

Translational Genetics Research Collaborative

Culture Statement

A. Our core values

1. Trust, equity and mutual respect are fundamental and foundational to how we work. Our work environment is warm and supportive and based on open communication.
2. Through our actions, we demonstrate that each team member is valued as an individual for their unique skillset, perspectives and background (e.g. cultural background, race, sexual orientation, gender, religious perspectives, psychiatric or medical history, dis/ability, etc.) that they bring into our team. Each team member, regardless of position, background or length of team membership, is valued equally and we strive to create an environment in which all team members can grow and develop in ways that they find satisfying/fulfilling. We hold ourselves and each other accountable to identifying and addressing any actions, words or attitudes that may devalue another team member in order to learn and uphold safety for everyone.
3. Our team is committed to the principles of justice and equity in every aspect of our own work, and in our influence on the environments and society around us.

B. Team environment: culture of respect, equity, trust and open communication

1. We apply our care about those who are marginalized in society to the work that we do and aim to make a positive difference for this population.
2. We take responsibility to reflect on the work that we are doing and we seek to recognize the systems of power that are present, think critically about them, and whenever possible, take steps to make sure that our work is founded in justice, and equity.
3. By being selected to join TGRC, members have already proven their merit and earned their position on the team. We strive for diversity among our team members without engaging in tokenism.

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4. Each team member is expected to do their best, and to contribute to the work of the team beyond their own direct responsibilities, for example, by actively engaging in brainstorming/troubleshooting discussions at team meetings, and voicing any concerns or questions about work strategies or processes. Each team member is encouraged to self-reflect on experiences of tensions related to work and articulate their insights into issues that need to be resolved and/or changes that need to be made.
5. Team members are invited to contribute intellectually to the development and prioritization of questions asked, with our vision and mission in mind, as well as to the design of projects to answer these questions, whether at the conceptual/initial stages, or as the projects progress. In order to facilitate this, bi-weekly TGRC meetings will be used as a forum to present and discuss any new projects, and to share updates or ask for input on existing projects, in order to give all team members the opportunity to contribute intellectually to all projects. This also facilitates identification of opportunities for team members to contribute practically to projects if appropriate.
5. A workplace where we all get along is critical to our success as a team – thus, all TGRC team members will join the group by consensus of existing group members and will agree to the commitments and expectations required of them. Examples of such commitments and expectations include: conducting work that aligns with TGRC's vision/mission and that is included in the agenda of bi-weekly TGRC team meetings, and adhering to our authorship philosophy (see Authorship Philosophy document). Participating in supervision is part of TGRC membership - though optional, attending supervision is encouraged as it promotes our ability to thrive as individuals and as a group.
6. We are committed to training exposure, and/or experience including various clinical or research opportunities, in a manner that is appropriate for each individual's stage in training and the capacity in which they are engaging with the team (for example, PhD student vs. clinical MSc student). For individuals who are not full TGRC members, we value input and questions, and will provide constructive feedback and opportunities to debrief throughout their time with the team. An important part of the learning experience with TGRC includes learning about our team

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environment. Thus, when possible, trainees will have the opportunity to attend one of the bi-weekly TGRC meetings and supervision meetings during their rotation. trainees are expected to honor the TGRC culture statement core values of respect, equity, trust and open communication for the duration of their time with TGRC, and to strive to participate as fully as possible in the learning experience – which may include, but not be limited to, aspects of team membership described in this culture statement. We will enthusiastically engage in training individuals who are not full TGRC members, but will do so within the limits of our capacity.

7. We value our own mental and physical health and are aware that only by being okay ourselves are we able to do meaningful work to our fullest potential. We always try to eat/drink/take washroom breaks no matter how busy our day is, and we remind each other to do this if we notice it not happening. We also encourage each team member to reflect on their personal health needs and to pursue resources and support as necessary (including time during work hours for counselling or medical appointments). Further, we encourage team members to take their vacation days and to use sick days when needed. Trainees are encouraged to take time off when sick and to schedule vacation time – the number of days appropriate for vacation depends on the capacity in which they are engaging with the team.
8. We are thoughtful and explicit in communicating our boundaries (e.g., time availability/responsiveness/capacity, physical interactions). We understand that setting boundaries does not negatively affect our relationships with one another – in fact, this is part of healthy team functioning. We will respect each other's boundaries and check in if boundaries are unclear, and have explicit discussions if boundaries are in conflict with institutional rules and regulations.
9. Strengths, growth, and achievement of the team and its members are highlighted and celebrated. We take the view that when one team member succeeds, we all benefit.
10. We all aim to grow in our roles – we strive to increase our confidence and competence in new areas.

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11. Our work is meaningful. We will never ask each other to do "make work" projects. We share responsibility around administrative tasks (e.g. tasks related to meeting chairing, minutes, and social planning). While every attempt will be made to ensure that team members are working to the top of their scope of practice/job description, that tasks are matched to skills, and that tasks satisfy our individual needs, there may be situations in which our individual needs are de-prioritized in the interests of contributing to the team's mission. Decisions regarding work allocation in these situations will be considered seriously, and the team will try to provide extra support for any members asked to contribute in this way.
12. Volunteers will join the group on consensus of two team members, and while they are not considered TGRC members (i.e., they do not regularly attend meetings/supervision, etc.), we value our committed volunteers, and aim to give them constructive feedback and exposure to experiences that will help them achieve their goals.
13. Each team member has ownership over their individual responsibilities for a given project and is recognized for the important contributions they make, through these responsibilities, towards the vision of TGRC. We also value and acknowledge the contributions – both direct and indirect – made by all team members to our accomplishment. Ultimately, no team member is solely responsible for a specific TGRC project, nor does the ownership of any TGRC project rest solely with one team member.
14. The team involves members who are employees, and trainees. The contributions of all team members are valued – there is no hierarchy of one domain or position over the other (see Appendix). All team members are available to help all other team members.
15. All team members are encouraged to bring up their worries related to work or that affect work with others in the team as soon as possible – while supervision meetings are a safe, appropriate forum for talking about these things, team members need not wait for this meeting to raise issues. Confidentiality will be respected.
16. All team members have responsibility to the team: team members are encouraged to challenge the team leader; pointing out

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inconsistency/potential problems/fallacious thinking is critical to our success as a group! All team members' contributions are valued.

