

DDI Alliance Executive Board Meeting Minutes

18 September 2026

Present: Trent Alexander, Alina Danciu, Jon Johnson, Jared Lyle, Johan Fihn Marberg, Steve McEachern, Katja Moilanen, Bonnie Wolff-Boenisch

Informational Items

- The following remaining FY27 funding requests have been reviewed by the Board via email since the June Executive Board meeting:
 - Technical Committee request and DDI-CDI Working Group request: Jon informed the groups that the Board is strongly supportive of bringing together the main product groups to have greater alignment between the products, especially with the recent creation of the DDI-C and DDI-L WGs and as an opportunity to develop a clear aligned roadmap across them. However, we cannot realistically support \$20,000 per annum for such a meeting, and certainly not without much more clarity of the objectives and outcomes. Jon requested that they resubmit with:
 - Clarification of the outcomes, e.g. combined roadmap across the product WGs, 2026/27 and following years,
 - A reduction in costs over the 3-4 year period, such as the intended frequency of a F2F meeting, smaller / online meetings, co-location etc
 - “Beyond Descriptive Metadata: Improving Dataset Discoverability through Computationally Derived Metadata” proposal: The Board declined funding the proposal.
- DDI Alliance Organizational Evolution Task Group Charge
 - Jared and Jon met with the Task Force to review their charge and answer questions.
 - The Task Force will submit a report to the Executive Board by the end of January in preparation for discussion at the February 2027 Executive Board meeting.
- Scheduling FY27 meetings
 - We propose to meet in February, March, April, May, and June. Proposed dates and times will be circulated for availability in a separate email.

Developing a New Three-Year Strategic Plan

The Executive Board began discussion of the development of DDI's next three-year strategic plan, which will succeed the 2024-2027 [Strategic Plan](#) and guide the Alliance through 2030. The purpose of this initial discussion was not to establish new strategic priorities, but to reflect on the

current plan, identify changes in DDI's environment, consider desired outcomes for 2030, and surface strategic choices that should inform the planning process.

Lessons from the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan

The Board discussed aspects of the current plan that have worked well and areas that could be strengthened.

Members noted positively that the current plan is short and accessible and that Board members have continued to refer to it. The Alliance's budget is also aligned with the strategic plan. Areas in which the Alliance has made progress include training materials, building partnerships and community, improving documentation, and restarting the DDI Developers Group.

Several areas were identified as needing additional attention:

- **Membership:** The Alliance has been successful in engaging a broader community, but has had less success converting that engagement into active membership. Better understanding the needs of both current and potential members remains important.
- **Tools:** Progress has been made in rebuilding a developer community, but significant gaps remain in the availability of tools that enable organizations to implement DDI. This is particularly challenging for small archives and organizations with limited technical staff. Tools developed by contributing organizations may understandably reflect those organizations' immediate needs rather than the needs of the broader community.
- **Awareness of tools and resources:** The Alliance could do more to make members and potential users aware of available DDI tools. EDDI is an important venue for sharing this information, but the Alliance should consider how to reach people and organizations that do not participate in EDDI.
- **Product alignment:** Work to improve alignment among DDI product lines is underway but remains in progress.

The discussion also raised the broader question of whether the next strategic plan should be more selective in helping the Alliance determine where to focus its limited resources.

Changes in DDI's Environment

The Board considered what has changed since development of the current strategic plan in 2023.

AI -- Artificial intelligence was identified as one of the most significant changes. Members noted that many archives and other organizations do not yet know where to begin in evaluating potential uses of AI, what applications to test, or what useful products or services might result.

DDI may have a role in helping organizations understand these developments and in applying its expertise in data description and interoperability.

Interoperability -- Members also noted growing expectations for data and metadata interoperability. Persistent identifiers are increasingly important for linked data, provenance, AI applications, and research infrastructure. This is also relevant to initiatives and infrastructures such as EOSC, OpenAIRE, and scholarly knowledge graphs. The Alliance should consider both whether DDI standards adequately support persistent identifiers and how DDI engages with relevant external organizations and initiatives.

Audience -- The Board also noted increasing adoption and potential use of DDI beyond traditional data archives, including in research settings and statistical organizations. This raises questions about the audiences DDI serves and how the Alliance can convey its expertise to communities beyond its traditional base.

Where DDI Should Be by 2030

The Board discussed what should be materially different about DDI by the end of the next strategic-plan period.

Sustainability -- Organizational and financial sustainability emerged as an important concern. The Alliance needs a sustainable membership and income base to support its ambitions. Members noted that a model in which a shrinking number of members bear increasing costs is not sustainable; either the Alliance must increase its financial capacity or its activities and ambitions will need to reflect a smaller resource base.

