



Vision 2030 Learning Series:

Equity Working Groups that Strengthen Organizations

September 2026



Welcome!

Introducing Ourselves



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Land Acknowledgement

**Where are you joining us
from? Where are you located?
Whose territory?**

Native-Land.ca

Put it in the chat!

Some guidelines for today...



This session is being recorded. Your breakout groups will not be, nor will further sessions.



These are hard and complicated topics! Let's share and listen with generosity



The stories we share stay here, and the learnings leave.



Ask questions in the chat or raise your hand using the toolbar below to speak.

This Fall, as Part of Vision 2030....

- **Learning Series 1:** Creating Equity Working Groups that Strengthen Organizations
- **Learning Series 2:** Building Together: Equity as a Practice: From Audits to Organizational Transformation (beginning in November)
- [Sustainability Network Registration Link](#)

Series 1: Creating Equity Working Groups that Strengthen Organizations

1

Equity Working Groups (Masterclass) - September 22nd

2

Building Strong Foundations (Workshop) - October 6th

3

From Conversations to Influence (Workshop) - October 20th

4

Moving to Action and Embedding Change (Workshop)-
November 6



Today's Masterclass

Why Focus On Equity Working Groups/Committees?

- Equity Working Groups / Equity Committees are both a **challenge** and an **opportunity** for organizations committed to advancing equity
- We observed nonprofits in Canada **struggling** with having effective “EDI committee” structures, and sometimes that they were sites of **conflict**
- Research by Imagine Canada also showed that groups with effective EDI committees were having a lot of success ([Equitable Benchmarking Project, 2022](#)). Have an **EDI Committee of any kind made organizations more likely to have made progress** on their EDI objectives.
- Saltwater created a guide with Imagine Canada [on this topic](#).

Agenda for today's class

1. [The importance of paradoxes in equity work + introducing ourselves](#)
2. [The purpose of an equity working group](#)
3. [Membership of Your Group](#)
4. [Collaboration and Trust](#)
5. [Getting to Work & Getting Stuck](#)
6. [Self Assessments](#)



Core Concept: *Paradox*

In our experience, equity work is full of paradoxes – seemingly opposed ideas that are both, nonetheless, true. When faced with a paradox, it can be tempting to just “choose” one side of the paradox. The wisest and most honest course of action, however, is usually to somehow hold both at the same time, together.

Introductions

- You will be in breakout rooms of 2-3
- Introduce yourselves!
- What have you observed about equity working groups in the ENGO sector - the good, the bad, and the ugly?
- As you share these observations - what paradoxes surfaced? How did that paradox live (or die!) in the group?



Purpose(s) of an Equity Working Group

We currently have a relatively new Equity Committee and having a more clear direction and goals would be a change I would like to see.

- Participant

Purposes

- There are many possible purposes for equity working groups or equity committees
- Sometimes, they are working at cross purposes !
- At minimum, we are hoping for centralization and visibility; often to get things on the table and start moving



This is for Everyone

All of these experiences are interconnected. Equity initiatives also often have a positive impact on everyone at the organization. We all must be involved and are affected by the work.

This is for Specific Groups

Equity work requires a focus on specific groups that experience systemic oppression, and further identify and consider the unique barriers and harms they face.

Define the Role(s) of Your Equity Working Group

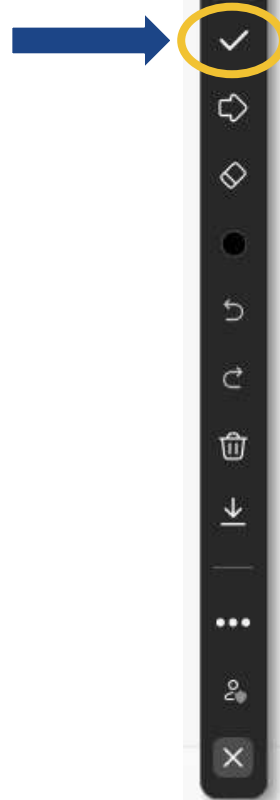
- **Assessment and evaluation:** monitoring how your organization is doing.
- **Oversight and centralization:** acting as a gathering place for different equity initiatives to ensure they are coherent with each other
- **Advisory or coaching:** making recommendations or giving insights to leadership or key collaborators on how to improve their equity, diversity and inclusion practice.
- **Strategic:** defining the vision and long-term equity goals; guiding the organization to move to action
- **Stewardship:** troubleshooting, raising concerns, and caring for the work.
- **Implementation:** making decisions and taking action; having its own projects and initiatives.