17. Each individual's work is their own – each team member has the freedom to get their work done as they see fit. Team members are encouraged to develop their own creative problem-solving strategies, but when ultimate responsibility rests with the team leader, they should be kept informed, and anything that might be legally/ethically an issue should be discussed as soon as possible. All practical problems/roadblocks/issues are to be brought up at TGRC meetings, if not before.
18. Within-group conflict resolution: Problems will come up at work between team members from time to time; it will be up to all of us to help solve these problems. Triangulation (two members of the team complaining together about a third) is not acceptable, but talking to someone else in the team in a spirit of constructive problem solving is encouraged. Interpersonal problems should be brought up between parties in question with a third person as a facilitator if needed, or raised at supervision meetings.
19. All team members strive to use work-related resources wisely. Resources such as time and funding are used to their fullest potential. For example, all team members will seek out and use external funds to cover conference travel costs (e.g., professional development funds, external travel awards) whenever possible to protect central team funds for salaries and essential operating costs (e.g., lab service fees). All purchases with central team funds falling outside of one of these two categories should be carefully considered.

C. Team management style

1. Needs of the team that affect their ability to do, and/or feelings about their work, come first to the team leader. The team leader is always accessible to team members – no matter time of day and other workload issues (e.g., busy grant writing season). Team members are encouraged to bring issues that are important forward at any time as needed.

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2. Job of the team leader is to enable team members to continue to do their jobs (e.g., by bringing in funding, ensuring salary is disbursed, providing mentorship and support for securing funds) and facilitate team members' ability to do their work (e.g., providing tools, support, connections, information) – not to micromanage.
3. If there are any problems with work product/process, the team leader will talk with the team member(s) in question about the issue as soon as it is possible. There will not be punishment/threats – instead, constructive attempts will be made to improve areas of weakness.
4. The team leader will keep all team members up to date with regard to information about the funding status of their positions at all times. Asking questions is encouraged.
5. Team members' professional development and advancement is important. The team leader will accommodate needs related to this issue as far as possible on an individual basis.
6. Multiple roles and relationships between team leader and team members (i.e., employer, mentor, friend) may lead to conflicts of interest. In these situations, communication about the interests associated with each role will be explicitly articulated.

All team members are responsible for holding each other accountable to these principles and procedures!

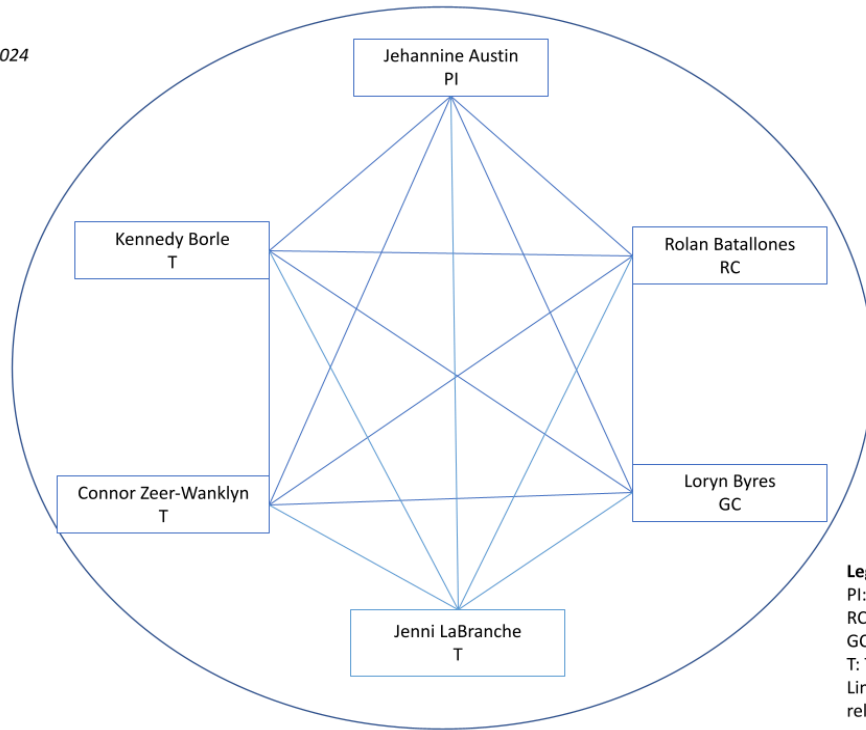
This document will be reviewed and revised at least once annually so that it accurately reflects the values and practices of the team.

Date of last revision: November 28, 2024

Appendix

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TGRC: Relational Chart
last updated: Nov. 28, 2024



Legend:
PI: Principal Investigator
RC: Research Coordinator
GC: Genetic Counselor
T: Trainee
Lines denote accountability relationships