

# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) Strategy

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# Introduction - EDIA in the RSE Community

The Research Software Engineering (RSE) community lacks diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and abilities. As pointed out in the paper [“Understanding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Challenges Within the Research Software Community”](#) by N.P. Chue Hong, J. Cohen and C. Jay, this cannot be “excused” by a similar lack of diversity in related fields where the RSE “come from”. In their study, they found that the RSE community is even less diverse in terms of gender, disability and ethnicity than other classical STEM fields such as Physics or Computer Science. Ethnic diversity is particularly low in the community compared to, for example IT professionals in industry.

In our [RSE Landscape Review](#), we summarise a couple of surveys, case studies and observations about the RSE community. The review highlights a spectrum of RSE and RSE-related roles, and work that has been done to showcase this. It also points out that, while there is a diverse representation in the community, only about half of the respondents of our community survey feel valued, and little more feel represented by the RSE Society. This clearly shows that a lot of work still needs to be done in this area, and we need to work hard to be more inclusive and create a safe environment where people feel that they and their input are valued. Suggestions from the community survey are that we need to do more for RSEs in industry and embedded and academic RSEs, reach out to non-STEM fields, and work together with a diverse range of affinity groups and associations.

As a first step to ensure EDIA in the RSE Society, we have an [Equality, diversity and inclusion policy](#) in place, as well as a [Complaints and Grievances Policy](#), a [Code of Conduct for Trustees](#) and the [RSE Society Code of Conduct](#). In our EDI policy, we state “The Society of Research Software Engineering is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our members and volunteers, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our membership (including trustees) to be truly representative of all sections of society, and for each member to feel respected and able to give their best. ” However, this alone is not enough to improve the situation. In particular, the aims and commitments outlined in the EDI policy do not happen by themselves, and are just the minimum level of EDIA commitment we must have in the Society. In order to actually improve diversity and inclusion, we need concrete actions that bring change.

In this document, we want to lay out the steps that we are taking to improve the EDIA situation in the Society and our community. We are aware that our understanding of EDIA and useful actions to improve it are limited. The current trustee board, as of summer 2022, consists mainly of white members, and in the last trustee election the only candidates standing for election were white men. We are thankful for anyone who is contributing to our community and very much value the work of all our trustees. But it is obvious that we must try harder to make the Society worthwhile contributing to for a larger, more diverse, set of people. As outlined below, we are working on measures to receive input on EDIA from more sources, such as the Advisory Board that we are in the process of setting up.

Given the limitation of diversity in our board, and very low uptake of surveys sent out, we apologise for the limitations of this EDIA strategy which did not have the diverse input that would be desirable. Please email [edia@society-rse.org](mailto:edia@society-rse.org) with any feedback and suggestions to improve it.

In order to make progress we have to start somewhere. This document is an attempt of first steps, hopefully into the right direction.

## Long-term Vision

**Enabling RSEs.** We aim to reduce inequalities in the way opportunity is distributed throughout the RSE community. Our vision here is to develop our role as enablers, ensuring, for example, that all our events are designed to maximise the diversity of contributing voices. We aim to build a community that encapsulates a diversity of viewpoints that are listened to and given a platform to positively shape RSE and the community at large. Our aim here is to address inequities through increasing the inclusivity of our community.

**Outreach.** In formulating our long-term goals, our point of departure is that the RSE community is not as diverse as it should be. Part of our work here will be to facilitate greater diversity in RSE intake. We aim to ensure that RSE becomes an ever more widely recognised professional activity. We commit to ensuring this widens participation and creates a pipeline for welcoming more people from underrepresented groups into the community. To fulfil these goals, we will increase the number of entry points into the community through intensifying our outreach efforts.

**Diversifying leadership.** Increasing diversity within the community is closely coupled with our aim to improve representation in leadership roles. This includes, but is not limited to, the Society's trustee board and leadership teams within centralised RSE groups and the DRI professions more generally. We aim to champion career ladders and information flows about careers that will improve diversity at all levels of our community.

