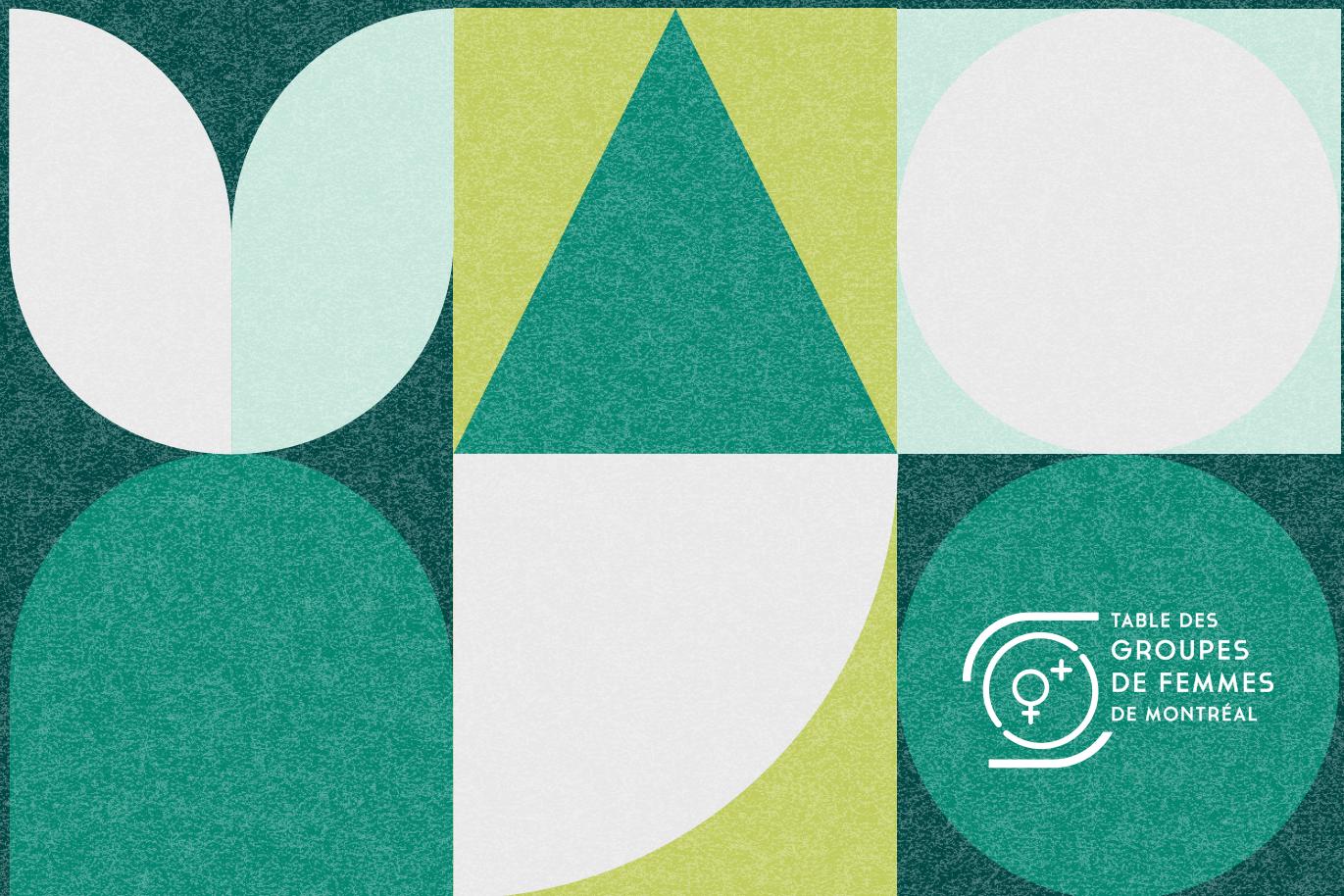


For a Feminist Movement That Is More Inclusive of Sexual and Gender Diversity

ACTIVITY GUIDE



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction

5 Activities

- 6** Activity 1 – Dialogues of Care
- 9** Activity 2 – The What and the Why
- 13** Activity 3 – Concerns
- 16** Activity 4 – Our Shared Vision
- 20** Activity 5 – Our Strengths
- 23** Activity 6 – Synthesis

25 Annexes

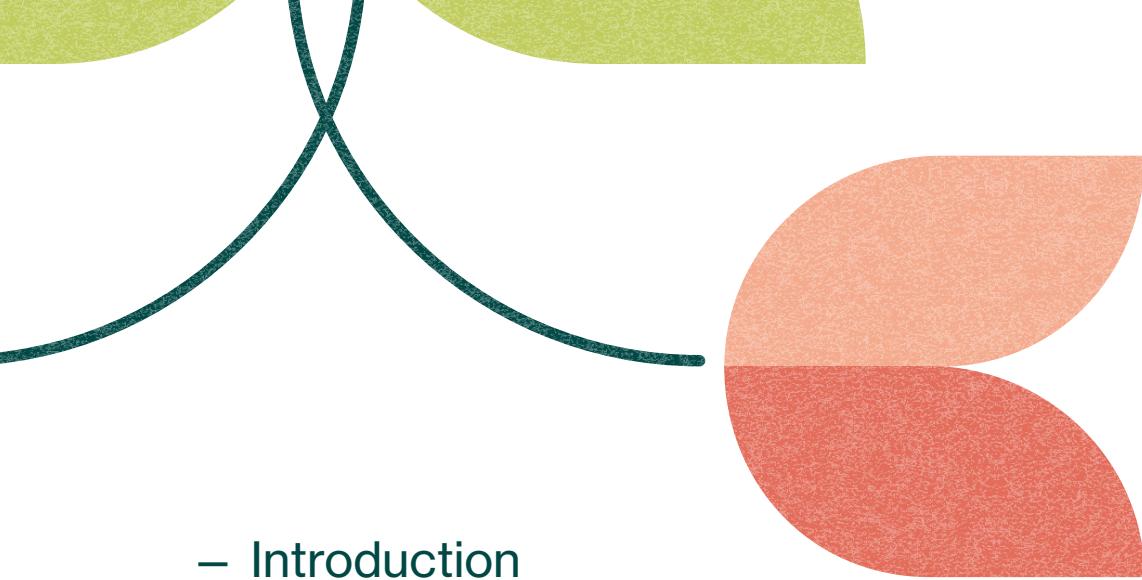
- 26** Annex 1 – Care and equity guardian
- 28** Annex 2 – Inclusivity as a Position
- 30** Annex 3 – Brave(r) Spaces
- 32** Annex 4 – Collective Decision-Making and Consensus
- 34** Annex 5 – Myths and Realities about Inclusion



