

Swedish Infrastructure for Ecosystem Science (SITES)



Gender Equality Plan

Version 1.0

June 2023



Swedish Infrastructure for Ecosystem Science

Table of Content

1	Overview	3
1.1	SITES Gender Policy	3
1.2	Acknowledging the Gender Gap	3
2	Identifying Gender Differences	4
2.1	Gender Reporting	4
2.2	SITES II Gender Statistics (2018-2022).....	4
3	Working Towards Gender Equality.....	6
3.1	SITES Strategic Goals.....	6
3.2	Gender Milestones.....	8

1 Overview

1.1 SITES Gender Policy

SITES (Swedish Infrastructure for Ecosystem Science) is a national infrastructure for research on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. SITES is open to all researchers and offers access to the infrastructure according to the equal conditions principle, i.e. equal opportunities regardless of gender, religion or beliefs, race, sexual orientation, age, etc., in alignment with Article 21 of the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU 2007). SITES is also actively working, through outreach and distribution of information, to create equal gender distribution among users and a globally diverse user base. SITES aims to promote high-quality research through long-term field measurements and experiments and by offering expertise that attracts a gendered balanced user group, coming both from Sweden and internationally. An additional and important goal is to make data openly available to all users. The core of SITES consists of eight distributed research stations that represent all Swedish climate zones as well as a variety of different ecoregions. These SITES research stations, Abisko, Asa, Erken, Grimsö, Lönnstorp, Röbbäcksdalen, Skogaryd and Svartberget, have additional gender objectives set by their host institution/organization, i.e. the University of Gothenburg, the Polar Research Secretariat, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, and Uppsala University, which are referred to as SITES Partner Organizations hereafter. Thus this document describes SITES gender equality aims and is a complement to the personnel policies of the SITES Partner Organizations.

The SITES Gender Equality Plan, serves three primary purposes; 1) to increase the awareness of the importance of working actively with gender equality issues within SITES, 2) to avoid gender discrimination within SITES, and 3) if gender imbalance or discrimination exists, define and implement measures to address it. The Gender Equality Plan promotes SITES strategic goal of, “SITES is diverse, inclusive, equitable and promotes gender equality (Goal #20).” Gender is only one aspect of diversity, and thus, the Gender Equality Plan, should be used as a springboard to address diversity more broadly within SITES through the SITES: Vision, mission and strategic goals 2023-2028.

1.2 Acknowledging the Gender Gap

Gender bias and discrimination in academic and research communities is well documented (e.g. European Commission 2019), as structural and systematic inequalities between genders exist and create barriers that women must face (Berhe 2022; Catalan 2023; O'Dorchai 2009). The “leaky pipeline”, in which a high proportion of young academics are female but leave academia in higher numbers than their male colleagues, results in a higher proportion of men in senior positions (Pell 1996). Further, the covid-19 pandemic, which started early 2020, has had a disproportionately negative impact on female scientists, which has further exacerbated inequality and bias (Oleschuk 2020; Viglione, 2020). Additionally, gender identity isn't binary, and thus underrepresented genders, beyond male and female, should be considered in addressing the gender gap. SITES acknowledges the importance of tackling these gender biases and through this Gender Equality Plan, outlines the status and activities of SITES gender mainstreaming, i.e., integrating a gender equality perspective at all stages and levels of the research infrastructure.

2 Identifying Gender Differences

2.1 Gender Reporting

In the Annual Report submitted to VR each year by 31 March, the following categories pertaining to gender will be reported by SITES (normal text is gender reporting and key figures requested by VR and italic text is additional measures taken by SITES):

- Annual Reporting reflects the year's key figures in relation to gender equality, including comparison to the previous year and a comment on the development
 - If gender inequalities, describe future activities planned to address the issue
- A description of activities and measures taken relating to the internal gender equality work
 - Gender distribution within governing and advisory bodies (See table 1 below)
 - Gender distribution among SITES staff, stated as total and percentage of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) and divided up by position categories
 - *If information is available, report number and gender proportion of SITES internal training and all-hands meetings*
 - Describe measures taken during the year and future activities planned if inequalities
- A description of activities and measures taken relating to the external gender equality work
 - Gender distribution among users (*divided by project lead and if available, career stage, as has been done by SITES during the previous funding phase*)
 - *If information is available, report gender distribution of persons taking part in educational courses and meetings at the stations and hosted by the Partner Organizations*
 - Describe measures taken during the year and future activities planned if inequalities

2.2 SITES II Gender Statistics (2018-2022)

Gender equality is one aspect of SITES ambition to be diverse, inclusive, and equitable. During the previous five-year funding phase (2018-2022) SITES has collected gender information on project users and starting in 2022, in accordance with VR Gender Equality Plan, SITES has also reported the gender distribution among SITES employees for the first time. These key figures will continue to be collected during the current funding phase (2023-2028) and provide a context for this Gender Equality Plan in order to know where gender mainstreaming efforts should be placed.

