

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Guide for PLOS Editorial Board Members

As an Editorial Board Member and ambassador for PLOS, you uphold our [Code of Conduct for Editorial Board Members](#), including a commitment to [Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion](#) (DEI).

Truly Open Science requires direct action to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion. This guide includes actions that you can take as a PLOS Editorial Board member.

Contents

[Actions to promote DEI as a PLOS Editorial Board member](#)

- [1. Invite diverse reviewers to evaluate manuscripts.](#)
- [2. Refer diverse candidates to join the Editorial Board.](#)
- [3. Be aware of potential sources of bias when evaluating manuscripts and report any inappropriate language or behaviors to the journal office.](#)

[References](#)

Actions to promote DEI as a PLOS Editorial Board member

1. Invite diverse reviewers to evaluate manuscripts.

How

Within and beyond your immediate network, reach out to early-career researchers, researchers and experts in the fields from diverse backgrounds (for example those who disclose themselves as women or [non-binary](#), researchers from lower- and middle-income countries) to review manuscripts.

Why

The peer review process is an essential part of maintaining scientific integrity in publishing. Research has shown that compared to manuscript submissions and research output, women [\[1\]](#) and researchers from regions with emerging economies [\[2\]](#) are generally less represented as reviewers.

Editors and reviewers are important promoters of scientific communication and increasing the diversity of these roles may improve equity in science [3]. To incorporate diverse perspectives into the peer-review process, we encourage you to invite reviewers from diverse backgrounds.

2. Refer diverse candidates to join the Editorial Board.

How

Take note of the diversity of researchers at conferences or networking events and [refer](#) qualified researchers from different backgrounds (geographical region, gender, career stage, etc.) to join the PLOS Editorial Boards.

Why

There are numerous benefits to establishing a diverse editorial board. Research by Goyanes [4] analyzed 84 journals and showed “that diverse editorial boards are more likely to publish more diverse research articles” in regards to both research areas and authorship. Advocating for diverse editorial boards in turn not only enriches the depth of journal content, but also helps establish equitable development of knowledge [3]. Diverse editorial boards come from different backgrounds and, through having this wide range of experiences and cultures, help to foster innovation and improve collaborative community learning [3]. These boards provide a necessary shift in perspective, minimize confirmation bias and lead to more inclusive research outputs [5].

3. Be aware of potential sources of bias when evaluating manuscripts and report any inappropriate language or behaviors to the journal office.

How

Take the time to learn more about potential sources of bias in peer review, and expand your network to include diverse people. If you notice [any biases](#) that do not comply with [PLOS policy](#) during your manuscript evaluation, [contact us](#).

Why

Research has shown that biases exist in peer review [6]. For example, implicit biases can potentially result in fewer women getting invited as reviewers [7]; underrepresentation of women on journals’ editorial boards [8]; and increased rejection of papers authored by non-native English speakers for English proficiency [9].

The goal of the guide is to provide actionable items for all PLOS editorial board members to participate in diversifying the peer review process. While a good starting point, we acknowledge that there may be actions that both editorial board members and the journals can take beyond what are listed here. As an example, please see [this editorial](#) to learn more about the work and progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion made by our colleagues at PLOS Global Public Health as well as additional suggestions.

References

1. Squazzoni F, Bravo G, Farjam M, Marusic A, Mehmani B, Willis M, et al. Peer review and gender bias: A study on 145 scholarly journals. *Science Advances*. 2021 Jan;7(2):eabd0299.
2. Global State of peer review report [Internet]. Clarivate. Available from: <https://clarivate.com/lp/global-state-of-peer-review-report/>
3. Diversifying editorial boards [Internet]. COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics. 2021 [cited 2023 Dec 20]. Available from: <https://publicationethics.org/news/diversifying-editorial-boards>
4. Goyanes M, Demeter M. How the Geographic Diversity of Editorial Boards Affects What Is Published in JCR-Ranked Communication Journals. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. 2020 Feb 14;97(4):1123–48.
5. The case for (more) diversity in peer review [Internet]. www.elsevier.com. [cited 2023 Dec 20]. Available from: <https://www.elsevier.com/connect/the-case-for-more-diversity-in-peer-review#:~:text=For%20science%20and%20society%20more>
6. Helmer M, Schottdorf M, Neef A, Battaglia D. Gender bias in scholarly peer review. *eLife* [Internet]. 2017 Mar 21 [cited 2019 Dec 10];6.
7. Lerback J, Hanson B. Journals invite too few women to referee. *Nature*. 2017 Jan;541(7638):455–7.
8. Liu F, Holme P, Chiesa M, AlShebli B, Rahwan T. Gender inequality and self-publication are common among academic editors. *Nature Human Behaviour*. 2023 Jan 16;
9. Amano T, Ramírez-Castañeda V, Berdejo-Espinola V, Borokini I, Chowdhury S, Golivets M, et al. The manifold costs of being a non-native English speaker in science. *PLOS Biology* [Internet]. 2023 Jul 18;21(7):e3002184–4.



If you have any feedback on the guide, would like to share your perspectives from your community and region that we can consider in journal development or need help with your editorial role, please contact edboardsupport@plos.org.