Using the annotate tool

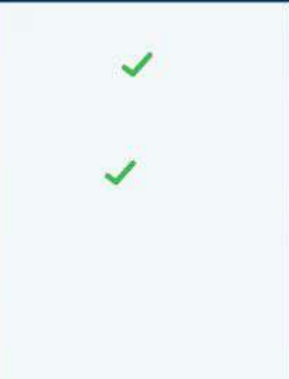
Step 1:
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icon



Step 2:
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What role(s) does is working group fulfilling? If you don't have one... What would you need?

Assessment & Evaluation	Oversight & Centralization	Advisory or Coaching	Strategic	Stewardship	Implementation
					

???



We Need to do it All

We have big ambitions and big needs.

We Have to Focus

We have limited resources, time, and people.

Role Reality

- Don't have any time? You probably shouldn't be an implementation committee!
- Don't have leadership or governance presence? Probably shouldn't be strategy!
- Our level of time and resources should be related to the ambitions and aspirations for our committee, and help us choose the right role.



Membership of your Equity Working Group

Are equity denied communities not participating because of barriers or because they're not interested?

- Participant



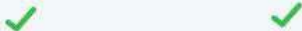
Membership Considerations

- Number of people
- Roles in the organization
 - Leaders, staff, Board
 - Wider community
- Diversity and representation
- Competency and skills

Example of Competencies

- **Anti-oppression and systems of power:** people who have a good understanding of the issues across multiple axes of oppression and how they function in our society.
- **Organizational change:** being able to examine organizational processes, culture, or decision making, understand their equity implications, and create solutions.
- **Strategic thinking:** involves understanding the big picture of your organization, being able to break down big initiatives into smaller steps, and being able to predict and troubleshoot around challenges.
- **Relationship building:** getting people on board with a plan, building support, communicating the changes necessary, and handling resistance.

Where are our strengths?

Right Number of People	Distribution of Roles
	
Diversity and Representation	Competencies
	



The Ideal Team

Highly representative, meticulous selection and recruitment process!

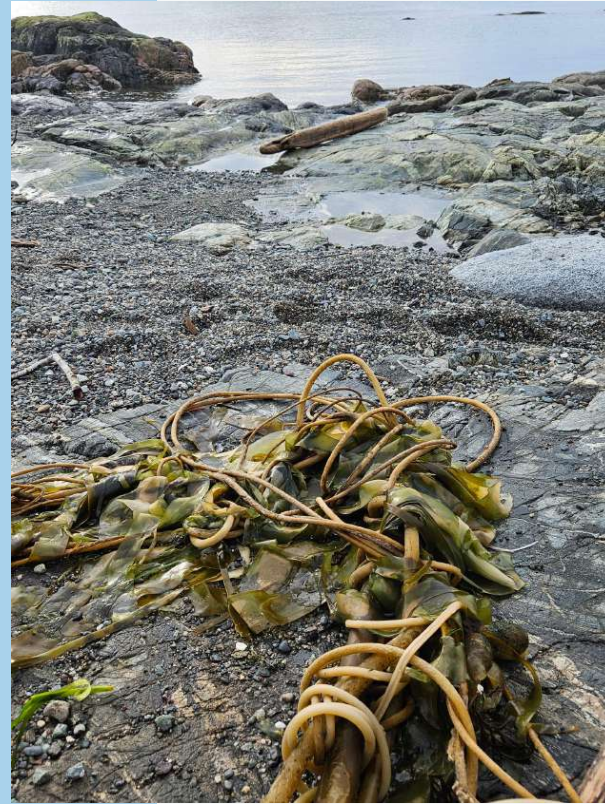
The Real Team

The people who are already at the table are the right people to get things started.

On October 6th...

