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A movement to highlight the importance of research software and the people who develop it

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According to studies in the UK and US, research software underpins ninety-five percent of research. Thirty-three percent of international research produces new code. However, research software still has to be recognised as a first-class research output, and the researchers who develop it often find themselves in dead-end career paths.

In 2012, research software engineers in the United Kingdom embarked on a mission to change the academic system to (1) recognise the value of research software; (2) recognise the role research software engineers play as part of research groups; and (3) develop a career path for research software engineers. Research software engineers (RSEs) typically spend most of their time on software development. They often have formal training in a specific research discipline and understand nuances of the field in which they work, which aids in developing appropriate software.

Notable organisations that make up the global RSE community include the United Kingdom's Software Sustainability Institute, various country- and region-specific RSE Associations, the Society of Research Software Engineering (SocRSE) and the Research Software Association (ReSA). The Research Software and Systems Engineering Africa (RSSE Africa) community was established in 2019 and offers an online forum and regular community meetups for African RSSEs to connect and learn.

In 2020 ReSA published an initial mapping of research software initiatives (including projects, communities, and funders) for the Global North. The exercise was repeated in 2022 for the Global South. The second round of mapping increased awareness of research software initiatives on the African continent, but significant gaps still exist. Talarify is building on the work done by ReSA to increase the visibility of research software stakeholders in Africa.

In this presentation, the authors will introduce various concepts related to RSEs, and share resources such as software sustainability evaluation guidelines, training opportunities, and information about joining the African and global RSE communities. Members of African research software communities, teams, and projects, will be invited to add themselves to the global map.

The HPC community includes many nascent and established research software developers who may be unaware of existing and emerging opportunities and resources. The presentation will interest researchers who develop software, professional software developers in research environments, research and infrastructure managers, policymakers, funders, and more.

Primary authors: Ms VAN DER WALT, Anelda (Talarify); MAPHANGA, Nomalungelo (Talarify)

Presenters: Ms VAN DER WALT, Anelda (Talarify); MAPHANGA, Nomalungelo (Talarify)

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