

## RDA Governance

V.1	Initial published version (originally working draft 3)
V.2	Updated to reflect the work of the OAB Task Force to clarify the roles of the OAB and Organizational Assembly and maintenance of the Organisation Plan
V.3	Revised figure 2. Expanded introduction. Comments from law firm helping establish the RDA Charity.
V.4 + changes	Base version: V4, dated Oct 2013 + draft changes by Stefanie Kethers in April 2015, in consultation with Mark Parsons
V.5	Changes by RW
V.5.1	Comments from AT, further changes by RW and SK
V5.2	As approved by Council in June 2015

### Status

The role of the RDA **Governance Document** is to describe the structures of RDA, and their relationships, that support the activity and principles of RDA, and Council’s powers and authority. The Governance Document is the responsibility of the RDA Council.

### Introduction and Guiding Principles

The goal of the Research Data Alliance is to accelerate international data-driven innovation and discovery by facilitating research data sharing and exchange. This is achieved through the development, adoption, and deployment of infrastructure, policy, practice, standards, and other outputs, as expressed in the RDA Mission: The Research Data Alliance (RDA) builds the social and technical bridges that enable open sharing of data.

To effectively facilitate the achievement of this goal, members of the RDA adopt the following Guiding Principles that underlie and steer the conduct and evolution of the organization.

#### Guiding Principles of the RDA:

- **Openness** – Individual membership is open to all interested individuals who subscribe to the RDA’s Guiding Principles. RDA community meetings and processes are open, and the outputs of RDA Working Groups are publicly disseminated;
- **Consensus** – The RDA moves forward by achieving consensus among its membership. RDA processes and procedures include appropriate mechanisms to resolve conflicts;
- **Balance** – The RDA seeks to promote balanced representation of its membership and stakeholder communities;
- **Harmonization** – The RDA works to achieve harmonization across data standards, policies, technologies, infrastructure, and communities;

- **Community-driven** – The RDA is a public, community-driven body constituted of volunteer members and organizations, supported by the RDA Secretariat.
- **Non-profit** - RDA does not promote, endorse, or sell commercial products, technologies, or services.

Individual RDA membership is free and open to all interested individuals who subscribe to the RDA's Guiding Principles. Organisations can also become members of the RDA by filling in an application form and paying the membership fees. More information on individual and organisational membership can be found in the next sections.

## Individual Member Participation

The heart of RDA is its Individual Members who are actively involved in its efforts. Individual Members may participate through:

- **Discussion Forums** where ideas are discussed within the scope of the RDA. Any RDA member may participate in the RDA discussion forums.
- **Interest Groups** which are comprised of experts from the community that are committed to directly or indirectly enabling data sharing, exchange, or interoperability. Interest Groups serve as a platform for communication and coordination among individuals, outside and within RDA, with shared interests. They produce important deliverables such as surveys, recommendations, reports, and Working Group Case Statements.
- **Working Groups** which are engaged in creating outputs that will directly enable data sharing, exchange, or interoperability. Working Groups operate to a defined objective and on a finite timeline. These are described in their ratified Case Statements and agreed upon establishment. Upon completion of the Working Group effort as described within the ratified Case Statement, a Working Group will be disbanded. Working Group membership is open to all RDA members; members are volunteers who may be supported by their sponsors or self-motivated.
- The **Plenary** which is the bi-annual meeting of the RDA. Attendance at the Plenary is open to all RDA Individual Members, who are encouraged to participate in the RDA Plenaries.

## Organisational Member Participation

Organisations may join the RDA. Organisational Members help to guide and support the RDA, and provide an important route for the adoption of RDA outputs to promote data sharing. Organisational Members are approved by the RDA Council and can be R&D agencies, for-profit companies and non-profit foundations, community organisations, institutions, or any other organisation which has an interest in furthering the goals of the RDA. It is desirable that Organisational Members of the RDA

- Work towards the aims of the RDA and subscribe to the RDA Guiding Principles

- Work to accelerate international data-driven innovation and discovery by facilitating research data sharing and exchange, use and re-use, standards harmonisation, and discoverability
- Provide ongoing financial support in the form of member fees to the RDA for the term of their organisational membership
- Send a representative to attend and vote in the Organisational Assembly (OA) meetings

The **Organisational Assembly** (OA) is the body of representatives from the Organisational Members and Organisational Affiliates (see below). The OA meets during RDA Plenaries. The Organisational Assembly also elects the Organisational Advisory Board (OAB), which provides advice to Council on adoption of RDA Outputs, and the directions, processes, and mechanisms of RDA. A chair of the OAB serves as a non-voting observer member of Council.

The processes governing Organisational Members, Organisational Affiliates, Organisational Assembly and Organisational Advisory Board are described in the Organisational Membership Processes Document.

## Affiliation with other Organisations

The Research Data Alliance wishes to work with likeminded organisations in order to coordinate efforts in mutual areas of interest and to avoid unnecessary duplication and conflict. The processes governing Organisational Affiliates are described in the Organisational Membership Processes Document.

