

Ask for Help

Source: The Open Notebook:
<https://www.theopennotebook.com/finding-diverse-sources-for-science-stories/>

There's no shame in asking other people to help you find suitable sources. (Remember that people from historically marginalized groups should not be expected to take on the responsibility of doing reporters' research for them.) People who science journalists can turn to for source recommendations can include:

- **Sources.** Asking sources who else you should talk to is a standard interview technique. In doing so, it's a good idea to specifically seek out diverse sources—for example, by saying something like: “My publication makes it a practice to consistently include diverse sources in our stories, so that we can accurately capture the range of experts whose voices, perspectives, and expertise are relevant. Toward that end, can you recommend some additional experts I might talk with whose work is pertinent here and who are people of color or who are members of other historically marginalized communities?” Such a question can be a useful strategy even when interacting with sources who are not able to make time for an interview. (Additionally, when reporting on [science that involves researchers in nations in the Global South](#), it's important to include those scientists as sources. If a U.S. institution has put out a press release about a study, it may not prominently include contact information for study co-authors outside the U.S., but U.S. sources should be able to help facilitate such connections.)
- **Colleagues.** Other journalists may be able to suggest suitable experts from diverse communities. Remember, though, that relying on other reporters to find sources can perpetuate the problem of the same few minority voices being heard again and again.
- **Press officers.** Public information officers at universities, scientific societies, funding agencies, and nonprofit organizations can help reporters find sources, and should be able to respond helpfully to requests for experts who are from underrepresented communities, when possible. As with any request to press officers, when making such requests it's helpful to be specific about what type of expertise you're seeking and on what timeline.
- **University-specific affinity groups.** Many universities have institution-specific affinity groups, which are easily searchable. For example, searching for “University of Illinois physics affinity groups” yields [this page](#).
- **Expert-referral services.** Expert referral services can sometimes fulfill journalists' requests for diverse sources.
 - The National Science & Technology News Service (NSTNS) links journalists to Black scientists who have experience working with the media. Reporters can tweet queries to the group [@NSTNSorg](#).
 - [SciLine](#), a free service supported by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, connects journalists with scientific experts. Sciline accepts requests for diverse sources and routinely seeks out sources from underrepresented groups.
 - Requesting diverse sources through other referral services, such as [Newswise](#), [HARO](#), and [ProfNet](#), may also turn up good options.
- **Online discussion groups.** If you belong to an online discussion group of journalists—whether it be a private Facebook or Slack group or a discussion group such as those hosted by the National Association of Science Writers or the Society of Environmental Journalists—you can ask other subscribers if they can recommend potential sources with particular expertise, and specify that you're seeking diverse sources.
- **Twitter.** Asking for sourcing suggestions on Twitter can be helpful; again, be mindful not to expect that people from marginalized communities will do the work of finding your sources.

Find More TON Resources for Including Diverse Sources

- [Including Diverse Voices in Science Stories](#)
- [Covering Indigenous Communities with Respect and Sensitivity](#)
- [Including LGBTQ+ Scientists as Sources](#)
- [Writing Well about Disability](#)
- [The Do's and Don'ts of Community Engagement](#)
- [Gut Check: Working with a Sensitivity Reader](#)

- [Invisible Science: Why Are Latin American Science Stories Absent in European and U.S. Media Outlets? \(léelo en español\)](#)
- [The Science Byline Counting Project: Where Are the Women—and Where Are They Not?](#)
- [Diversity Style Guides for Journalists](#)
- More from the [Diverse Voices in Science Journalism](#) series