SECTION I

INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION





– Introduction

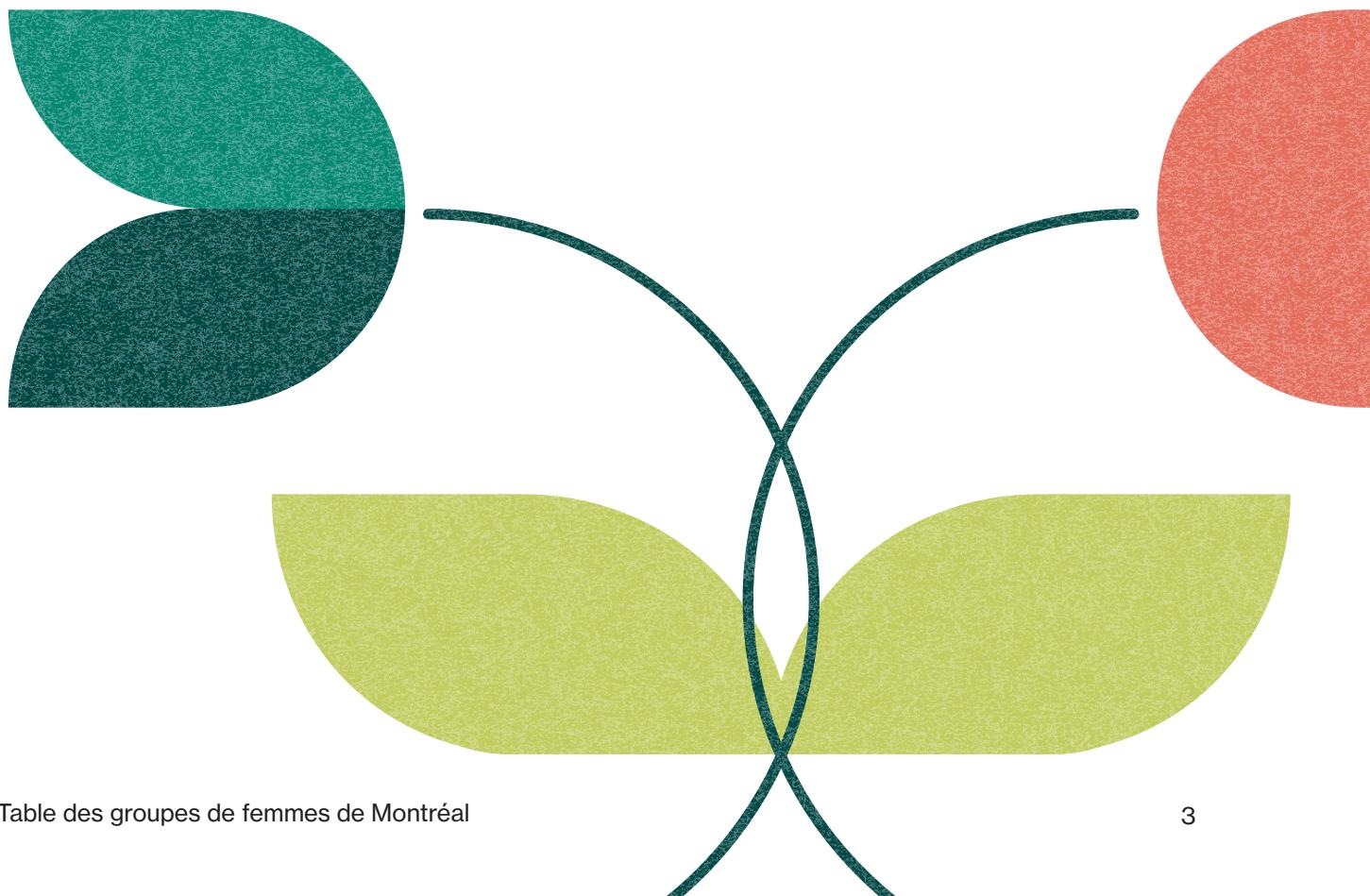
This activity guide was created as part of the project «For a Feminist Movement That Is More Inclusive of Sexual and Gender Diversity» – a collective process that seeks to accompany women's groups and feminist spaces that wish to become more inclusive and welcoming to members of queer communities within their activism, services, spaces and staff.

While the topic of including members of queer communities has been widely discussed within the feminist movement for years, these discussions are often marked by a certain resistance to change. We must deconstruct this resistance together to overcome it and collectively commit to ensuring that marginalized people have access to the services they need without obstacles. As presented in the first version of the road map, one essential approach to inclusivity is collective decision-making. This decision-making model is based entirely on collaboration between all of an organization's various bodies to ensure consensus and thus collectively engage in a process of change.

The activities presented in this workbook were designed as reflective exercises to guide you in this search for consensus, by creating spaces for discussion in which to clarify expectations, proactively address doubts and concerns, and reduce the unknowns, to some degree. Participation across all bodies within an organization, such as staff, the Board of Directors (BoD) and members, is essential, as it makes it possible to hear from a diverse range of viewpoints and experiences during discussions.

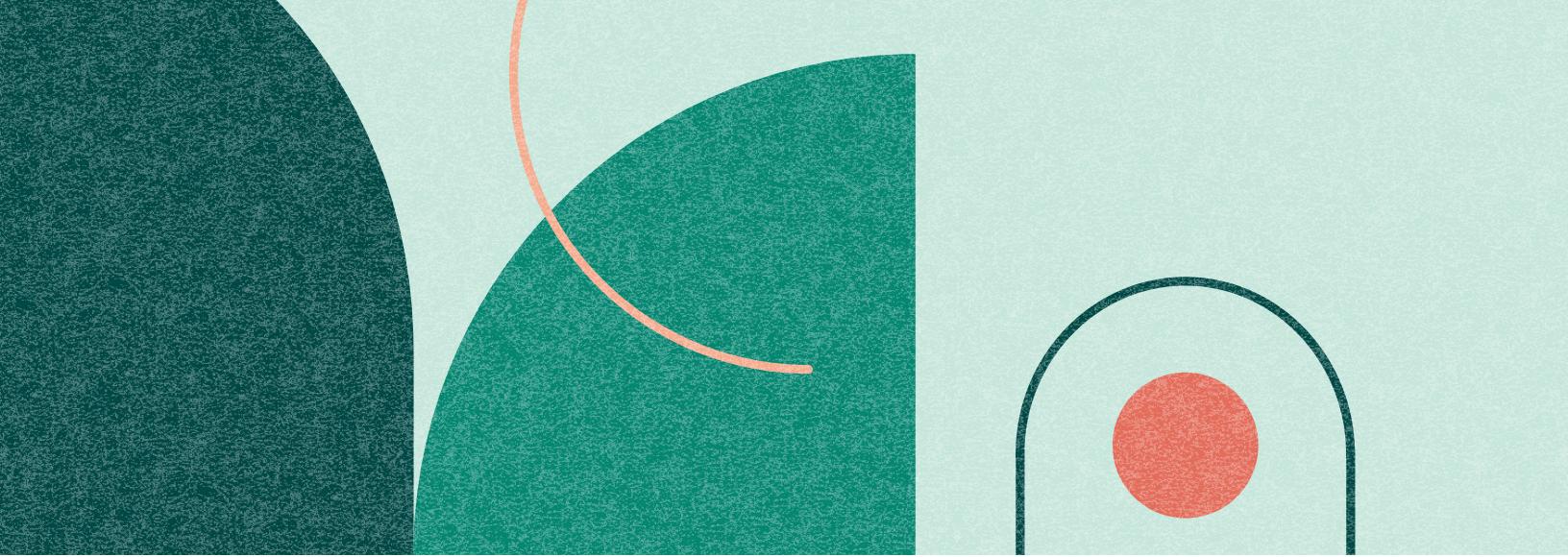
These activity sheets are flexible templates that can be adapted based on your space, the topics under discussion and the people participating. While they were designed to support a process of improving 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion specifically, they can be applied to any context of increasing inclusion.

These activities can be introduced at any point in the process, but it's important to follow the order in which they are presented. As part of preparing your facilitation, we recommend reading Annexes 1 through 4 ([Care and equity guardian](#), [Inclusivity as a position](#), [Brave\(r\) Spaces](#), and [Collective Decision-Making and Consensus](#)). The guides were designed with all the details someone from an organization would need to facilitate the activities. However, if needed, a TGFM team member can make themselves available to help with facilitation.





ACTIVITIES



– Activity 1

Dialogues of Care

⌚ Objective

Collectively define ground rules to maintain a dialogue of care.

❖ Materials needed

Whiteboard or large piece of paper, markers.

⌚ Activity duration

20 minutes

☰ Summary description

This activity seeks to establish ground rules for maintaining safe and caring dialogue as a full group, using consensus. Creating rules as a group is a first step towards collaborative work, providing a safer environment and giving each participant the right to be, think and act freely while respecting those around them.

Instructions

1. The group is asked to determine how speaking turns will be managed and assign who will facilitate, take notes, keep track of time and who will be designated as the care and equity guardian for this activity and those that follow. The facilitator explains the objective of the activity to the group.

5 minutes

2. Participants are asked to share what they need to authentically express themselves in a group setting and to facilitate collaboration, using the following questions as a guide:

10 minutes

- What is the goal of this meeting and of the reflections we wish to have?
- What organizational values do we want to bring to this conversation?
- How would we like to react to conflict during the meeting?
- How should we respond if we witness discriminatory statements being made during the meeting?
- How can we stay open to collective accountability?
- What are some concerns I have about this discussion?

3. The group is asked to discuss the points that were brought and come to a consensus about the elements that will help them, as a group, have constructive and caring conversations.

5 minutes

- a. The facilitator or the note-taker gathers the elements that the group decided on and writes them down on the board or the large paper.

The group rules will remain posted for all subsequent activities. Rules can be added or changed during subsequent activities if the group considers it necessary.

