

2023 DEI Ambassador Program – Call for Proposals

Do you have a great idea to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within INFORMS? INFORMS is pleased to announce the Diversity and Inclusion Ambassadors initiative program!

- **Submit a proposal for a small grant (up to \$2500) to support a diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) initiative to benefit the INFORMS community**
- **Any INFORMS member or staff can apply**
- **Proposals are due by November 15, 2022**
- **Projects run during 2023**
- **Up to 15 projects will be funded**
- **See below for more details!**

Do you have a great idea to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within INFORMS? The INFORMS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Ambassadors Program will bring together groups of academic and practitioner members, graduate and undergraduate students, post-docs, and staff who will individually and/or collectively work on initiatives to foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive INFORMS community. The program is intended to provide a platform for our members to engage in DEI initiatives in a variety of areas including workplace practices, teaching, and research, and leverage our capacities as individuals (practitioners, researchers, educators, students, and staff) to contribute to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion among the broader INFORMS community.

Up to 15 projects will be funded.

Who Should Apply for the DEI Ambassadors Program?

- All INFORMS members and staff are encouraged to apply. Former involvement with DEI programs/activities is a plus, but not required.
- Applicants should have an individual (or small 2-4 person team) proposal for a project that will contribute to or create the capacity to contribute to furthering DEI within an INFORMS community or for the entire membership.
- Applicants will be expected to remain engaged with the entire group of Ambassadors on a sustained basis. While the ambassadorship will only last formally for one year, the goal is to establish long-term relationships among participants, and between participants and existing (and potential future) INFORMS initiatives for long-term impact.

To push our thinking in new directions, INFORMS is seeking both Ambassadors who have been immersed in this topic as well as those interested in connecting to it from different fields and perspectives.

Awardees from previous years are eligible to apply again, either with a new proposed project or with a significant extension to their previous project.

How to Apply

Interested participants should submit an application via INFORMS Awards Portal. The application includes:

- A brief 1-2 page statement uploaded as a PDF articulating the applicant's (or the team's) interest in becoming a DEI Ambassador(s), including:
 - the objectives for their proposal,
 - what they believe they can contribute to the Ambassadors program,
 - how the proposed project/activities will have an impact,
 - how this impact can be measured based on relevant metrics (short, medium, and long term),
 - how the applicant's prior experiences will help in the proposed effort,
 - articulation of what INFORMS staff support might be required to ensure the success of the project,
 - a proposed budget, requesting up to \$2500 (or \$2500 per person for teams), with a description of anticipated usage of the funds.
- The applicant's CV or resume uploaded as a PDF. (In the case of a small team, the CVs or resumes of all team members should be compiled into a single PDF file and uploaded.)
- Postdoctoral fellow and graduate student applicants should also include a letter of recommendation from their faculty advisor. Undergraduate students should include a letter of recommendation from a faculty member in their unit or their school chair.
- Participants may explore the possibility of matching funds from their organizations or other external sources to support their activities, and possibly pilot some of the proposed initiatives within their own organization before widespread adoption within INFORMS. If such a commitment is made by a participant's employer, a letter of commitment should be included in the application.

If an applicant or a group of applicants have plans to solicit other external funding to support their proposed activity, they are encouraged to discuss this in their proposal.

Applications will be reviewed by a committee and the selected Ambassadors will be announced in January.

Funding

Each Ambassador will receive up to \$2,500 in discretionary funding, to be spent on initiative-related activities. Each Ambassador will submit a budget for his/her proposed activity. (Some proposals may not request any funding, and others may request less than the maximum, depending on the content of the proposal.) The funds are to be used as the participants see fit following INFORMS rules and regulations and will be approved by INFORMS. For example, a participant/group may support an hourly student to assist with data analysis, support the travel of a world-renowned expert on DEI topics to give a plenary or keynote presentation at the INFORMS annual meeting or the Business Analytics Conference, pay for designing/printing pamphlets or preparing a webinar for increasing awareness of DEI within INFORMS, etc. The funding will be disbursed as reimbursement of approved expenses incurred upon submission of receipts. Ambassadors should submit their receipts to INFORMS staff. All expenses must be incurred by the end of the calendar year and submitted for reimbursement by February 1 of the following year.