We will be digging into some more of these membership questions, including:

- Leadership buy in and presence on your committee
- Roles and responsibilities of individuals on the committee
- Diversity on the committee itself



Additional Resource:

This resource from the [University of British Columbia](#) (2023) has a good section on around leadership and facilitation roles in an equity working group.



Collaboration on your Equity Working Group

“We have workshops, bias trainings, access programs... The usual. but what we don't have is psychological safety.”

– Participant

Common questions...

- How do we ensure equal participation and voice on an equity working group?
- How do we address a lack of participation of varied demographics?
- How do we care for people of marginalized identities and experiences?
- How do we ensure everyone feels heard and valued?

Practices to Build Strong Collaboration & Trust

- Establishing collaboration norms
- Acknowledge what is happening
- Use simple facilitation strategies (e.g. check ins)
- Welcome disagreement and alternative views
- Practicing when to lean-in and when to lean-out
- Lack of participation is usually a symptom of the working group, not the person



Equity Work Creates Safety

This work is important in building towards more safety for people, particularly those experiencing systemic oppression.

Equity Work Causes Pain

People, particularly those experiencing systemic oppression, can be exposed to painful experiences and other types of risk.

On October 20th....

We will be digging into some more of these collaboration questions, including:

- Building trust and accountability
- Facilitating productive dialogue across perspectives, experiences and roles
- Navigating difficult conversations



Getting to Work ... and Getting Stuck

“As an environmental organization we recognize that environmental issues are closely connected to poverty, Indigenous rights, and systemic inequities... We hope to explore practical ways to move from good intentions to meaningful, accountable action.”

– Participant

Common questions

- How do we effectively use our time to lead to concrete actions ?
- How to maintain momentum and also working with limited capacity?
- How to create a sustainable and meaningful committee?



We Have to Be Careful

These are delicate and sensitive issues, and there is a lot we don't know!

We Have to Get Moving

There is no perfect moment, and being “frozen” certainly doesn't help.



There is No “One Right Way”

There is no perfect option, or universally applicable best practice.

There Are Bad Ways

There are certainly ways to do equity work that make things worse and cause more harm.



We Need Everyone

If we want to be successful, we
need everyone on board.

We'll Never Get Everyone

That is never going to happen,
and we have to get moving!

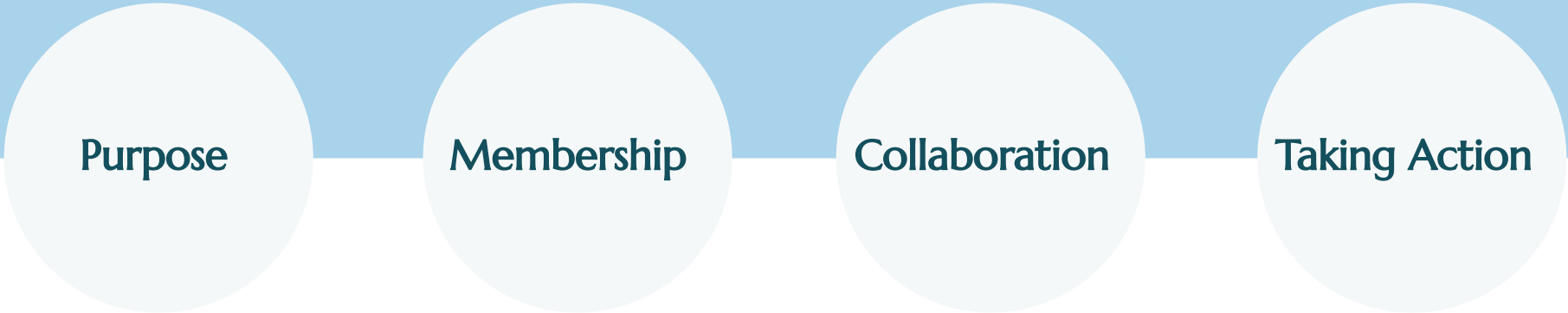
Getting Moving

- The importance of joy, motivation, and going where the energy is
- Noticing your wins over time, even if they don't feel like “enough”



Self Assessments

4 Key Areas



The diagram consists of four light gray circles arranged horizontally. Each circle contains a text label. The circles are positioned on a light blue background that transitions to white at the bottom.