Reflection Prompts

Here are some ideas that can help ensure safer conversations:

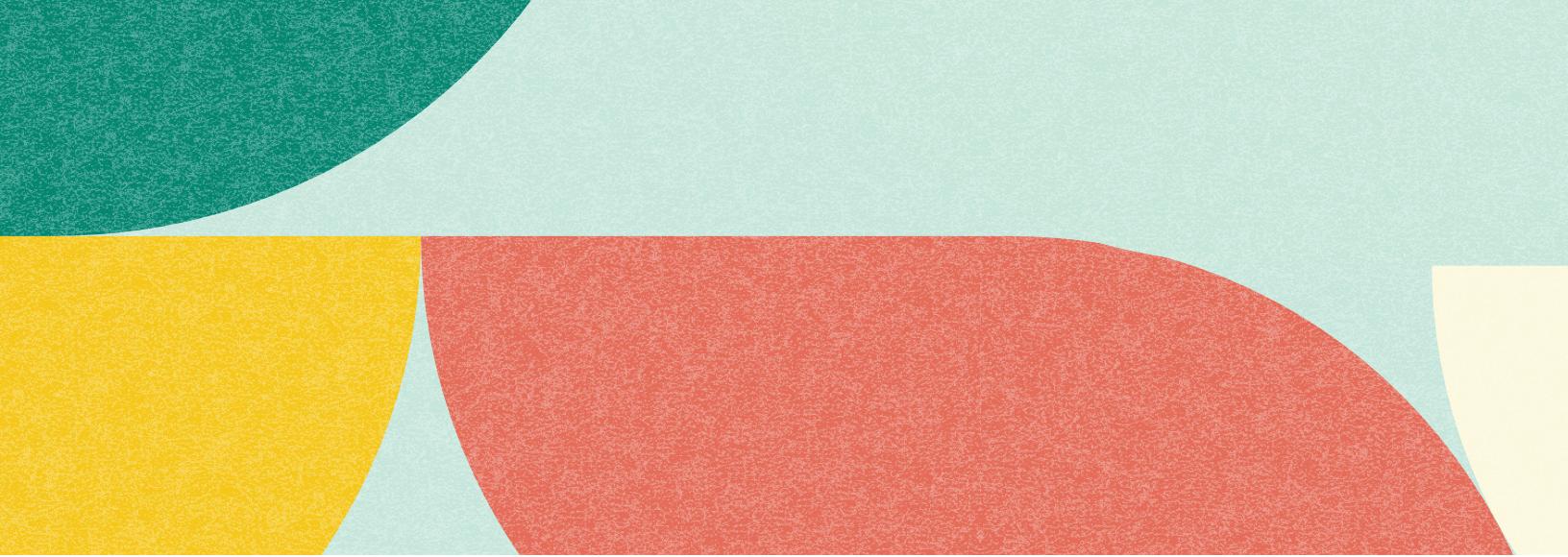
- Intentionally engaging in the present moment and listening to the speaker;
- Being aware of emotions that are brought up (for oneself or for others);
- Examining our intentions in order to better understand and respect our boundaries;
- Noticing and speaking up when dialogue breaks down (to the group or facilitator);
- Naming our feelings and our needs;
- Welcoming critique and conflict.

For this activity, it is important to remind the group that it is both an individual and a collective responsibility to be aware of any communication patterns we may have that impede a dialogue of care. Each participant is responsible for their own emotions and their own words. As such, we must be aware of the difference between the intention and impact of someone's words.



Common Pitfalls

It may not seem important to take the time to come to consensus on how the group will communicate. That being said, it's important not to underestimate the challenge involved in having difficult and vulnerable conversations about inclusion and change. By committing to certain shared baselines around communication, your group is acknowledging each member's humanity and individuality, all while encouraging accountability for maintaining a caring space.



– Activity 2

The What and the Why

Objectives

1. Develop a clear picture of the organization's current situation as relates to increasing inclusivity.
2. Recognize and name our individual and collective intentions to commit to changes that will increase inclusion.

Materials needed

Papers, markers, whiteboard, tape.

Activity duration

75 minutes

Summary description

Participants will share their personal vision on the organization's current inclusivity practices and needs. They will then discuss the reasons that motivated them to get involved in changes to improve inclusivity. This activity makes it possible to hear everyone's point of view and gather all the elements that the group has observed.

Instructions

1. The facilitator will present the activity's objectives and discussion questions, as well as the next steps. 5 minutes
2. Participants are asked to individually reflect on the following questions (see below for more detailed questions): 10 minutes
 - How does inclusion apply to our current practices and actions, both at the individual and collective level?
 - How is inclusion important to me and to us as a group?
3. Participants are asked to pair up to share their answers to the previous two questions. 15 minutes
4. Each pair joins another pair to form small groups of 4. In these small groups, participants will discuss their answers to the previous two questions and their experience discussing them with their partner, including anything they learned or noticed (similarities, differences, complementary elements).
 - a. Each small group chooses one person to write down their reflections on the papers provided (1 idea per paper) and another to serve as a spokesperson in the large-group recap.
5. Each small group is asked to tape their papers up on the board. The spokespersons will then take turns summarizing what was discussed in their small group. 15 minutes

6. All participants are asked to answer the following questions to help enrich the group discussion:

15 minutes

- How do our motivations (our intentions or the meaning behind what we do) influence the work that we do together?
- Are there any elements of convergence?
- How will we handle divergences of opinion? Individually and as a group?
- How will this change be important for the organization and its clientele?

Possible Questions:

How does inclusion apply to our current practices and actions?

- What are our current practices to include members of queer communities in our services?
- What is our organization's heritage and history with inclusion?
- Who currently uses our services? What are their needs?
- Who is not using our services? Who is excluded from our services?
- What connects the people currently using our services?
- What challenges do people experience in our space as relates to including members of queer communities?
- What is our team dynamic like? Which voices are centred in our team meetings? Which voices are less present or heard?

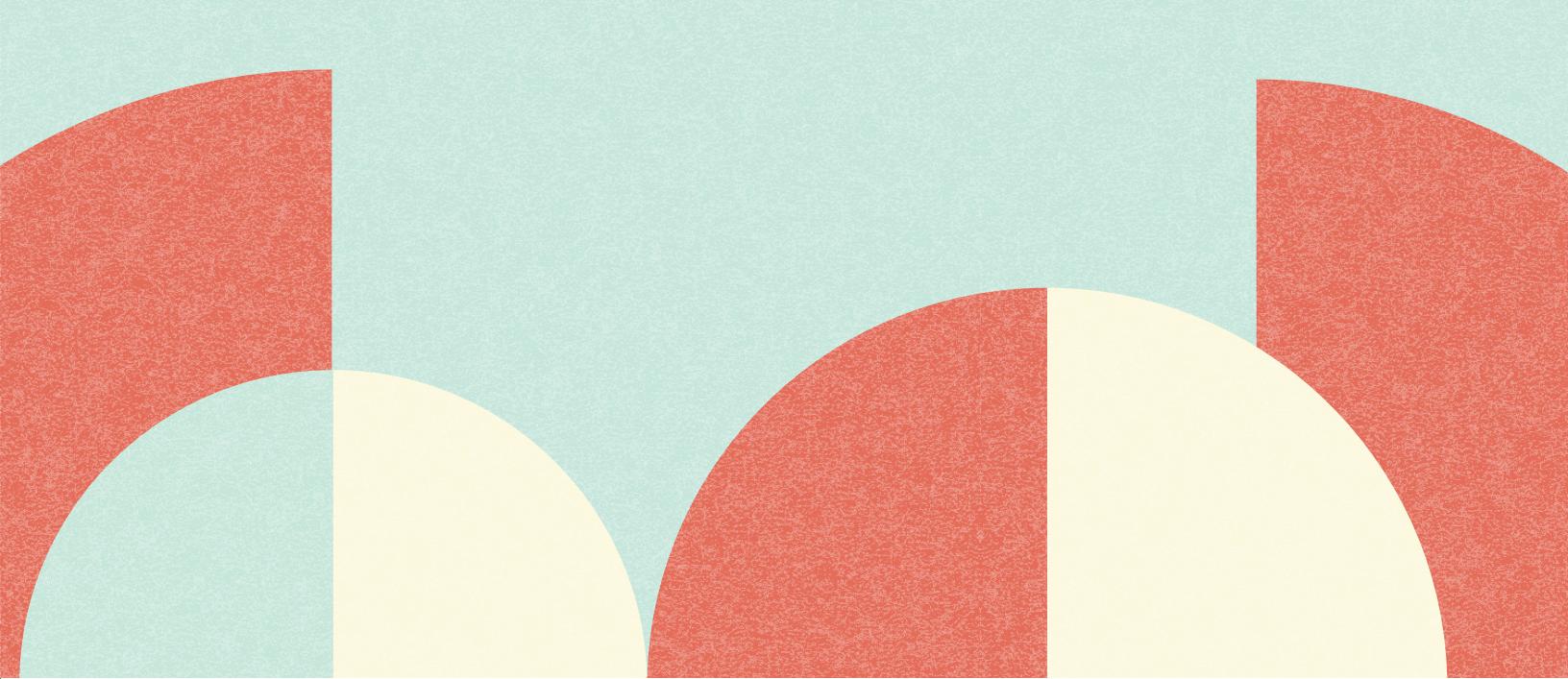
How is inclusion important to us?