## Supporting Bodies of the RDA

The supporting bodies of the RDA provide the environment to support the work of the Individual Members, Organisational members and Affiliates, Interest Groups, Working Groups, and Plenary, and ensure that the organisational perspective remains focused on the longer term aims of the Research Data Alliance. The RDA supporting bodies are:

- **COUNCIL:** The **Council** is responsible for maintaining the vision of RDA, ensuring the guiding principles of the organisation are maintained, and formally endorsing the outcomes of the RDA activities in line with RDA principles. The Council is responsible for the overall oversight, success, strategy, and sustainability of the RDA. The powers and authority of the Council are described in this document. Details of the processes governing Council membership and responsibilities are described in the **Organisational and Process Plan document**.
- **SECRETARIAT:** The **Secretariat** supports the administrative, logistical, and other activities of the RDA by implementing the processes defined in the planning documents. This includes supporting the Membership and Bodies of the RDA in their undertaking of RDA activities. The Secretariat is responsible for the RDA Organisational and Process Plan document, which describes how the RDA works, its decision making, mechanisms, and general processes. The Secretariat is led by a

Secretary General who is appointed by and reports to Council. The Secretary General serves as a non-voting, observer member of Council. The Secretariat is responsible for operation of the RDA including development and maintenance of the annual work plan. An annual budget proposal is prepared by the Secretariat for Council review and approval.

- **TAB:** The **Technical Advisory Board (TAB)** is responsible for the technical direction of the RDA and provides technical expertise and advice to the Council, as well as helping to develop and review RDA Working and Interest Groups to promote their impact and effectiveness. Membership of the TAB is elected from the RDA membership. A co-chair of the Technical Advisory Board serves as a non-voting, observer member of Council. The powers and authority of the Technical Advisory Board are described in the **RDA TAB Election Process document**.
- **OAB:** The **Organisational Advisory Board (OAB)** provides organisational advice to the RDA Council. The OAB advises Council on the adoption of outputs, directions, processes, and mechanisms of RDA. A co-chair of the OAB serves as a non-voting, observer member of Council. The powers and authority of the Organisational Advisory Board are described in the **Organisational Membership Processes document**.

## RDA Constituent Bodies in Detail

This section provides more detail for each of the constituent bodies of the RDA. The characteristics, roles and responsibilities of these bodies are expected to evolve over time as the organization acquires more experience and continues to evolve its structure for effectiveness and impact.

### Individual Members

<b>Function</b>	Broad constituency of the RDA
<b>Membership</b>	Membership is open to any individual who subscribes to the RDA Guiding Principles.
<b>Joining</b>	Any individual may join the Research Data Alliance; they do so through the RDA website.
<b>Leaving</b>	Members may leave by contacting the Secretariat for removal from the RDA mailing lists and forums. Individual Membership can be revoked in respect of any member who is found not to be operating in line with the aims of the RDA. The procedures for this and appeal mechanisms are described in the Organisational and Process Plan.
<b>Duration</b>	There is no limit on membership term
<b>Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members may participate in all RDA Forums, Plenaries, Interest Groups and other open activities.</li> <li>• Members may join Working Groups and participate subject to the Working Group guidelines.</li> </ul>

<b>Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members are expected to subscribe to the Guiding Principles and goals of the RDA.</li> <li>• Members are encouraged to be active members, i.e. to participate in RDA Discussion Forums, Interest Groups, Working Groups, Plenaries, etc.</li> <li>• Members are encouraged to comment on Candidate Case Statements, Charters, RDA Outputs, plans and documents, and within open community discussions.</li> <li>• Members are encouraged to promote the RDA and its outputs to the broader community to contribute to the effectiveness and the impact of the organisation.</li> </ul>
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## Organisational Members

<b>Function</b>	To provide an organisational perspective on the work of RDA and to enhance the implementation of the output of RDA Working Groups.
<b>Membership</b>	Membership is open to any organisation that subscribes to the RDA Guiding Principles. Organisational Members can include R&D agencies, for-profit companies and non-profit foundations, community organizations, institutions, etc.
<b>Joining</b>	Organisational Members apply to join through the RDA website and are approved by the RDA Council.
<b>Leaving</b>	Organisational Membership is annual, and is renewed upon payment of an annual fee. Membership can be revoked from any member who is found not to be operating in line with the aims of the RDA. The procedures for this and appeal mechanisms are described in the Organisational and Process Plan.
<b>Duration</b>	There is no limit on membership term.
<b>Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational Members may participate in all RDA Organisational Fora.</li> <li>• Organisational Members will be provided regular updates on the work of the RDA.</li> </ul>
<b>Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards the aims of the RDA and subscribe to the RDA Guiding Principles.</li> <li>• Work to accelerate international data-driven innovation and discovery by facilitating research data sharing and exchange, use and re-use, standards harmonisation, and discoverability.</li> <li>• Provide ongoing financial support in the form of member fees to the RDA for the term of their organisational membership.</li> <li>• Attend and vote in the Organisational Assembly (OA) meetings.</li> </ul>

