Prizes: Guidance for RSC member committees

This document is intended as a guide to support RSC member committees in running a competitive prize scheme, and to share good practice and learnings from the RSC's Review of Recognition Programmes.

The first section of the document outlines the questions that, following recommendations from the Review, member committees should address when looking to set up a new prize. If your committee would like to set up a new prize, please complete the Member Committee Prize Proposal form and return it to the RSC Networks team at networks@rsc.org.

The second section of the document is structured chronologically and gives members practical guidance at each stage of the process of administering a prize, from planning and preparation through to celebrating winners.

The scope of this guidance is most relevant to the types of prizes that Interest Groups may administer, but there will be best practice that should be considered across different forms of recognition and prizes.

This is a draft document and we welcome any feedback you may have. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the RSC Prizes team at awards@rsc.org.

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Section I: Setting up a new prize

Any member committee thinking of introducing a new prize or recognition mechanism should carefully consider and have clarity on each of the aspects below.

Purpose of recognition
Long-term viability
Equality, inclusion and diversity
GDPR

Being clear on the purpose of recognition is key. Any prize might satisfy multiple purposes, but achieving clarity on the ***primary*** purpose of what you are trying to achieve will enable strategic decision-making about all other aspects.

Once committees have clarity on this, it is important to consider whether setting up a new prize is the best and most effective way of achieving this identified objective. We appreciate that setting up and running a prize, considering all aspects of good practice, takes considerable time and resource and is a significant investment by current and for future committees. There can be other mechanisms to achieve the same objective.

