

EDI Project Knowledge Sharing and Learning: Q&A with the Royal Economic Society's Discover Economics

Introduction to EDI Small Grants Funding

The [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Project](#) is a joint programme between The Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS), its member social science societies and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The purpose of the programme is to encourage and facilitate greater awareness of, and actions to support, EDI across member social science societies, by working together to share resources, learning and to maximise the potential to effect real and positive change.

As part of this partnership, AcSS and ESRC have given small scale grant funding to support EDI initiatives and interventions. Social science societies were encouraged to submit bids, either at an individual societal level or as a partnership/consortium of learned societies, to support work to pilot or scale up EDI initiatives or interventions.

About RES DE funded EDI Initiative

The Royal Economic Society's (RES) Discover Economics (DE) programme was awarded grant money to deliver an in-person event at a university with 15–17-year-olds from state schools and sixth forms, where economics is often seen as an elitist subject, with the purpose of trying to address the issues that add to the gender and socio-economic disparities within the field of economics.

Here, RES DE take part in a knowledge sharing Q&A, providing valuable insights and learning for other social science societies who may be interested in delivering similar EDI interventions with students from state schools and sixth forms.

Q&A with RES DE

What was the purpose of the Discover Economics workshop and how does it relate to the organisation's EDI work?

[Discover Economics](#) is on a mission to increase the diversity of economics students. We aim to: broaden the appeal of economics to potential students; change their perceptions of economics and economists; and attract more students from under-represented groups. We focus on engaging with young people who are making choices about what post 16 qualifications to take and what subjects to study at university or through an apprenticeship.

Why choose a workshop and what advice would you offer social science societies interested in running a similar event?

Post Covid-19 we have reached over 20,000 young people through outreach workshops and have been able to measure an increase in stated likelihood of selecting economics at university or as a degree apprenticeship. Partnerships are key to success. In this case working closely with economics departments at both the University of Liverpool and Manchester Metropolitan University. At these universities it was important to work with current undergraduate students that identified as being from under-represented groups. These students act as the role models for our target audience.

You worked with state schools in rural/coastal areas of North West England and North Wales that do not offer economics as an option for this workshop, why was this?

Through our outreach work we had recognised a number of requests from schools for workshops that we had not been able to fulfil due to a lack of resource in the area. This funding allowed us to meet this demand and deliver important outreach to young people in state schools – only 50% of whom offer economics as an A Level. Whilst studying economics at this level is not an essential requirement to study economics at university, we know that without sampling the subject at this stage that it is highly unlikely that a student will make the brave step to select it for their degree.



Photo courtesy of Royal Economic Society's Discover Economics

What were the main outcomes of the workshop?

Overall, 155 school students from five schools benefited from the outreach. Upon evaluating the workshop, we saw significant results in increasing young people's interest in studying economics at university, teaching them something new about the subject and importantly their enjoyment of the event. Teachers scored the event very highly on being appropriately pitched for the young people and maintaining high levels of engagement whilst also recognising that they themselves learnt new things about economics too.

How did you approach contacting the schools and what advice would you give to other social science societies who want to build relationships with schools in order to address EDI issues within their discipline pipeline?

Working with the outreach teams at the two partner universities was crucial as they had local knowledge that we didn't. We had also built-up demand from schools before delivery and so we fortunately had a waiting list before going live. I suppose my advice is to build a community of partners and ensure that the outreach has relevance to schools so that they have a clear understanding of the potential outcomes and how it can align with their existing curriculum.

You ran the workshop at the University of Liverpool, in conjunction with Manchester Metropolitan University. Why did working with universities work well?

There are numerous benefits here – the universities have a great environment to showcase the subject, academics to give insights as to how the subject would be taught and then the undergraduate students themselves who are the tangible role models. They also have their own internal outreach teams who are well versed in delivering outreach to schools across the subject areas.

What has the feedback from those involved been?

The response from the two university partners has been extremely positive with both keen to continue the relationship and deliver further joint projects in the future. Lead academics have shared lovely feedback, including the following:

“Many thanks for your support for this event which was absolutely fantastic!”

“It was a fantastic event indeed! It was great meeting you all! Many thanks for making the event such a success!”

As the quotes below show, teachers shared that the interactive elements alongside listening to insights from a variety of guest speakers were the most useful elements of the day:

“Seeing the students so engaged and excited with the trade activity”

“Getting students to interact”

“Panel session was excellent”

“Panel session on career paths and areas of interest”



Photo courtesy of Royal Economic Society's Discover Economics

What has been the feedback from the students who took part in the Discover Economics Workshop and is there any evidence that it has helped to change perceptions relating to supposed elitism of the subject?

Feedback from participants shows that they enjoyed the interactive elements, putting questions to guest speakers and looking at the university facilities. Insights into different module options and career pathways opened their eyes to the fact that there are many varied opportunities from studying economics and not all relate to working in the finance sector in the Southeast, which is a common perception.

How do you propose to build on the EDI work carried out as part of the Discover Economics workshop?

We have developed a community of Discover Economics Academic Champions – these are academics at economics department at over 30 universities that take a lead in their locality for a consistent approach to economics outreach. We meet on a bi-monthly basis to share best practice whilst also being able to have stronger evaluations and outcomes as a result.

Do you have any resources or documents you would be willing to share that could help other social science societies who are looking to carry out similar EDI work?

Yes of course, any other social science societies are welcome to join our bi-monthly meetings and view the resources we use to engage young people.

If social science societies want to know more about the EDI work carried out by Discover Economics as part of this project and if they have specific questions, how can they find out more?

If you are keen then please visit our website – discovereconomics.co.uk, or email at discovercon@res.org.uk

Overall, what is the most important lesson you can share with other social science societies?

You can't achieve success on your own.

Are there any final thoughts, reflections, or learnings you would like to share?

I would like to give thanks to AcSS who have been very supportive throughout the application process and through to event delivery. The Academy has been a great partner that truly aligns with the Royal Economic Society strategic goals to:

- Bring communities of economists together
- Advocate for economics
- Improve diversity, inclusion and integrity in the profession
- Develop the next generation of economists



Photo courtesy of Royal Economic Society's Discover Economics