2.2.1 Internal Gender Reporting

2.2.1.1 SITES Operational Leadership

The SITES Operational Leadership Group includes the eight SITES Station Managers and the SITES Thematic Program Leaders as well as the SITES Secretariat. Currently females are underrepresented within the SITES Operational Leadership Group (Table 1). SITES is directly involved in the hiring of the Secretariat and Thematic Program leads but the hiring of the Station Managers is with the Partner Organizations.

The SITES Steering Group and Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) make up SITES governing and advisory bodies, respectively. The Steering Group is appointed by SLU (as SITES host organization) and as the decision making body of SITES, the Steering Group appoints the SAB. To promote equal opportunities, SITES has a mandate that each gender should be represented by at least 3 members for the Steering

Group (7 total) and 2 members for the SAB (5 total), as is the situation for the current SAB and Steering Group (Table 1). Although the Steering Group has the charge and mandate to oversee and lead the activity of the infrastructure in line with the governing documents, the SITES Partner Organizations have the opportunity to provide input on strategic matters. This is an important link in ensuring gender equality is translated between SITES and the Partner Organizations, i.e., as SITES Station Managers and staff are hired and based at the Partner Organizations.

Measures to take: *SITES should maintain the balance between genders currently in the Steering Group and SAB. SITES should strive to increase female representation within the SITES Operational Leadership Group, directly within the Secretariat and TP leads, and indirectly, by ensuring SITES Gender Equality Plan is shared with the Partner Organizations.*

Table 1. Gender distribution within SITES Operational Leadership Group (Secretariat, Station Managers and Thematic Program Leads (TP Leads)) as well as the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and Steering Group in 2022.

	SAB	Steering Group	Station Managers*	TP Leads	Secretariat
Female	3	3	2	1	2
Male	2	4	6	2	3
Sum	5	7	8	3	5
% Female	60%	43%	25%	33%	40%
% Male	40%	57%	75%	67%	60%

* The Station Manager hiring process is conducted by the partner organization linked to the specific station

2.2.1.2 SITES Staff

SITES started collecting information on gender and position distribution among SITES employees in 2022, so no comparison between years can be made. Rather the statistics reported here give an indication of the current gender status of the staff network. Of the total 107 staff that worked at SITES stations in 2022, 47 were female and 60 were male, of which females accounted for 37% of the total FTE hours worked and males 63% of the total FTE hours. Females tended to hold Research Assistant and Laboratory Technician positions, whereas males tend to hold Research Engineer and Technician positions, with both genders evenly holding Field Technician positions.

Measures to take: *SITES staff currently meets the gender balance as a whole (EU aspiration: maximum differential of 40–60%) but this data only reflects one year, and thus, the trend should be monitored to ensure this balance remains. By tracking the types of positions held by each gender over time, if gaps exist, SITES can better address gender gaps in relation to position type in the future. Each SITES Station Manager should take the responsibility of monitoring the gender trends of their staff and ensure equal employment opportunities in the way SITES job ads are written and advertised. Further, the SITES Operational Leadership Group, should aim to increase the awareness of any gender gaps in SITES staff, and should include a gender brief as part of the annual reporting.*

2.2.1.3 SITES Training, Meetings and Communications

During SITES II, central training, meeting and communication efforts, carried out by the Secretariat and Thematic Programs, were reported but gender statistics were not kept.

Measures to take: *SITES should continue to track these central activities, and during SITES III, include the gender dynamics of Thematic Program training and SITES all-hands meetings if available. SITES will not track gender dynamics of its communication efforts, but rather should include a goal in the Communication Plan to strive to have gender balanced communication material and outreach activities, e.g. gender balance of persons highlighted in the newsletters and video material as well as gender balance of invited speakers to SITES all-hands meetings and training events.*

2.2.2 External Gender Reporting

2.2.2.1 SITES Users

During the SITES II funding phase, SITES has collected gender information on project users. User statistics also include the career stage and host organization, allowing for a more holistic evaluation of the diversity of SITES user base. Further, users are assigned as a project leader (i.e. the main PI of project) or other user (i.e. project participant). Career stage and project leader are both important indicators of gender dynamics over time.

During SITES II, the percentage of female project leaders was between 33-41%, with the lowest percentage in 2020 when the covid-19 pandemic is shown to have a disproportionately negative impact on female scientists. At the junior career stage, females and males make up a similar proportion, 10-17% of project leaders, whereas the percentage of senior female project leaders (19-26 %) still lags behind senior male project leaders (43-53%). Among other users, females account for 33-46% and males 54-67% of users during SITES II. In general, other users suggest a positive trend in terms of achieving 40-60 gender balance. Currently use of SITES stations is not restricted, i.e. there is space for everyone who applies to use the field station. However, in the future, if space becomes limited, SITES should consider gender balance in the application selection process.

