



# SoLAR Strategic Plan

April 2023—March 2025

# The Challenge

We are experiencing an unprecedented increase in the quantity and quality of information and data available not only to us, but also about us. Educational opportunities are no exception. With recent and unprecedented advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) substantial new opportunities and challenges are provided for the learning analytics community. We must adapt individually, institutionally and culturally to the transition in technologies and social norms that make this possible and question their impacts and implications for learning and knowledge building.

## Vision

SoLAR's vision is to be recognized as the leading organization promoting research and implementation of learning analytics ([definition of learning analytics](#)).

## Mission

SoLAR's overall mission is to advance the field of learning analytics globally by:

- Fostering the highest standards of academic research in learning analytics;
- Creating opportunities for the diverse stakeholders in learning analytics to communicate, collaborate, debate and support the implementation and adoption of learning analytics;
- Raising awareness of learning analytics amongst analysts, decision and policy-makers in educational institutions, professional and government contexts;
- Raising awareness of learning analytics amongst non-academic research and industry innovators.

## Members

SoLAR members include academic researchers, educators, government policy analysts, industry, institutional leaders, practitioners, product developers and students in the interdisciplinary field of learning analytics.

# Strategic Goals versus Core Business

As evidenced by the update on Strategic Plan 2021-2023 at the AGM in March 2023, the majority of goals from that plan were achieved and many remain now as core business such as supporting the *Journal of Learning Analytics*, ensuring leading research is accessible, promoting the creation and sustainability of SIGs, expanding knowledge of learning analytics via podcasts, webinars, blogs, etc. Also taking into account feedback from the learning analytics community and SoLAR institutional members, this document outlines the four main strategic goals till March 2025. .

## Goals April 2023 — March 2025

1. Develop sustainable models for SoLAR major events 2024-2025
2. Assist individual and institutional members with embedding learning analytics in practice
3. Develop an engagement plan to work and/or collaborate with industry and its rapid pace/development (e.g., AI)
4. Continue to increase the diversity and inclusivity of the SoLAR Community

## Enablers

In combination with or in addition to the SoLAR Executive, the following [Working Groups](#) assist in furthering, the vision, mission, core business and strategic goals:

Communication	Education	Inclusion	Industry
Special Interest Groups	Institutional Membership	Journal of Learning Analytics	IAALDE
Events	ECR Grant	Learning Analytics in Practice (LAP)	Website

# GOAL 1: Develop sustainable models for SoLAR major events 2024-2025

## AIM:

Our first and foremost aim for SoLAR is to ensure that we develop a sustainable model for core SoLAR major events: LAK and LASI. SoLAR has come out of the pandemic well in terms of reputation, financial reserves, as well as launching the first LAK with an in person element in four years (LAK23) in Arlington (USA). However, the world has substantially changed post-pandemic whereby a mixed economy in terms of conferences and learning societies has emerged such that some (past/current/future) participants wish to continue joining SoLAR activities online, some desire only face-to-face, some integrated virtual, and others choose their mode of engagement depending on the activity.

**LAK** is the premier research forum in the learning analytics field, providing common ground for all stakeholders in the design of analytics systems to debate the state of the art at the intersection of Learning and Analytics — including researchers, educators, instructional designers, data scientists, software developers, institutional leaders and governmental policy makers. Moving forward, LAK should remain the main forum for community members, including practitioners, to present high quality research.

The inaugural **Learning Analytics Summer Institute (LASI)** was held in 2013. At that time, LASI served as an intellectual and social springboard to accelerate the maturation of the discipline. Almost a decade later, we have seen the learning analytics field continue to expand and mature as it embraces the multi-disciplinary approach across learning and education and the initial goal of LASI has been achieved. It is time now to move on to the next phase and empower our community members and partners by focusing on building the network of local LASIs such as ALASI, Nordic-LASI and LASI-Spain, to name a few, rather than focusing on a central LASI in one location.

The change in how SoLAR supports LASI provides an opportunity to introduce in 2024 a new fully virtual event with a focus on implementing and embedding learning analytics initiatives, including using AI tools, through **Learning Analytics in Practice (LAP)**. This new 24 hour event will provide opportunities for individuals and institutions to participate in three geographic time zones and provide a more simplistic submission process to allow practitioners, industry partners and others the opportunity to present or contribute to the learning analytics community.

