



University of  
Massachusetts  
Amherst

## Centering Equity in Limited Submissions

Item Type	research_collaboration;article
Authors	Clark, Dessie
Citation	D. Clark. 2023. Centering Equity in Limited Submissions. University of Massachusetts ADVANCE Program.
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.7275/mgfp-7h42">https://doi.org/10.7275/mgfp-7h42</a>
Download date	2026-04-16 07:56:13
Item License	<a href="http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/">http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/</a>
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/1961">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/1961</a>

# Centering Equity in Limited Submissions

## WHAT ARE LIMITED SUBMISSIONS?

Limited submissions are funding opportunities in which the funder has limited the number of applications from an organization.<sup>1</sup> These opportunities may be from federal or state sponsors, corporations, or foundations.<sup>2</sup>

## CENTERING EQUITY

Limited submission processes at the applicant organization should be created with an eye toward equity. This begins with casting a broad net both to identify and encourage applications to the limited submission process and to mentor those who choose to apply. In the case where collaborative proposals are sought, the organization should facilitate ideation and coordination of collaborative groups, with an emphasis on creating diverse and inclusive teams. The opportunities should be advertised well in advance, especially for yearly or cyclical calls, leaving ample time for scholars to join or develop new networks or reach out to their network to continue key collaborations. In most cases, the sponsor will determine eligibility for the limited submission (who can be a PI, co-PI and under what conditions—e.g., age, rank, time from terminal degree or appointment at the organization). Yet not all eligible scholars will be aware of the call; thus, the organization should proactively encourage applications across the relevant fields. Once scholars choose to begin the limited submission process, it is equally important to ensure that the process is transparent. When information is transparent, more people will find it accessible. For example, all timelines should be clearly marked, and a rubric that provides information about how and when proposals are to be evaluated should be made available. Additionally, to better support scholars, administrators should consider providing templates for standard forms such as Letters of Intent (LOIs), as feasible.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR LIMITED SUBMISSIONS

Most centrally, limited submission processes should emphasize principles of equity and inclusion. Organizations should encourage diverse and equitable teams to apply for opportunities and use rubrics with standard criteria for judging applications. These criteria should recognize inclusive practices. To gauge how well diversity and equity goals are being met, the organization should track the demographics of those who apply for these opportunities, those who are advanced to the submission stage, and the outcomes of the submissions, including

UMassAmherst | ADVANCE Program



information by race, gender, field, and career stage. Another overarching consideration for managing limited submissions is the appropriate use of technology. For example, organizations should use websites and integrated software to manage and communicate the process. Ideally, a central online location for submission information can be easily found in a search of the organization's websites. These platforms should include critical information such as due dates, submission procedures, process timeline, and frequently asked questions.

## CRITICAL COMPONENTS FOR ADMINISTRATORS & STAFF<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Managing Workflow

- Map out all deadlines ahead of time, working backward from the sponsor's proposal submission deadline.
- Use project management tools to make it easier to see overlapping deadlines, task assignments, and track progress on a variety of checklists.

### 2. Finding Limited Submission Opportunities

- Sign up for funding agency, philanthropic membership organization, and peer institutional e-mail newsletters. Curate opportunities and post on an easy-to-find [website](#).
- Create and communicate a standardized process for faculty to know about opportunities. For example, if the opportunity is through NSF, faculty in all NSF-supported fields should be notified.
- Set recurring reminders in organizational calendar or project management tool for annual or invitation-only opportunities.

### 3. Announcing and Sharing Opportunities

- Send out an email to individuals or a listserv with a direct link to the opportunity. Listservs should be comprehensive and up to date.

<sup>1</sup> <https://research.arizona.edu/development/limited-submissions>

<sup>2</sup> <https://research.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Syracuse-University-Limited-Submission-Process-August-2020.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.inforeadycorp.com/post/2019/03/27/limited-submissions-made-easy>

# Centering Equity in Limited Submissions

- Include the hyperlinked opportunity on websites and newsletters.
- Describe the eligibility and review criteria and identify organizational support for successful applicants.
- Provide information on and facilitate networking with previous campus applicants and awardees.
- Track and report previous applicant numbers and success rates.
- Emphasize the importance of diverse, inclusive, and equitable teams as criteria for the opportunity.

## 4. Designing the Limited Submission Application Process

- Requirements: Identify restrictions of the sponsoring organization on page limits, file types, and formatting to make the process easier for the eventual selected submission team/individual.
- Add space for applicants to list reviewers who might be included or should be recused from their applications.

## 5. Establish administrative support for selected applicants

- Identify staff support available for multi-PI, cross-discipline, cross-organization unit proposals.
- Provide clear guidelines and timelines for obtaining institutional commitments, including matching funds.

## 6. Locating Reviewers

- Try to recruit a large pool of reviewers from a variety of areas. This may include asking faculty on your campus what would make them more likely to agree to review. Consider organizing training on reviewing that involves members of the organization with experience reviewing for external funding entities.
- Create an online reviewer sign up form that can be linked on websites and weekly newsletters.
- Manage conflicts of interest upfront by crosschecking department affiliations.
- If a reviewer from your pool is also an applicant or consultant on another application, do not assign them to review any applications.

## 7. Establish an equitable, clear, and transparent review process

- Reviewers should discuss and agree upon review criteria before commencing their reviews.
- Consider using a framing statement prior to discussion of applications.
- Best practices for [equitable review](#):
  - Set up an initial conversation among the review panel about what each review criterion means.
  - Before reviewing applications, also discuss common biases by gender, race/ethnicity, and nationality that come up in review and structural inequities that contribute to differences that may appear in application materials (e.g., CVs).
  - Evaluate each nominee on the same set of criteria.
  - Give yourself enough time to review.
  - Repeated and intentional efforts lead to change.

## 8. Notifications and Communication

- Customize notification messages to applicants to include specific feedback and next steps in the limited submissions process.

## 9. Engaging in Project Evaluation

- Project management tools should include reports to share with stakeholders: keep track of who applies, who doesn't, and whether submitted proposals are successful by race, gender, field, and career stage. Identify any discrepancies, and target resources aimed at addressing inequalities in future limited submissions.
- Report out to organization, including Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs, and Heads. Ensure that the key stakeholders understand where there needs to be greater support for building inclusive and equitable research teams.

---

Suggested Citation: D. Clark. 2023. Centering Equity in Limited Submissions. University of Massachusetts ADVANCE Program.

---

ADVANCE is funded by the National Science Foundation. For more information on ADVANCE go to <https://www.umass.edu/advance/>.