




Inclusive STM Meetings

Event Chair and Session Organizer Guidelines

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Executive Summary

These guidelines provide STM Event Chairs and Session Organizers with a comprehensive framework for planning and executing inclusive, accessible, and diverse conferences and events.

Key priorities include:

- **Geographic Diversity:** Ensuring widespread geographic representation and particularly addressing representation gaps from Africa, Asia, South America, and regions outside Europe/North America.
- **Sector-wide Representation:** Ensuring representation from both large and small STM publishers, as well as other partner organizations
- **Accessibility First:** Implementing universal design principles to create barrier-free experiences online and in-person
- **Measurable Outcomes:** Establishing clear metrics and evaluation methods to determine the effectiveness of DEI efforts

A phased implementation approach, with adoption slated to begin with the Spring 2026 US conference, is planned.

Introduction and Purpose

STM, as the International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers, is committed to advancing trusted research through inclusive practices. With over 160 member organizations across 21 countries, we recognize that our events must reflect the global diversity of the scholarly communication ecosystem. Our Principles aim to minimize current gaps in representation.

Core Principles

1 Proactive Inclusion

Create event content and experiences to be accessible and inclusive from the outset, not as an afterthought.

2 Global Representation

Actively increase participation from underrepresented regions, especially Africa, Asia, South America and other regions outside Europe/North America.

3 Organizational Diversity

Balance representation between large commercial publishers, small independent publishers, university presses, learned societies, and collaborators connected to the publishing industry.

4 Measurable Impact

Implement clear metrics and evaluation processes to track progress and identify areas for improvement.

5 Continuous Improvement

Regularly update practices based on participant feedback and emerging best practices in inclusive event design.

Pre-Event Planning

Establishing an Inclusive Planning Committee

Working Targets: All STM events should have a planning committee of approximately 6–8 that includes:

- Global Majority World (e.g., Africa, Asia, South America, etc.)
- Representatives from both large (>1000 employees) and small (<100 employees) publishers
- At least one Planning Committee member with knowledge of or experience in STM's accessible program design guidelines
- Gender balance (no more than 60% of any gender)
- Mix of career stages (early career entry to senior leadership)

Resource Allocation

STM will support the implementation of these guidelines. Additionally, STM event practices aimed at ensuring an inclusive and accessible attendee experience are in place.

Speaker and Panelist Selection

Diversity Targets

Working targets for all STM events:

- Geographic representation: At least 15% of speakers from outside Europe/North America
- Publisher size: Minimum 15% representation from small/independent publishers
- Career stage: At least 15% early career professionals (within 10 years' experience in the industry – age is not a factor)
- Gender balance: No more than 60% of speakers of any gender
- Intersectional representation: Active consideration of multiple diversity dimensions

Selection Process

To ensure broad representation in speakers and panelists:

1 Expand the Search Pool

- Utilize STM's global member network including chapters
- Partner with regional publishing associations
- Search social networks and other open sources of potential expertise for speakers

2 Eliminate Bias in Selection

- Use structured evaluation criteria
- Implement anonymous review for submitted abstracts where relevant
- Ensure diverse review panels where relevant
- Question "usual suspect" syndrome (i.e., avoid repeatedly inviting the same speakers)

3 Support Speakers

- Offer mentorship for first-time speakers
- Share [STM Presenters Inclusivity Style Guide](#)
- If requested or needed, contact STM first to ascertain if resources are available to cover travel costs for speakers from smaller member organizations and/or underrepresented regions
- Offer flexible presentation formats (pre-recorded options for time zone challenges)

4 Avoiding Tokenism

- Ensure diverse speakers are given substantive topics, not just diversity-focused sessions
- Balance seniority levels across all demographic groups
- Integrate diversity content throughout the program, not only in separate sessions/tracks

Content Considerations

Inclusive Programming Practices

Session design requirements:

- Avoid very early/late sessions.
- Build in regular breaks, broadly every 90 minutes, recognising flexibility for attendees to step out if needed. Avoid scheduling events and meetings during major religious observances
- Provide varied session formats (panels, workshops, discussions)
- Include networking opportunities accessible to introverts

Virtual and Hybrid Event Considerations

Platform Accessibility

STM prioritizes virtual platforms that include accessibility features. Session Chairs, Speakers, and Panelists are encouraged to familiarize themselves with and leverage platform capabilities to ensure accessible experiences, such as close captions.