## Goal 1: Develop sustainable models for SoLAR major events 2024-2025

Priorities	Actions	Dec 2024 Measures	Dec 2025 Measures	Enablers
1.1 LAK24 model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trial an integrated virtual format building on feedback received for future LAKs</li> <li>• Recommend model for LAK25</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant feedback</li> <li>• Cost/benefit analysis</li> </ul>	Agreed model financially sustainable based on user feedback	Events LAK
1.2 Transition to Local LASIs only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and support more local LASI events</li> <li>• SoLAR to provide advice and assistance with organization as requested</li> <li>• Promote LA in under-represented regions by actively reaching out to members</li> <li>• Promote local LASI events and SIGs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local organizers feedback</li> <li>• Participant feedback</li> <li>• Cost/benefit analysis</li> </ul>	6 local LASIs held	Inclusion SIGs Local LASI organizers Events
1.3 Learning Analytics in Practice (LAP) virtual event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and implement a new 24 hour virtual event in June 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant feedback</li> <li>• Cost/benefit analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant feedback</li> <li>• Cost/benefit analysis</li> </ul>	Events Communication LAP

## GOAL 2: Assist individual and institutional members with embedding learning analytics in practice

### AIM:

While historically LAK and SoLAR in general has been a community of diverse disciplines and traditions, with the increased focus on robustness, CORE rankings, and extensive review processes, LAK has become increasingly more research-focused. While there is nothing wrong with being a leading research conference, as evidenced by both internal and external feedback,<sup>1-3</sup> SoLAR risks becoming too focused on robustness and relatively small-scale but well-executed (lab) studies, rather than also embracing wider embedded applications of learning analytics, AI, practice, and collaborations with wider industry and policy makers. SoLAR Institutional Members have expressed a need for more opportunities to share practices and to learn from each other how to effectively embed LA from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

## Goal 2: Assist individual and institutional members with embedding learning analytics in practice implementations

Priorities	Actions	Dec 2024 Measures	Dec 2025 Measures	Enablers
2.1 Provide opportunities to share learning analytics in practice projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LA in practice submissions at LAK</li> <li>• Trial new virtual event - LAP</li> <li>• Support local LASIs</li> <li>• Institutional Member workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of practical submissions at LAK</li> <li>• Participant feedback from member workshops</li> <li>• Number of LAP attendees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% increase in practical submissions at LAK</li> <li>• 50% increase in LAP attendees</li> </ul>	<p>Communications</p> <p>Education</p> <p>LAP</p>
2.2 Focus on embedding learning analytics in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer new track in LAK 25</li> <li>• Organize special issue in Journal of Learning Analytics focused on large scale implementations/ embedded practice</li> <li>• Recognize the importance of open, accessible, reproducible, repeatable, and replicable data and analysis approaches</li> <li>• Create an Open Science Statement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of submissions in new LAK track</li> <li>• Statement published</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large-scale implementation/ embedded practice track in LAK25 with 10 accepted papers (<i>still going through the LAK review process</i>)</li> <li>• 25% of LAK25 papers have committed to Open Science statement</li> </ul>	<p>LAK</p> <p>Journal</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Executive</p>
2.3 Focus on greater engagement with and between institutional members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional Member only briefings/ workshops</li> <li>• Opportunities to share practices</li> <li>• Opportunities to participate in joint grants or research projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of IM briefings/ workshops</li> <li>• Number of joint grants applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% increase in IM briefings/ workshops</li> <li>• 50% increase in joint grant applications</li> </ul>	<p>Executive</p> <p>Membership</p>
2.4 Launch training opportunities for leading analytics teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted leadership symposium at LAK24</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of attendees</li> <li>• Feedback from attendees</li> </ul>		<p>Executive</p> <p>LAK</p>

# GOAL 3: Develop an engagement plan to work and/or collaborate with industry and its rapid pace/development (e.g., AI)

## AIM:

As is evidenced by the rapid growth of AI in various commercial organizations, there are many opportunities for SoLAR to work with industry to embrace the affordances of AI, while also acknowledging the potential limitations. Prior to the pandemic SoLAR had several links to industry in both application, financial support, and knowledge sharing. Unfortunately, in comparison to other large(r) learned societies, SoLAR is not as well linked with industry currently. SoLAR and industry have a great deal to offer one another which would benefit the entire SoLAR community, and as such this goal is focused on reviewing and (re)strengthening our connections, collaborations and strategic partnerships, not only with industry, but with other learned societies as well.

