### **Stage 2: Inclusive Implementation and Knowledge Mobilization**

- Ensures research activities, interventions, and outputs are accessible, relevant, and impactful for each EDG.
- Supports community co-creation, cultural safety, and adaptive strategies that evolve with community input throughout project execution.
- Promotes knowledge mobilization across audiences, including policymakers, practitioners, children, youth, families, and community organizations.

### **Stage 3: Continuous Feedback and Adaptive Practice**

- Facilitates ongoing evaluation and adaptation, ensuring projects remain responsive to community needs.
- Encourages reflective practice to strengthen equity, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness in current and future research.

By integrating design, implementation, and adaptive feedback, the Equitable Pathways Accelerator ensures that research is inclusive and fair from conception to delivery, fully aligned with OCEC Equitable Pathways principles of “nothing about us, without us” and context-sensitive excellence.

## 5. DORA and Equitable Pathways Core Principles for Research Assessment

### Defining Excellent Candidates for Research Funding

DORA principles do not provide a single prescriptive checklist of “excellent candidates.” Instead, it redefines excellence away from journal-based metrics and toward a holistic, contribution-focused, context-sensitive evaluation of researchers and their work.

### Core Principles for Reviewers

Reviewers should apply these principles consistently:

#### A. Focus on Quality, Contribution, and Substance

Reviewers should avoid using indicators such as the Journal Impact Factor (JIF), h-index, or ranking as proxies for research excellence. Instead, assess the quality and impact of the work:

- Rigour and the soundness of research design methodology.
- Originality, conceptual contributions, and intellectual leadership
- Robust research design and methods
- Transparent, reproducible, and ethical research practices
- Substantive contributions to knowledge, regardless of where published.

#### B. Recognize Diverse Forms of Research Output

Reviewers should evaluate the full diversity of outputs. High-quality research manifests in multiple forms:

- Peer-reviewed publications (quality assessed on their own merit)
- Datasets, software, and researcher tools
- Replication studies, negative results, and methodological innovations
- Policy briefs, commissioned reports, clinical guidelines
- Community-engaged research outputs, and co-production
- Patents, commercialization, or industry collaboration
- Creative works and knowledge mobilization activities
- Open science contributions (preprints, protocols, FAIR data)

Excellence is not limited to one type of output.

#### C. Emphasize Societal and Community Impact

Consider the research’s potential and demonstrated contributions to:

- Child health, education, wellbeing, or social policy
- Indigenous nations, each equity deserving group, and vulnerable children
- Community capacity building and relationships
- Professional practice, service delivery, and decision-making
- Inclusive, equitable, and culturally grounded care

## D. Emphasize Influence, Uptake, Societal and Community Impact

Impact should be understood broadly and proportionately:

- Improvements to child health, education, or wellbeing.
- Benefits to Indigenous nations, EDGs, and vulnerable populations.
- Advancements to theory, methods, practice, or domain knowledge
- Uptake by practitioners, policymakers, patients, and communities.
- Contributions to public discourse or cultural understanding.
- Influence on professional practice, policy, and equity-oriented care.
- Translation of knowledge into industry, or public understanding.
- Advancements that enable other researchers to succeed.

## E. Prioritize Ethical, Inclusive, and Responsible Research Practices and Open Science

Assess whether applicants demonstrate:

- Transparency in methodology, data handling, and ethics
- Attention to equity in data, samples, and technologies
- Reproducibility and rigorous documentation
- Compliance with disciplinary and institutional standards
- Commitment to open science and FAIR principles
- Respect for Indigenous sovereignty and OCAP® principles
- Accessibility and anti-oppressive practices
- Ethical authorship, collaboration, and supervision
- Research integrity

## F. Evaluate Contribution to Research Culture

Recognize often-invisible academic labour:

- Mentorship, supervision quality, and training impact
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Peer review, editorial service, and community leadership
- Leadership in inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible teams
- Creating collegial, supportive, safe, and inclusive research environments
- Contributions to institutional or disciplinary governance
- Actions advancing IDEA

## G. Considerations of Research Context and Career Stage

Evaluate applicants relative to access and opportunity:

- Early career-trajectories, career breaks, non-linear pathways
- Differential access to research infrastructure, resources
- Teaching or administrative load
- Disciplinary norms
- Candidate contributions relative to opportunities available
- Structural barriers affecting members of EDGs

## H. Evaluate Interdisciplinarity, Collaboration, and Team Science

Reviewers should value:

- Interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity
- Co-creation with communities
- Collaboration that advances complex research problems
- Leadership roles within teams
- Contributions to shared infrastructure and collective outputs

## I. Using Narrative CVs to Assess Excellence

Reviewers should:

- Focus on substance of contributions, not format
- Evaluate coherence and clarity of the narrative
- Assess evidence for significance, influence, and quality
- Look for alignment with responsible and ethical research practices
- Recognize leadership, mentorship, and training roles
- Value interdisciplinarity, partnership, and societal relevance

## J. Ensuring Transparency, Consistency, and Accountability

Reviewers should:

- Apply criteria consistently to all applicants
- Use structured evaluation frameworks aligned with DORA
- Document decisions clearly
- Declare potential conflicts of interest
- Avoid implicit bias by using comparative judgments
- Focus on content, not prestige signals

## K. Summary for Reviewers

Excellence is multidimensional. Reviewers should:

- Assess quality directly, not via journal metrics
- Consider diverse outputs and contributions
- Evaluate influence and significance, not citation counts
- Recognize responsible research practices and open science
- Value mentorship, leadership, and research culture contributions
- Apply a context-sensitive and equitable lens
- Use qualitative, narrative-based approaches
- Make structured, transparent, and well-documented assessments

## Resources

- Pedersen, D.B., Gensby, U., et al. (2025). Emerging Practices in Research Assessment. CeRRA. <https://www.cerra.aau.dk>
- Aalborg University. (2024). Emerging practices in research assessment. <https://www.aau.dk>
- Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education*. Purich Publishing.
- Council of Canadian Academies. (2024). EDI practices in postsecondary research. <https://www.cca-reports.ca>
- Declaration on Research Assessment FAQ. (n.d.). <https://research.ucalgary.ca>
- First Nations Information Governance Centre. (n.d.). OCAP®. <https://fnigc.ca/ocap>
- Henneken, E.A. & Accomazzi, A. (2023). *Nature*, 620, 594–596.
- Henville, L. (2024). How to write a narrative CV. *University Affairs*.
- Henville, L. (2025). Writing a successful narrative CV. *University Affairs*.
- Hoppers, C.A. Odora. (2002). *Intl Review of Education*, 48(5), 333–344.
- Hoppers, C.A. Odora. (2009). *Education, culture and society*. UNESCO.
- Narrative CVs. (n.d.). [Research Impact Canada](#)
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. (2018). *Epistemic freedom in Africa*. Routledge.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. & Smith, M.S. (2025). *University World News*.
- Nielsen, M.W., et al. (2021). *PNAS*, 118(21).
- San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). <https://sfдора.org>
- DORA UCalgary case study. <https://sfдора.org>
- Smith, M.S. (2025). *Policy Options*.
- University of Calgary. DORA, Leadership, Narrative CVs. <https://research.ucalgary.ca>