Commitments

Ambassadors will be appointed for a term ending December 31st. Participation in the program requires a commitment to:

- Complete their proposed initiative/project that will raise the profile of this theme within INFORMS or make an INFORMS-wide contribution.
- Attend a virtual kick-off meeting in January to meet the cohort of current Ambassadors and learn about each other's projects.
- Attend quarterly (or more frequent, if needed) conference call meetings for progress updates and sharing (a kick-off meeting and at least three additional meetings through the end of the program).
- Prepare a one-page executive summary: An initial draft due June 30th; final draft due December 20th.
- Contribute a post to the DEI blog.
- The executive summary should discuss the project, new learning, the impact of the activities (short, medium, long term). Some participants may be invited to share an edited/extended version to be published in *OR/MS Today*, *Analytics*, and/or *OR/MS Tomorrow*. To further disseminate the outcomes, some participants may also be invited to participate in webinars and other channels.
- Share their results with the INFORMS community in a specially designated session (or a series of sessions or events) at the Annual Meeting.

For Ambassadors whose projects show significant potential and strong progress but cannot be concluded in one year, a second term can be considered, if they submit an application again the following year.

Potential individual/group projects may include (but are not limited to):

- Collecting and sharing best practices for increasing diversity or enhancing inclusion of a given group.
- Reviewing existing processes and their outcomes for potential (possibly unintentional) biases against or barriers to individuals within a group and identifying ways to make processes more equitable.
- Creating guidelines for DEI training for members or staff that can be used across multiple organizations, including topics such as bystander intervention and implicit bias.
- Collecting (in collaboration with INFORMS staff) and analyzing data to better understand DEI metrics across various INFORMS groups activities, such as subdivisions, journals, award committees, conferences (participants, keynote speakers, plenary speakers, etc.), etc.
- Starting a new INFORMS award focusing on DEI contributions.
- Framing a research agenda that is focused on DEI-inspired themes, especially in areas that rely heavily on human studies, but have perhaps consistently neglected to pay attention to different physical, biological, and/or psychological/behavioral aspects of specific minority groups.
- Developing non-traditional evaluation metrics for DEI within our community and identifying potential obstacles toward promoting diversity and inclusion.
- Targeting K-12 (kindergarten thru 12th grade in the United States, or equivalent primary and secondary education levels in other countries) outreach to promote analytics and operations research, engage diverse populations with INFORMS early on, and addressing the “pipeline” coming into the profession.
- Establishing a training program on DEI: for example, a series of short videos on several of the topics above (these could be made available free of charge to INFORMS members and for a fee to other individuals or organizations for group access).
- Collecting and analyzing data to better understand the relationship between DEI metrics and funding (government, company, etc.)
- Studying the experiences and challenges of international members and their attitudes towards DEI.
- Exploring the challenges and opportunities that arise from intersectionality, wherein someone belongs to more than one marginalized group, e.g., forging allyships between different marginalized groups.
- Developing a “How can I help?” guide that speaks personally to members in different positions/roles (educator/teacher, advisor, supervisor, manager, student, etc.) within INFORMS

by recommending specific actionable ways to contribute to DEI that span the spectrum of the amount of effort and time-commitment required.

- Developing partnerships with other professional societies to jointly sponsor a DEI activity.
- Developing partnerships with organizations to better elevate DEI awareness among O.R./Analytics professionals within an organization.
- Developing mentorship programs for certain subgroups.
- Organizing keynote panel discussions at conferences inviting leaders from companies, governments, and universities (e.g., deans and school chairs) to discuss their DEI initiatives and best practices
- Setting up online community forums for LGBTQ+, female, under-represented minorities so that members can ask and discuss issues with mentors within the same community.
- Conducting a survey about maternity/family leave policies at different universities.
- Creating a guide/video training for all organizations using the INFORMS Career Center reminding interviewers of the types of questions they cannot ask job applications (e.g., marriage, disability, children status) and suggesting appropriate ways to communicate the availability of disability/marriage/child/etc. services.

These are just a few potential examples, and the list would expand based on the proposals received, as well as the themes or focus areas that may be identified as high priority for INFORMS in a given year, to ensure alignment with INFORMS activities and goals.

Evaluation Process

All applications will be evaluated by a Program Committee, who will consider individual merits of each application. The selection criteria are:

- Whether the project is well defined;
- Whether the project appears doable within the proposed timeframe and budget;
- The project's potential for DEI impact in the INFORMS community;
- The project's potential for DEI impact in the broader OR/MS profession;
- How well the success of the project can be objectively assessed in the near or long term;
- How well the scope of the project complements or deepens the topics to be addressed by the cohort of Ambassadors each year, and in consecutive years.