Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan
2025-2030

IVADO

Université de Montréal
Polytechnique Montréal
HEC Montréal
Université Laval
McGill University

CANADA FIRST RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FUND | APOGÉE CANADA FONDS D'EXCELLENCE EN RECHERCHE

Québec

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A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Artificial intelligence is increasingly influencing the way we learn, work, make decisions, and innovate. As its role grows, its impacts—both positive and negative—are becoming more visible and impactful. A technology with such a wide reach demands a level of responsibility commensurate with its influence. It must be designed with scientific rigor, but also with substantive attention to the inequalities it may reproduce or amplify, because the choices made today in the development and adoption of these technologies will have a lasting impact on our institutions and our living environments.

The R^{3}AI project—aimed at the adoption and development of robust, reasoning, and responsible artificial intelligence—embodies this bold ambition: to fundamentally transform the way AI is developed, adopted, and governed. Led by IVADO and spearheaded by Université de Montréal and its partners (Polytechnique Montréal, HEC Montréal, Université Laval, and McGill University), this project is creating the conditions for a structural shift in the AI ecosystem. This is a demanding goal. But how and where do we begin?

First, by consistently integrating the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into all aspects of IVADO's operations. In this regard, we are not starting from scratch. IVADO has already demonstrated its ability to promote and apply these principles during its Data Serving Canadians project, in partnership with Université de Montréal,

HEC Montréal, and Polytechnique Montréal. This plan builds on those foundations and adapts them to the context of the R^{3}AI project. IVADO's leadership is committed to elevating this approach to the highest level of the organization and ensuring its consistency across all its initiatives by strengthening EDI governance and leadership, continuing to transform our organizational culture in a sustainable manner, and pursuing the implementation of rigorous mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating our actions.

Next, by promoting this vision throughout the ecosystem that IVADO brings together—whether in research, innovation, training, or knowledge mobilization. This means working closely with our academic, industrial, and community partners to ensure that these principles are concretely reflected in projects, selection processes, collaborative practices, and the outcomes of the work conducted. It also means ensuring they are concretely reflected in the experiences of each member of our ecosystem, by strengthening equity in terms of access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making spaces.
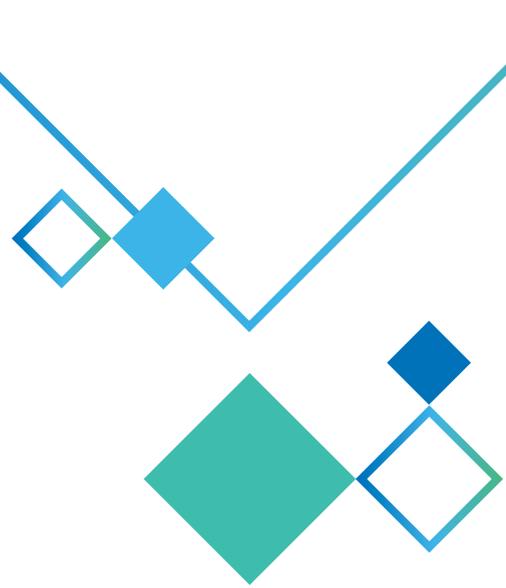
EDI is not a peripheral aspect of our approach; it is a fundamental component. Understanding the varied impacts of AI, collaborating with the communities involved, and working to change the structures that shape our environments are essential requirements for a project of excellence such as R³AI.

However, this action plan does not claim to provide definitive answers. It sets a direction, offers levers for action, and affirms a commitment to sustainable transformation. Its success will depend on the ongoing commitment of our teams, our partners, and the communities with whom we collaborate. The scale of the R³AI project entails a clear responsibility: to contribute to innovative, equitable, and responsible AI.

