



# Modernizing Academic Appointment and Advancement (MA3) Challenge



## OVERVIEW

The Modernizing Academic Appointment and Advancement (MA3) Challenge invites proposals from U.S.-based accredited, tax-exempt colleges and universities—including their departments, centers, and institutes—to reimagine their academic hiring, review, promotion, and tenure (RPT) processes. This initiative seeks bold, creative strategies to develop academic reward systems that foster a collaborative, responsive, and transparent research environment.

There is currently a significant disconnect between what institutions purport to value - access to knowledge, improving the pace of discovery, public trust in and community engagement with science, etc. - and the activities they tend to reward, like publishing scholarly works in high impact factor, big brand journals. If activities that advance these values - like open science, public engagement, civic science, team science, and diverse contributions to knowledge - are to propagate at scale, hiring and evaluation systems need to reward them properly.

The Challenge is organized by the Open Research Community Accelerator ([ORCA](#)) in partnership with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Aspen Institute. The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Dana Foundation, the Rita Allen Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation have contributed \$1.5 million dollars, collectively, to institutions seeking funding for efforts that lead to (1) explicit changes in hiring and RPT policies and practices, and (2) strengthened capacity to promote these changes within and across institutions.

## ELIGIBILITY

- **Tier 1:**
  - Colleges and universities (institution-wide), or their larger divisions (e.g., schools, colleges, cohorts of 3+ departments).
  - Up to six winners will be awarded \$250,000 each for two years.
- **Tier 2:**
  - Individual departments, centers, or institutes
  - Up to six winners will be awarded \$50,000 for two years.
- Colleges, universities, and their divisions may also submit an application in partnership with one or more professional society as the sub-awardee.



Pathways to reform can and will vary across geographies, institutions, and disciplines. To that end, applicants are encouraged to define their own bespoke approaches to academic appointment and advancement modernization.

## APPLY



Apply on the MA3 Challenge website (coming soon). Applications open on September 15, 2025, and are **due by December 31, 2025**.

Contact: [caitlin@orcaopen.org](mailto:caitlin@orcaopen.org)

## COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Representatives from the Challenge winners will participate in a community of practice over the duration of the program, overseen by ORCA. The goal is to provide awardees with community support, resources, and subject matter expertise during the lifespan of the grant.

This will provide them with support in the following phases:

- Development
- Execution
- Assessment
- Sharing lessons learned
- Dissemination of results



## A NOTE FROM THE ORGANIZERS

We believe that this challenge will cultivate a culture of openness, collaboration, societal impact among higher education institutions. It will enhance the quality, rigor, reach, and impact of scholarship by promoting transparent and values-aligned practices. Additionally, this program will enforce stronger ties between academia and society by rewarding productive public engagement and civic practices. Most critically, it will provide a replicable roadmap for changing how research is conducted, evaluated, and shared.

## Sponsors



Rita Allen Foundation

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