**Breaking barriers.** We recognise that underrepresented groups in RSE are more likely to be subject to heightened job insecurity. We will continue championing improvements to the RSE career and improving information around career pathways in RSE. In the long term, we seek a community where job security is heightened and career barriers are lessened for all.

**Culture and operations.** Finally, we target several cultural and operational transformations as a Society. We aim to make the Society a key enabler of discussion and awareness around issues of equality, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. We commit to providing a welcoming space for this and encouraging continuous participation throughout our community. We will embed the practice of monitoring diversity and representation across all the Society's functions and activities. As a starting point, we aim to grow participation in our annual landscape review. More granular monitoring of the make-up of discussion panels, conference

presenters and more will help us identify and respond to inequalities more quickly. Crucially, over time this will allow us to monitor EDIA trends within our community.

## Action Plan

In the following, we set out goals and interventions with short-term, medium-term and long-term deadlines. This is a living document, i.e., it will be constantly updated in order to reflect the status of these interventions, changes in the strategy, and new goals and interventions identified by the trustees or recommended by our members.

Each goal or intervention needs to be [SMART](#) (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound). If not all of these criteria are met, the goal needs more discussion and should be added under [Ideas to consider](#). For the short-term goals, at least one named trustee needs to be responsible.

### Short-term (within 6 months)

Description	Reasoning	Who is responsible?	Deadline	Status
Trustees have to perform mandatory EDIA training.	The <a href="#">online training</a> will provide a baseline awareness on EDIA issues, that the EDIA team can build upon for support of there initiatives and interventions.	EDIA subgroup	30.9.2021	Done. Every trustee since the 2020/21 term has to complete the online training.
Do an accessibility review of our website and implement improvements.	Our website shows a number of issues which make it harder accessible for people who use screen readers, for example. Very likely there are many more issues that we are not aware of.	EDIA subgroup (Holger and Mark)	30.6.2022	Completed (further improvements will be implemented as necessary). An accessibility checker tool has been added to wordpress, and all trustees have been asked to ensure some basic accessibility rules are

				being followed on all the pages.
Create an accessibility checklist for events.	A checklist will make it easier for the RSECon EDI chair to ensure they consider all essential issues for the conference, and will help for all other events to improve EDIA.	EDIA subgroup (Marion), Conference EDI chair	31.7.2022	Completed. The checklist for the 2019 conference, and the York event accessibility checklist were combined to create the Event EDIA Checklists and Guidelines, which have been shared with the RSECon EDI chair and adapted according to our needs. The RSECon EDI chair has adapted them further for the conference and shared them with the various conference teams.
Work with the RSECon EDI chair to ensure diversity of chairs, speakers and keynote speakers at RSECon.	We want to represent our diverse community at the RSE conference, and inspire diverse (potential) RSEs to join our community.	EDIA subgroup (Marion)	31.7.2022	In progress. The EDIA chair is experienced and taking the lead on this.
Set up a Public engagement and outreach working group.	In order to increase diversity in our community, we want to reach out to more people, especially also those who are not yet RSEs, and tell them about the role.	EDIA subgroup (Mark)	31.7.2022	On hold.

## Medium-term (within 0.5-3 years)

Description	Reasoning	Who is responsible?	Deadline	Status
Do an accessibility review of our processes and tools, and implement improvements.	The processes and tools used by the trustee board need to be checked to ensure that there are no accessibility barriers (or as few as possible).	EDIA subgroup	31.8.2023	In progress. As first intervention, it was decided that all online Society events should have Zoom captioning enabled by default. A detailed review of all tools and processes needs to be performed.
Set up a SocRSE Advisory Board	An advisory board will broaden the range of expertise and experience available to the trustees. People can be appointed who do not have the time to be trustees. In particular, people with lived experience and more background in EDIA will help us to improve on these topics The terms of reference specify that at least one member of the advisory board should be appointed with a focus on EDIA.	Governance subgroup, Advisory Group working group	31.12.2022	In progress. The Advisory Board ToR have been written and approved. The board has been assembled and will meet for the first time soon.
Improve diversity of <a href="#">RSE case studies</a> .	The case studies are doing ok in terms of gender diversity. However, other dimensions of diversity need to be improved.	RSE role diversity working group.	31.8.2023	In progress.



