

DDI Alliance Executive Board Meeting

July 8, 2014

Minutes

- Gillian Nicoll, Australian Bureau of Statistics (Chair)
- Ron Nakao, Stanford University (Vice Chair)
- George Alter, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research
- Steve McEachern, Australian Data Archive
- Anita Rocha, University of Washington, Center for Studies in Demography & Ecology
- Mary Vardigan, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ex officio)

1. Revenues document

At the Annual Meeting of Members in Toronto, members discussed a proposal to implement a tiered membership structure for the Alliance and to increase fees for the 2016 fiscal year based on the tiered levels. The consensus in Toronto was that the proposal should be revised to incorporate members' feedback and then reissued for review with an electronic vote to follow.

The EB reviewed the revised proposal, addressing specific questions posed by the small group that authored the document. First the EB considered whether to add a Foundational membership category, which would make three tiers (Contributor, Premium, Foundational) in total. The Foundational category had been part of a first draft of the document but was removed because it was thought that additional benefits would be required for this higher fee level. The EB decided not to include this third level at this time but to see how things progressed with the two-tier structure. Similarly, it was decided not to create finer grained levels for the Educational/Non-profit category based on size of organization because it would add more complexity. Most current members will fall into that group.

The EB also looked at the issue of library consortia joining the Alliance and whether there should be a special category of membership and special fees for this. It was decided that the current scenario about this kind of membership described in the document was sufficient and we should not go further at this time.

Finally, the EB discussed whether we should move forward to request another 10% fee increase for the second year in a row, given that two long-time members dropped out in June when the invoices were sent out. It was suggested that we add to the introduction of the proposal some additional text about the fact that increased revenue means that we can support more work on DDI 4 and complete it sooner. Providing a cogent rationale for the fee increase is important in terms of transparency. We might also couple the rationale with a statement that fees could decrease once the project is complete.

Related to the membership drops, the EB recommended that a letter be sent to the former members reiterating what it means to be a member of the Alliance and the benefits that DDI offers in terms of data stewardship.

Turning back to the revenues proposal, the EB discussed the fact that the proposal actually recommends three separate actions: implementing a new tiered fee structure, increasing fees, and adjusting fees on an ongoing basis at the rate of inflation.

It was decided to make changes to the proposal and then put it out for review and feedback, emphasizing the three separate decisions embedded in the proposal. We have time before we need to vote to implement the changes. The EB can discuss the timing of this at the August meeting or at a later meeting as we don't need to take concrete action until the next calendar year.

2. Update on Forward Work Program

A first version of the Forward Work Program for 2014-2017 had been discussed at the Meeting of Members and a suggestion was made that a new objective relating to marketing and partnerships be added. The EB reviewed the revised version and made a few additional changes, including retitling the document as the DDI Alliance Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The revised version with changes will be posted on the DDI Alliance website.

3. Selection of Product Owner

Identifying a "product owner" (the term used in Agile development for the person responsible for software requirements) for the DDI 4 project was the subject of intense discussion during the Scientific Board meeting in Toronto. Discussion of this item has continued since the meeting, and an update was provided.

Adam Brown, Chair of the Scientific Board, sent out a message soliciting expressions of interest in joining the DDI Moving Forward Advisory Group (DMF-AG), which will make decisions about the content of the specification. The call for nominations also included a call to serve as Chair of the DMF-AG. So far, Adam had received only one response, so it was decided to extend the deadline for responding by a week. Adam will also begin to contact specific people to serve. Therese Lalor, the DDI 4 project manager, needs this group to be constituted very soon so that the topics for the October sprint can be confirmed and the appropriate participants invited.

It was reiterated that the DMF-AG should be as representative as possible in terms of geography and skillsets.

4. Sprint funding

At the meeting in Toronto, the issue of the Alliance paying for food in addition to accommodations for participants in future sprints was raised. For the Dagstuhl sprint this isn't an issue as food is included in the daily room and board rate.

The Board decided to offer \$50 a day as an option. This will be incorporated into the form.

5. Scientific Board reporting

A suggestion was made during the Toronto meeting that the Scientific Board Chair (Adam) report periodically to the Executive Board to enhance cross-committee communications. It was decided that the Scientific Board Chair should provide a written summary of the Board's activities for the EB to review at its meetings.

6. Marketing and partnerships

As noted above, during the meeting in Toronto a suggestion was made to pursue strategic partnerships as part of DDI marketing activities and to roll this into a new working group. A number of people volunteered to be part of the new group. The Director will assist in convening the first meeting of the group.

Related to this, the Director met earlier in the week with CASRAI, the Consortia Advancing Standards in Research Administration Information, which is a non-profit standards development organization. Chuck Humphrey introduced the two groups to each other and the discussion led to suggestions for possible collaborative projects going forward.

7. Training

In its first meeting as a Board, the EB agreed to review the Alliance Training Principles but has not yet done so. Because this requires in-depth discussion, it was decided to move this item to the next meeting.

8. Data Transformations Tool

ICPSR has partnered with some DDI developers to submit a request for funding to NSF to build a tool that will update DDI XML when data in a statistical package change. The activity also involves creating a Standard Data Transformation Language (SDTL). The EB needs to discuss how these products might be supported and governed in the future.

With respect to the SDTL, the recommendation is that this should become part of DDI and be maintained by the Alliance. However, governance of the tool is more complicated. Under NSF requirements, the tool will be open source, but this can be implemented in various ways. We could require, for example, that anyone revising the code make the new product available as open source also. It is in the best interest of the Alliance to manage the intellectual property in a responsible way into the future.

Because the item will need further discussion, the EB decided to revisit it at the meeting in August. It would actually be good to discuss this at the same time as training because training activities will produce a set of resources that need to be managed as well.

9. Naming of Tools

A DDI developer asked for clarification regarding whether he would be free to create an R package using the DDI “brand.” The EB advised that naming the R package “DDI” could be seen as an infringement of copyright and could potentially be confusing, so the Director will communicate this to the developer and will also ask if it is possible to reserve the name “DDI” for the Alliance.