



## SySTEAM Initiative

### *Volunteer reviewer program (VRP) overview*

*Sign up at: [tinyurl.com/3k5z553k](https://tinyurl.com/3k5z553k)*

### About the SySTEAM VRP:

The SySTEAM VRP aims to help members of the SySTEAM community and the general public get involved with both SySTEAM and groups/organizations developing free, open-access SE informational sources for the systems engineering community. SySTEAM VRP volunteers interested in helping provide technical + readability feedback on free, open-access systems-education content can submit a quick application form about their qualifications, interests, and areas of subject matter expertise & experience in order to qualify, and will get matched with peer review opportunities when they become available. The VRP is meant to give individual SySTEAM community members with the option to get matched with & engage with peer review opportunities that not only relate to their personal expertise and interests, but that also allows them to make a visible, tangible impact on the quality of free, publicly-accessible systems-education content that's actively seen & used by systems engineering practitioners and educators around the world.

### Who can participate?

This program is open to any and all members of the SySTEAM community and the general public, including individuals without prior peer-reviewing expertise. In the area of interdisciplinary systems education, there is often a need to ensure that resources and other technical content maintains readability and usability for a wide range of users/audience members (such as students, early career professionals, and individuals from outside the engineering community) while still keeping the content useful and relevant to seasoned systems engineering professionals and subject-matter experts; SySTEAM therefore values the participation of volunteers from all professional backgrounds/sectors and levels of expertise.

### Why participate?

- The program provides a unique opportunity to engage with, and aid in the development of, systems education technical content seen and used by the systems engineering community. Depending on the specific review opportunity, this can also involve the opportunity to engage with and/or directly contribute to the improvement of prominent and well-respected systems education resources.
- Participation can be used to count towards professional development requirements for INCOSE certification renewal and other similar continuing-education requirements.
- The volunteer reviewer program supports SySTEAM's core mission of improving the quality and accessibility of systems engineering resources, and is a great way to get involved with SySTEAM outside of live meeting or community events, in a way that works with your schedule, interests, and availability.
- In some cases, the external resource-development volunteer groups that SySTEAM partners/coordinates with via the VRP may opt at their discretion to invite individuals who provide particularly exceptional/high-quality reviews as potential contributing authors for their future resource content.

## How this works:

The SySTEAM VRP works in a somewhat similar fashion to standard peer-review processes: volunteers complete a sign-up form/application that asks about their professional experience, qualifications, and topic area(s) of interest, and are subsequently assigned items to review based on their responses.

### **(1) Sign up as a volunteer via the online VRP application form.**

You can sign up to participate in the SySTEAM VRP through the following sign-up form:

[tinyurl.com/3k5z553k](https://tinyurl.com/3k5z553k). SySTEAM's VRP is structured so that instead of having to request separate application forms for each review opportunity, volunteers only have to complete the VRP form once to be eligible for consideration for any of SySTEAM's available/open peer review opportunities. This unified "common application" form for SySTEAM's volunteer peer review opportunity is meant to take ~5-10 minutes to complete, and allows SySTEAM volunteers to specifically opt in and out of consideration for currently available opportunities, so that interested volunteers always paired with review opportunities that they will find engaging and enriching. The form has descriptions that will walk you through the sign-up process, which consists of a handful of questions about your and your subject-area interests, experience, and expertise. SySTEAM will use this information to match you with reviewing opportunities as they become available.

### **(2) Volunteers are matched with review opportunities as they become available.**

Once specific content has been identified for review, SySTEAM will use the sign-up information to identify reviewers are good matches for the available review opportunities. SySTEAM VRP opportunities all involve the review of reference/educational content developed either directly by/for SySTEAM (e.g., SySTEAM mini-conference abstracts) or that that SySTEAM VRP collaborating organizations (volunteer groups creating free and public/open-access systems education resources) have developed and would like reviewed for readability, usability, and/or technical accuracy.

### **(3) Volunteers are sent invitations to review via email once they are matched with a review opportunity.**

Volunteers only need to sign up once to become eligible to be matched with review opportunities, and remain eligible for additional review assignments after successfully completing their first review. (If you've signed up but haven't been contacted yet, don't worry! It just means that SySTEAM is still working on finding a reviewing opportunity that's a good match for you.)

### **(4) Volunteers complete their reviews within the review timeframe.**

Once you're matched with a review opportunity and invited to complete a review, you'll be provided with details on how to complete and send in your review. This will typically take the form of an online feedback form that will guide you through the review process. You'll also be told when you'll need to send in your review (usually a week or two later).

### **(5) Volunteers can request verification and validation of their reviews.**

Volunteers who are invited to review and successfully send in their review feedback in a timely manner are eligible to have their reviews officially verified by the SySTEAM VRP via email. Volunteers can request that SySTEAM verify the completion of their reviews & validate that their submitted reviews meet quality standards for a valid review by sending a copy of their submitted reviews to SySTEAM, using the steps specified in their invitation-to-review email. Review verification & validation (V&V) is provided as a courtesy to SySTEAM VRP volunteers, and can be used to provide proof of peer-review and/or volunteer work for the purposes of fulfilling professional development/continuing education credits (as required by organizations like INCOSE).