Committees should also

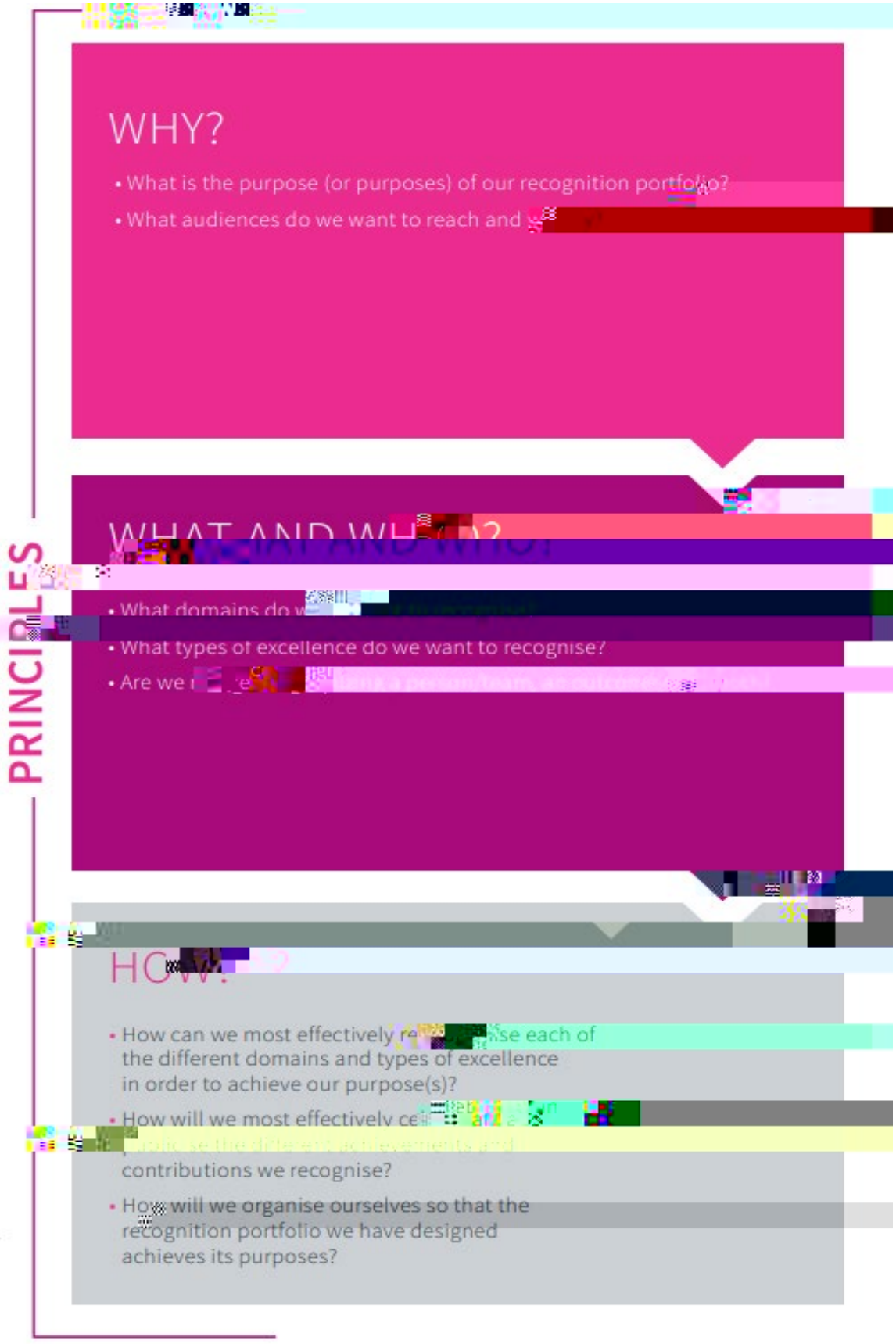

Figure 2 – Strategic design of a recognition portfolio

Long-term viability

It is important to consider the long-term viability of running any new prize. Many groups look to set up new prizes with the intentioew

Section II: Administering a prize

This section has been structured chronologically through each of the different phases of administering a prize.

Committees looking to set up a new prize should read this section carefully, to get a sense of the tasks involved in administering a prize.

1. Planning

Member committees should:

Plan timelines – allow for a broad nomination window, with accessibility and equality in mind. The nomination window for centrally administered RSC Prizes is typically at least 2 months. Set a nomination deadline (date and time) and be firm with this deadline.

Appoint a judging panel – the names of all judges should be in the public domain when nominations open. This signals publicly who is not eligible to make a nomination or be nominated.
To avoid any perceived or real conflicts of interest, panel members should not be eligible to be nominated, make a nomination, or provide a reference (if references are required).

Define and set eligibility/selection criteria – in setting eligibility criteria, committees should consider equality, inclusivity and diversity lusivity divers

Planning phase guidance

Coordination

Member committees should appoint an individual, or group of individuals, who will be responsible for administering and coordinating aspects of the prize. This might be the group secretary, or Chair.

To avoid any perceived or real conflicts of interest, they should be independent from the rest of the judging or selection panel, if possible, and they should not be eligible to be nominated or make nominations for the prize.

Judging panel

Judging panels should balance expertise in the area of excellence being judged, as well as diversity in its broadest sense, noting that a number of studies have shown that diverse groups make better decisions.

Insofar as is practical or possible, try to ensure that judging panels represent a range of institutions or organisations. This helps to avoid cases where a nominee is based at the same institution as multiple judges, who subsequently are unable to judge the nomination due to a conflict of interest.

It is valuable to have a balance of continuity and rotation in panel membership, so that good practice is passed on as new judges join.

Receiving nominations

In the vast majority of cases, the most appropriate mechanism will be to have an open nomination process. In some cases a formal nomination process might be a barrier to receiving nominations, but committees who opt not to have an open nomination process should take steps to ensure that they are considering all whom may be eligible for recognition.

The RSC Networks team can provide support to committees looking to set up a new prize by creating an online nomination form which complies with data protection legislation. If this is of interest to your committee, please contact Networks@rsc.org for more information.