Goal 3: Develop an engagement plan to work and/or collaborate with industry and its rapid pace/development (e.g., AI)				
Priorities	Actions	Dec 2024 Measures	Dec 2025 Measures	Enablers
3.1 Industry + sponsorship collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create relationship with new industry partners</li> <li>• Sustain relationship with existing industry partners/sponsors</li> <li>• Acknowledgment of academia-industry projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased sponsorship funding for LAK</li> <li>• Number of partnerships</li> </ul>	20% of LAK25 costs funded by sponsorships	Executive LAK Industry
3.2 Responsive to new (AI) developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New position paper AI and LA</li> <li>• Nexus Blog posts</li> <li>• Webinars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of blog posts</li> <li>• Number of webinars</li> <li>• Number of position papers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Position paper</li> <li>• 3 Blogs/webinars</li> </ul>	Executive Journal SIG Communications
3.3 Strategic partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review current partnerships and relationships</li> <li>• Establish a new industry partnership</li> </ul>	1 active industry partnership with SoLAR	3 activity industry partnerships with SoLAR	Executive Membership Industry



# GOAL 4: Continue to increase the diversity and inclusivity of the SoLAR community

## AIM:

SoLAR should be as diverse and inclusive as possible. This is critical to (i) our aspiration to be a truly international society, (ii) maintaining the intellectual health of the field, and (iii) preventing group-think. We need to continue to diversify in aspects such as geography, gender, ethnicity, discipline, methodology etc.

This is also a horizontal goal that can be supported by all other goals.

Goal 4: Continue to increase the diversity and inclusivity of SoLAR community				
Priorities	Actions	Dec 2024 Measures	Dec 2025 Measures	Enablers
1.1 Promote active development of graduate students and early career researchers, in particular outside Western Europe, North America, and Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erik Duval Scholarships for Doctoral Consortium students</li> <li>LAK/LAP conference scholarships for early career researchers</li> <li>SoLAR Membership Scholarships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of DC scholarships</li> <li>Number of conference scholarships</li> <li>Number of membership scholarships</li> </ul>	Maintain financial support for scholarships, with at least half of scholarships offered outside western EU, NA and AUS	LAK Inclusion Membership ECR
1.2 Promote inclusive learning analytics research and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain web page that establishes SoLAR's commitment to tackling discrimination</li> <li>Maintain a list of educational resources that raise awareness and promote work that contributes to inclusive learning analytics</li> <li>Invite contributions specifically targeting inclusive LA research &amp; practice from the community to existing communication channels including JLA and LAK24/25</li> <li>Track and encourage equity focused research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Working groups have non-Executive members</li> <li>72% JLA authors first time authors</li> <li>Number of resources on SoLAR website</li> </ul>	Continue to deploy actions across other elements in SoLAR to actively promote education measures against discrimination	Communication Inclusion Education Website LAK JLA

# References

1. Motz BA, Bergner Y, Brooks CA, et al. A LAK of Direction: Misalignment Between the Goals of Learning Analytics and its Research Scholarship. *Journal of Learning Analytics* 2023: 1-13.
2. Ferguson R, Clow D. Where is the evidence? A call to action for learning analytics. Proceedings of the 6th Learning Analytics Knowledge Conference; 2017; Vancouver: ACM; 2017. p. 56-65.
3. Haim A, Shaw S, Heffernan N. How to Open Science: A Principle and Reproducibility Review of the Learning Analytics and Knowledge Conference. LAK23: 13th International Learning Analytics and Knowledge Conference. Arlington, TX, USA: Association for Computing Machinery; 2023. p. 156-64.



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