Grant Participation -- The Board also discussed opportunities to participate in grant-funded activities and the capacity the Alliance would need to receive and manage external funding.

Tools -- Tools were discussed in this context as well. Although grant funding has supported tools development in the past, tools may become unsupported after individual grants end. The Board discussed the need for a more holistic tools strategy that considers which tools the community needs, how development is funded, and how important tools can be sustained over time. The absence of some previously available capabilities, such as an SPSS-to-DDI conversion tool, was noted as an example.

Role in Collaborative Projects -- The discussion also raised a broader question about the Alliance's role when participating in collaborative projects: what role DDI should play, what benefits should accrue to the Alliance and its community, and how that participation should be resourced.

Strategic Choices and Prioritization

The Board discussed the need for the next strategic plan to make meaningful choices rather than treating every worthwhile activity as a priority.

A central concern was that DDI has many legitimate priorities -- including standards development, tools, documentation, training, community building, membership, partnerships, interoperability, and emerging areas such as AI -- but limited organizational, financial, and volunteer capacity.

The next strategic plan should therefore help the Alliance determine where it can have the greatest impact and where it should concentrate its resources. This includes considering not only what DDI should do more of or differently, but also what it might do less of, deprioritize, or leave to others.

Relationship to Organizational Evolution

The Board emphasized that strategic planning is taking place at an important point of organizational change for the Alliance and should not be rushed.

The strategic planning process and the Organizational Evolution Task Group's work should be aligned and inform one another while maintaining their distinct purposes. The strategic plan will help define what DDI wants to accomplish, while the Organizational Evolution Task Group is considering the organizational structure and capacity needed to support the Alliance's future work.

Next Steps

Rather than immediately converting the discussion into proposed strategic priorities, the Board agreed that the themes, opportunities, tensions, and choices identified by the Board will be synthesized into a small number of strategic questions.

These questions will be circulated to the Executive Board for review and refinement before being used to help structure broader consultation as part of the development of the 2027–2030 Strategic Plan.

The Board agreed to using the following process for next steps in developing and finalizing the new plan.

Stage	Timing	Purpose
EB kickoff	Sept. 2026	Assess the current plan; identify changes in DDI's environment; and articulate desired 2030 outcomes
Frame strategic questions	Oct. 2026	Synthesize the EB discussion into 5-7 strategic questions that identify the major choices and tradeoffs facing DDI
Stakeholder consultation	Oct. 2026 -	Seek input on the strategic questions from

	Jan. 2027	the Scientific Board, Technical Committee, working groups, members, and selected external stakeholders
Synthesize findings and choices	Feb. 2027	Summarize stakeholder input and identify the major strategic choices and alternative strategic directions
EB strategy session	Mar. 2027	Resolve the major strategic questions and agree on 3-4 strategic priorities
Drafting	April 2027	Translate the strategic choices into priorities, outcomes, measures and implementation connections
Community review	May 2027	Present the proposed strategy at the annual DDI Meeting of Members and gather feedback to validate and refine it
Finalization	June 2027	Incorporate feedback and seek EB approval of the new 2027-2030 strategic plan

Appendix 1. Decision on Face-to-Face Meeting Funding Request

After the 18 September 2026 Executive Board meeting, Jon requested that the Technical Committee and the DDI-CDI Working Group update their face-to-face meeting funding request, including:

- Clarification of the outcomes, e.g., combined roadmap across the product WGs, 2026/27 and following years,
- A reduction in costs over the 3-4 year period, such as the intended frequency of a F2F meeting, smaller / online meetings, co-location etc.

From 29 September through 9 October 2026, the Executive Board reviewed and approved the revised 2026/27 Face-to-Face Funding Request (see Appendix 2) for \$13,000 USD through an email vote.

Appendix 2. Face-to-Face Meeting Funding Request

2026/27 Face-to-Face Funding Request

Requested revision 2026-09

Background:

This proposal signifies a shift in the focus of the Technical Committee (TC) from the on-going development of DDI-Lifecycle and DDI-Codebook to coordinating the content, purpose, internal structure, and technical infrastructure for the development and publication of the DDI Suite of Products. The approach for advancing cross-cutting work with the TC and relevant product working groups is outlined in [Cross-Cutting F2F Meetings: Conceptual Statement](#). This funding request addresses the content and coverage of the first of such bi-annual meetings to take place in Cologne, Germany in March/April 2027 (space is available and specific dates are being considered by the intended participants). Note that past attempts at meeting in the margins of EDDI have been increasingly difficult. The members of the Technical Committee are often involved in other working groups, board meetings, and the Hack-a-thon. This makes it difficult for timing a full Technical Committee meeting and impossible to meet with other product working groups. We have discussed this with the DDI-C, DDI-L, and DDI-CDI working groups and are proposing a new approach to addressing cross-cutting topics through a combination of targeted face-to-face meetings with product working group members. Suggested attendees have been selected based on the topics of this year's F2F meeting