	For example, all but one RSE on the case study page are white.			
Have an EDIA call for the events and initiatives fund, asking our community to submit proposals for workshops, meetings, and any ideas they might have to improve EDIA.	We have a brilliant community with lots of good ideas, and we should involve them more. This will not only make sure that not all the work is on the trustees, but also bring many more ideas and experiences into play.	EDIA subgroup, Comms subgroup, Events subgroup.	31.12.2022	Being discussed.
Hold an online outreach event for students. This should be about an hour long, and should be advertised widely. Through our community, we will try to reach the relevant groups at universities.	We want to tell graduate and undergraduate students about the RSE role.	EDIA subgroup, Public engagement and outreach working group.	31.7.2023	Being discussed.
Create material (videos, slides) about the RSE role and make it openly available.	The material can be used by anyone who wants to lobby at their university for RSE groups to be formed, or wants to create a regional group, or wants to do outreach events.	Public engagement and outreach working group.	31.7.2023	Not started.
Publish a “call to arms” to encourage our community members to hold outreach events and engage in initiatives such as the STEM Ambassadors etc.	Limiting ourselves to the trustees for outreach would have a limited effect. Working with our community we can reach many more people.	Public engagement and outreach working group.	31.7.2024	Not started.
Do outreach activities for pupils and students from underrepresented and non-privileged groups.	We want to support people from underrepresented and non-privileged groups, and show them RSE as a career	EDIA team, Public engagement and outreach working group	31.7.2023	Not started. We need DBS checks to be allowed to work with children/teenagers.

	choice. For this, we will have to make sure that we also reach those that might not necessarily consider to go to university.			
Liase with RSE Leaders on how to improve EDI in their teams.	The RSE Leaders play a crucial role in building and shaping our community. Working with them is therefore important to make it more diverse and inclusive.	EDIA team (Marion)	31.7.2023	In progress. Marion is working on EDI in recruitment in the N8 CIR WHPC chapter, and Marion is holding discussions with interested members of our community. Material from these discussions is gathered at <a href="https://github.com/MarionBWeinzier/RS-EDI">https://github.com/MarionBWeinzier/RS-EDI</a> and in checklist documents. We will run an event with the RSE leaders to share our learnings, and discuss further ways to improve EDI.
Support setting up Special Interest Groups for underrepresented groups.	Special Interest Groups can provide a space for discussion and experience exchange, and a safe space for people from minority groups where they can meet people with similar lived experience. It can also give a platform to advocate for change.	EDIA team	31.12.2024	Being discussed.

<p>Make sure that our events, and in particular RSECon, is offered in a hybrid format, in the interest of inclusivity and diversity.</p>	<p>It has been shown that the online conferences during the pandemic have not only reduced the negative impact of conference travel on the environment, but also increased diversity in the participants, see <a href="https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-021-00823-2">https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-021-00823-2</a> . Recently, many event organisers seem to want to go back to the pre-pandemic formats, at the cost of inclusivity. Organising hybrid events needs thought, technology, and potentially money. We need to commit to put all of this into our events in order to not exclude a large number of our RSE community from participation.</p>	<p>EDIA team</p>	<p>Before start of preparation of RSECon23 (ideally earlier)</p>	<p>Being discussed.</p>
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## Long-term (more than 3 years)

Description	Reasoning	Who is responsible?	Deadline	Status
<p>Propose to the trustee board to change the constitution to require</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A minimum number of trustees from minority groups.</li> <li>2. One of the following               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The president and vice president to not have the same gender or</li> <li>b. The governance subgroup to include at least two non-men.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>The trustee board, so far (as of summer 2022) tends to be mainly white, and in the 2021 election we had only male candidates. We want to represent a diverse community. However, thought has to be given to how to achieve such a balance, as recently the number of candidates who stood in the trustee elections has been limited.</p>	<p>EDIA subgroup, governance subgroup.</p>	<p>31.8.2025</p>	<p>Not started.</p>
<p>Get expert advice on how to improve accessibility in the Society, covering all aspects.</p>	<p>All our accessibility efforts are limited to our best knowledge and information we can find online and in dialogue with our community. Expert advice will go beyond that.</p>	<p>EDIA subgroup</p>	<p>31.8.2025</p>	<p>Not started.</p>