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

*For additional questions, comments, or concerns, please contact:*

**SySTEAM Program Director, Caitlyn Singam** ([caitlyn.singam@incose.net](mailto:caitlyn.singam@incose.net))

### **Volunteer sign -up:**

#### **1. Do I need to re-enroll in the VRP after I complete the initial sign-up form?**

No need – once you’ve completed the sign-up form and sent it in, you’re all set! Sign-ups also don’t expire (i.e., you only ever need to sign up once), so you can remain in consideration for future review opportunities for as long as you’re interested in participating in the SySTEAM VRP. You’re also always welcome to reach out if you’d like to update your information.

#### **2. How can I confirm that I’ve successfully signed up for the SySTEAM VRP ?**

Once you complete the sign-up form, you should receive an automatic email providing you with a copy of your responses. If you’ve received the email with your form responses, your sign-up was successful! If you don’t receive the email right away, try waiting a few minutes (if you are using a government or institutional email address, the email might take a little longer to make its way through your organization’s IT filters) and check your email account’s spam/trash folder to make sure it didn’t get filtered out of your inbox; otherwise, you may need to send in your responses again. (Don’t forget to hit “submit” at the end of the form!)

#### **3. I’d like to update the information from my sign-up form to reflect my new job and/or latest qualifications. How can I update my volunteer profile?**

The form should have provided you with an “edit my response” link; you can use that to re-open your completed form and edit your responses directly. Otherwise, please feel free to send any update requests to the SySTEAM Program Director via email ([Caitlyn.Singam@incose.net](mailto:Caitlyn.Singam@incose.net)).

#### **4. I’ve signed up but haven’t been asked to review anything. What’s going on?**

If you've signed up but haven't been contacted yet, don't worry! It just means that SySTEAM is still working on finding a reviewing opportunity that's a good match for you. The availability of review opportunities can vary depending on the editorial/review needs of SySTEAM itself and SySTEAM’s VRP partner organization(s), but you’ll be informed as soon as you’re identified as a match with a review opportunity.

### **Completing reviews:**

#### **5. How long does it usually take to complete a review?**

It’s hard to say for certain, as it’s usually highly dependent on the person completing the review (how fast they read, their familiarity with the content topic, etc.) and the amount of detail they put into their comments/feedback. For a well-written, short (1-3 page) article with no noticeable issues to remark on, it should be possible to complete a review in under 30 minutes.

#### **6. I’ve completed a review with the SySTEAM VRP and would love to do another! Do I need to do anything to stay involved?**

You’re all set – no need to do anything further! However, you’re always welcome to reach out via email to share your enthusiasm for the SySTEAM VRP program (it’s always great to hear positive feedback about SySTEAM efforts)!

## **7. Can I decline a review invitation?**

Yes, it's no problem at all – all volunteers have the option to decline SySTEAM VRP reviews at the time they receive their invitation-to-review emails. If you are aware of circumstances that would prevent you from developing an unbiased review (e.g., a conflict of interest, such as having to review an article you wrote yourself) and/or prevent your completing your review by the requested deadline (e.g., a scheduling conflict with impending work deadlines, or being out-of-office due to illness/vacation/etc.), you can simply reply to the invitation-to-review email to explain the situation.

## **8. I need clarification on some of the instructions for the SySTEAM VRP review I'm doing. What should I do?**

Please reach out to the SySTEAM Program Director via email if you run into any trouble with the SySTEAM VRP matching process or have any related concerns. Generally, however, when SySTEAM VRP peer reviews usually have an associated form (either from SySTEAM or SySTEAM's applicable VRP coordinating partner) and/or that will guide you through the review process, what the requesting party is looking for in terms of feedback (e.g., evaluation criteria or areas of particular interest/concern), and how to format your responses for your review.

### **For external resource developers:**

## **9. Is the SySTEAM VRP currently accepting new coordinating partners? What kind of content is eligible for review through the SySTEAM VRP ?**

The SySTEAM VRP strives to support the development of quality, open-access resources in the field of systems engineering and in the broader area of systems education. In order to receive volunteer reviewer support via the SySTEAM VRP, a resource needs to meet the following minimum criteria:

1. The resource being reviewed must be made available at no cost to its intended audience and to any interested members of the public.
2. The resource must be developed and released without any intentional restrictions placed on its accessibility to interested members of the public.
3. The resource must be a source of factual, informational material relating to systems engineering, systems thinking, systems science, or related discipline(s).
4. The resource must not promote, endorse, or advertise commercial products. (Exceptions can be made for highlighting technical products released by professional organizations, such as the INCOSE Systems Engineering Handbook).
5. The intended role of SySTEAM VRP volunteers in aiding the development of the resource cannot be one where it is conventionally the practice of the resource developers, the developers' organization, or their developmental sponsors/affiliates to employ paid personnel, either in whole or in part.

These requirements are in place in order to ensure that efforts associated with the SySTEAM VRP continue to align with SySTEAM's mission, vision, and values, as well as to ensure that the freely given time and effort of SySTEAM community volunteers is duly respected and recognized. For further clarification, or to discuss potential coordination with SySTEAM/the SySTEAM VRP, please contact the SySTEAM Program Director ([Caitlyn.Singam@incose.net](mailto:Caitlyn.Singam@incose.net)).