- What are your individual and collective motivations for moving towards greater inclusion of gender-diverse people?
- How will this change be important for the organization and its service users?



Common Pitfalls

While it may feel natural to form groups with people that we know or who have similar tasks or roles, we recommend forming pairs or groups of people who rarely work together or who work in different bodies within the organization (Board of Directors, staff, etc.). This allows for a diversity of points of view and experiences within the small groups, leading to a more accurate picture of inclusion within the organization and ensuring that small groups do not become echo chambers.



– Activity 3

Concerns

⌚ Objective

Share our individual and collective concerns and apprehensions about committing to changes that will increase inclusion.

❖ Materials needed

Post-its (ideally in different colours), pens or pencils, 5 large sheets of paper on which to stick the Post-its (one per category), tape.

⌚ Activity duration

90 minutes

☰ Summary description

Participants will share their concerns and apprehensions towards engaging in a process for greater inclusivity. They will then reflect and attempt to respond to the concerns that were raised.

Instructions

1. The facilitator will explain the activity's objective and steps. They will also remind the group of the rules it agreed to during the first activity.
5 minutes
2. Participants are asked to individually reflect on their concerns and apprehensions towards engaging in a process for greater inclusivity. They should write their ideas on Post-its (1 idea per Post-it) based on the following 5 categories

- What are my concerns:
 - a. Around governance?
 - b. Around services?
 - c. Around our current service users?
 - d. Around the team?
 - e. Other (image, policy, partnerships, funding, etc.)?

15 minutes
3. Participants are then asked to stick their Post-its for each category onto the corresponding large paper. They will then form 5 small groups (1 group per category).
5 minutes
4. Each small group will sort through the Post-its for their category, grouping similar ones together and rephrasing the concerns into the form of questions rather than statements, e.g., "Does increased inclusion run the risk of chasing away existing users?" rather than "We worry that people will stop using our services if we move towards greater inclusivity."
 - a. Each small group is asked to choose one person to take notes, if needed, and another to present their work to the large group.
20 minutes

5. Each spokesperson will take turns presenting their group's category, reading the concerns and questions that emerged. Participants will then discuss the concerns and apprehensions that were brought up for this category, before moving on to the next.

45 minutes

- a. During the discussion period, participants can try to respond to the questions that were brought up and find solutions (see [Annex 5: Myths and Realities about Inclusion](#)).
 - i. The facilitator should note any responses on Post-its and then pair them with the corresponding concern.
 - ii. Any concerns that were not answered or resolved should be kept to discuss with the TGFM or other external resources.



Common Pitfalls

When we talk about situations that affect a minority group, we often exclude or minimize the participation of the people in that group, because they are not considered neutral parties. Knowing, as we do, that these changes affect us all means that neutrality is impossible in these conversations. Excluding or ignoring the contributions of a group or a person constitutes discrimination and should absolutely be avoided in this type of exercise. Indeed, when someone who is affected by the situation under discussion is sharing their perspective, it's important to actively listen.

That being said, it's also important not to burden them with the responsibility of answering every single question or concern that's brought up. Each member of the group should be involved in the discussion, and all participants should take part in resolving the concerns.



– Activity 4

Our Shared Vision

Objective

Reach group consensus about the changes needed to increase inclusion in the organization.

Materials needed

Papers, markers, tape, white-board or a large piece of paper for the large-group discussion.

Activity duration

90 minutes

Summary description

Participants will express their personal vision of what inclusion means, and then discuss the changes they would like to see to improve inclusion within the organization. Together, participants will find points of convergence in their individual visions and solutions to arrive at a consensus for the organization.

Instructions

1. The facilitator will explain the activity's objective, as well as the next steps. They will also remind the group of the rules it agreed to during the first activity. 5 minutes
2. Participants are asked to individually reflect on the following questions: 15 minutes
 - What is my vision of inclusion?
 - Where do I want to bring the organization in terms of inclusion?
3. Participants will form small groups of 3-4 people to discuss their individual reflections. During this period, the small group is asked to share their individual reflections and respond to the following questions: 30 minutes
 - What does inclusion look like for our organization?
 - Who do we want to include in our services?
 - What does change for greater inclusion mean to us?
 - a. Each small group chooses one person to write down their reflections on the papers provided (1 idea per paper) and another to serve as a spokesperson in the large-group recap.
4. Each small group is asked to tape their papers up on the board. The spokespersons will then take turns summarizing what was discussed in their small group. 15 minutes

5. In the large group, participants are asked to talk about their experience in the small-group discussions, including anything they learned or noticed

30 minutes

- Were there any shared points, complementary points, or points that diverged?
- If there were any points of divergence, how can we come to a compromise (if compromise is possible or desired)?

Using the elements discussed during the activity, as well as those identified during activity 2, the group will deliberate to arrive at a shared vision of inclusion towards which the team hopes to steer the organization in the future.



Common Pitfalls

Consensus does not mean unanimity. During discussions and debates, the goal is to come to a collective vision for the team, rather than trying to shoehorn in every aspect of each individual vision (as these will sometimes be in opposition to one another). As such, it's important to clarify the decisions to be made, explore and seek out new ideas, and validate and rework proposals to come to an answer that best suits your organization. This might mean implementing different ways to validate proposals throughout the discussion. Consent-based decision-making makes it possible to add structure to this type of conversation: it's a process based on the fact that it is not necessary to be completely in agreement with a proposal to give one's consent. Rather than seeking unanimous approval from every single participant, decisions can be made as long as no one presents a reasonable opposition.^{1,2}

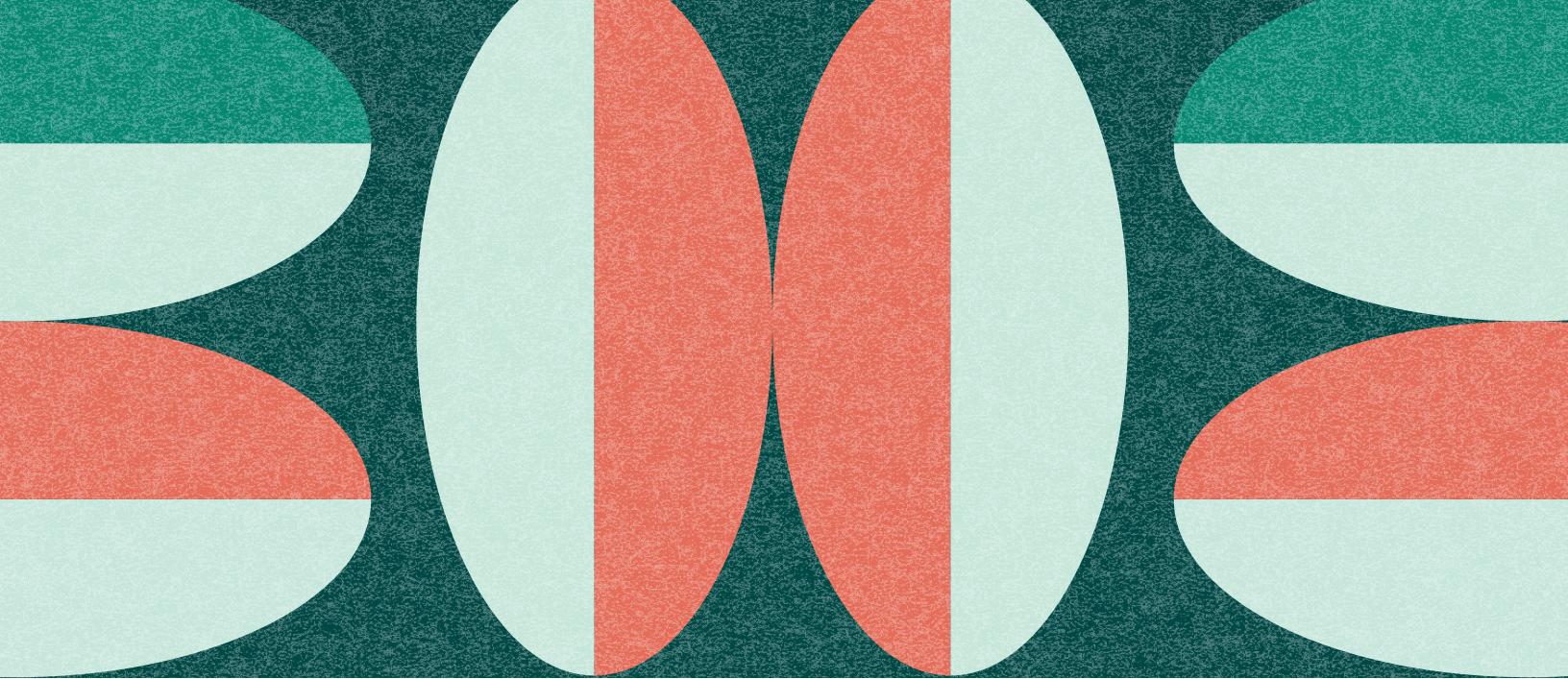
It's also important to recognize that the group members will influence one another over the course of their discussions – which is normal and desirable. However, it is crucial to reduce the power dynamics as much as possible during the decision-making process to ensure that the group's vision of inclusion is truly shared and thus avoid "false consensus" (see [Annex 4 - Collective Decision-Making and Consensus](#)).

