



Dear Sweet Adelines Member,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones staying safe and healthy.

When the International Board of Directors recently released our statement denouncing songs with racist lyrics, messages, or histories, we committed to providing a tool and support to help all of our members identify songs with those characteristics. Today I am announcing the launch of our Song Assessment Tool.

As part of their efforts on the creation of an overall Chorus Toolkit, the Diversity and Inclusivity Task Force has been working since early 2020 on the development of an easy-to-use tool that provides a consistent set of guidelines to guide members through the assessment of a song based on factors driven by our Guiding Principles of Diversity and Inclusion and a Culture of Belonging. We know that many of you are already doing this type of work when you select your songs, and our hope is that this tool makes your job even easier.

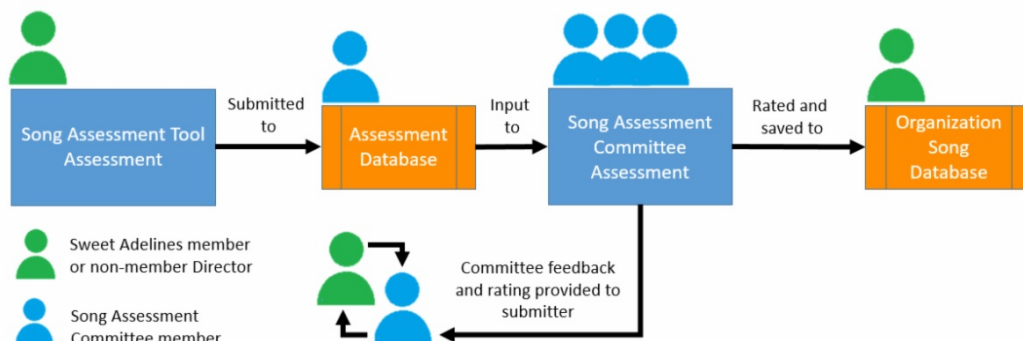
Before introducing the Song Assessment Tool, it's important to recognize the critical work of the members of the Task Force who've contributed to this particular tool in the kit. Just like you and me, they are members of Sweet Adelines from all walks of life and backgrounds. They have devoted hours of their time and offered their personal expertise to make us a more diverse, inclusive and aware organization. We are a richer organization due to their actions and participation.

With the June IBOD announcement, and specifically the change to competition rules that include disqualification for the performance of songs with racist lyrics, messages and histories, the IBOD realized the research process that serves as the foundation of the Song Assessment Tool would provide the information necessary to identify racist lyrics, messages, and histories. The tool was identified as an important part of the process that will enable the organization to enforce the rule change, and the schedule for its delivery was accelerated to give our members access to the tool as soon as possible.

Here's how the tool works:

- Sweet Adelines members (and non-member Sweet Adelines chorus directors) will have access to the Song Assessment Tool. They will assess a song by working through a series of questions that lead them through step-by-step research about the song. Once their assessment is complete, they will submit the song and it will be added to an assessment database.
- A Song Assessment Tool Committee will review the submission and determine if the research is accurate and thorough, then confirm whether the research indicates the song has racist lyrics, message or histories. This will enable the committee to answer the question 'is this song admissible for performance or presentation by Sweet Adelines'? The committee will answer that question with a 'yes' or 'no' and provide that answer back to the submitter. The committee will also save all rated submissions, along with the supporting research, to a database that will be shared with all Sweet Adelines members (and non-member chorus directors).

Song Assessment Tool Process



- This rating is related only to the presence of racial characteristics in a song. While other questions in the tool will help performers assess whether a song is appropriate for a distinct performer or for a specific audience, those beyond the question of race are not included in the assessment of the

song as 'admissible' or 'inadmissible.' A rating of 'admissible' does not have any relationship to those factors in the Judging Category Description Book that indicate whether or not a song is suitable for a performer, including its strength as a barbershop arrangement for contest. For example, we have already assessed the song 'My Romance' as an admissible song based on the absence of any racist lyrics, message, or history, but you still need to evaluate whether it is well-suited to your group based on factors like vocal range, arrangement strength and complexity, and the personality of the performers.

Since we are just starting to use the tool, it is somewhat daunting to think of assessing all existing repertoire songs. To make this new process more manageable for our members and to enable the Song Assessment Tool Committee to respond to initial submissions in a timely manner, we are asking members to begin with submission of their competition songs. Starting with regional competition 2021, the competition registration process will be updated to include an indication that the competitor has verified the organizational rating of each song that will be included in any competition performances, including Open Division and International Finals packages. We know you will be eager to get definitive answers, so we have an initial short-term committee in place now with multiple assessment teams in preparation for an anticipated high volume of initial submissions. A permanent committee will be appointed once the initial volume has been adequately addressed.

If there are songs you are assessing for other performances and are having issues finding conclusive research about racist lyrics, messages and histories, or if you need some help with your first efforts with the Song Assessment Tool, we also have a team of resources available to walk you through use of the tool. There is a new email mailbox dedicated to the Song Assessment Tool for that specific purpose and for any other outstanding questions you may have. The email address is songassessment@sweetadelines.com.

This is a significant new educational tool and process for all of us at Sweet Adelines. We will be providing educational materials, including recorded video walk-throughs of the Song Assessment Tool, reliable research resources, tips and tricks for researching songs, and an evolving set of frequently asked questions. All of these resources will be available as of today on the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion web page](#) on the Sweet Adelines International website. (First blue box under 'Resources.')

As I've said in previous messages, Sweet Adelines International is committed to strong actions that support our Guiding Principles of Culture of Belonging and Diversity & Inclusion. This is an important step in our work toward fully living our principles.



[Click Here to View Video Script from International President Joan Boutilier](#)

We appreciate your continued support as we navigate this process together. Stay Sweet Adelines Strong.

Joan Boutilier,
Sweet Adelines International President