Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Working Group Survey Results: *Strategies to Increase Diversity*
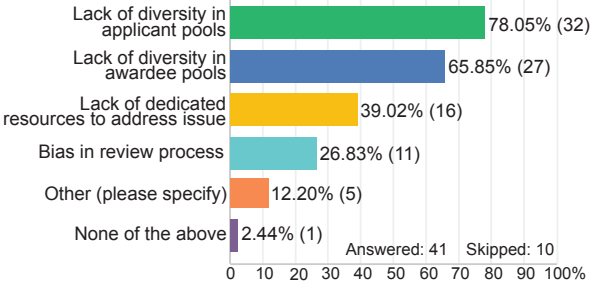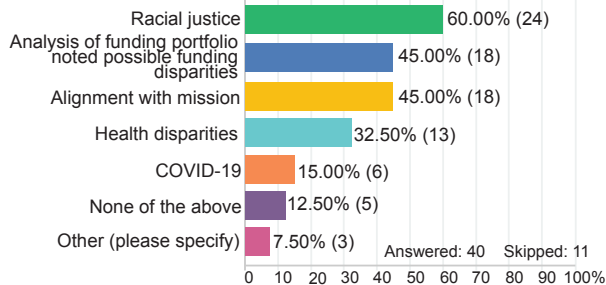
Health Research Alliance

Goal: In May of 2021 the HRA DEI working group surveyed members about DEI policies and practices at their organizations, in order to provide learning opportunities, develop resources, and identify tools to amplify member efforts to advance DEI in grant programs and processes. The information below summarizes results regarding strategies to increase diversity in applicant and awardee pools, from a total of 50 respondents from 46 independent HRA member organizations.   Additional resources: Diversity program inventory

Major motivations for change include a *lack of diverse applicants and awardees*, as well as the racial justice movement.

When thinking about demographic representation in your competitions, what gaps has your organization identified in the grant selection process? (select all that apply)

- Lack of diversity in applicant pools — 78.05% (32)
- Lack of diversity in awardee pools — 65.85% (27)
- Lack of dedicated resources to address issue — 39.02% (16)
- Bias in review process — 26.83% (11)
- Other (please specify) — 12.20% (5)
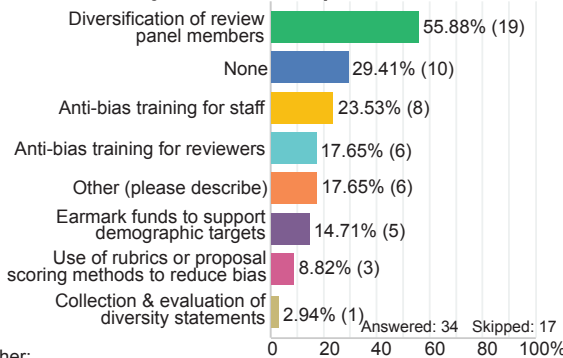- None of the above — 2.44% (1)

Answered: 41   Skipped: 10

If you are seeking or have sought to make changes to your selection process to increase diversity, what motivated this change? (check all that apply)

- Racial justice — 60.00% (24)
- Analysis of funding portfolio noted possible funding disparities — 45.00% (18)
- Alignment with mission — 45.00% (18)
- Health disparities — 32.50% (13)
- COVID-19 — 15.00% (6)
- None of the above — 12.50% (5)
- Other (please specify) — 7.50% (3)

Answered: 40   Skipped: 11

Strategies to increase diversity in grant awardees is focused on increasing diversity of *review panel members*.

What strategies, if any, has your organization used to increase diversity in the awardee pool?

- Diversification of review panel members — 55.88% (19)
- None — 29.41% (10)
- Anti-bias training for staff — 23.53% (8)
- Anti-bias training for reviewers — 17.65% (6)
- Other (please describe) — 17.65% (6)
- Earmark funds to support demographic targets — 14.71% (5)
- Use of rubrics or proposal scoring methods to reduce bias — 8.82% (3)
- Collection & evaluation of diversity statements — 2.94% (1)

Answered: 34   Skipped: 17

Other:
- Expanding eligibility requirements to allow for the need to meet family responsibilities, personal emergencies, etc.
- Reviewers alerted to the possible presence of resilience statement in biographical sketch and instructed them to contextualize achievements using that information if available.
- Considered during programmatic review and award matching.
- Adding anti-bias training and incorporating rubrics into our review

A variety of strategies to improve diversity in award applicant pools were described, but few had received feedback and success is to be determined. Considerations regarding international applicant participation was also limited.

1) Has your organization tried any strategies to increase diversity in award applicant pools? If so, briefly list.

