**Guidance for Participant Selection and Application Forms**

This document aims to set out a set of useful guidelines to facilitate fair selection of participants for workshops.

**Problem statement**

* You are likely to have limited space and places to offer to participants; it is possible your workshop program will be oversubscribed.
* Therefore, you must establish a method of fairly choosing between individuals and offering them access to an educational opportunity.

**Criteria**

Establish and agree your participant criteria in writing at the outset, before developing any communications materials or adverts. This will reduce any later bias, and ensures potential participants receive clear information from the outset.

In setting your criteria, consider: are there any funder-specified conditions? Are there restrictions on access to your facilities (e.g. for over-18s only) that are non-negotiable for safety or organizational policy reasons?

In general, we encourage using a minimal set of fixed criteria, to reduce barriers to access.

Make your selection criteria transparent: include it in any adverts or communications about your event where you are seeking to select participants. Put yourself mentally in the position of an applicant: it can be damaging to spend time and energy investing in a potential opportunity, only to discover you did not meet unspecified entrance criteria.

If you decide that, beyond minimal entry criteria, that you will prioritize allocating places with an additional method (e.g. those who apply earliest; those who are from specific underrepresented groups e.g. women, LGBT+, BAME individuals; those who can attend all session dates), then also make this clear in your communication materials.

As an example, if your main criteria are that your participants should have some STEM background but little formal biology training, include this in your advert and at the top of the application form.

**Application form**

In general, try and keep application forms as short and free form as possible. Primarily, add question(s) to capture key participant data (e.g. email, contact number – only where reasonable), and add questions(s) to capture how the participant meets your minimum criteria. It is also useful to collect information on why the participant is interested in attending your workshop.

Give the participants opportunities to communicate any accessibility requirements and add a free-form question to provide you with any further information they think is appropriate.

Make clear at the top of the form the date applications will close, and a date by which you will reply to participants.

**Example: Application form questions**

What is your name?

What is your email address?

Can you attend all the workshop sessions?

Why are you interested in joining this workshop, and what do you hope to learn?

What technical (STEM) skills do you already have?

What previous experience have you had relating to biology? (Please describe briefly.)

Can you confirm that you are aged 18 or over?

Do you have any accessibility requirements that we can accommodate? If so, please describe what you need.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

**Feedback**

Reply to all applicants on the date you have specified, whether or not they have received a place. You can create form emails in advance for this purpose, and then personalize them as required.

**Prioritize unsuccessful applicants in the future**

Consider offering ‘priority’ places on future courses for unsuccessful applicants who meet the basic criteria but did not receive a place; upon returning a decision, ask for their permission to re-contact them if a future course is offered.