

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
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ADVANCING DIVERSITY IN SPACE: CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES FROM A NON-PROFIT
ORGANISATION

Abstract

This abstract presents the formation and impact of a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the space industry as seen from its volunteer board members. It highlights the organisation's journey, emphasising governance, overcoming challenges, and its ongoing goal of creating a diverse and inclusive environment in the space sector.

The paper will detail the organisation's strategic objectives and governance structures that support its DEI mission, specifically with the goal of supporting and uplifting LGBTQ+ individuals in the space industry. Initiatives such as mentorship programs, professional development workshops and educational outreach will be showcased, illustrating their role in diversifying the space workforce. In doing so, the paper will highlight the power of community and safe spaces to welcome marginalised peoples into the space industry. The discussion will also extend to how the organisation addresses historical legacies and systemic barriers in its advocacy for inclusivity and equity across the industry, and the challenges which come with being the first dedicated organisation of its kind. Novel approaches adopted by the organisation, such as advocacy through the visual arts, will also be highlighted.

Furthermore, the paper will explore the significant impact of creating a welcoming and safe workplace on workforce retention. It argues that such environments not only attract, but also retain a diverse talent pool, addressing hiring challenges faced by the space sector and beyond. By offering a comprehensive analysis of the organisation's strategies, outcomes, and lessons learned, this paper aims to contribute valuable insights and practical models for cultivating a diverse and inclusive community within the space industry and other sectors struggling with workforce diversification and retention.