Mélanie Bosc
Deputy CEO, IVADO
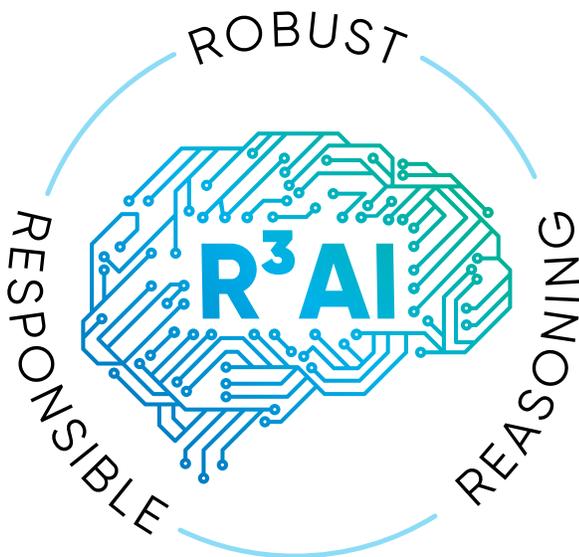
CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE AND EQUITABLE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Vision

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming the way we live, work, and conduct research. While its potential is immense, the risks and inequalities it can exacerbate are equally significant. For it to truly benefit society as a whole, its development and adoption must be guided by ethical principles and a rigorous focus on its social impacts.

As part of its R^{3}AI project, IVADO champions the vision of a robust, reasoning, and responsible artificial intelligence, and recognizes that this can only emerge within an ecosystem that reflects the diversity of experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. This action plan on equity, diversity, and inclusion translates this ambition into concrete commitments. It serves as the overarching framework for the actions to be implemented within the Consortium and across the ecosystem it engages.

IVADO works closely with its academic, industrial, and community partners to create an enabling environment— in the fields of research, education, and innovation—that fosters the development of more inclusive AI and its thoughtful implementation. This involves anticipating and reducing bias,

broadening participation in research and decision-making spaces, and supporting environments where everyone can fully contribute to the development and transfer of knowledge.

This vision for robust, reasoning, and responsible artificial intelligence aligns with the initiatives of Université de Montréal and is being implemented in collaboration with Polytechnique Montréal, Université Laval, HEC Montréal, and McGill University, centered on a shared commitment to a more equitable AI.

IVADO is also working to build lasting, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Given the unique nature of this commitment, a specific action plan has been developed.

Statement of Principles

This action plan is based on three principles that serve as the guiding framework for IVADO and its stakeholders in their efforts to advance the artificial intelligence ecosystem.

Co-construction	Scientific Rigor	Structural Transformation
Developed in collaboration with those affected by AI equity issues, including members of underrepresented groups.	Based on a review of the literature and scientific knowledge in EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion).	Focused on changing institutional frameworks, going beyond individual practices.

Co-construction

IVADO relies on the active participation of all stakeholders, including members of underrepresented groups, and leverages co-construction to achieve its objectives. The strategies adopted are the result of structured dialogue and shared deliberation, ensuring that actions are grounded in real and shared needs (see p. 9).

Scientific Rigor

The development of this plan is grounded in a rigorous analytical approach. It acknowledges that AI does not affect all communities in the same way and draws on scientific research, factual data, and the knowledge and expertise of the partners involved to produce a thorough analysis of the issues and dynamics shaping the AI ecosystem (see p. 7).

Structural Transformation

IVADO's action plan adopts a two-pronged strategy: addressing current underrepresentation while transforming organizational systems and structures to ensure lasting equity. These strategies extend across all of IVADO's activities, from research to institutional culture, governance, and program management. This transformation is driven at the highest level of the organization, with IVADO's leadership and governing bodies committed to integrating EDI principles into the Consortium's strategic decisions and practices.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

IVADO's EDI action plan addresses a well-documented reality: AI technologies do not affect all communities equally. Studies show that systemic barriers rooted in algorithmic biases, organizational cultures, academic practices, and structural inequalities persist within the AI ecosystem. These barriers hinder the full participation, recognition, and advancement of underrepresented individuals in this field.

The analysis presented in the table below is based on a body of scientific and institutional research addressing equity issues in technology and research environments. It highlights the realities faced by various underrepresented groups and the systemic dynamics that continue to shape the AI ecosystem today.

