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RE: Comments on Development of a Prize Competition for Institutional Excellence in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) is an international nonprofit scientific and educational organization that represents more than 10,000 students, researchers, educators and industry professionals. The ASBMB strongly advocates for strengthening the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce, supporting sustainable funding for the American research enterprise, and ensuring diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in STEM.

Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) are essential to the STEM enterprise as they are crucial for innovation to grow and persist. Diverse groups have been shown to [outperform groups that are homogenous](#) and to give the private sector a [competitive advantage](#). To guarantee that the government-funded biomedical workforce remains competitive, the National Institutes of Health must invest more in DEIA by creating more training programs and institutional funding opportunities, particularly for [under-resourced institutions](#).

On April 29, the NIH released a [request for information](#) inviting comments on the “Development of a Prize Competition for Institutional Excellence in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.” The request seeks input on six perspectives: (1) structure of the prize competition, (2) outreach, (3) judging criteria, (4) timing, (5) dissemination of winning submissions and (6) reasons for potential barriers in applying.

The ASBMB has recommendations relating to each perspective. Many of our members have experience with DEIA efforts at their institutions, and we have compiled these recommendations based on their experiences as well as the [NIH’s existing Prize for Enhancing Faculty Gender Diversity in Biomedical and Behavioral Science](#). Our recommendations are aimed at rewarding institutions and investigators who have displayed excellence in long-term DEIA efforts that have resulted in structural change. They are described below:

1. Structure of the prize competition

The competition should be held every three years and award monetary prizes to institutions, departments or programs that have displayed excellence in DEIA. A pool of \$750,000 should be distributed among 10 winners with a percentage of the prize distributed to the institution (75%)

and a percentage distributed to the program lead (25%). To prevent the same institutions from winning each cycle, winners should be eligible to enter the competition only every other cycle. To improve and sustain long-term DEIA efforts, the ASBMB strongly recommends that the NIH ensure that this prize goes to low-resourced institutions that demonstrate financial need as these institutions [predominately serve historically marginalized groups](#). Judges should evaluate entries from two groups: research-intensive institutions and [low- or limited-resourced institutions](#).

Research-intensive institutions should be awarded \$50,000 each, while low- or limited-resourced institutions should be awarded \$100,000 each. Furthermore, entries from research-intensive institutions should be judged against one another, and entries from low- or limited-resourced institutions should be judged against one another.

The NIH should use the following eligibility criteria:

Low- or limited-resourced institutions are entities that engage in biomedical or behavioral research and that fall into one of the two categories listed below:

Undergraduate-focused institutions

- The entity must be an accredited public or nonprofit private institution that grants baccalaureate degrees in biomedical sciences.
- At the time of prize competition submission, all the non-health professional components of the entity together have not received support from the NIH totaling more than \$6 million per year (in both direct and indirect costs) in four of the past seven fiscal years.

Undergraduate institutions with associated health professional schools and graduate programs

- The entity must be an accredited public or nonprofit private institution that grants baccalaureate and advanced degrees in health professions or advanced degrees in biomedical and behavioral sciences.
- At the time of the prize competition submission, the entity must not have received support from the NIH totaling more than \$6 million per year (in both direct and indirect costs) in four of the past seven fiscal years.

2. Outreach

Outreach to institutions should be conducted using the web and social media, partner organizations' and DEIA offices' communications channels, and platforms employed previously in successful prize competitions. NIH should advertise the competition on the website of the office of the NIH Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity (COSWD) and multiple social-networking platforms, including Twitter and LinkedIn. In addition, NIH should request that scientific societies publicize the competition to their constituents in their newsletters and at their in-person and virtual events. NIH should request that DEIA offices at institutions and DEIA professional societies also spread the word. To make certain that low- or limited-resourced institutions are aware of the competition, NIH should coordinate with the offices of sponsored research at them.

3. Judging criteria

Judging criteria should be modeled after those for the [Prize for Enhancing Faculty Gender Diversity in Biomedical and Behavioral Science](#). Below is recommended language for impact, metrics, sustainability, application ability and lessons learned:

(40%) Impact: A single approach (i.e. program, initiative and project) or combination of approaches should be evaluated based on the magnitude and extent of impact of overall DEIA at an institution, program and/or department. Approaches should include intersecting identities,

such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age and religion. Impact can include qualitative elements such as improvement of climate and inclusiveness of the environment. Impact can include quantitative improvements such as increased rates of historically underrepresented faculty recruitment, increased retention of historically underrepresented trainees, and increased pay of historically underrepresented faculty.

(25%) Metrics: The applications must include the following metrics and data of (a), (b) and (f); (c), (d) and (e) should be used by judges to evaluate applications.

- a. **Pre-implementation:** Aggregated demographics for the institution, school, department or program to which the approaches or interventions apply, at the pre-implementation stage.
- b. **Post-implementation:** Aggregated demographics for the institution, school, department or program to which the approaches or interventions apply, at post-implementation or time of application.
- c. Data should be evaluated for quality and strength, as well as analysis of specific conclusions.
- d. Data should be evaluated on whether they support multiple elements of impact, as described in the *Impact* criterion above.
- e. Data analysis and data trends should be evaluated on its ability to reveal both gaps and improvements in diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion.
- f. Evidence of successfully recruiting and retaining diverse talent across the board from faculty to trainees.

(15%) Sustainability: The extent to which effective efforts to enhance DEIA at an institution can be regularly monitored and sustained.

(10%) Applicability: The potential for approaches to be implemented in other departments within the same institution or at similar institutions. The ease with which a program could be generalizable and adapted for different situations.

(10%) Lessons learned: The submission identifies lessons learned during implementation and clearly explains what challenges were faced and how they were addressed. Honest comments about roadblocks encountered are valuable.

4. Timing

The application should be open for eight months, and the winners should be announced four months from the submission deadline.

5. Dissemination of winning submissions

Prize winners should be announced on the [COSWD](#) website and [NIH extramural diversity website](#). The announcements should highlight winning institutions, resources developed, a blog post on updates and a toolkit of resources by the winners. Moreover, a forum (similar to the one for [Effective Approaches to Fostering Faculty Gender Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)) should be held at the three-year mark to share innovations, initiatives and/or programs that were enhanced or developed as a result of the prize. The NIH should provide funds in addition to the price award for a representative from each awardee institution to attend a national conference of their choosing to disseminate their successful DEAI efforts. NIH should also ask scientific societies to disseminate winning submissions.

6. Reasons for and potential barriers in applying

Low- or limited-resourced institutions may face administrative burdens. It's also important to recognize that individuals who are spearheading DEAI efforts are often overburdened with duties already and any way the NIH can mitigate the burden of this award would be helpful.