

Snowmass2021 - Letter of Interest

Understanding the process is critical for agency, intervention, and influence

Topical Group(s): (check all that apply by copying/pasting /)

(CommF1) Diversity & Inclusion

(Other) This item is critically relevant to ALL frontiers.

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Abstract:

Snowmass is important for influencing the future of high-energy physics (HEP) research and the communities that drive it. However, this process is a) not clearly and comprehensively described or explained b) in a sufficiently timely fashion c) for all stakeholders to participate equally and strategically. We recommend new protocols and policies for communication of the Snowmass/P5 process to afford agency and greater inclusion of voices and ideas.

New methods for communicating the process

Snowmass is described as a community-oriented “scientific study” to help drive, decide, and communicate the vision for the future of HEP¹. There are some materials that help describe some elements²³. However, most of the process is not clearly described, the descriptions are not communicated in a timely manner, and many important stakeholders are not communicated with and included. Furthermore, opportunities for strategic intervention are not clearly delineated. For example, many early-career scientists don’t come to understand the overall process or its critical

¹ <https://snowmass21.org/>

² e.g., https://indico.fnal.gov/event/45207/attachments/133652/164937/How_to_Snowmass-final-links.pdf

³ e.g.,

https://indico.fnal.gov/event/43167/contributions/186016/attachments/128804/156063/Snowmass_FNAL_SAC_May_29_2020.pdf

nuances until it is too late for them to participate, even though many of them may inherit the results of the plans made now. Even now, many people don't understand the purpose of the letters of intent, or how they feed into future snowmass meetings, white papers, and the eventual P5 report. Many of those who have a clear vision and set of expectations for the process acquire it through conversations with others who know. **While there are some documents and presentations on record, there seems to be no clear guide for individuals and groups to engage in a strategic intervention within the Snowmass process: knowing when, where, and how to best make one's voice heard is at the heart of this process, but it appears to be one of the least broadly understood aspects.**

This lack of transparency severely limits the agency of individuals in deciding how they engage with the process, and it prohibits equal participation, especially amongst those who already lack influence, access, and power within the HEP community. This is a clear and acute example of how the broader STEM community, including academia, in general fails to illuminate the processes and norms of how research is conducted and how decisions and policies are made.

When it is a priority, HEP and related academic communities clearly describe and communicate protocols for decision-making. Therefore, we recommend the following:

- a. establish a campaign of communication and engagement that starts one year earlier in the Snowmass process to permit those with less familiarity to plan their engagement;
- b. establish a campaign of inclusion and engagement with communities that are typically underrepresented or minoritized in HEP;
- c. establish a committee to operate before, during, and after the next Snowmass process to monitor and assess communications and decision-making structures and processes;
- d. establish a committee to assess Snowmass 2021 communications and decision-making and make recommendations for the next Snowmass.

Governance and decision-making significantly dictate power dynamics within a community. The lack of opportunity to participate equally in the visioning and planning process for the future of the HEP community is not only damaging for the community, but unnecessary. Everyone who is concerned about the future of HEP should be concerned about the lack of transparency of the Snowmass governance process.