

DDI Alliance Executive Board Meeting

19 September 2018

Present: Bill Block, Cathy Fitch, Maggie Levenstein, Jared Lyle, Steve McEachern, Barry Radler, Joachim Wackerow

Workshop on the Modernization of Official Statistics

The Board discussed the invitation to participate in the 2018 Workshop on the Modernisation of Official Statistics, which will be held in Geneva on 27 - 28 November 2018, including who should represent the Alliance. The workshop falls during the week of the technical sprint directly before the European DDI user conference (EDDI), which means that Jay Greenfield and Achim, who have attended previous workshops, cannot attend.

The Board recommended asking Mari Kleemola to represent the Alliance at the workshop. Mari has served on the DDI Executive Board and is familiar with technical issues. It was recommended that Mari be briefed by Jay Greenfield about last year's meeting, especially about technical proposals discussed by the group since the meeting.

The Board discussed what the goal is for the Alliance's participation in the workshop. The Board emphasized that it is always good to engage with other communities but they also wanted to have a clear objective for participation. It was suggested that participation in the workshop contributes to one of the goals in the new strategic plan: increasing participation from national statistical offices. Also, with DDI 4 development, we are trying to be compliant with GSIM, which will be discussed at the workshop. Historical context was also provided. Years ago, the DDI Alliance was not present at these meetings and it made it difficult to engage with the national statistical agencies. It was suggested that it is important DDI is present and that the exchange is on both levels.

Open Letters

The Board reviewed two letters recently received from the community relating to resourcing Alliance priorities. One was entitled "The Case for Continued Support of a Model-Driven, Platform-Independent DDI," authored by Dan Gillman, Jay Greenfield, Arofan Gregory, and Larry Hoyle. The other, "TC meeting at EDDI Sprint," was from Wendy Thomas and Jon Johnson.

The Board discussed the overarching concern in the letters about how the Alliance will resource activities, especially supporting DDI-Lifecycle and completing DDI 4. Parts of the community are interested in completing DDI 4 and want to ensure sufficient resources are committed to that endeavor. Others want to make sure we have sufficient support for DDI-Codebook and DDI-Lifecycle.

The Board discussed the underlying tensions about limited resources: How do we choose which activities we focus on? The Board recognizes this is a source of frustration and desires to acknowledge the concerns. At the same time, the Board acknowledges they need to make difficult decisions.

It was emphasized that the Board needs to steer these decisions and provide guidance and transparency, and to get the working groups to agree to these. (It was reminded that the past name of the Executive Board was the "Steering Committee"). It was also emphasized that the Bylaws specify that the Executive Board and the Scientific Board are the leading groups of the Alliance, and that the Alliance risks repeating what the 2011 external review of the Alliance warned against: control of Alliance decisions by a small, non-representative, and non-transparent group.

The Board discussed how to respond to the concerns. It was emphasized that the Board doesn't see this is an either/or situation. Rather, this is a resource constraint issue. It was suggested it might be useful to invite the authors of the letters to join the next Executive Board meeting to discuss their concerns. Another suggestion was to emphasize support for continued development of DDI 4 as long as there are resources, and to invite the open letter authors to work with us to identify and pursue resources to support further development. The North American DDI (NADDI) user conference was suggested as a good example of a self-sustaining project not supported by Alliance funds. It was cautioned that raising other money takes time and that the Board still needs to make decisions that won't be popular by some portions of the community.

Steve said he would create a first draft of a response and circulate it to members of the Executive Board by next week.

Strategic Plan

There was not remaining time to discuss the Strategic Plan. Steve requested Board members email him if they have input on the Strategic Plan. It was suggested that the Board make changes to the plan given the recent feedback. The Board will discuss at the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 17 October at 3pm EDT. The discussion will cover revenue generation and resourcing, as well as the strategic plan.