Managing the Peer Review Process:

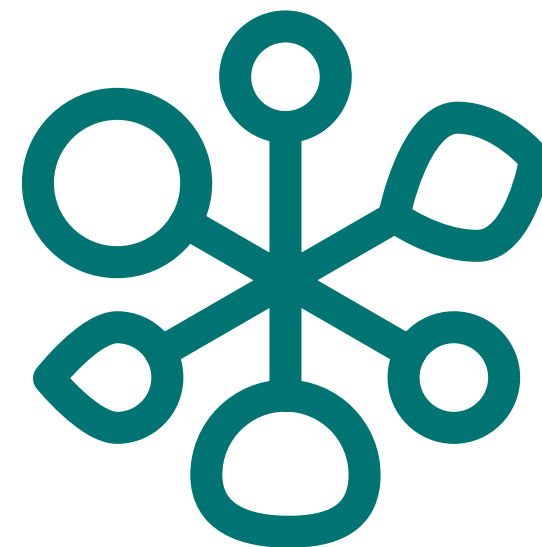## Addressing Diversity & Inclusion in Reviewer Recruitment

Introduction

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is one of our highest strategic priorities at Springer Nature. Our mission is to open doors to discovery, enabling millions of researchers, educators, clinicians and other professionals to access, trust and make sense of the latest insights so together we can improve and enrich lives and help to protect our planet for future generations. Working to improve DEI is essential to achieving this mission.

We commit to championing DEI in the communities we serve, using our networks and brands. We will work to eliminate barriers to creating, discovering and using knowledge, and supporting equitable outcomes in learning and advancing scholarship – from young learners to PhD-level and beyond.

As an organisation we believe that diversity is a strength, that inclusion requires commitment and that representation matters. These values are increasingly important for the credibility, trust and reputation of our journals. Our journals serve a diverse and global community and it is vital that this diversity is represented in both peer reviewers and in the Editorial Boards who make decisions on c ontent to be published. These values are set out in our code of conduct for journals and peer review policy.

As Editors, you play a key role in ensuring that your journal is inclusive, welcoming and representative of your research community. To help support this, we have developed best practice recommendations for the recruitment of peer reviewers. We strongly encourage you to use this framework to ensure hat values of diversity, equity and inclusion are taken into consideration for your journal.

Recruitment of Peer Reviewers

Consider appropriate representation

It can be hard to recruit reviewers, and efforts to balance the reviewer pool are welcome and appreciated. Actively considering a wider and more diverse reviewer pool improves our chances of finding appropriate and willing reviewers. Diverse reviewer pools also benefit the journal by increasing the visibility of the journals and by building relationships with new groups of researchers.

The topic of a manuscript should be considered when identifying appropriate peer reviewers. However, we strive for diverse demographic representation of peer reviewers, and Editors are strongly encouraged to consider geographical regions, gender identities, racial/ethnic groups, and other groups when inviting peer reviewers.

It is also important to ensure that the journal is able to encourage early career researchers (ECRs) to participate in the peer review process. In this way Editors can support diversity and inclusion in their journal by supporting junior researchers by inviting them to review (or co-review with a more experienced colleague) and by directing them to existing resources that Springer Nature provides to support reviewers (see also here). Some societies and organisations have created guides on this that can be helpful. We have links to some examples on the Resources slide at the end of this presentation.

Tips & Examples

Examples of appropriate representation

If a manuscript is e.g. on 'gender representation', it is definitely the right course of action to pick **reviewers who identify as members of a group most directly affected by the research,** given the inherent and existing inequity in academia between and among different groups.

Similarly, it might be appropriate to look for **local experts** to serve as reviewers for a manuscript, especially for example, given the unequal power imbalance between authors in high income countries writing about other parts of the world.

Ensure that peer reviewers who are part of a community that a manuscript or book is about, are consulted. This is especially important for research on **historically marginalised communities.**

For certain topics, **'lived experience' expertise** should be considered when selecting reviewers (e.g. mental health research).

Practical tips for increasing diversity

To improve the chances of securing a diverse panel of reviewers, we recommend that you tailor your reviewer invitations so as to be able to successfully assemble a diverse panel. E.g by:

- Inviting at least 50% women reviewers for the first round of invitations.
- Try out one new peer reviewer (e.g. an early career researcher) in addition to experienced peer reviewers
- Aim to include at least one peer reviewer not based in US/Europe

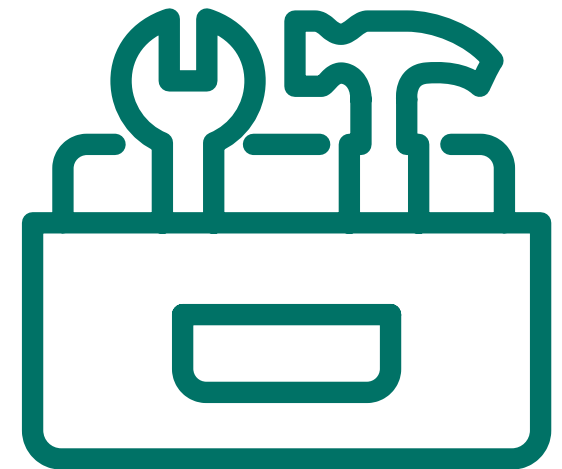**Be cautious of over-asking a small group of 'diverse' peer reviewers**

Consider peer reviewers suggested by authors, but check whether reviewer suggestions are too homogeneous: based on geographical location, same institution as the author, demography, gender, ethnicity etc.

Resources

- NIH Recruitment Search Protocol, which contains step–by–step directions for how to conduct an unbiased talent search using certain demographic information (e.g. from Web of Science)
- American Psychological Association's toolkit for DEI, which includes a section on representation on Editorial Boards and a section on inclusive peer review
- COPE's guidance on diversifying editorial boards

- Courses for external Editors – Editor Courses | Editors | Springer Nature Peer review policies:
  - BMC
  - Nature Portfolio
  - Palgrave Macmillan
  - Springer
- Springer Nature Journal Editors' Code of Conduct
- Springer Nature training webinar on Finding Peer Reviewers: Solutions for Identifying and Securing Potential Candidates.

For additional support in developing broader and more diverse networks of reviewers, we recommend the various professional bodies and networks in respective communities who can offer further direction.

Thank you

For more resources for editors,
you can visit Springer Nature's Editor pages.
You can also find out more about
Springer Nature's DEI initiatives on our website