First Joint Meeting

- RDF representations
 - Common classes across products, development of RDF representation where missing, consistent approach across products (SB Goal 3.7)
 - Implications for production processes
 - **OUTCOME:** Full first draft on rules and approaches to creating RDF representations of DDI products
- Common content structures
 - Clarify coverage and purpose of each product in terms of applications and required technical approaches
 - Identify and describe common content, reason for consistency across products and recommended approach
 - Clarify and develop a workplan to address any gaps or issues
 - **OUTCOME:** Review ready document containing a specific profile for each primary product and documentation of the second bullet.
- Integrating new content across products
 - Approach and process for integration
 - Use of Qualitative content as a test of this process
 - **OUTCOME:** Process for integration of new content across products - Review ready process proposal

- Creation of a multiyear roadmap for cross-cutting work:
 - Priorities for on-line work (identifying and scheduling appropriate work)
 - Integration of Qualitative content and testing of approach for integration of new topics across products
 - Identification process for future F2F topic selection
 - **OUTCOME:** A multi-year roadmap for cross-cutting goals with details for 2027/28 ready for presentation to the Scientific Board

Logistics

The meeting will be scheduled March/April 2027 dependent on individual availability. The meeting will take place at GESIS in Cologne Germany. A set of meeting rooms will be reserved for 5 days (M-F). Reducing the meeting to 4 days would save approximately \$1,350.

Funding Requirements

Item	Per Person Cost	Number of Persons	Total
Hotel room	6 nights (@ \$150/night) \$900	5 TC, 2 CDI, 1 DDI-L, 1 DDI-C	\$8,100
European transportation	\$200	1 TC, 0 CDI, 1 DDI-L, 1 DDI-C	600
Non-European transportation	\$1200	4 TC, 2 CDI	7,200
Food/Snack	1 week (@ \$30/day) \$150	10	1,500
Sub-total			\$17,400
Anticipated contribution from orgs			4,400
Total			\$13,000

Suggested Attendees:

Technical Committee	CDI WG	Codebook/Lifecycle WGs
Wendy Thomas*	Arofan Gregory	Franck Cotton
Oliver Hopt (local)	Achim Wackerow	Hayley Mills
Darren Bell *	Dan Gillman	Lucus Bourcier
Dan Smith	Deirdre Lungley	Guillaume Duffes
Flavio Rizzolo *	Hilde Orten	
Jeremy Iverson	Benjamin Beuster	
Olof Olsson	Noemi Betancort	

* In both TC and CDI groups, TC members are also involved in DDI-C and DDI-L
Critical members for selected topics are identified in red

Additional members who are self funding could attend or be added for specific discussions via zoom.

Cross-Cutting F2F Meetings

Conceptual Statement

Organizational Structure

Background Materials

- [Planning Topics of March/April 2027 meeting](#)
- [Proposal resubmission \(July 2026\)](#)
- [Roadmap Document](#)
- [Infrastructure Strategy Recommendations \(December 2023\)](#)

Meeting Specifics

- Face-to-Face meeting would take place every other year
 - Between meetings, small focused groups should schedule one or more half day meetings remotely to facilitate work on specific outcomes
 - Meetings could be 3-5 days in duration depending on specific goals
- Meetings should focus on cross-group goals rather than be used as working meetings for internal group work. Days could be added to the cross-group dates to accommodate individual groups. These costs would be born by the individual groups.
- Selection of attendees should focus on those needed to complete the task list of the specific meeting
- Each meeting will identify specific tasks needed that can be completed or significantly progressed during the meeting time
- The Technical Committee (TC) will coordinate with the primary Product WGs to identify and select specific activities for each F2F meeting and work together between meetings to ensure assigned tasks progress as needed.

Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this semi-annual meeting is to progress the:

- Integration of the production process
- Synergy within the DDI Product Suite
- Cross-product group coordination on content coverage and transformation between products
- Emerging technologies

Goals

Integration of production process

The production processes for DDI products need to be within an environment that is sustainable and supports preservation of products and integrity of the work of DDI. This involves creating a technical infrastructure for hosting development and production work and then ensuring its use by development working groups. DDI is a suite of related products that need to retain a common look and feel for the user and provide clear documentation on the development and production processes. Sharing tools to generate multiple language implementations from canonical content models or managing and publishing technical documentation leverages the knowledge of individual participants across the product line and ensures the sustainability of product production. This includes automating production processes to encourage broader participation by the DDI community, speed up production, ensure quality through validation processes, and reduce reliance on individuals for hand crafting production steps.

