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The SCAR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Group

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Summary

SCAR's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Group (AG), established in 2021, now has over 150 members. The group is active in a number of areas such as developing a SCAR Code of Conduct on EDI issues, reviewing existing external diversity and inclusion resources, and working with other organisations to share experience and best practices. The AG also includes representatives from COMNAP, the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) and the Southern Ocean Observing System (SOOS). The EDI AG is collaborating with the SCAR Executive Committee, Secretariat, and Capacity Building, Education and Training (CBET) Committee to address the issues identified during a scoping phase, and to advance SCAR's goal of becoming a truly inclusive organisation, in line with the desire expressed in the Final Report from ATCM XLIV, Berlin 2022, "*to ensure that everyone working on Antarctic matters [is] safe, welcomed, respected and free from discrimination*".

Introduction

In 2020, SCAR brought together a scoping group to determine the best course of action for SCAR in tackling issues of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The membership of the scoping group drew on expertise both within SCAR and external to it. To acknowledge and learn from the efforts made by other polar organisations, the group included some members of the SOOS Working Group on EDI.

The scoping group's principal recommendation to the SCAR Delegates was to form a specific SCAR Action Group (AG) on EDI. The AG is tasked with broadly looking at how EDI issues can be effectively dealt with within SCAR and what practical actions are relevant for the organisation.

Early priorities identified by the scoping group included an audit of existing information about diversity within SCAR – looking at diversity in leadership positions as well as in applications to award schemes, and in attendance at meetings and conferences. Other priorities included: building a baseline of relevant SCAR and community data to guide the work of the AG; reviewing other organisations' codes of conduct on EDI and on how to promote best practices; providing feedback and guidance on SCAR Capacity Building activities; and engaging the many existing EDI AG volunteers in support of these and other activities. The scoping group highlighted that taking these priorities forward would require the engagement and support of the many volunteers who drive SCAR's activities.

The formation of the EDI AG was accepted by the SCAR Delegates at their meeting in March 2021, and the SCAR Executive Committee approved the formal AG proposal in May 2021.

The AG's leadership was chosen from over 150 community volunteers, consisting of a Senior Leadership team made up of a Chief-Officer (Dr Adriana María Gulisano), a Deputy Chief Officer (Dr Jilda Alicia Caccavo), a Secretary (Pilvi Mischitiello) and a wider leadership steering group (LSG). The LSG has 15 members who are responsible for different working areas. They represent the Antarctic research community from all career stages, disciplines and geographical regions.

More details are available at <https://www.scar.org/capacity-building/edi/home/>

This Paper is submitted by SCAR in recognition of priority 13 of the ATCM Multi-year Strategic Work Plan calling for Parties to:

Address equality, diversity and inclusion issues, by promoting full participation of underrepresented groups in Antarctic science and operations activities across all Antarctic issues, including science, operations, policy and law.

For ATCM XLV (2023) this called for “Parties, Observers and Experts to share information on their plans on these issues”.

These statements have been taken into account in setting the priorities and future plans of the SCAR AG and are in line with the statement on diversity and inclusion from the Final Report of ATCM 44:

The ATCM highlighted the importance of ensuring that everyone working in Antarctica is safe, welcome, respected and free from discrimination. Participants affirmed their commitment to enhancing diversity and promoting an inclusive culture for everyone contributing to the work of the Antarctic Treaty system.

External Representation

The SCAR EDI AG includes representatives from the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS), the Southern Ocean Observing System (SOOS) as well as the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP). In addition, members of the SCAR EDI AG are active in other EDI initiatives such as the International Science Council (ISC) Standing Committee for Gender Equality in Science (SCGES) and the SOOS Working Group on EDI issues.

Recent Activities

Building on the activities suggested by the scoping group, the EDI Action Group has added further areas of work and below we summarise these ongoing activities.

One of the first activities undertaken by the AG was to review all of the existing data available from SCAR Capacity Building activities from an EDI perspective. This was successfully completed, and a paper to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal on this activity is currently in preparation.

A number of activities relating to the 2022 SCAR Open Science Conference (OSC) (<https://scar2022.org/>) were undertaken. For the first time, the AG was represented on the OSC’s International Science Organising Committee to help ensure the involvement of Early Career Researchers and to help deliver a good balance between gender, age and ethnicity in, for example, invited speakers and session conveners. The AG will also be involved in the planning of the next OSC in 2024.

Another activity led by the AG was the creation of a demographic survey for the SCAR community to be rolled out as part of the OSC. The AG worked with the SCAR Secretariat and local organisers to develop and implement the survey as part of the registration process. The initial survey was filled out by over 700 participants and covered questions concerning career stage, age, gender, nationality and race/ethnicity, as well as research background and participation level (presenter, co-author, etc.). All questions were voluntary and further responses were gathered in a post-conference poll. The AG will use this information both to gauge diversity and inclusion as it relates to the OSC, but also to further refine survey methodology for future SCAR meetings.

During the OSC itself, the AG helped to organise and was actively involved in two sessions dedicated to EDI topics, as well as dedicated workshops. The sessions were very well attended and had speakers from many different EDI-related fields. Recordings are available from the SCAR YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@scar-antarctica/about>).

A significant theme emerging during the OSC was the need to facilitate safe space discussion groups and identify the most effective platforms to do so. This has been added to the list of AG priorities.

A draft SCAR Code of Conduct on EDI issues has been created, and is being reviewed and shared beyond the AG with EDI professionals, along with a community glossary of terms that explains the language used in the policy. It also includes an EDI statement for SCAR which will be developed through different community engagement activities.

To disseminate the work of the AG to the wider SCAR community as well as to other polar and non-polar organisations, a range of outreach activities has been planned. For example, in November 2022, the AG celebrated the third international Polar Pride Day along with many other organisations. In addition, campaigns for “Women and Girls in Science Day” proposed by the United Nations have been launched and will be supported by the AG.

To further develop its relationship with the International Science Council’s Standing Committee for Gender Equality in Science, the AG is planning a webinar to highlight SCAR experiences in dealing with EDI issues, to take place in June 2023.

The AG has also developed an EDI calendar to enhance awareness of EDI-relevant events from other organisations, including online, hybrid as well as in-person conferences, webinars, activities and more. This calendar is regularly being updated.