Under-represented Groups in AI	Documented Barriers	Documented Potential Solutions
Racialized People	• Algorithmic biases leading to discriminatory effects (employment, housing, justice). • Lack of transparency hindering the identification and correction of biases. • Underrepresentation and lack of recognition in research. • Persistent barriers to publication, funding, and career advancement.	• Improve access to resources, networks, and opportunities. • Strengthen active participation in decision-making and research settings. • Include racialized people in the design, evaluation, and guidance of AI systems.
People of African, Caribbean, and Black descent	• Exacerbated algorithmic biases (e.g., search engines and recognition systems), reinforcing stereotypes and discrimination. • Inequalities in access to technology, data, and skills. • Systemic barriers in academia: racism, isolation, pressure to represent, difficulties in accessing funding and publication opportunities.	• Adopt research approaches grounded in community engagement and partnerships. • Recognize the diversity of knowledge, including historically marginalized forms of knowledge. • Support full and effective participation

Under-represented Groups in AI	Documented Barriers	Documented Potential Solutions
Indigenous Peoples	• AI technologies that can perpetuate colonialism (exploitation of Indigenous data, reproduction of biases and increased surveillance). • Lack of consultation in technological development, leading to ill-suited solutions. • Academic research conducted without benefits for communities. • Mistrust of the academic community.	• Break away from colonial practices in research methods. • Ensure the sovereignty of Indigenous data. • Ensure the active participation of Indigenous communities in the development of AI.
Women	• Underrepresentation in educational programs, the industry, and decision-making positions. • Gender bias (in hiring and promotion) and wage inequality. • Discrimination, stereotypes, and harassment undermining the work environment. • Lack of female role models in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, reducing appeal and a sense of legitimacy starting with academic guidance.	• Combine institutional policies with protective measures. • Increase participation in decision-making bodies. • Implement fairer recruitment and evaluation practices. • Provide ongoing support for access, advancement, and retention.
People with disabilities	• Low representation and visibility (in academic circles and the digital sector). • Insufficient reasonable accommodations (focused on medical diagnosis or individual responsibility rather than on the institution). • Pressure associated with disclosing an invisible disability. • Limited recognition of intellectual contributions, with their role often reduced to that of test subjects.	• Implement institutional-level accommodation policies. • Address algorithmic biases. • Recognize the expertise of people with disabilities.

Under-represented Groups in AI	Documented Barriers	Documented Potential Solutions
2SLGBTQIA+ Individuals	• Scientific and technological fields where binary gender norms marginalize their identities. • Increased harassment, isolation, and psychological distress, particularly among trans and non-binary people. • Algorithms that misgender or perpetuate homophobic and transphobic biases. • Exploitation of visibility.	• Ensure inclusive institutional policies. • Ensure the active participation of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in decision-making. • Ensure equity-based governance to reduce inequalities.

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

This plan is the result of a participatory initiative launched by IVADO's leadership that has engaged numerous key players in Quebec's AI ecosystem. Grounded in the principles of R³AI, this initiative places individuals from underrepresented groups at the heart of the process.

Co-construction with Experts from Underrepresented Groups

Several initiatives have been launched to encourage active participation, based on the principle of "nothing about us without us":

→ A **working group** composed of experts in technology, research, and EDI, whose knowledge and experience were directly incorporated into the design of the action plan.

→ **Community partnerships** with organizations and leaders from underrepresented groups working in the technology and AI sectors, enabling the collection of their concerns, needs, and perspectives.

→ **Participation mechanisms** that are accessible and tailored to linguistic, cultural, and physical or virtual accessibility needs.

→ **Compensation** for expertise, recognizing the time and knowledge shared.

These co-creation forums helped refine the action plan's priorities and ensure that the proposed recommendations were grounded in the lived experiences of members of underrepresented groups in the technology sector.

An Inter-University Working Group on EDI (U5)

A working group bringing together EDI advisors from the five partner universities (U5) was established. These meetings have facilitated:

→ An **exchange of experiences and practices** regarding issues specific to underrepresented groups within the respective institutions;

→ The formulation of **concrete actions** to promote the development of more equitable practices within the IVADO ecosystem;

→ The co-construction of the EDI strategy by **building on existing initiatives at U5 universities**, in order to optimize resources, ensure the sustainability of actions, and foster complementarity among the institutions.

Harnessing Research Expertise

As part of the R³AI cross-sectoral scientific program, ten research clusters have been established, including one dedicated to Ethics, EDI, and Indigenous Peoples Engagement (IPE).

