GRC Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group

EDI Working Group Side Event – *Managing AI for Research Excellence: Embedding Ethics, Equity and Inclusion*

Sunday 18 May 2025

Report to the Executive Support Group (ESG)

1. Attendance

The side event was attended by around 40 participants, which is in line with the sessions organised by the EDI Working Group during previous Annual Meetings. It is also in line with the participation in most of the other side events held during the 2025 Annual Meeting.

2. Objectives of the event

1. Raise awareness of how AI can impact the equity and inclusivity of research management practices, both positively and negatively.
2. Discuss how research funders can apply EDI principles and practices to mitigate risks to research excellence when utilising AI.
3. Identify actionable steps for the EDI Working Group to support GRC Participating Organisations in the adoption of AI.

The discussion revolved around the following key areas:

1. Key benefits of integrating EDI principles in using AI in research management processes and how research councils are or can do so.
2. Potential risks to EDI and, consequently, to funding excellent research when using AI and strategies to mitigate them within research management.
3. Addressing inequities among funders of access to AI for research management.

3. Summary of the discussions

Nagla Rizk, a Professor of Economics and the Founding Director of the MENA Observatory on Responsible AI at the American University in Cairo, delivered the keynote speech at the side event. She emphasised both the opportunities presented by AI, such as increased productivity and efficiency, as well as the creation of new jobs, and the risks it poses, particularly for marginalised communities and gender equity. Prof. Rizk provided several key examples of these risks, illustrating how biased training data can lead AI systems to favour male candidates or to misdiagnose health issues. She stressed the importance of questioning who designs, owns, and benefits from algorithms.

Developing responsible AI involves pursuing "the ethical development and deployment of artificial intelligence systems that uphold human rights, dignity, and fundamental freedoms while minimising harm and ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability." According to Dr Rizk, this can be achieved through two main pillars:

1. Incentivising voluntary compliance with Responsible AI Principles.
2. Taking proactive measures to ensure Responsible AI practices in research.

She also spotted the light on some relevant initiatives that are taking place in the MENA region, such as the MENA Observatory on Responsible AI, which is an interdisciplinary platform connecting policy-oriented researchers and innovators, aimed at fostering collaboration and building capacity for responsible data and AI practices.

The panel discussion focused on the integration of AI in research and its implications for fairness, inclusion, and ethical standards. Dr Eman Khunayn emphasised AI's potential to improve research efficiency. In contrast, Prof. Ute Roessner raised concerns regarding the use of AI in peer review and proposal writing, particularly due to the limitations of large language models (LLMs). The AI models currently available are not sufficiently trained, and it will take time before they can be used fully.

Dr Dorothy Ngila and Prof. Anicia Peters highlighted critical issues related to intersectionality and the systemic biases present in AI systems. Prof. Peters discussed efforts to automate grant management using AI, highlighting challenges in reviewer selection and the need for in-depth, contextual searches. She emphasised the importance of utilising institution-specific datasets and addressing embedded biases—especially those affecting women and people of colour—by incorporating human oversight and ensuring that AI designs are inclusive. Dr Ngila explained that it is essential to consider the relationship between power and privilege, on the one hand, and AI, on the other. Researchers who use AI need to consider all the categories of end-users. However, this can only be done successfully in diverse research ecosystems. AI models are also designed by people, and can reflect their biases and values.

Examples were provided, such as facial recognition systems that perform poorly on darker-skinned women due to a lack of intersectional data, illustrating the real-world risks associated with biased AI. The discussions also addressed structural inequalities, such as English-only requirements that marginalise non-English speakers, as well as biases related to well-established institutions in model design.

The speakers agreed on the necessity of shared resources, training, and mutual exchanges to promote the global use of inclusive and responsible AI. They repeatedly emphasised the importance of transparent data practices and model accountability. Dorothy Ngila concluded by advocating for systemic changes in research funding and team composition to reflect diverse perspectives and integrate EDI principles in a responsible manner.

AI requires large machine structures and a high-speed internet connection; therefore, it cannot be used in communities and/or countries where the necessary infrastructure is not in place. This risks exacerbating existing inequality between research systems and communities. Finally, discussing the environmental impact of AI, which requires large quantities of energy and produces substantial emissions, will be crucial to ensure that its adoption does not exacerbate climate change.

The session concluded with a Q&A segment, emphasising the importance of collaborative learning, policy development, and AI literacy across all roles within the research ecosystem.

This side event paves the way for next year's Annual Meeting of the GRC. Its discussions on the ethical, equitable, and inclusive deployment of AI in research management directly align with Open Science principles of transparency, inclusivity, and accessibility. Moreover, the EDI values highlighted throughout the session are not only essential to the responsible implementation of AI but also serve as a cornerstone for advancing Open Science globally. These shared values underscore the importance of

embedding equity and inclusion at every stage of the research process. Given this alignment, the EDI Working Group looks forward to actively contributing to the next Annual Meeting by participating in and helping shape relevant sessions, ensuring that Open Science efforts reflect diverse perspectives and uphold the principles of fairness and social responsibility.

4. Recommendations

Based on the discussions during the side event, the EDI Working Group recommends the following when implementing the use of AI at funding agencies and for STI mechanisms:

- Promote Responsible AI Practices by encouraging the use of Responsible AI Principles through incentives and recognition programs, and work on the design and implementation of policies and frameworks that ensure ethical AI practices in research, focusing on fairness, transparency, and accountability.
- Address Bias and Inclusivity by ensuring AI systems are trained on diverse datasets to avoid biases, particularly those affecting marginalised communities and gender equity and also considering the incorporation of human oversight in AI processes to ensure inclusive designs.
- Enhance collaboration and capacity building through the design and implementation of interdisciplinary Platforms to foster the cooperation among policy-oriented researchers and innovators, and develop shared resources and training programs.
- Improve research efficiency and ethical standards through the use of AI in research maintaining ethical standards.
- Consider needs for infrastructure for AI and address inequalities in research systems and communities, and discuss the environmental impact of AI, ensuring its adoption does not exacerbate climate change.

5. Next Steps

The EDI Working Group is producing a report based on the side event, which will aim to inform discussions in the GRC regarding Artificial Intelligence. It will promote the insights and conclusions of the side event in the GRC, with a specific focus on contributing to the follow-up discussions on AI at the Regional and Annual Meetings.

6. Annexe 1 – Agenda of the side event

Time (AST)	Item
10.30	Welcome and introduction from the EDI Working Group
10.35	Keynote speaker: Dr Nagla Rizk, Professor of Economics and Founding Director of the Access to Knowledge for Development Centre (A2K4D) at the American University in Cairo.
10.50	Panel discussion: • Dr Dorothy Ngila, Director: Knowledge and Institutional Networks Business Advancement: Knowledge and Institutional Networks, NRF South Africa • Dr Eman Khunayn, General Manager of the Smart Cities Technologies Institute at King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST)

	• **Prof. Anicia Peters**, CEO of the National Commission of Research, Science and Technology of Namibia (NCRST) • **Prof. Ute Roessner**, CEO of the Australian Research Council (ARC)
11.40	Q&A with the audience
11.50	Summary and Close
12.00	Finish

7. Annexe 2 – Pictures from the event