It is possible that the group will not come to a shared vision, or that there will be major points of divergence between members. If that happens, we recommend taking a beat and finding another time to continue the discussion, as well as involving external facilitators who can support the group's reflection process.

References

¹Imfusio. [Consent-based decision-making](#).

²Fondation Nicolas Hulot pour la nature et l'homme. [Démocratie participative : guide des outils pour agir](#). (in French only)



– Activity 5

Our Strengths

Objective

Acknowledge the organization's individual and collective strengths in order to overcome the group's concerns and apprehensions and attain its shared vision of inclusion.

Materials needed

Papers, pens or pencils, markers, whiteboard or a large piece of paper.

Activity duration

45 minutes

Summary description

This team-building activity helps participants reflect on the strengths of their fellow team members and express themselves on this topic. Once its strengths have been identified, the group can take a step back and observe how these strengths can be used to address its fears and concerns.

Instructions

1. The facilitator will explain the activity's objective and steps. They will also remind the group of the rules it agreed to during the first activity.
5 minutes
2. Each participant will write their name in the middle of a paper, making sure to leave enough space around it so that each group member can write a word or a short sentence, and hand it to the person to their left.
5 minutes
3. Participants will then write down a strength or professional talent of the person whose name is in the centre of the paper – at least one word, but no more than a sentence. This strength or talent should align with the change the group is seeking, namely, greater inclusion. These comments should be anonymous. The group will continue to pass the papers until each participant receives the paper with their name on it.
10 minutes
4. Each participant is asked to read their paper silently, and take note of which strengths or talents were repeated most frequently. They will then take turns sharing a few strengths and talents from their paper. The facilitator can write these strengths and good qualities on the board for the group to see.
15 minutes
5. The facilitator will ask the group to reflect on and respond to the following questions:
15 minutes
 - What strengths and talents do we share as a team?
 - Which of our strengths and talents will help respond to the concerns raised about the changes needed to increase inclusion?
 - Are there strengths and talents that were not named that we think we should develop to facilitate the process of increasing inclusivity?
 - What are our collective strengths?
 - What are the organization's strengths and accomplishments?



Common Pitfalls

We recommend reminding everyone of the ground rules agreed to during the first activity before starting this one, in order to encourage participation from everyone and ensure that potential internal conflicts do not spill over into the activity. It could also be a good idea to have a care and equity guardian.

However, if the group dynamic tends towards conflict during the activity, it can be adapted to focus only on collective strengths or the organization's strengths and successes, rather than individual strengths.



– Activity 6

Synthesis

Objectives

1. Evaluate the group's individual and collective posture towards change.
2. Identify the actions needed for changes that will foster inclusion.

Materials needed

None.

Activity duration

20 minutes

Summary description

The group will review the consensus reached on its shared vision of inclusion, and then gather the questions that were not addressed. In the light of the group's review and remaining questions, it will identify the next steps in the short-term phase of a process to foster inclusion.

Instructions

1. The facilitator will remind the group of the key elements of its shared vision of inclusion, as well as the concerns that were not addressed during activity 3. 5 minutes
2. **Option 1:** If the group managed to reach consensus during activity 4, participants will identify 2-4 actions that can be implemented in the short term in order to make progress on the organization's changes to support inclusion 10 minutes
Option 2: If the group was not able to reach consensus during activity 4, participants will name what they need to continue reflecting and discussing, with the goal of reaching consensus.
3. Participants will plan their next meeting. 5 minutes



Common Pitfalls

For this last activity, it's important that the group focus on synthesizing the previous activities and planning its next steps. As such, the facilitator may need to remind the group to avoid reopening discussions or debates during the activity, inviting them to plan a new meeting if needed.

SECTION III

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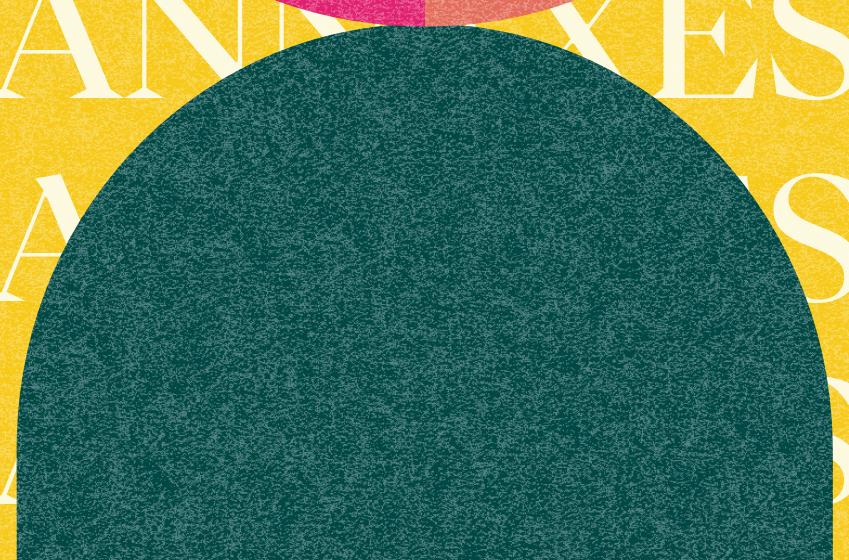
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– Annex 1

Care and equity guardian

What is a care and equity guardian?

A care and equity guardian (*garde du senti*, in french) is a person who monitors the emotional well-being of all participants during an activity and works to prevent dynamics of domination within a group.^{3,4} They serve as an active witness who is responsible for naming any barriers to dialogue that they observe during the discussion.

They should also be available to receive any feedback from participants, and may intervene to prevent situations that could negatively affect the group members' well-being or dialogue. For examples of how a care and equity guardian may intervene, please see the resources presented in the footnotes.

It's important to remember that the care and equity guardian is not there to "police" the group. This role is not meant to prevent participants from expressing themselves freely, but to hold everyone accountable for their statements, remind them of their blind spots and reveal any unconscious biases that they may have.

Why is this role important?

Originally developed in feminist spaces, this role is a practice of collective care where we recognize the importance of caring for one another and paying attention to one another's feelings.⁵ Having a care and equity guardian present at a meeting helps support inclusivity and accessibility, in addition to helping manage conflicts that may come up during discussions between participants.

Which behaviours are harmful to dialogue?

