

ENDORSEMENT OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Background

The Executive Committee also requested that the DDIC consider whether the ATS should continue endorsing other professional societies' documents and whether the ATS should similarly seek other societies' endorsement of ATS documents. The request was prompted by uncertainty about what endorsement means (i.e., what is endorsement conveying to readers about the ATS' opinion of the document and will the ATS be potentially held accountable if the document is later found to be flawed), as well as recognition that providing and seeking endorsements are a substantial additional workload for the ATS Documents Editor (i.e., roughly 10-15 documents per year).

Current approaches

ATS endorsement of other societies' documents: When an organization requests ATS endorsement of a document, the ATS Documents Editor recruits one to two content reviewers and a methodological reviewer. If the organization is willing to make changes to their document, the ATS Documents Editor returns the reviewers' comments to the organization for consideration. Upon resubmission, the ATS Documents Editor sends the revised document and the organization's point-by-point responses to the reviewers' comments to the Executive Committee to be considered for endorsement (the Executive Committee recently began allowing the ATS Documents Editor to make the decision on their behalf). If the organization is not willing to make changes to their document, the document and the reviewers' comments are sent directly to the Executive Committee to be considered for endorsement. For endorsement, there must be no serious content concerns, conflict of interest management must be adequate, and, for guidelines, the Institute of Medicine Standards must be met.

Other societies' endorsement of ATS documents: ATS occasionally seeks other organizations' endorsements. The most common context for ATS seeking endorsement is when the co-chairs of an ATS project inquire about having their document co-sponsored by another organization, but either inquire too late or decide that they don't want to risk the chance that their document will be published in a non-ATS journal, so they elect to pursue endorsement instead. In such cases, once the document is nearly complete, the ATS Documents Editor reaches out to the organization of interest, asks if they endorse documents (many societies don't) and, if so, he requests that the ATS document be considered for endorsement.

Proposed approaches

The DDIC is sympathetic toward the workload created by the endorsement processes, but believes that providing and seeking endorsement is beneficial. Endorsing other societies' documents likely facilitates the endorsement of ATS documents by other societies and the option to pursue another society's endorsement provides an acceptable alternative for ATS document developers who hoped to pursue co-sponsorship, but for whom co-sponsorship was either undesirable or not possible. For these reasons, the DDIC recommends leaving the ATS' endorsement program unaltered.