The Ethics, EDI, and Indigenous Engagement Cluster:

→ Examines the ethical and societal implications of AI-based technologies;

→ Contributes to the integration of best EDI and IPE practices across all groups;

→ Engages early-career researchers from diverse disciplines to enrich perspectives and promote diversity of knowledge.
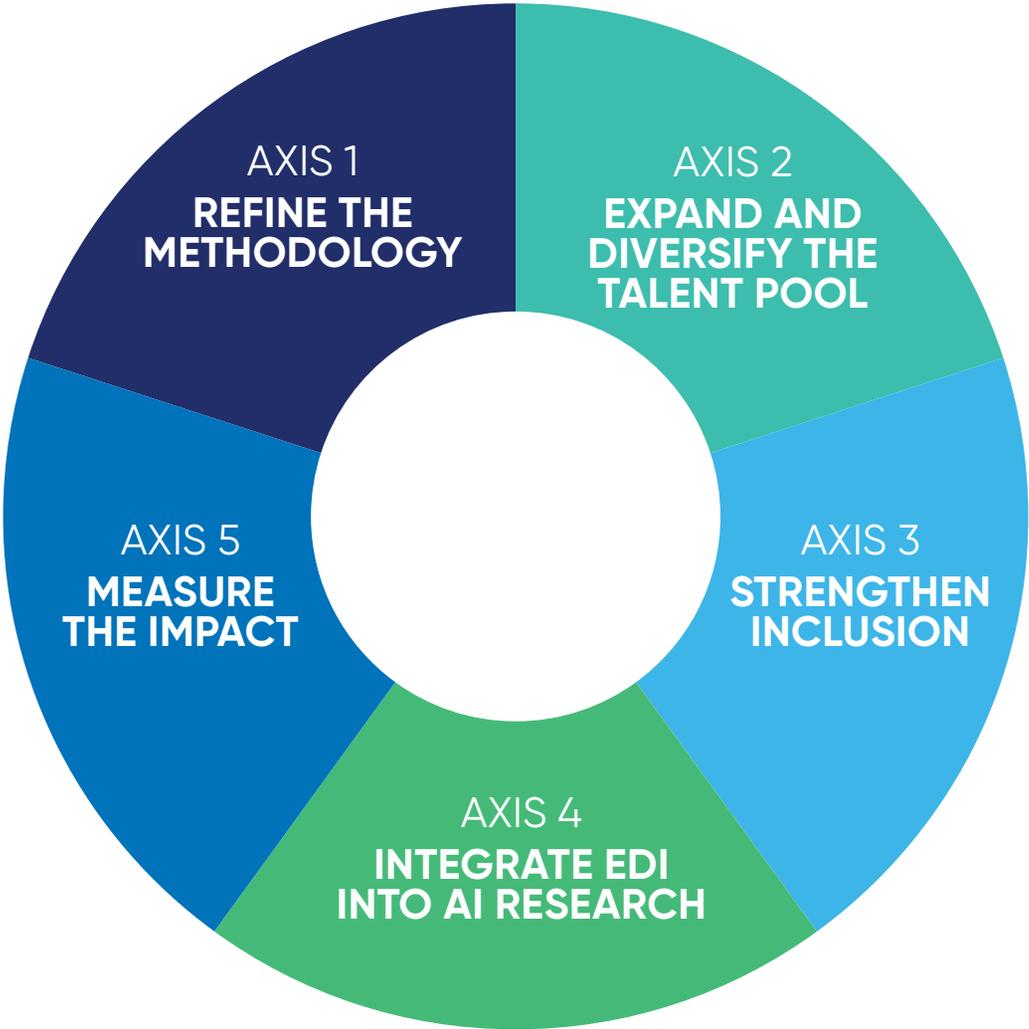
This scientific contribution ensures alignment between EDI and IPE action plans and the research orientations pursued within IVADO.

Involvement of IVADO's Governance and Operational Teams

IVADO's governance and operational teams were closely involved in developing the EDI strategy to ensure its alignment with the Consortium's guidelines and its sustainable implementation. This approach was based in particular on:

→ **The guidance of IVADO's management,** as well as the contribution of the scientific leadership, which steered the definition of the plan's strategic priorities and actions.

