Increasing Inclusivity in Research Software

Opportunities for research software engineers and researchers who write software, including PhD candidates, from underrepresented groups.

We are looking for people who:
- Write software as a core component of their research, work as a research software engineer or similar.
- Are based at a UK Higher Education Institute.
- Are from a minoritised group in research software.
- Would like to contribute to developing an inclusive research software culture.

Remuneration:
+ Fee based remuneration to fit alongside current employment/PhD.
    + £75 for each workshop/meeting with the associated prep or actions.
    + A maximum of 6 meetings/workshops over a 4-month period.
    + 1 session in-person in Manchester with costs paid, all others on-line.

Duration: January - April 2024

Application form: [Online](#)

Deadline for application: Friday 17th November, 10am.

Queries: Anita Banerji, project coordinator, anita.banerji@manchester.ac.uk

Background:

The Software Sustainability Institute (SSI) advocates for good software practices in research, for the recognition of software as a research output and for research software engineering as a profession. However, the international Research Software Engineering (RSE) survey shows that the community is strongly biased towards being racially white and male. For example, the proportion of women and people of colour identifying as part of the RSE community is lower than in both academia and software engineering more generally. This may also be the case for people from other systematically excluded groups.

This project aims to understand and address the barriers for these groups in the RSE community. The first stage is to co-design the research methods, for example, focus groups, interview schedules or surveys, with people in the research community who write software.

We are looking for a maximum of 3 research partners to support our team.

It doesn't matter whether you do or don't use good software practices or whether you have heard of the SSI or not, and you also don't need to have any experience with social research methods. Instead, you need to write software for research purposes and have experience of being in a minoritised group in the research workplace and be keen to promote more equitable career paths in research.

The project will be co-ordinated by Anita Banerji, social methods researcher for the SSI, and the current team also includes Miriam Tenquist, social science researcher, and Caroline Jay, Professor of Computer Science. We are all based at the University of Manchester.

Role description.
As a team we will be:
- Designing research engagement methods that allow underrepresented groups in the RSE community to co-create inclusivity initiatives.
- Working in collaboration with others from underrepresented groups who write software for research including running workshops or surveys to design the methods.
- Engaging in support and training around social research methods and co-creating a shared learning space.
- Being open to exploring creative research methods. For example, imaginative/reflective exercises around a sense of belonging or using metaphor or art methods to share experiences.
- Seeking ways of working that honour the lived experiences of people from underrepresented groups and that understand the emotional burden often experienced.

Essential criteria:
1. UK Higher Education Institute employee or PhD candidate.
2. EITHER
   a. a researcher/PhD candidate who writes software as a core part of their research.
   b. OR a Research Software Engineer
3. Lived experience of being in a minoritised setting and from an underrepresented group in RSE. We know this applies to women and people of colour, and we are also open to other groups who are likely to be systematically excluded. This could include LGBTQ+ people, disabled people, first-generation graduates, non-English first language speakers, non research-intensive or Russell group university graduates and others.
4. A passion for inclusivity initiatives. This could be demonstrated through personal explorations through reading, films, social media around prejudices and lived experiences; taking part in initiatives as a participant or organiser; or through your own experience of barriers to career progression.

Desirable criteria:
5. An understanding of the skills needed for research engagement methods such as focus groups, interviews, and surveys. This could be demonstrated through being a participant; through facilitating activities or training that demonstrate similar skills; or through research projects.
6. Good listening and communication skills around lived experiences. This could be demonstrated inside or outside a workplace setting.
7. Experience of working collaboratively where process is valued as well as outcomes.
8. An affinity with the goals of the Software Sustainability Institute. However, you don't need to have heard of, or engaged with, the SSI previously.

Project team bios

I'm Anita, and I'm co-ordinating our Inclusive RSE project. I've worked as an RSE and a science researcher and am now a social methods researcher for the SSI. It was the murder of George Floyd, alongside my own experiences as a woman of mixed race, that led me to this work. I hope it will give us a better understanding of how we can support underrepresented people to achieve their full potential in the research environment. I would like our group to work in a way that challenges the conventional academic practices which do not benefit underrepresented groups. This could include creating a shared learning space and exploring creative methods.

Hi, I'm Miriam, a third-year PhD sociology student with expertise in gerontology and immigration studies. I've participated in past EDI studies including a prior project with the SSI. My passion for this field stems from my own experiences as a woman and person of colour, as well as my dismay at the ongoing disparities and experiences of underrepresented groups. I hope this work adds an important piece to the societal puzzle of inclusion by challenging accepted ways of doing things both within and outside of research. I want this group to fight for those who still don't have a space at the table and reshape the existing way of understanding and practising EDI within the RSE context and beyond.

I'm Caroline, and I'm a Professor of Computer Science. As I've made my journey through academia, I've become increasingly aware of the biases that are entrenched in the system. I've seen that career advancement can be harder for colleagues of colour and women, due to societal and institutional discrimination. The initiatives that try to improve things are often superficial and are sometimes even counter productive. I have recently started researching this area and have a lot to learn. I would like to work with people with knowledge and lived experience of these problems to co-produce meaningful, systemic change.

Application process:

Please fill in this online application form.
The deadline is Friday 17th November 2023 10am.
Interviews will be held on Tuesday 12th December 12 - 2pm over Zoom.