Barriers to dialogue are logical fallacies that harm communication within a group and render constructive dialogue impossible. These include sophisms like imputing another's motives, faulty generalizations, appeals to the group, arguments from authority, false dilemmas, slippery slope, etc.^{3,6}

Dynamics of domination refer to a collection of behaviours, whether voluntary or involuntary, that reproduce a hierarchy imposed by our society's systems of oppression. These behaviours are directly influenced by our social position (race, skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, etc.). They can take the form of monopolizing the space, cherry-picking others' statements to respond, speaking in "all-caps" (tone of voice, body language,

cutting people off, eye-rolling), excluding or invisibilizing minorities, infantilizing, being defensive, avoiding emotion, etc. These dynamics are not always obvious or visible, both for the person producing them and for those affected by them.^{3,6}

Elitism refers to prioritizing an idea or a statement solely due to the status within the group of the person who proposed it. Seniority and friendships are the two most common forms of elitism, which can be used to place greater importance on one idea rather than another.^{3,6}

References

³ Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante. [Le Petit livre mauve](#). (in French)

⁴ Réseau Demain le Québec. [Pourquoi et comment avoir une gardien.ne du senti dans ses événements?](#) (in French)

⁵ Table de concertation des groupes de femmes Bas-Saint-Laurent. [Garde du senti et care collectif](#). (in French)

⁶ Coop Raquette. [Le dialogue bienveillant](#). (in French)

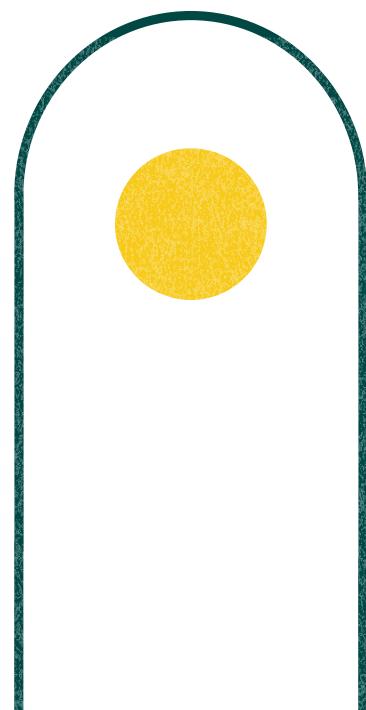


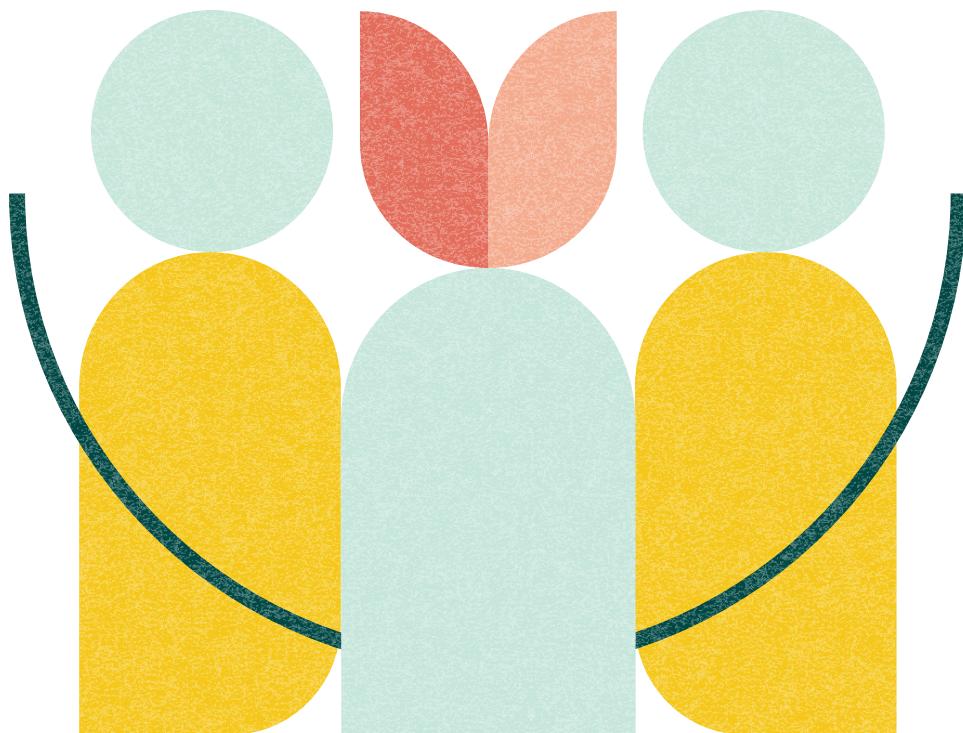
– Annex 2

Inclusivity as a Position

Committing to a process of opening up an organization to members of queer communities requires not only a collective, but an individual adoption of inclusivity as a position. Taking this position is a process involving self-reflection, allowing each person to examine their own thoughts, behaviour and biases, and take accountability for their own reactions. It is an ongoing learning process that is not necessarily linear, and can take a long time. Welcoming critique and learning from our mistakes is a key part of inclusivity as a position.

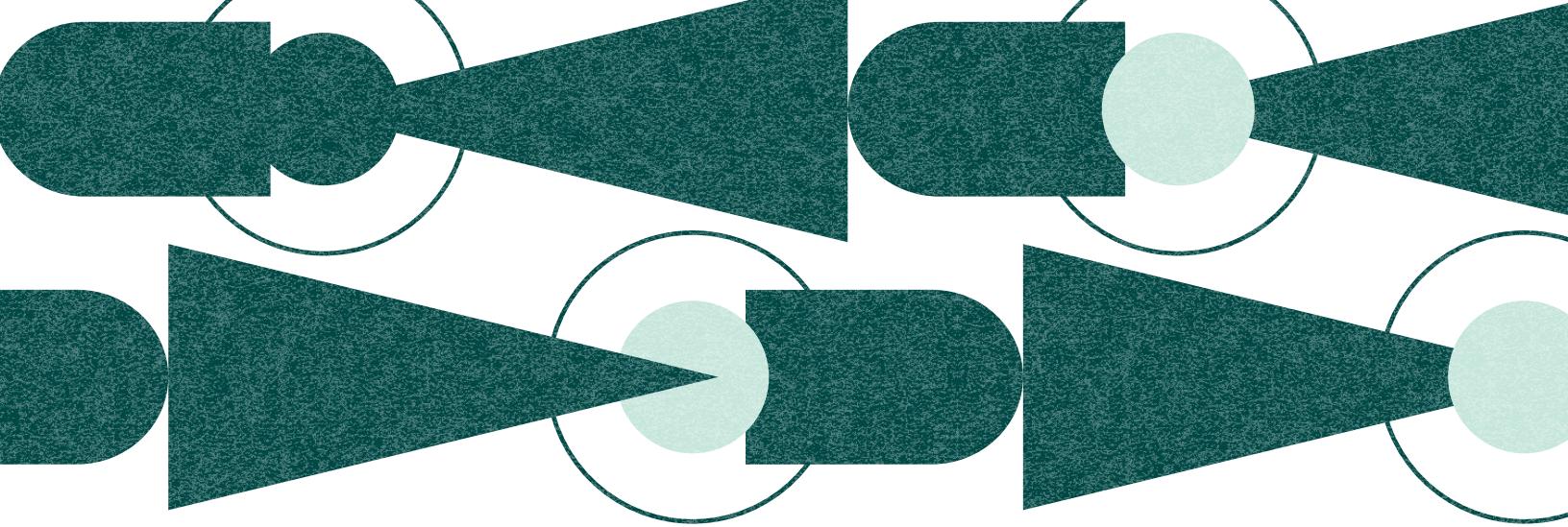
Adopting a position of inclusivity is also a process that can come with vulnerability and discomfort. This discomfort can often slow us down in the face of change, but it can also be a motivational force. Being able to question ourselves and move beyond our discomfort is a path toward personal and professional improvement, in addition to becoming a force for change within our environment. As the process requires time and energy, it is important to be patient with ourselves and with other people involved. This also goes for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. Throughout the process, they will learn to trust the organization.





Taking a position of inclusivity asks us to show humility in the face of our assumptions and errors so we can challenge them. This accompanies a practice of listening to the people involved when they come forward to express discomfort with a reaction or behaviour, and not questioning their feelings. Examining our past behaviours and attitudes, especially when those may not have been for the betterment of a person or community, can evoke feelings of shame. It is important to be able to see this shame and overcome it, so that we can see that change is needed. This reflection allows us to grow and more easily adopt new practices.

Lastly, it is important to be aware of the considerable impact of privilege and oppression on feminists spaces' accessibility to members of queer communities, and especially on their feelings of safety within those spaces. As a result, we need to be aware of our own privileges as well as those of our service users. By taking these privileges into account, we can more easily recognize the specific needs of members of queer communities – as well as other marginalized communities – and create a more inclusive environment.



– Annex 3

Brave(r) Spaces

Creating spaces to cultivate and confront our discomfort is a crucial part of a collective process towards inclusion. As theorized by activist bell hooks, these braver spaces go beyond safer spaces. Safer spaces are spaces where people's individual experiences are welcomed and validated. As such, they are able to feel comfortable expressing themselves and telling their stories, without fear of violence or judgement. This feeling of personal safety is never guaranteed and can vary from one person to another, but these spaces strive to be as safe as possible.

