

DDI Alliance Executive Board Meeting

20 November 2024

Present: Cory Chobanik, Cathy Fitch, Jon Johnson, Maggie Levenstein, Jared Lyle, Johan Fihn Marberg, Steve McEachern

DDI Budget 2025-2028

The Board discussed in detail one of its main tasks: budget planning. Jon proposed to update how the budget is allocated starting in FY26 (July 2025 through June 2026), including how working groups and community members can request funding from the DDI Alliance.

Why the need to change the process and priorities?

- Increased Scope of Activities
 - The scope of DDI Alliance activities has increased, especially prior to the pandemic.
 - Working groups are more active, numerous and diverse, which is a sign that the Alliance is attracting more people to its mission.
 - Monies are needed to support the basic operational activities of the Alliance, its committees and working groups, and to ensure that there is room for innovation and growth of these activities.
- Financial Sustainability
 - For the last several years, the DDI community has asked to spend quite a bit more than annual revenues, which the Executive Board approved. At the current deficit spend rate of \$50,000 annually (FY25), reserves will deplete by 2030, threatening the organisation's future.
 - Membership fees have not increased for 10 years.
 - Revenue has decreased by 20% due to full members not renewing and fewer full members joining.

What changes do we propose?

- Adopt a balanced, scaled budget that maintains core activities while minimising travel costs. Jon reviewed an anticipated 3-year budget, with projections showing what will happen if the budget is not balanced.
 - Recognising that getting to a place where we have a balanced budget in a single year is unrealistic and unnecessary with the current reserves; would have a hobbling effect on the functioning of the organisation but that it should be within as short a timescale as possible.
 - Travel and accommodation appear to take up a large part of Alliance costs and restrictions on this would bring the quickest and least painful way of reducing expenditure.
- Retain an open "Priority Fund" aligned with the Strategic Plan to support high-value initiatives.

- Increase membership fees by 20% from 2026/27 and signal a similar increase in future years (e.g., 2028/29).
- Adopt a target of increasing membership (2 full members in 2025, 2 in 2026 and 3 in 2027).

As next steps:

- Jon will bring forward a more detailed budget proposal for the next EB meeting, including how to reduce overall costs and allocate funds strategically.
 - It was proposed that a 20% increase in one year might be too steep for some members; an increase of below 5% per year might be better.
 - It will be helpful to share this phased budget approach to the membership so they understand that, yes, there are healthy financial reserves but they are at risk of going away quickly if changes are not implemented.
- Jon will bring forward a more detailed funding request proposal for the next meeting, including reasonable budgets for each priority and the best process for allowing people to bid to support strategic priorities. We should inform the community by January.
- Steve to discuss potential EU grant opportunities with Bonnie (CESSDA) and Simon (CODATA) at the upcoming meeting in Brisbane.
- Jared to review Michigan's requirements for the Alliance's participation in potential grant programs.

Annual meetings

The Board discussed annual meetings, including the concern that there is too much duplication between the Annual Meeting of Members (coordinated by the Executive Board) and the Annual Meeting of the Scientific Community (coordinated by the Scientific Board), which makes neither as attractive as they could be. The Scientific Board leadership feels the same way.

The Board discussed separating the business aspects of the membership meeting into a virtual meeting. Concern was expressed about separating the business side from working group and technical discussions. Transparency is key and separation may hurt organizational buy-in.

As next steps:

- Jon to discuss annual meetings with Scientific Board leadership.

Expanding the Secretariat

The Board discussed how current activities are limited by the ebb and flow of volunteer activity. Getting to a balanced budget by the end of the three year budget would put us in a position to commit to longer term expansion to support a larger membership.

Adding a Vendor Page

The Board discussed adding a new page on the DDI website listing the vendors using DDI standards (without endorsing specific vendors). This would be a step towards more formal recognition of the role they play in adoption of the standards.

Transfer of DDI Website Technical Hosting

Starting in December 2024, the technical hosting of the DDI Alliance website will transfer from ICPSR to the DDI Technical Committee. Since this is currently listed in the Bylaws as a Secretariat task (“Develop and manage a Web site for communication within the Alliance and with the public.”), we want to formalise in an email to the Technical Committee about the transfer of the technical maintenance. Jared will send the following email to the Technical Committee:

This email is to outline the transfer of technical responsibilities of the DDI Alliance website from ICPSR (DDI Secretariat host) to the DDI Technical Committee (TC). Starting December 2024, the TC opted to take over website technical hosting rather than the Alliance shifting the work to an external vendor.

The website technical responsibilities for the TC include:

- DDI Alliance website (<https://ddialliance.org/>) migration to a new web server/hosting account.
- Website hosting.
- Website maintenance and updates.
- Security monitoring and management.
- Technical support and troubleshooting.
- ADA compliance testing and necessary improvements per Section 508/WCAG compliance standards

The Secretariat will continue to manage website content for communication within the Alliance and with the public. The TC will manage website content for Products.

No images or logos containing others' IP should be posted on the DDI website without first consulting with the DDI Secretariat.

Any proposed changes to this agreement should be expressed in writing 12 months in advance.