



Adjudicating awards through an equity, diversity & inclusion (EDI) lens

Why is this important?

Awards are one way that universities and units signal their values around excellence. Similar to processes in hiring, recruitment and performance reviews, a carefully designed awards adjudication process ensures that biases do not affect decisions and prevents failures to detect, document, or acknowledge meritorious work by faculty and staff. In particular, historically, systemically and persistently marginalized groups (HSPMs) may be penalized by poorly designed processes and may be more likely to have their excellence overlooked.

Public recognition and validation contribute to staff and faculty members' motivation and help promote a sense of belonging. They also indicate what types of actions are valued by the unit or institution. For example, if awards are given to teachers who are dedicated to inclusive and accessible teaching practices and researchers who commit to building reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities, the notion that these practices are valued is strengthened.

Encourage applications & nominations

- Remind colleagues to nominate diverse excellent candidates whose contributions may be overlooked
 - For example: IBPOC, women, first-generation university goers, assistant professors who juggle rich personal and professional commitments, persons with visible and invisible disabilities, and more
- Get more members of HSPM groups to nominate themselves and apply
- Create award calls for nominations, websites, and promotional materials that are transparent and welcoming
 - Use [inclusive language](#) that resonates with people from HSPM groups
 - Be aware of imposter syndrome; simplify academic terms; avoid using hyperbolic superlatives- "outstanding," "world-class expert," "excellent," "superior"- which can be intimidating
 - Be concrete and specific about what you are looking for
 - Use images and quotes that feature people from HSPM groups
 - Ensure each step of the adjudication process is clearly communicated
 - State explicitly that the strengths and experiences of members of HSPM groups are valued
- Provide information about the value of applying to and winning awards
- Create a low-barrier application process
 - Offer ample time (more than 2 weeks)
 - Avoid asking for a burdensome quantity of materials

Expand & clarify the notion of excellence

- Broaden the [criteria to include practices that foster inclusion](#) among the metrics for excellence
 - For example: excellence is building relationships with affinity groups, having intercultural competence, creating collaborative relationships with with Indigenous governments
 - In teaching: excellence is mentoring, creating inclusive approaches to supporting members of HSPM groups, creating changes in curriculum or pedagogy that support inclusive teaching
 - In research: excellence is valuing not only people who do research, but also valuing those who support research translation and those who do research that specifically benefits members of HSPM groups
- Make sure the website or award calls for application explicitly connect equity, diversity & inclusion work to ideas of excellence

Prioritize fairness in the process

- Design a clear and transparent adjudication process
- Manage conflict of interest and perception of bias
- Align the criteria for the awards to the types of inclusive excellence you are seeking to recognize
- Create a rubric to ensure candidates are assessed equitably
 - Ensure users are oriented to using the rubric
- Develop processes for adjudicators to keep each other accountable. For example...
 - Have a conversation about the potential influence of biases and how to keep each other accountable
 - Create an environment in which they can discuss potential biases affecting the adjudication
 - Assign someone to an equity advisor role, whose job it is to ensure that different perspectives are being considered and that the process is guided by principles of equity
- Ensure award criteria are not biased towards certain types of disciplines
 - For example, decisions based primarily on impact factor can penalize people who do more qualitative/relational research
 - Throughout the process, ask, "What are we missing in this moment?" "Are there any types of biases we aren't considering?"
- Continually, especially when the process concludes, discuss with committee members about what aspects of the process were successful and what should be changed to make future award cycles more inclusive

Build support for inclusion

- Have a diverse and welcoming adjudication committee
 - Recruit people who are committed to an inclusive, equitable process and who understand and support inclusion within the realm of the award
 - Anticipate and [address concerns about power differences](#) early in the process so they do not influence decision-making
 - Ensure multiple people are involved in making the final decision
 - Consider the types of diversity it is important to have represented (demographic, identity, discipline, position, etc.)
 - If there is little demographic diversity in your department/unit, consider inviting members from other departments, rather than overburdening the same colleagues by repeatedly asking them to join
- Provide adequate training in key topics
 - e.g. conflict of interest, integrating equity into notions of excellence, process integrity, creating rubrics, managing power dynamics