## How does the Action Plan fit with our vision and goals?

- *Build a welcoming, inclusive and safe community where diverse viewpoints are expressed, listened to and supported in making decisions that positively impact RSEs and the RSE community*
  - **Established:** RSE-Con, SeptembrSE, communication channels, CoC enforcement, working group
  - **In progress:** accessible website, jargon free language, easy to find resources, recognition through speaking opportunity and awards, mentoring, volunteering, advisory board

- **Future:** ambassador programme (project board), open research (open source, open access etc) practices for transparent and ethical processes (can we make internal processes open?)
- *Establish RSEs and the RSE community as a widely known and visibly recognised part of research infrastructure*
  - **Established:** talks in international conferences, papers, reports, case studies, podcast, website
  - **In progress:** Publication, social media campaign, curated set of training materials, educational resources, videos for RSE roles
  - **Future:** Promotion pack (1 min, 5 min, 15 min talks, flyers, presentation for others to use), regular training opportunity, international collaboration with adjacent organisations (both local RSE organisations and other organisations supporting and promoting RSE, such as the eScience Centre in the Netherlands, or the Turing Institute in the UK)
- Ensure that engagement and communication processes in SocRSE provide an equitable process for participation
  - **Established:** conferences, papers, reports, case studies, podcast, website
  - **In progress:** Survey and feedback process, volunteer opportunity in working groups, outreach for underrepresented groups
  - **Future:** Honoraria to recompense people for volunteer work – especially in EDIA, hybrid approach for international conferences, online opportunities to actively connect with the members in the Global South and other underrepresented groups
- Commit to creating diverse representation in leadership positions in SocRSE
  - **Established:** Trustee roles, each trustee can join subgroups, different working groups for volunteers to join
  - **In progress:** Members from underrepresented group to join as trustee
  - **Future:** Create SSI fellowship like opportunity to engage with diverse representatives in RSE to associate with SocRSE (network of SocRSE fellows or residents who can learn from established RSE through SocRSE and locally represent RSE)
- Ensure the adoption of RSE skills widely across different professional sectors (academia, industry, government)
  - **Established:** SSI and Collab workshop representation, case studies
  - **In progress:** Outreach efforts
  - **Future:** regular talks and workshops (maybe like open access week?)
- Advocate for the recognition of RSE roles internationally by supporting RSE networks and their work at local levels
  - **Established:** Case studies
  - **In progress:** Podcast, interviews, survey, mentorship
  - **Future:** International call for submission?
- Provide mentorship and organisation level support where possible for the newly emerging RSE groups (such as in the Global South)
  - **Established:** Case studies, mentorship
  - **In progress:** Catalogue existing RSE network
  - **Future:** Open up organisation document for reuse and adoption of established work in SocRSE

- Actively support RSE members from underrepresented groups (based on gender, identity, nationality and disability) by creating opportunities for them to connect with established RSE groups
  - **Established:** Event fund/grant
  - **In progress:** (listed in the table) Liaise with RSE Leaders on how to improve EDI in their teams, Publish a “call to arms” to encourage our community members to hold outreach events and engage in initiatives such as the STEM Ambassadors etc.

**Future:** Create specific call for establishing local RSE network (mentorship support + fellowship), speaking opportunity (active invitation)

# Ideas to consider

This is the place where we put ideas that come up in discussions, individually or as feedback from our community and members, which are not yet fully thought out, and not yet SMART goals.

Ideas:

- Set up an EDIA fund to support participation in events etc.
- Increase diversity in the RSE community as long-term goal
- Discouraging use of problematic language (e.g. <https://itconnect.uw.edu/work/inclusive-language-guide/>)
- <https://edisgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/DAISY-guidance-current-updated-May-2022-V2.pdf>