→ **The engagement of the Governance and EDI Committee,** which developed key recommendations and helped shape the plan's priorities.

→ **The involvement of the operational teams,** who participated in discussions on the sustainable integration of EDI practices into the Consortium's activities.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

AXIS 1
REFINE THE METHODOLOGY

AXIS 2
EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY THE TALENT POOL

AXIS 3
STRENGTHEN INCLUSION

AXIS 4
INTEGRATE EDI INTO AI RESEARCH

AXIS 5
MEASURE THE IMPACT

AXIS 1

To gather reliable data on the representation and experiences of underrepresented groups within the IVADO ecosystem, in order to guide the actions outlined in the plan.

AXIS 2

Increase the participation and representation of individuals from underrepresented groups in AI and enrich the pool of talent and ideas within the IVADO ecosystem.

AXIS 3

Foster an inclusive organizational culture to create learning, research, and work environments where diverse talents can thrive.

AXIS 4

Maximize the benefits of AI research for society as a whole by establishing dialogue between EDI and AI research and by diversifying approaches.

AXIS 5

Measuring the actual progress and impacts of the action plan for underrepresented groups and the development of responsible AI.

AXIS 1
REFINE THE METHODOLOGY

Objective

To gather reliable data on the representation and experiences of underrepresented groups within the IVADO ecosystem, in order to guide the actions outlined in the plan.

Implementation

→ Develop a rigorous, ethical, and legally compliant framework for the collection, management, and processing of self-reported data.

→ Conduct a comparative analysis of the systemic barriers faced by underrepresented groups in the Canadian research community and within the IVADO ecosystem.

→ Implement a communication plan to ensure transparency regarding IVADO's commitments and outcomes in the area of EDI.

AXIS 2
EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY THE TALENT POOL

Objective

Increase the participation and representation of individuals from underrepresented groups in AI and enrich the pool of talent and ideas within the IVADO ecosystem.

Implementation

→ Conduct outreach and educational initiatives on AI in collaboration with community partners to spark interest among the next generation.

→ Support students from underrepresented groups in AI through targeted initiatives.

→ Foster the recruitment and support of talent from underrepresented groups within the teaching and research communities.
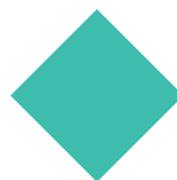
AXIS 3
STRENGTHEN INCLUSION

Objective

Foster an inclusive organizational culture to create learning, research, and work environments where diverse talents can thrive.

Implementation

→ Influence the culture within scientific and academic circles by participating in institutional initiatives.

→ Integrate EDI into all of IVADO's strategic and operational decisions.

→ Train and equip teams to foster an inclusive work environment.

→ Engage the network of partners in the co-construction of IVADO's activities.

AXIS 4
INTEGRATE EDI INTO AI RESEARCH

Objective

Maximize the benefits of AI research for society as a whole by establishing dialogue between EDI and AI research and by diversifying approaches.

Implementation

→ Promote EDI principles to develop equitable and inclusive technologies.

→ Equip the research community with the tools to integrate EDI principles into their projects.

→ Share and mobilize AI knowledge throughout society in collaboration with our partners.
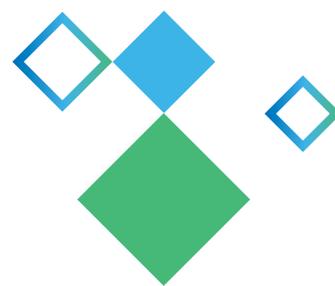
AXIS 5
MEASURE
THE IMPACT

## Objective

Measure the actual progress and impacts of the action plan for underrepresented groups and the development of responsible AI.

Implementation

→ Define clear, quantitative, and qualitative indicators and establish mechanisms for analyzing data to measure progress toward the objectives of this action plan.