No 1.5% (17)
Yes 58.6% (24)
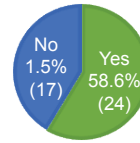
Main strategies:
- Direct outreach to institutions/organizations
- Direct outreach to individuals
- RFP/Application materials
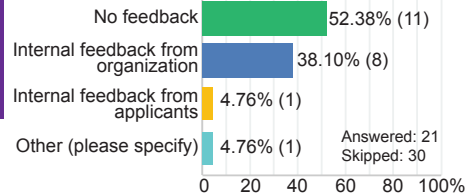- Review Process

Examples:
Direct outreach: Email to minority serving listservs, tweeting to minority serving social media accounts, direct outreach to individuals and requesting dissemination of program info, encouraging nominations of diverse individuals via email to institutions or scientific advisory boards, informational webinars.

Changes to RFAs: Include DEI statement in RFA, targeted RFA's and special opportunities for diverse applicants, optional resiliency statement in biographical sketch, added questions about DEI institutional environment & mentor-ship, asks what steps will be taken to ensure research plan will not inadvertently exacerbate inequalities, DEI taskforce to review RFAs.

Changes to review process: Diverse reviewer recruitment, identification of a competitive cutoff and careful examination of race/ethnicity at transition points.

In thinking about strategies to encourage resubmission or continued participation in grant competitions by researchers from underrepresented groups, my organization: (select all that apply)

- Provide feedback in the form of review comments — 51.34% (19)
- None of the above — 37.84% (14)
- Revise language in review comments so feedback is helpful, professional, and encouraging — 24.32% (9)
- Other (please specify) — 13.51% (5)
- Refer unsuccessful applicants to resources to improve future submissions — 2.70% (1)

Answered: 37   Skipped: 14

2) Did you receive feedback about the strategies from either applicants or interally at your organization? (Check all that apply)

- No feedback — 52.38% (11)
- Internal feedback from organization — 38.10% (8)
- Internal feedback from applicants — 4.76% (1)
- Other (please specify) — 4.76% (1)

Answered: 21   Skipped: 30

3) Which strategies were successful or unsuccessful at increasing diversity in the applicant pool? How was effectiveness assessed?

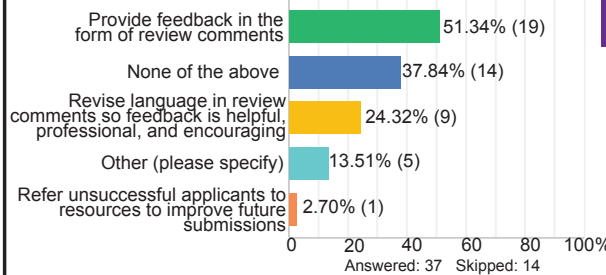The majority of responses indicated that it is too soon to tell. Some successes were seen with targeted RFAs.

4) Are there any particular considerations you had in applying strategies given international applicant participation in your competitions?

No (7)   No response (31/43)

Other:
- Allow grantees to conduct research remotely if unable to travel to the US Institution where mentor is located.
- Yes, international has been a big consideration, especially applicants from low and middle-income countries.
- Some of the DEI categories are different in other parts of the world.
- Do not accept international applicants.

Strategies to encourage resubmission include: providing feedback, revising unhelpful review comments, and offering grant writing courses.
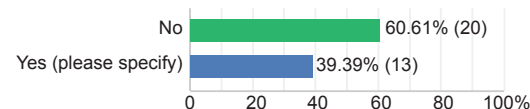
Other:
- Occasional, minor revisions to comments to remove unhelpful comments or soften negative comments to make more constructive.
- Offering a grant writing course
- Provide feedback to all applicants, not specifically to encourage URM
- We provide summary statements for some programs

Does your organization have any strategies for diversifying governance, advisory, and other external (volunteer or paid) leadership roles? If yes, what has been done? For example, does your organization consider ethnic, gender, and/or racial diversity when selecting members of any of its advisory boards or committees (scientific, editorial, or other)?

(17/24) Respondents said their organization formally or informally considers race, ethnicity and/or gender in selecting new members of committees or boards. Responses indicated more progress with gender diversity.

(7/24) Respondents said their organization is in discussion or in the process of working on this. Three organizations have created DEI committees or are working with an outside company to develop strategies to address this.

Does your organization have any strategies/efforts to support or increase visibility for awardees from underrepresented minorities? For example, does your organization promote underrepresented minorities for volunteer roles, speaking roles, publication activities, or elevate them through social media?

- No — 60.61% (20)
- Yes (please specify) — 39.39% (13)

Many respondents indicated a concerted effort to *elevate or highlight awardees from all backgrounds* on social media or for speaking opportunities. Other responses include increasing available language types for website and actiivities, as well as highlighting minoriies while being mindful of the "minority tax".

Does your organization do any of the following in grant or fellowship programs: Expect mentor training that is culturally competent, evaluate the PI/mentor's commitment to DEI, evaluate the institutional committment to DEI, evaluate how the mentor and mentee are fostering a diverse and inclusive environment or provide grants that evaluate inclusivity at the faculty/independent investigator level?

64% responded "None of the Above"