



# HOW-TO MANUAL

*A Guide for Conducting Your ACT-SO Program*

2023-2024

# Message from the ACT-SO National Director

You have accepted a tremendous yet rewarding responsibility by agreeing to serve as the ACT-SO Chairperson or as an ACT-SO Committee member. ACT-SO represents the best in student achievement and is a vital part of the NAACP's vision for building the next generation of civil rights advocates and leaders and expands our goal of "One NAACP." You are helping to guide the paths of today's youth into the future, and you should be applauded for your commitment and involvement in this program.

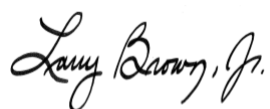
National ACT-SO is providing the guidance you will need to conduct a local program in this ACT-SO *How-To Manual: A Guide for Conducting Your ACT-SO Program*. Please review this manual to increase your knowledge about NAACP ACT-SO and its inner workings. This handbook provides you with a program overview, committee responsibilities, policies, procedures, suggested sub-committees, timelines, and more. Additional updates and changes will be noted in official correspondence from the National ACT-SO Office.

This Hybrid Edition of the guide allows you a greater opportunity to offer more competitions as you can host coaching and mentoring sessions, and the local competition virtually and in-person!

Please be mindful of the dates and deadlines schedule. Each ACT-SO program will be held responsible for adhering to the dates posted.

Think outside of the box and create a local ACT-SO program that promotes the boldness and brilliance of the youth in your community. Utilize the resources provided by the national ACT-SO staff, local professionals and experts.

Best wishes for a successful ACT-SO!



Larry Brown, Jr.  
National Director  
NAACP ACT-SO

# **Section 1**

## **ACT-SO Program Overview**

# ACT-SO Mission

ACT-SO is a major youth initiative of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Founded in 1978, by renowned author and journalist, Vernon Jarrett, ACT-SO provides a forum, through which youth of African descent demonstrate academic, artistic, and scientific prowess and expertise, thereby gaining the same recognition often only reserved for entertainers and athletes.

ACT-SO is rooted in the firm conviction that African Americans can succeed and compete at the same or superior levels as their counterparts in classrooms, boardrooms, startups, and laboratories across this nation and abroad. The mission of ACT-SO is to prepare, recognize, and reward youth of African descent who exemplify scholastic and artistic excellence. ACT-SO goals are:

- To mobilize the adult community for the promotion of academic and artistic excellence among students of African descent.
- To recognize academic and artistic achievement among students of African descent.
- To provide and assist students with the necessary skills to establish goals and acquire the confidence and training to make a successful contribution to society.

# ACT-SO QUICK FAQs

## WHAT IS ACT-SO?

ACT-SO is a yearlong youth achievement enrichment program designed to recruit, stimulate, improve and encourage high academic and cultural achievement among high school students of African descent. The ACT-SO program centers on the dedication and commitment of community volunteers and business leaders to serve as mentors and coaches to promote academic and artistic excellence. There are 32 categories of competition in the sciences, humanities, performing arts, visual arts, culinary arts, and business.

## WHO SPONSORS ACT-SO?

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sponsors ACT-SO, which is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. ACT-SO receives support from schools, community organizations, churches, foundations, private corporations, and individuals.

## WHO FOUNDED ACT-SO?

Vernon Jarrett, a renowned author and journalist, initiated the idea of a program that would promote and reward academic achievers the same way sports heroes are honored. The first national ACT-SO competition was held in 1978 in Portland, Oregon.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

High school students who are citizens of the United States, enrolled in grades 9-12 and are amateurs in the categories of competition are able to participate.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN ACT-SO?

The ACT-SO program is intended to be a learning experience, first and foremost. The focus of a viable and effective local ACT-SO program is on enrichment and mentorship. Students work with ACT-SO mentors who help them develop projects throughout the year online and in-person. Local ACT-SO programs also provide ACT-SO students with enrichment opportunities, such as workshops, tutorials, and field trips.

The benefits ACT-SO Olympians receive from the enrichment and mentorship components include substantial assistance toward the development of their ACT-SO projects and valuable tools to assist them throughout their education.

Each ACT-SO program conducts a local competition. The local competition serves to showcase the hard work students have put in all year long. Students receive medals and prizes provided by the local and regional sponsors and contributors. ACT-SO Olympians who receive gold medals on the local level then compete at the national competition where they receive scholarships and other rewards provided by national sponsors.

## Local Program Overview

ACT-SO adult committees should convene during the months of August and September. All local programs are required to submit an Intent Form to the national ACT-SO office before the November 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.

