

Meeting of DDI Alliance Executive Board

August 27/28, 2014

Minutes

Present: George Alter, Mari Kleemola, Ron Nakao, Gillian Nicoll, Leanne Trimble, Mary Vardigan

1. Review of action items from last meeting

All action items were completed except for corresponding with the two DDI members who had dropped. It was decided that personal communications would be preferable to letters and that in those conversations it would be good to find out how much fee increases contributed to the decision to drop membership.

2. Training

The Board reviewed the [Alliance Training Principles](#) in the context of the thorough discussion of training that took place at the 2013 members meeting. The following suggestions were made:

- Create a Preamble to the principles to the effect that while the Alliance considers training to be very important, the main priority of the Alliance is developing the specifications, and it has minimal time and effort to devote to training. Therefore, the Alliance can sponsor online training such as high-level overviews in the form of Webinars but cannot be responsible for in-depth technical training, which consultants and other independent trainers are welcomed and encouraged to provide. Webinars are one of the least expensive options and can be recorded and made available online later.
- Think about how #1 (Audience) and #3 (Training levels) relate to each other and remove the first part of #3 that mentions audience since this is a duplication.
- Is #5 (Regional focus) necessary?
- Review and edit #7 (Non-profit status) with an eye toward describing the division of labor set out in the Preamble.

Additional discussion included these points:

- Most current training is face-to-face, but this is expensive
- Right now most people doing training in this mode are also working on the specification, so they can transfer the technical knowledge they have
- DDI has become more complex, peer-to-peer training may not be a viable training mechanism any longer
- Ideally there will continue to be a mix of online and face-to-face instruction going forward

There was a suggestion that the Alliance endorse specific commercial trainers for a fee, but monetizing certification of trainers in this way was seen as unrealistic.

The Board decided that the new training committee should review these discussions and undertake a revision of the training principles, working out what is feasible for the Alliance to do in the training arena. This training group will be convened soon.

3. Budget

The final year-end budget figures were reviewed. The \$20K surplus is largely due to the fact that the encumbered payments to the XML and User Support consultants totalling \$25K did not take place in FY 2014 but will be paid instead this fiscal year. It was recommended that this information be integrated into the budget display by breaking down the fund balance to show these commitments on the reserves.

4. Update on DDI 4 Scientific Board, Advisory Group, Sprints, and Release Plan for DDI 4

An update from Scientific Board Chair Adam Brown was reviewed. He noted that in the past two months the Moving Forward Advisory Group was established to govern the Moving Forward project. The Scientific Board Chair sought nominations from the community to ensure a wide range of representation. The group membership consists of:

- Adam Brown (Chair), Stats NZ
- Achim Wackerow, GESIS
- Larry Hoyle, University of Kansas
- Dan Gillman, Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Arofan Gregory, Metadata Technology
- Wendy Thomas, Minnesota Population Center
- Steve McEachern, Australian Data Archive
- Mary Vardigan (Director), ICPSR
- Kelly Chatain/Nicole Kirgis (Project Manager), Survey Research Operations, University of Michigan

The group had met four times since July and covered topics including the organization of the Dagstuhl Sprint, the relationship between DDI and other standards, the DDI 4 content backlog, and the release plan and communications approach. The Advisory Group (AG) terms of reference and minutes of past meetings can be found at:

<http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/DDI4/Advisory+Group>

The group then went on to discuss the Release Plan for DDI 4. The AG has recommended that the Release Plan be shifted forward, with the first release taking place in January/February 2015 to ensure better quality of the first deliverables so that users can provide meaningful feedback.

The Board discussed what this means for the overall timetable of DDI development and release. That is, if the first release has slipped by three to four months, will this happen for each subsequent release? Getting the production framework up and running has taken longer than planned, but once completed it should run smoothly.

The Board agreed that they want the AG to look closely at the schedule with the aim of getting back on track after the initial delay.

Related to this, the ABS will be implementing 3.2 and would like to leverage stakeholders beyond the Alliance so that more can be accomplished. We need to determine what the process for this work would be. Could two days be added at the end of the EDDI week in London (first week in December) to work collaboratively on DDI profiles? The French statistical agency is also interested in this work as are some of the big longitudinal studies that want to commission surveys with DDI output from data collection firms. The project manager will need to manage this and understand the timetable. ABS needs this work to be complete by June.

There was a discussion of how much responsibility the EB should take for activities during the transition to the new governance model. We should be clear about the relationship of the EB to the Scientific Board and to the Advisory Group during this time when the new leadership bodies are beginning to play an active role. The AG is off to a good start so that is positive, but the EB will likely need to monitor progress until these groups are well established and there is greater transparency.

For example, there should be more clarity about how people are selected for sprints so that we can be confident that the right people to carry the work forward are there. We need to understand the goals of the sprint and the set of skills needed in order to make decisions about whom to fund. It is difficult to parcel out the \$15K allotted across the three sprints since we don't know what to prioritize. We need to give feedback to the AG about this.

Also, a new focus on data citation was added to the Dagstuhl sprint when word was received that an application to NSF to enhance the DDI specification with citation-related information was successful. The EB needs to know in advance about these sorts of things and how such decisions get made.

C. Project Manager

Therese Lalor from ABS has finished her stint as project manager and will likely attend the Dagstuhl sprint in the role of a content modeler. Looking ahead, project management will probably need to be handled by a small team of people, including individuals from UM Survey Research Operations and the Director, since no one person can contribute enough time. This situation is not ideal. It was decided that ICPSR would write up a proposal about project management and circulate it to the Board for discussion offline.

Next Meeting

Gillian will be away until December 10, so Ron will chair the next meeting in late October or early November. On the agenda for the next meeting will be a discussion of the revised revenues document, governance of Alliance products (tools, training materials), and the succession plan for the Director.