Eligibility criteria

In cases where the primary purpose of a prize is to support an individual's career progression, it might be appropriate to restrict eligibility to a particular career stage.

In setting eligibility criteria, committees should consider equality, inclusivity and diversity. In recent years, the RSC has moved towards eligibility criteria based on years of full-time equivalent professional experience, in preference to age. As an example, for the RSC's centrally administered early career prizes, eligibility criteria are outlined as follows:

> Nominees should be an early career scientist, typically with no more than 10 years of full-time equivalent professional experience
> This should be experience gained as part of a scientific career excluding time spent in full-time education. Time spent as a postgraduate student should not be included e.g. Masters, PhD. Time spent as a post-doctoral researcher should be included
> Nominators will be asked to provide details of the nominee's professional experience, in relation to the above criteria
> Career breaks will be recognised, and applications are particularly encouraged from those whose career has spanned a break due to caring responsibilities or personal circumstances e.g. a period of parental/adoption leave, family commitments, illness, or other exceptional circumstances

Selection criteria

Your selection criteria will form the basis of judges' assessments and will also help to structure your nomination form. Selection criteria should not be based on quantity-based metrics.

In light of the selection and eligibility criteria defined above, you should design the nomination form so that:

a) coordinators have the information they need to determine whether a nomination is valid, and are able to contact the nominator and nominee
b) judges have the information they need to make the best possible decision
c) the amount of unnecessary/redundant information collected is minimised

Use word limits on your nomination form, rather than page limits, for consistency.

Celebration mechanism

This should be linked to the defined purpose of the prize, and that this is as meaningful as possible for the recipient(s).

More details about celebration mechanisms can be found in the section on Promotion and Celebration (page 14).

2. Nominations

Member committees should:

- Put out a call for nominations. Your call for nominations should [illegible]

Nomination phase – guidance

Communications

It is good practice to promote your prize using a number of different channels and routes to reach the widest possible audience. You might consider using a combination of e-alerts/e-mails, group website posts, promotional flyers, social media posts, word-

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Preparing for judging

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3. Judging

Member committees should:

Ensure there is a clear process for judges to declare conflicts of interest . Further guidance on this is given below.

Take steps to ensure that the selection of winner(s) takes place fairly.

4. Promotion and celebration

Member committees should:

- Contact

5. Review

At the end of each cycle, committees should briefly review how the process went and whether there are necessary adjustments/mitigations that can be made before nominations next open for the prize.

It is good practice to periodically review your recognition schemes more broadly, to ensure that they are as far as possible fulfilling their defined purpose.

Some starting points are suggested below, but each recognition scheme will have a unique set of challenges and circumstances. If you would like to discuss these with the RSC Prizes team, please don't hesitate to get in touch at awards@rsc.org.

Number of nominations

There can be a number of reasons why a prize might receive few nominations. Committees might consider:

Awareness – is there more you can do to promote the prize to the community and spread the word?

Eligibility criteria – are they too restrictive? How large is the community you are hoping to reach through your recognition scheme?

Nomination process – is the nomination form too lengthy? Does it put nominators and nominees off engaging with the process?

The prize itself – is it attractive to, or meaningful for, potential nominees?

Diversity of winners/nominations

Increasing the diversity of nominations is a necessary condition for increasing the diversity of the winners of any prize. It is important that nominee pools reflect the diversity in an area that is being recognised.

Diversity should be embedded in all thinking about recognition and at each stage of the process, from nomination through to celebration. The Royal Academy of Engineering/Science Council's Diversity Progression Framework offers a tool to measure strengths and areas for development on this topic.

Committees might consider:

Data on previous nominations – it is beneficial for policies and procedures to be informed by evidence.

Eligibility criteria – your eligibility criteria should be inclusive, and adequately account for and normalise non-traditional career paths and career breaks.

Encouragement – is there more you could do to encourage nominations from and of underrepresented groups of people? Can you develop mechanisms to encourage those making a nomination for the first time?