Brave spaces, for their part, are meant to deepen our reflections while maintaining caring dialogue. Brave spaces are built on a foundation of safer spaces where individual spaces are validated, but seek instead to highlight the strength and courage present when we express our vulnerability and discomfort.

Brave spaces are based on 6 pillars⁷:

1 Vulnerability, which, despite the discomfort we might experience, brings with it creativity, innovation, learning and accountability.

3 Welcoming and facing our fears, so that we can truly learn.

5 Examining our intentions, so that we can better understand and respect our boundaries, in addition to taking accountability for our words and actions.

2 Changing our perspective, so we can better recognize others' experiences.

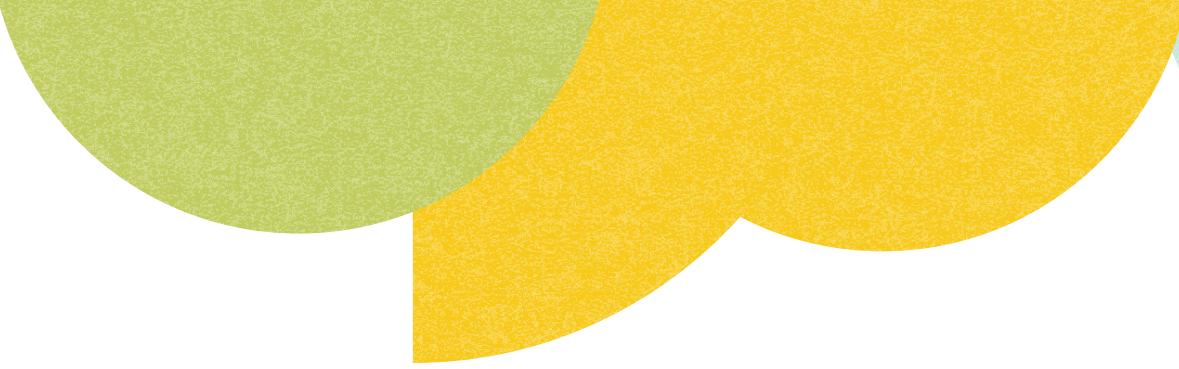
4 Thinking critically, so that we can deconstruct our own understanding of the world and the people around us.

6 Mindfulness, so that we can intentionally engage with the present moment.

Nourishing this type of space throughout an inclusivity process helps facilitate collective decision-making and guide our reflections. Becoming aware of how our communication structures can impede caring dialogue is both an individual and collective responsibility (see [Annex 1 – Care and equity guardian](#), for more information about behaviours that impede dialogue). Throughout this dialogue, we are intentionally creating a space to further our commitment to one another and to others.

— References —

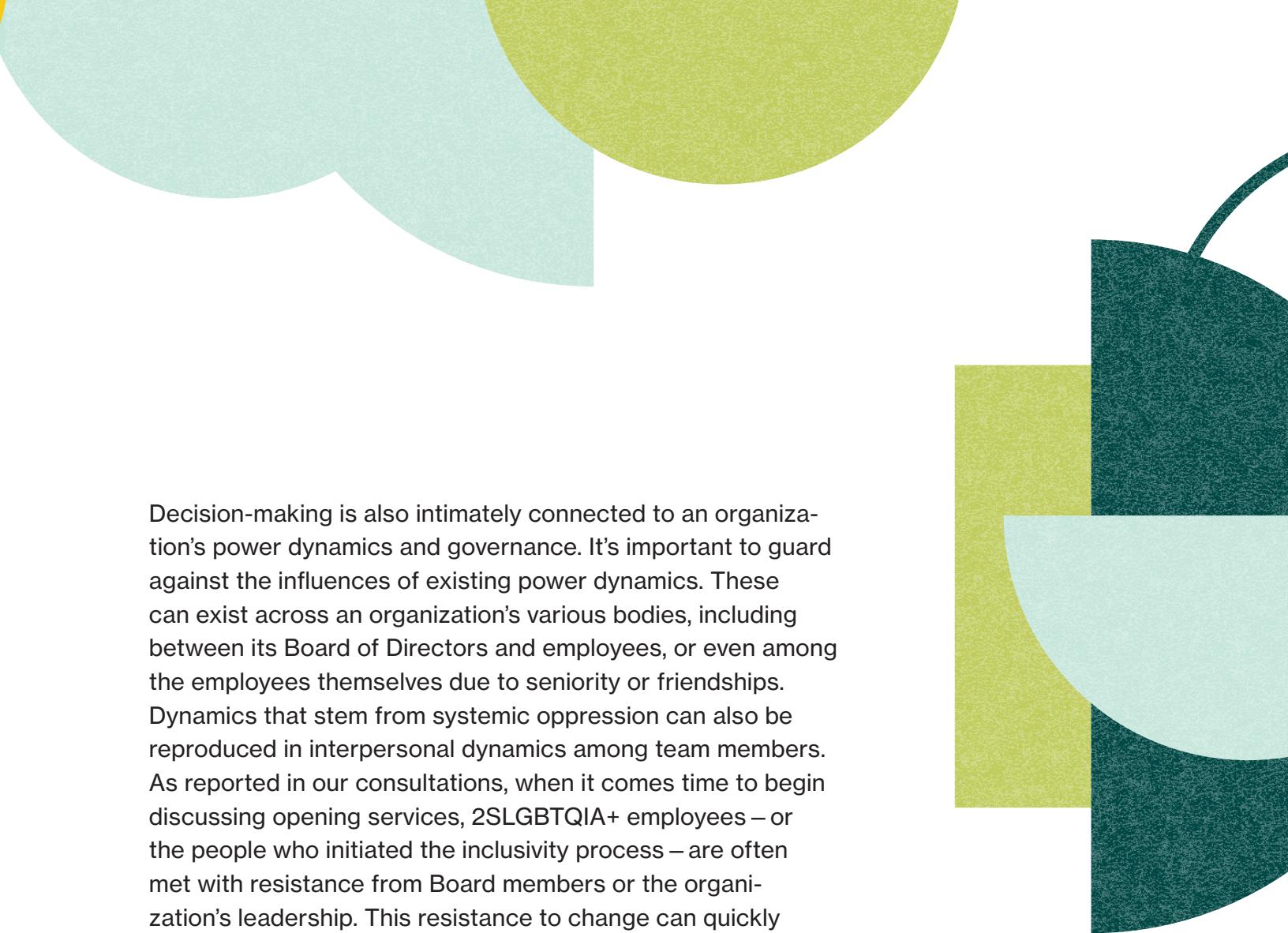
⁷ Stubbs V., LICSW et LCSW-C. [The 6 Pillars of Brave Space](#)



– Annex 4

Collective Decision-Making and Consensus

Decision-making is a central element of any collective process to improve 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion. Decisions must involve the full collaboration of the organization's various bodies to ensure consensus: its team, members of its Board of Directors and its membership as a whole. Consensus refers to a position that is chosen together, without necessarily requiring unanimity.⁸ However, consensus is not possible without the full participation of all people involved. As a result, it is important to create moments of dialogue between all members of an organization's teams so that everyone feels heard and taken into consideration. Without taking the time for people to align themselves with a collective decision, the consensus will fall apart at the first hurdle. These moments of collective listening and learning will ensure the group's engagement and a more solid consensus.



Decision-making is also intimately connected to an organization's power dynamics and governance. It's important to guard against the influences of existing power dynamics. These can exist across an organization's various bodies, including between its Board of Directors and employees, or even among the employees themselves due to seniority or friendships. Dynamics that stem from systemic oppression can also be reproduced in interpersonal dynamics among team members. As reported in our consultations, when it comes time to begin discussing opening services, 2SLGBTQIA+ employees – or the people who initiated the inclusivity process – are often met with resistance from Board members or the organization's leadership. This resistance to change can quickly halt inclusivity processes and cut conversations short.

While they're often founded in a fear of the unknown, these concerns should not be an obstacle to collective decision-making, especially when power dynamics are present. Making decisions by consensus seeks to respect the pace of all people involved. It also involves trusting the 2SLGBTQIA+ people involved. Choosing not to collectively engage in a process of change has real and damaging effects on members of queer communities. These effects must be taken into account when making the decision. As such, decisions must be based on the well-being of the "collective we," meaning for the organization's evolution towards safer and adapted services, rather than based on our own individual feelings of resistance.