Measurement and Evaluation

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Program Chairs are encouraged to work with STM to understand the following metrics and adjust program design accordingly:

1 Demographic Representation

- Geographic distribution of participants and speakers
- Publisher size representation
- Career stage distribution
- Gender identity breakdown

2 Accessibility Utilization

- Number and type of accessibility accommodations requested
- Percentage of sessions with STM Inclusive powerpoint used
- Participant satisfaction with accessibility measures

3 Inclusion Indicators

- Speaker evaluation scores across demographics
- Participant evaluation for DEI specific questions

4 Organizational Diversity

- Ratio of large to small publisher representation
- Participation from different partner types (publishers, libraries, technology providers, etc.)
- Geographic distribution of participating organizations

Data Collection Methods

Evaluation tools:

- Post-event committee, speaker and panelist survey (voluntary)
- Post-event satisfaction survey with DEI-specific questions

Reporting Requirements

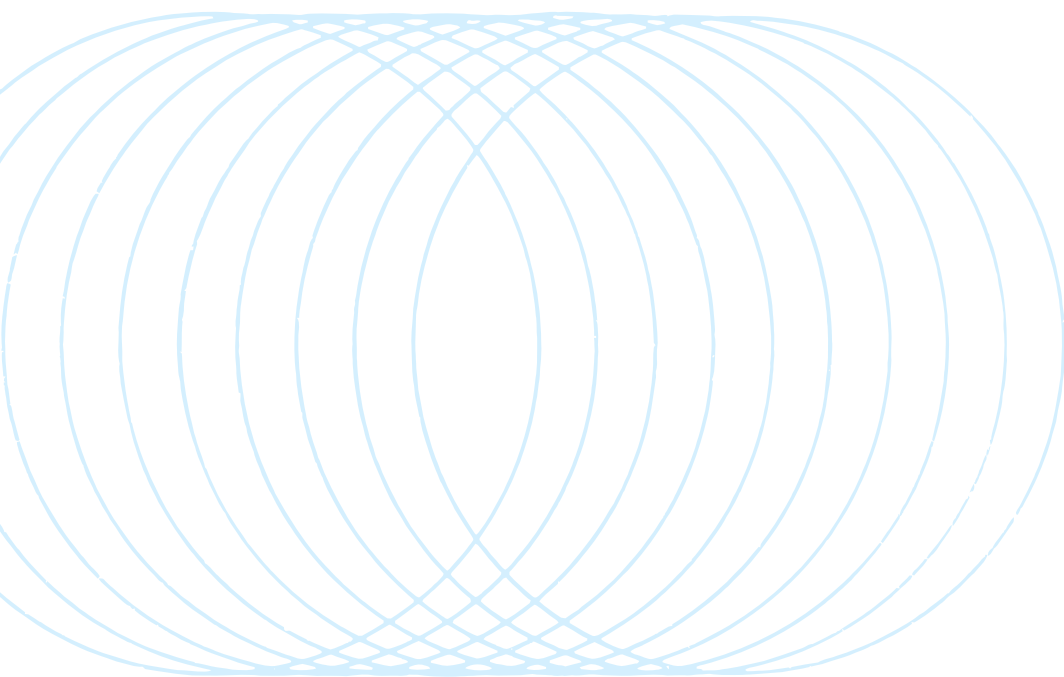
STM will undertake an after-event review, which will include:

- Demographic analysis and participant feedback report
- Accessibility utilization summary
- Recommendations for improvement
- In future, year-over-year comparison data

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Acknowledgements

The STM Association would like to thank William Deluise, Wiley, and Damita Snow, American Society of Civil Engineers, for their leadership, and the D&I Task & Finish Group for their expertise and support.

D&I Task & Finish Group Contributors

Dana Compton, American Society of Civil Engineers; William Deluise, Wiley; Jessica Gedamu, Springer Nature; Ana Maria Ion, De Gruyter; Katherine Kalavritinos, Elsevier; Rachel Martin, Elsevier; Teo Pulvirenti, American Chemical Society; Christene Smith, Wiley; Jane Smith, IOP Publishing; Damita Snow, American Society of Civil Engineers; Simone Taylor, American Psychiatric Association.

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