Measures to take: *SITES should continue to take proactive steps to attract projects led by female PIs, e.g. SITES could highlight current projects led by female PIs in communication efforts and could identify targeted networks where SITES could be presented to this user group.*

2.2.2.2 SITES education and outreach

During SITES II, education and outreach efforts at the stations, hosted by the Partner Organizations, were reported but gender statistics were not kept for these activities.

Measures to take: *SITES should continue to track these station activities during SITES III, and if possible include gender statistics, in particular for higher-educational courses. If gender gaps in educational courses at the stations exists, SITES should consider how to better advertise the course to increase gender balance.*

3 Working Towards Gender Equality

3.1 SITES Strategic Goals

SITES meets the current needs of today's researchers while developing new opportunities that contribute to the understanding of long-term interactions between society and its environment. To achieve its mission, SITES strives to fulfill the strategic goals characterized by the watchwords: Quality,

Openly Available, and Sustainable. Progress towards these goals are reviewed annually through the tracking of key figures and the SITES Annual Report submitted to VR. The activities and measures to address these goals are outlined in the SITES Business Plan and Communication Plan, updated internally annually.

3.1.1 SITES Strategic Goals related to Gender

The Gender Equality Plan mainly addresses SITES strategic goal of, “SITES is diverse, inclusive, equitable and promotes gender equality (Goal #20).” However, there are other goals that directly and/or indirectly relate to gender as described below.

3.1.1.1 *SITES is diverse, inclusive, equitable and promotes gender equality (Goal #20)*

SITES ambition to be diverse, inclusive, and equitable is at the foundation of long-term sustainability in the research infrastructure; gender equality is one part of this.

Measure to take: *SITES should increase the awareness of the importance of working actively with gender equality issues, and diversity more broadly, through equality and equal treatment within the SITES network.*

3.1.1.2 *The use and awareness of SITES stations and data expands and diversifies, especially among early career scientists (Goal #13)*

Targeting and retaining early career scientist within SITES is key to ensuring gender balance (i.e. given that a high proportion of young academics are female but tend to leave academics in higher numbers than males) but also to the overall sustainability of the infrastructure in the long-term.

Measures to take: *SITES communication and outreach efforts should target early career scientists and networks. SITES should strategically consider how to retain early career researchers within SITES, especially in the context of increasing the Senior female PIs within the network and providing opportunities for females to engage in SITES beyond academia is important to consider in outreach efforts. Further, the use of data by gender is currently not recorded by SITES. Given GDPR guidelines and since data should be openly available, SITES does not require that this information is reported. However, SITES should consider implementing a voluntary data use questionnaire which allows users to provide information, e.g. gender, when downloading data from the SITES Data Portal. With this information, SITES would gain some insight on gender statistics related to data downloads.*

3.1.1.3 *SITES supports a good working environment for staff members, including opportunities for developing competencies (Goal #16)*

Structural and systematic inequalities between genders exist within the workplace, which can be addressed through supporting a good working environment and promoting competence development, regardless of gender.

Measures to take: *SITES should promote an equitable and healthy working environment and provide training and career development opportunities for all staff.*

3.1.1.4 *SITES has resilience in the capacity to accomplishment its tasks (Goal #18)*

By building resilience in the SITES network, so that staff can cover for each other if, e.g., staff go on parental leave or caregiving leave, creates a good working environment for all, while also indirectly addressing socialized gender roles (e.g., research shows that females are more likely to provide

primary caregiving roles than men).

Measures to take: *SITES should build redundancy of staff through knowledge sharing and training programs as well as documentation of work routines so that staff can be prepared to cover for each other in times of need.*

3.2 Gender Milestones

In addition to addressing gender through the SITES strategic goals, specific gender milestones are set as a way to address SITES operations in relation to the gender equality work. SITES should strive:

- **For equity in gender representation across**
 - SITES Secretariat and SITES stations at all levels, and equal representation on SITES Leadership boards (EU aspiration: maximum differential of 40–60%).
 - SITES user base, with a focus on early career and increasing senior female PIs
 - SITES central communication efforts
 - SITES Thematic Program training and central all-hands meetings
- **To annually review the Gender Equality Plan**
 - Include gender reporting in the Annual Report sent to VR
 - Discuss SITES gender reporting with the Station Managers and Steering Group, and if needed implement new actions to address any inequalities in the annual Business Plan
 - Report on gender to the SITES Partner Organizations at the annual meeting
- **Engage in gender mainstreaming activities**
 - Adhere to equality and equal treatment within SITES
 - Increase the awareness of the importance of working actively with gender equality issues within SITES

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