Synergy within the DDI Product Suite

The products in the DDI Suite each address a selection of objects in the overall coverage of DDI and are intended to meet the needs of various user groups and applications. Each product should be clearly defined as to its coverage, application, and relationship to other products in the suite. These definitions need to be clearly stated and relayed to the user in order that the user can understand which product meets their current needs and technical capabilities and how content can be migrated between different products as new needs arise.

Content consistency

The primary products of the DDI Suite represent various expressions of the DDI Common Core and are aligned along these common objects. In addition, common content used in the identification of objects, referencing, and the use of controlled vocabularies, SDTL, and future non-core products needs to be consistent across the product suite. As new content is introduced into DDI the primary products must integrate that content as appropriate based on the same model of information and relationship requirements identified by content working groups. While the coverage will vary in terms of completeness and depth by each product, this will ensure easier transformation of common content, such as descriptive fields and use of controlled vocabularies, between products.

Emerging technologies

New technologies and uses of data described by DDI will have an impact on DDI development in terms of content, expression, and production. These changes need to be identified as they arise and integrated in a consistent manner across the DDI Product Suite. Examples of this include new implementation languages, new production techniques, and new models of access and usage such as AI. The purpose of this area of discussion is to ensure that emerging technologies and tools are applied across the product set as appropriate.

Detailed information on these goals and specific related activities are maintained in the [Planning Document for Future F2F Meetings](#). That document will be updated as needed and specific activities added that will ensure the completion and maintenance of these goals.

Planning Document for Future Cross-Cutting F2F Meetings

Meeting Specifics

- Face-to-Face meeting would take place every other year
 - Between meetings, small focused groups should schedule one or more half day meetings remotely to facilitate work on specific outcomes
 - Meetings could be 3-5 days in duration depending on specific goals
- Meetings should focus on cross-group goals rather than be used as working meetings for internal group work. Days could be added to the cross-group dates to accommodate individual groups. These costs would be born by the individual groups.
- Selection of attendees should focus on those needed to complete the task list of the specific meeting
- Each meeting will identify specific tasks needed that can be completed or significantly progressed during the meeting time
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Setting Meeting Agendas

The attached table lists specific activities identified by the Technical Committee and Product WGs. Each activity is associated with a specific goal from the [Cross-Cutting F2F Meetings](#) document. As it is developed, an activity should state its specific purpose, a clear statement of what the activity will result in (document, process, infrastructure change, etc.), priority, and assigned meeting date or on-line work period.

Commented [1]: Under development

TC discusses activities with Product WGs prior to scheduling a meeting.

Goals

1. Integration of production process
 - a. Coordinated technical infrastructure for hosting development and production work with controlled access so that content is supported and preserved over time
 - b. Consistency across products in terms of
 - i. Look and feel of outputs
 - ii. Production tools where applicable
 - iii. Documentation of production rules, processes and procedures

- c. Automation of production processes to
 - i. Increase the opportunities for contributions by the community
 - ii. Support incremental development and testing
 - iii. Speed up production process and make less labor intensive
 - iv. Improve quality through validation processes and production of implementations from a central model
 - d. Leveraging of tools between products for development and production
 - e. Review and publication processes
- 2. Product clarification
 - a. Clear statement of the applications of each product within the DDI Product Suite
 - b. Clear mapping of overall coverage of DDI and the specific coverage of each product
 - c. Clear guidelines for future product integration or differentiation to meet the needs of the user community
- 3. Content consistency
 - a. Identification of common structures
 - i. DDI Common Core expression
 - ii. Identification
 - iii. Controlled Vocabulary usage
 - iv. Integration of SDTL or future non-core products
 - v. Expression of implementation structures (XML Schema, RDF, JSON, Python, etc.)
 - vi. RDF equivalence mappings complementing the DDI RDF serialisation
 - b. New content coverage integration
 - i. Common model of content and relationship needs
 - ii. Coverage in terms of completeness and depth by individual products
 - iii. Transformation of common content (for example, descriptive fields) between products
- 4. Emerging technologies
 - a. Keep abreast of new technologies and the impact on DDI development and potential usage
 - b. Identification of key areas where integration of approaches to new technologies across products is recommended
 - i. Implications for products (structure, coverage, development, production, etc.)
 - c. AI creation of metadata, consistency and accuracy of field usage, interoperability between systems designed to explore AI/Human generated metadata