Purpose

Membership

Collaboration

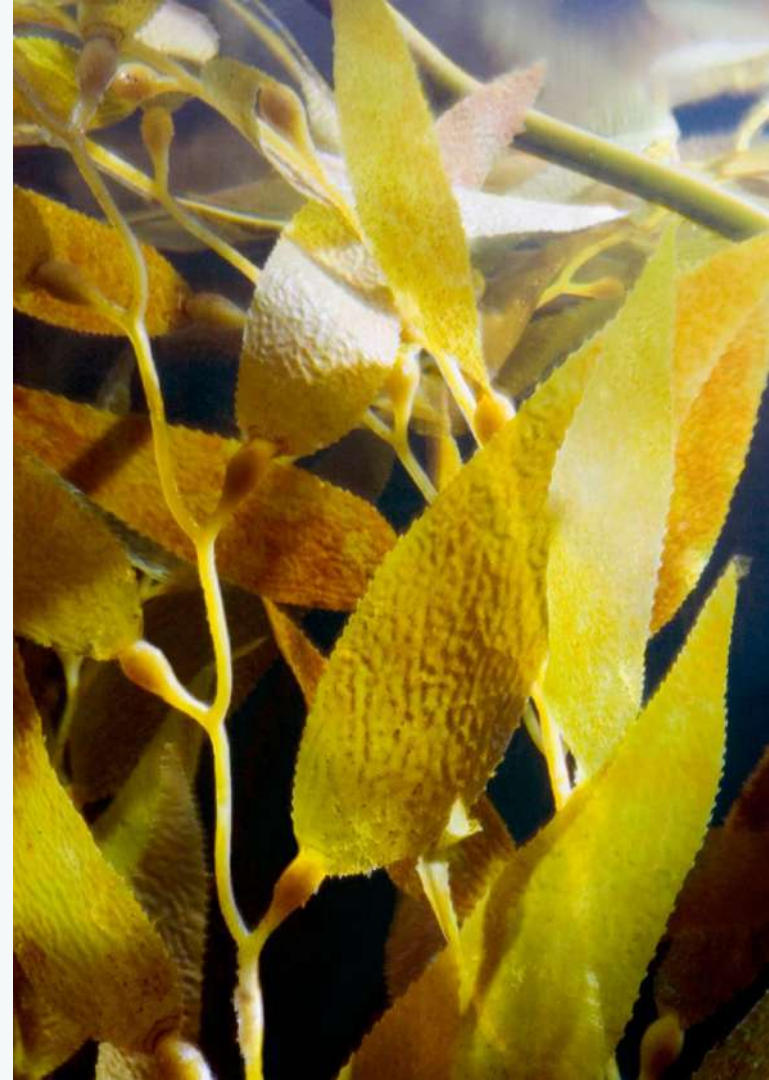
Taking Action



Of those areas...

- Where do you think your organization is strongest? If you don't have an equity working group already, what would come the easiest?
- Where do you know you need to work?
- What do you most want to learn about?

Group Discussions & Debrief



Workshop: Building Strong Foundations

On October 6th, we will cover:

- Clarifying the purpose and scope of your committee
- Membership and representation on the committee
- Ensuring leadership buy-in
- Roles and responsibilities of committee members

We will share tools with you to be adapted to your own context:

- Draft Terms of Reference you can adapt for their context
- Membership framework for deciding on membership
- Roles and responsibilities matrices to apply to your own committees

Before Next Time...

Please prepare a **summary of a success** and a **summary of a challenge** your organization has had, related to any of the four main topics of our next session:

1. Clarity of purpose of your equity committee
2. Membership and representation on your committee
3. Roles and responsibilities of committee members
4. Leadership buy-in for your committee

You will be asked to share these summaries with other participants, so it should be something you are comfortable sharing. We will send this information by email as well.

Email Nidhi with anything else!

Nidhi: nidhi.tandon@rogers.com

Subject line: masterclass debrief

Miigwech!
Thank You!
Merci!

Saltwater Consulting:
[Website](#)

Networked Intelligence:
[Website](#)