- August-October: Local Programs begin to mobilize adult committee members, recruit volunteers and submit the Intent Form to the national office
- September-March: Local programs conduct mentoring and local enrichment programs in preparation for the local competition
- February-April: Programs host their local ACT-SO competitions

## National Competition

- April-July: Students continue their mentorship and enrichment programs to prepare for the National ACT-SO Competition.
- July: National ACT-SO Competition and Ceremonies

2023-2024 CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS					
BUSINESS	CULINARY ARTS	HUMANITIES	PERFORMING ARTS	STEM	VISUAL ARTS
Entrepreneurship	Culinary	Music Composition	Dance: Ballet	Architecture	Drawing
Hospitality Management		Original Essay	Dance: Contemporary	Biology/Microbiology	Filmmaking
		Playwriting	Dance: Modern	Chemistry/Biochemistry	Painting
		Poetry--Written	Dance: Traditional	Computer Science & Coding	Photography
		Short Story	Dramatic Arts: Acting	Earth and Space Sciences	Sculpture
			Music: Instrumental--Classical	Engineering	
			Music: Instrumental--Contemporary	Mathematics	
			Music: Instrumental--Classical	Medicine & Health	
			Music: Instrumental--Contemporary	Physics	
			Oratory		
			Poetry--Performance		

## NAACP ACT-SO Chairperson & Committee Responsibilities

ACT-SO is a national, board-approved program of the NAACP and is governed by the established policies and procedures set forth in this section. ACT-SO's success is due largely to the dedication of the local ACT-SO sponsoring unit adult volunteers, mentors and coaches. These individuals volunteer their time and resources to the youth of their communities. The following information provides a brief description of the responsibilities of the adult components.

### ACT-SO UNIT SPONSORSHIP

Any NAACP Branch or Youth Council in good standing with the NAACP Headquarters (having submitted a year-end financial report and an up-to-date financial assessment to the national office (i.e., Freedom Fund or membership assessment) may sponsor an ACT-SO program.

***Each participating unit must submit the required Intent Form by the deadline in order to conduct the yearlong ACT-SO program.***

### ACT-SO CHAIRPERSON

***It is recommended that the appointed ACT-SO Chairperson possess a knowledge of and commitment to all facets of the ACT-SO program.***

- An ACT-SO Chairperson must conduct each ACT-SO program in concordance with all rules, guidelines, regulations, and requirements for the current academic year. The Branch President or Youth Council Advisor appoints chairpersons. During an election year (branch elections take place October thru December) the ACT-SO Chair appointed in the fall of that year will remain in position through the duration of the current program year including the upcoming National Competition. The National Director must approve exceptions in writing from Branch/Youth Council Leadership.
  - The ACT-SO Chairperson is appointed in the following manner:
    - Branch ACT-SO Chairperson\* is appointed by the Branch President
    - Youth Council ACT-SO Chairperson\* is appointed by the Youth Advisor
- \*Must be 25 years or older

- The ACT-SO Chairperson selects an adult ACT-SO committee. Adults are any person 18 years of age and older that are at least three years post high school graduation.
- Appoint an ACT-SO program Co-Chair to assist with the planning and execution of the program for the academic year.
- Host a yearlong ACT-SO Program from August-July of each year.
- Report ACT-SO-related activities to the executive committee of the sponsoring NAACP unit including all financial matters, reconciled monthly.
- Conduct a local ACT-SO competition to qualify for the national ACT-SO Competition.
- Collaborate with the appointed committee to raise funds for the current program year.
- Adhere to all deadlines designated by the national ACT-SO office.
- Complete and submit all required documents for all ACT-SO activities to the national ACT-SO office.
- Submit accurate financial records to the sponsoring Executive Committee.

### LOCAL ACT-SO COMMITTEE

The local NAACP ACT-SO Committee is one of the most significant components to the success of the local ACT-SO program. The committee should be comprised of at least five committed individuals with varying backgrounds who embrace the following responsibilities:

- Conduct planning meetings.
- Recruit sponsors and other community support.
- Recruit students, coaches and mentors in the fall of each year.
- Assist coaches and students in the development of their projects.
- Organize the local competition.
- Select qualified judges for the local competition.
- Oversee the local gold medal winner's registration, preparation and participation in the national competition.
- Participate in the National ACT-SO Competition.



## LOCAL ACT-SO SUB-COMMITTEES

The full ACT-SO committee under the direction of the ACT-SO Chairperson bears the ultimate responsibility for completing these outlined tasks. Subcommittees may be created as needed. However, it is strongly recommended that each local program at a minimum create a structure that includes four recommended sub-committees.

Each ACT-SO subcommittee should include 3 or 4 members who are able to carry out the identified responsibilities. Sub - Committee chairs may be selected from the existing local committee or from additional recruitment. A brief listing of committee responsibilities is provided below.

***NOTE: All committee members must be current members of the NAACP.***

- **Student Recruitment:** Responsible for identifying student participants for the yearlong ACT-SO program, preparing and disseminating information (i.e., forms, guidelines, competition schedule, etc.) about the ACT-SO program to schools, churches, recreation centers, etc.; organizing a student/parent orientation, maintaining contact with former participants.
- **Coach & Judges Recruitment:** Responsible for identifying coaches and a site for coaching and enrichment activities, identifying judges for the local competition, preparing and disseminating information to potential coaches and qualified judges; conducting orientation and training sessions for coaches and judges, providing the necessary information and materials for the competition judging; maintaining a directory of past and potential coaches and judges, organizing workshops, planning presentations by guest speakers.
- **Finance/Fundraising:** Responsible for raising money to adequately cover local ACT-SO program expenses; developing fundraising activities financial tracking and reporting system and working closely with the Treasurer of the sponsoring NAACP unit.
- **Public Relations/Media:** Responsible for promoting the local and national ACT-SO program to the community and publicizing related activities and events through the use of both traditional and digital media outlets, proficient in social media usage (TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube), Power Point, graphic design, writing press releases, producing/writing public service announcements (PSAs), pictures, brochures, and flyers.