→ Periodically review the indicators to adjust strategies and mechanisms.
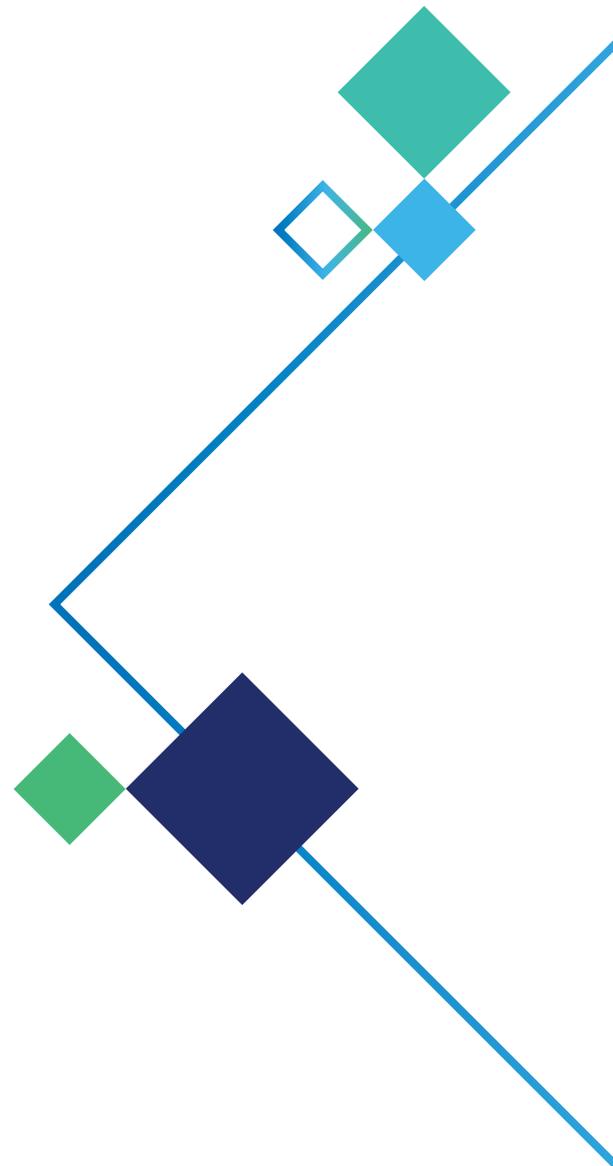
A SHARED INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

At IVADO, EDI is an institutional commitment championed by senior management and the entire executive committee, who ensure its integration into the Consortium's strategic priorities. Responsibility for its implementation is then shared across all levels of the organization: each department and team commits to integrating these principles into its daily activities, whether in strategic decisions or day-to-day operations.

A Dedicated EDI Governance Committee

A dedicated committee advises the organization on its EDI strategy and ensures that the selection of members for each committee is based on skills, complementarity, and representation of underrepresented groups. Chaired by IVADO's Deputy CEO, this committee consists of two representatives from a member organization and a representative from the U5 who serves on IVADO's Board of Directors.

Committed Teams

The EDI and Indigenous Peoples Engagement (IPE) team coordinates the implementation of the plan, but each operational team integrates EDI principles into its activities. The heads of research groups are also involved, particularly by incorporating EDI principles within their teams and into the evaluation criteria for funded projects.

Networking

The EDI team is active within Université de Montréal's Institutional EDI Network, CFREF's EDI Community of Practice, and RIQEDI (forums for sharing resources and best practices to benefit underrepresented groups).

Involvement of Impacted Groups

IVADO's community partners represent or work directly with underrepresented groups. Through them, the individuals involved participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the plan.

EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES

Technovation Montreal: Training the Next Generation of Women in AI

IVADO supports Technovation Montreal, a non-profit organization that encourages girls and young women aged 8 to 25 to engage with technology by building their skills through mobile app development, mentoring, and entrepreneurial training. The "Code with Me – AI" program aims to introduce them to the principles of AI so they can become informed users. The initiative helps diversify the talent pool in Quebec's AI ecosystem by engaging participants at a young age.

AI4Good Lab - Mila: Intensive Machine Learning Bootcamp

IVADO supports this seven-week program, which offers women and gender-diverse individuals the opportunity to develop the skills needed to create machine learning projects. It includes intensive training and the development of AI prototypes that address social issues. The program accepts 25 participants per cohort and provides a stipend. The AI4Good Lab is building a more inclusive tech culture and preparing people for careers in AI.