References

⁸Communagir. Comprendre et agir - Prendre des décisions collectives (in French)

Myths and Realities about Inclusion

Cis women who already use our services will no longer feel welcome if we include trans and non-binary people.

This statement suggests that once services have been made more inclusive, trans or non-binary people will represent the majority of service users. This is not the case. Cis women will continue to make up the vast majority of service users, and, likely, of the staff. Including trans and non-binary people will change only slightly, if at all, the nature of the services offered by the organization.

It is also possible that trans and non-binary people already use your services, or have used them in the past. Greater inclusion and transparency helps ensure greater safety and improved well-being for trans and non-binary people, who are especially vulnerable.

Last, but not least, cis women may also benefit from this process of increasing inclusion for trans and non-binary people. Having a safer space that is truly free from violence is a net benefit for all people who interact with the organization.

Cis women who already use our services won't understand these changes and this new openness to members of queer communities.

It's important to recognize the agency of service users in a process of inclusion, and not to underestimate their ability to adapt and learn. Space should be made for them to be part of the process through discussion groups and open conversations.

These conversations with service users don't need to dwell on theoretical concepts around gender and sexuality, but should instead highlight the shared experiences among all people who interact with the organization. Trans and non-binary people need services and resources, just as cis women do, and it's important to recognize that fact. One solution is to train team members on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues to help them address these realities with existing service users.

Lastly, we recommend emphasizing mutual respect for all rather than insisting that people learn every single concept; we don't need to know every aspect of a reality that we don't experience to respect and welcome those who do.

Including trans women and non-binary people who were assigned male at birth threatens the safety and rights of cis women.

The idea that non-binary and trans people – especially trans women – are a threat to cisgender women's safety is transphobic disinformation which is intended to increase fear of trans people. The safety of cis women service users is not endangered by the presence of trans and non-binary people any more than it is by the presence of other cis women service users. This fear creates a major division in the feminist movement that weakens it, in addition to increasing the stigmatization and marginalization of a group that is already vulnerable.

The truth is quite the opposite: trans and non-binary people are more likely to be victims of violence. This is especially the case for trans women. By depicting them as “abusers” or “threats,” we are falling for transphobic rhetoric and turning focus away from the real problem: gender-based violence and the patriarchy. When we meaningfully include trans and non-binary people in feminist movements and services, we are amplifying our reach and ability to collectively fight against an oppressive system.

If we include everyone except straight and cisgender men, we are voluntarily excluding and stigmatizing them in our practices.

Of course, cis men (regardless of their sexual orientation) also need access to services and, just like everyone else, they can be victims of the patriarchy. That being said, it is primarily women (both cis and trans), trans people, non-binary people and gender-nonconforming people who are most targeted by sexism and the patriarchy.

We know that these communities need closed spaces of solidarity in which they can feel safe. It is important to remember that closed or selectively closed spaces are not just spaces “with no cis men,” but ones in which the people present share a common experience of gender-based violence caused by the patriarchy.

Lastly, let’s remember that selectively closed spaces are also a response to a lack of resources for people who experience multiple forms of intersecting oppression. Cis men often experience fewer obstacles to receiving services.

Inclusion isn't a priority for our organization.
Anyway, we don't have the internal resources
or funding to do this.

Inclusion for trans and non-binary people is often raised by groups as a want and a need, but one that is rarely made into reality or transposed into the organization's annual priorities. For these changes to truly manifest, it's important to anchor them in the organization's reality by taking the time to reflect on how they will be implemented and providing ourselves with the means to accomplish our ambitions.

As a result, it's important to seek out opportunities that can build your capacity to reach your inclusivity objectives, such as funding opportunities or calls for projects that involve inclusion, updating your strategic planning, hiring someone who is affected by and specializes in the topic, or collaborating with an organization that works on diversity.

One step towards greater inclusion, even a small one, is better than doing nothing. It's easy not to prioritize these changes when we don't experience the direct impacts. As an organization, deciding not to take action to improve inclusion has a direct impact on vulnerable people who need better access to services.

**It's a lot of work for minimal results.
It's complicated.**

The first steps in a process to increase inclusion may seem complex, because we're looking at the long road ahead of us before we see measurable improvements. It is crucial that we remember that inclusion is a long-term and continuous process that involves a range of changes – some fast, and some slow. Inclusivity is not a race with a finish line; there is no real end to the process.

As an organization and a team, your objectives for your inclusivity process are probably not the same as those within another organization. But by basing it on the needs that are specific to your organization, the process will become much more realistic. As such, it will be easier to develop a plan that aligns with your capacity.

It's also important to remember that making changes for greater inclusion doesn't only benefit members of marginalized groups. Inclusivity benefits everyone, and everyone must participate in the process to ensure that the responsibility doesn't fall on one person or one small group of people.

If we're going to include trans and non-binary people in our services, we need to be 100% prepared. We can't afford to slip up.

Making mistakes is part of any process for change. Fear of making a mistake is often a barrier to action, but if we can accept that mistakes are a part of life, we can allow ourselves a greater margin for experimentation, which, in turn, helps us learn more.

It is conceivable that being in a learning period could be poorly received by the trans and non-binary communities that use or would like to use our services. But conversely, maintaining an attitude of humility towards our learning journey and showing openness to recommendations is often appreciated by the people we are seeking to include.

It's important to remember that bonds of trust are not built through irreproachable behaviour, but by transparent communication and accountability. Why not be upfront about the fact that we are in the process of changing, that we may make mistakes, but that we want to hear where we went wrong so we can improve?

Including trans and non-binary people is not part of our mandate.

As we mentioned earlier, the battles waged by feminist movements are – for the most part – fighting against gender-based violence and oppression, and eliminating sexism and the patriarchy to reduce gender inequality.

Women are not the only targets of sexism and the patriarchy. Trans and non-binary people also experience violence based on their gender and gender expression. If we want to reach gender equality, we must include everyone who is affected by this oppression and inequality.

If we can accept that fact and reframe things based on the struggles that gave rise to our mandates, it becomes clear that feminist struggles and the oppression experienced by trans and non-binary people are indissociable.

Trans men shouldn't be included in our spaces because they benefit from the patriarchy.

While some trans men will prefer to use services for men, many of them have experienced the same violence, oppression and discrimination as women have, either before, during or after their transition. As victims of the same abuse and abusers, it's common for trans men to feel safer in closed spaces, whether queer spaces or women's spaces.

However, it's also common for trans men or transmasculine people not to risk using services that are not explicitly labeled as being for them. Given that few, if any, services are specifically for trans men, it's important not to erase them from our process of inclusion.

We just have to say that we accept trans and non-binary people and they'll feel included.

This line of thinking is a ‘façade of inclusion’ – when an organization labels itself as inclusive towards trans and non-binary people without doing the real work behind the scenes to create safer spaces.

To make sure that your organization doesn't fall victim to this false inclusion, it's important to question the role that trans and non-binary people really occupy within it. Are they consulted and heard during decision-making processes? Do we respond to their actual needs, rather than those that we assume they have? Are our spaces really as safe as they could be?

Meaningful inclusion requires being honest with ourselves and the people we wish to include in terms of the work we've done and the work we still have to do.

Inclusive language erases women and invisibilizes violence against women.

Let's start by clarifying that inclusive language is an umbrella term that includes several different forms of written and oral communications. One shared aspect of these forms of communication is that they reject the notion under which masculinity and male gender is the “norm” or default format. Inclusive language (often confused with gender-inclusive language, which strives to avoid gendered terms) is especially meant to highlight the experiences shared by a heterogenous and varied group of people.

As such, there are many forms of inclusive language that can visibilize the experiences of women all while including people of other genders. You can determine which linguistic approaches best respond to your organization's needs and highlight the diversity of experiences that are found in your space.

Being forced to change the way I use language to be more inclusive is damaging to my practice and intervention style.

For a space to be more inclusive, it must adapt to the needs of its clientele to ensure that all people who use its services feel welcome and receive support that is adapted to their realities and needs. This is a fundamental principle of intersectional feminist intervention.

For example, in your space, you may need to adapt how you greet newcomers by making sure to ask people's pronouns at the beginning of your sessions. This simple gesture of respect for how people identify requires very little effort but can signal openness to trans and non-binary peoples' experiences. It also creates an opportunity for education with cis clients who may not be familiar with these issues.

Inclusion for trans and non-binary people can also be accomplished by integrating multiple ally-signaling behaviours, including adapting how we use language in interventions and communications. These behaviours will necessarily have a positive impact on the people visiting the space, even more so for the people they seek to include.

