Creating and Maintaining a Vibrant Community Award Program

INFORMS communities, its officers, and its members bring great value to the INFORMS organization, as well as society by advancing the knowledge and practice within their specific domains or interests. Awards granted by communities are a great opportunity to recognize excellence within the community and elevate the contributions in the field of OR.

Awards granted by communities are unique from awards granted at the INFORMS level, and often indicate a special connection or contribution in the domain of the community. Awards can come in many forms. Awards may be given for scholarly papers, student focused work, outstanding achievements, or sanctioned competitions.

The goal of this document is to provide guidance for communities to create their own best practices Policies and Procedures (P&P) documents to manage their awards.

Goals of creating best practices for community awards

Strengthening the quality of the community awards increases their importance and ensures their longevity and validity. Formalizing best practices for awards has many benefits. Primarily, a written P&P document creates:

- Consistency year over year with regards to judging, timelines, criteria, and goals, of the award.
- Easy knowledge transfer as leadership changes
- A clear definition of the purpose of the award and an understanding of how the award relates to other INFORMS awards, taking advantage of, or avoiding, overlaps in scope.
- Define any contractual obligations that are the responsibility of the Community or INFORMS staff
- Defined guidelines for certain scenarios which may require coordinated administrative oversight or conflict of interest (such as dishonesty, or failure of an awardee to uphold the criteria of an award).

Leveraging a P&P document

A properly structured P&P document provides a valuable framework which helps the community from having to reinvent the wheel each award cycle and encourages consistent structures to ensure the award is valued within the INFORMS landscape and the profession.

P&P documents created by communities are certainly not intended to be exhaustive. The P&P should provide a general overview, as well as helpful information for facilitating the award process.

The P&P is meant to guide decisions and promote a standard of care with the reputation of an award always in the forethought. There are instances where the P&P may need to be changed. In lieu of making independent annual edits to the policies governing an award program, there should be a system in place to review, edit, and approve changes to a P&P document, considering the view of stakeholders.

Should the community have any concerns or questions, the INFORMS staff and the INFORMS Professional Recognition Committee (PRC) are useful resources for any award or documentation related questions.

What should be included in a community awards policy and procedures document?

The following list outlines many topics that a community may consider for its inclusion in a P&P document. Awards gain importance and prestige through consistency and continuity. Use the questions within the topics to guide development of a Policy & Procedures (P&P) document.

A completed P&P document from a subsection is also provided as a sample.

Title of the Award

Is the title adequately descriptive to indicate its purpose without additional information?

Timeline of the award

Is the award run regularly? Is it run too often? Not enough? What time of year will the award search and selection take place? Is it a struggle to find eligible recipients of the award due to its timing? Can the award be sustainably offered in the future or is this a single event award? How often will the award and criteria be evaluated? Consider establishing mechanism to gauge perspectives among community and past recipients of the award.

Purpose of the Award

What is the purpose of the award? Who does this award serve? Which stakeholder group does this affect? Does the award carry merit within the community's members, and outside of it as well? Will the purpose of the award continue to be of interest to your members and be sustainably of interest? Is proposed award unique from other community or INFORMS level awards (list can be found here: https://www.informs.org/Recognizing-Excellence/INFORMS-Prizes)?

Selection/Judging Committee

How will the selection/award/judging committee be formed? How many members must it contain (odd number of judges recommended)? Does the award committee chair project a successful committee experience? Do judges responsible for determining winners have the necessary skillsets to evaluate the submissions? What can be done to ensure diversity across judge appointments? DO judges need to be members of the community? Are there any attendance requirements for the committee, for example if the judging or meetings must occur in person? Is there a plan in place to ensure the institutional/historical knowledge of the award program?

Are the committee members equal in rank and responsibility? What duties will all members have? How will conflicts of interest be identified and avoided? What will be done if a committee member must excuse themselves from judging for any reason? How will the judging

committee encourage diversity across gender, under-represented minorities, organizations, etc. among submissions? Who is responsible for approving new committee members and chair?

Note: The PRC recommends that all award committee members should be members of INFORMS. It is also a recommended best practice that committee member term cycles are staggered so that members come on and drop off each year to provide consistency and continuity from year to year.

Important Dates

What timeline will be needed to complete this award? Can important dates and deadlines be enumerated? This section could be organized by months or be monthly ranges. The dates referenced and tasks should be as generic as appropriate to accommodate that meeting dates fluctuate from year to year. Items to consider in the schedule include but not limited to (not listed in an assumed chronological order):

- Call for nominations posted
- Marketing /alerts/reminders
- Submission deadline
- Judging beginning/end periods
- Narrowing of submissions to new round
- Second Judging period beginning/end periods
- Notification of Finalists / Non-finalists
- Information disseminated to meeting department for program placement
- Information about onsite competitions (if applicable)
- Determination of winners
- Information disseminated to your INFORMS Membership & Communities staff liaison or contact for award creation (please contact INFORMS Community staff for award ordering deadlines)
- Determination/approval of new chair
- Determination of new committee members

Target Marketing Groups

Who will be the stakeholder groups that could be targeted for marketing this award? Identify internal stakeholders like membership classifications (student/retired) or professional areas (academic/practitioners) or career stage (early career) as well as external organization that members of your committee may be affiliated with. Can they be engaged in this award?

Eligibility and Application Process

What are the eligibility requirements for entering the competition? What must entrants include in their submission packet? Are there any requirements that the winner must complete, such as reprise, journal article, press release approval, etc.)? How will potential conflicts of interest be avoided?

Judging/Selection Process

How will selection be conducted after the submission deadline has passed? Are there additional submission pieces required as applicants move through the submission phases? Include the criteria that will be used for judging. Consider pros/cons of criteria that are too broad or restrictive. Consider criteria that will maintain flexibility as the profession evolves and changes. Are submissions judged in rounds (semi-finalist/finalist, etc.)?

Is the judging criteria consistent from year to year? How can consistency be ensured year over year? How will conflicts be handled should entrants question a judge's determination?

Notification of Recipients

How will applicants be notified (both winning and non-winning)? Consider if non-winning applicants will be encouraged to reapply the following year. Will feedback and suggestions on their submission be provided? If entrants will not receive comments on their submission, how can other positive feedback or guidance, be shared with the entrant? What is the process for announcing winners and archiving award submissions? Copies of notices should be sent to your INFORMS Membership & Communities staff liaison for archive purposes.

Award

Describe (a) the levels of award recipients (are multiple places given?), (b) where will the award be given (business meeting, award ceremony, etc.), (c). Will the award be given as a plaque or framed certificate? (d) Is there a monetary component? If so, what will finalist get?

Are the award winners required to complete additional tasks such as presentations, keynotes speeches, submit articles to journals?

Budget/Finances

How will the award be funded (sponsor or community fund balance)? Describe the annual budget – monetary prize, supplies (including cost of plaque or framed certificate), and administrative costs associated with the award (postage or staff hours). Consider costs that may be involved if there is a competition onsite (associated costs at the meeting location). Review the community fund balance. Is the award sustainable?

Revocation Policy

What are the circumstances under which an award can be revoked, if any? Awards indicative of a specific level of merit or achievement in the field, should take care to ensure that the recipients of the award continue to maintain the high standard of conduct that an award indicated even after the initial conferral of the award.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:
See attached example P&P from the Railway Applications Section of INFORMS.