Onboarding Sessions: Raising Awareness Among New Recruits

IVADO systematically trains its new recruits and postdoctoral fellows in EDI principles upon their arrival. This initiative embeds EDI into the institutional practices of new members rather than treating it as a secondary initiative, reflecting a collective commitment to these principles in their research.

Devenirs partagés. Pratiques de l'IA: Research-Creation Integrating EDI Principles

A residency and exhibition featuring artists who collaborated with AI researchers on feminist, queer, and ecological critical approaches, with the aim of reflecting on the production of responsible knowledge in AI. The project fostered dialogue between EDI research, AI research, and artistic production, demonstrating the benefits for scientists and artists of working together in a creative process.

Public Libraries: Awareness Workshops for the General Public

In partnership with the Association des bibliothèques publiques du Québec (ABPQ), IVADO is offering multigenerational workshops—both theoretical and practical, with no prerequisites—in public libraries. The workshops cover a wide range of key topics related to AI to help participants understand its history and how it works; identify its major challenges for our democracies; develop critical thinking skills; and use it responsibly.

OUR PARTNERS

IVADO is fortunate to have a network of partners committed to promoting access to technology and artificial intelligence for underrepresented groups. This network is a key asset in implementing the action plan under R³AI.

Academic Partners

Arbour Foundation
CIFAR
EDIT-STEM Carleton University
OBVIA
U5 EDI Committee
Université de Montréal EDI Work Group

Community Partners

AIMS

Association des biblio- thèques publiques du Québec

Y des Femmes

UTA Université du 3ᵉ Âge

IVADO

GROUPE 3737

Technovation

Institut des Sciences, des Technologies et des Études avancées d'Haïti (ISTEAH)

QUEERTECH
QueerTech

Parité Sciences

Nord Ouvert

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Working Group Members

Adèle Salin-Cantegrel, Executive Director of Scikoopp

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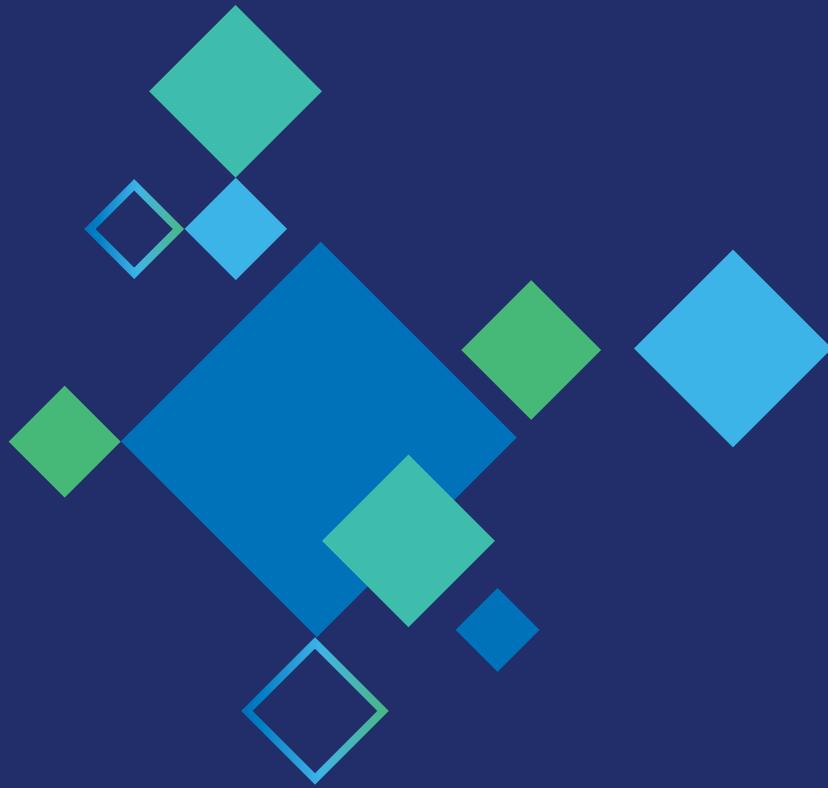
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