## RDA Working Groups

<b>Function</b>	<p>Working Groups are engaged in creating outputs that will directly enable data sharing, exchange, or interoperability. Working Groups operate to a defined objective and on a finite timeline.</p> <p>Working groups are expected to 1) propose one or more concrete impact-oriented outputs, 2) include a plan for adoption of the output(s) within the proposed timeframe and by Working Group members, and 3) articulate within the Case Statement what specific community will benefit by adoption of the outputs and include representatives of this community within the proposed Working Group membership.</p>
<b>Membership</b>	<p>Working Groups are open to participation from RDA members subject to the participation guidelines described in their Case Statement</p>
<b>Creation</b>	<p>A Working Group is established once the Working Group Case Statement has been ratified by Council. Each Working Group has two or more Working Group Chairs who serve as the point of contact for the Working Group.</p>
<b>Termination</b>	<p>Working Groups are disbanded upon completion of the outputs described within their ratified Case Statement or at the end of the timeframe designated within their Case Statement.</p>
<b>Duration</b>	<p>The Working Group is expected to provide a duration and timeline for activity in the Case Statement. Working Groups are expected to have a duration of no more than 18 months.</p>
<b>Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Groups have access to appropriate administrative and communications support from the RDA Secretariat.</li> <li>• Working Groups' efforts are supported by technical expertise and guidance from the Technical Advisory Board.</li> <li>• Working Group Outputs are widely promoted and distributed by RDA, the Council, and OAB.</li> </ul>
<b>Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Groups are responsible for carrying out the work described in their ratified Case Statement without any major variance in scope or stated outputs.</li> <li>• Working Groups are responsible for the initial adoption of their outputs within a community of impact during the duration of the Working Group effort.</li> <li>• Working Groups are responsible for presenting their work at Plenary meetings and working with the RDA on promotion and outreach about their outputs.</li> <li>• Working Groups are responsible for conducting open discussions on the RDA</li> </ul>

	<p>Forum during the course of their work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working Groups are responsible for upholding the RDA Guiding Principles, including achievement of progress via consensus.</li> </ul>
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## RDA Interest Groups

<b>Function</b>	Interest Groups form to investigate and discuss any issues relevant to RDA. Interest Groups are comprised of experts from the community that are committed to directly or indirectly enabling data sharing, exchange, or interoperability. Interest Groups serve as a platform for communication and coordination among individuals, outside and within RDA, with shared interests. They produce deliverables such as surveys, recommendations, reports, and Working Group case statements.
<b>Membership</b>	Interest Groups are open to participation from all RDA members
<b>Creation</b>	An Interest Group is established once the Interest Group Charter has been ratified by Council. Each Interest Group has two or more Interest Group Chairs who serve as the point of contact for the Interest Group.
<b>Termination</b>	Interest Groups are disbanded when they cease to be active.
<b>Duration</b>	There is no fixed duration of an Interest Group.
<b>Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest Groups have access to appropriate administrative and communications support from the RDA Secretariat.</li> <li>Interest Groups' efforts are supported by technical expertise and guidance from the Technical Advisory Board.</li> </ul>
<b>Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest Groups are responsible for progressing the activities described in their Charter.</li> <li>Interest Groups are responsible for describing their activity at Plenary meetings</li> <li>Interest Groups are responsible for conducting open discussions during the course of their work.</li> <li>Interest Groups are responsible for upholding the RDA Guiding Principles, including achievement of progress via consensus.</li> </ul>

## RDA Council

<b>Function</b>	The Council is the decision-making body of the RDA, receiving and deciding on recommendations from the RDA membership and other bodies. Evidence of a rough consensus is a key factor in Council decision-making. The Council is responsible for the overall oversight, success, strategy, and sustainability of the RDA, as well as the development and maintenance of the RDA Strategic Plan document.
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<b>Membership</b>	<p>Council is an elected body of the RDA. Its voting members are “statespersons” committed to enabling broad and robust international scientific and research data infrastructures, and not to promoting special interests, domains or disciplines. There are three non-voting observer members of the RDA Council: a Chair of the Technical Advisory Board, a Chair of the Organisational Advisory Board, and the Secretary General. Council terms will be structured so that 3 voting members of Council are elected each year.</p>
<b>Election</b>	<p>Candidate Council members will be nominated by a Nomination Committee, a committee of the Council that is responsible for nominating Council members. The Nomination Committee is appointed by the current RDA Council. Details of the membership of the Nomination Committee (including the conditions for admission to and termination of such membership) and the regulations governing Nomination Committee proceedings are set out in the <b>RDA Organisational and Process Plan</b>.</p> <p>The Nomination Committee calls for nominations through the RDA Secretariat. The Nomination Committee then provides a set of three candidates, taking into account individual capability, the purpose of council, and the balance of council membership. This set is presented to the Plenary and the recommendation of the Nomination Committee is either accepted, or rejected by simple majority. If the recommendation is rejected, the process re-commences for consideration at the following plenary.</p> <p>Each year, Council will choose two co-chairs, who co-ordinate the work of the Council.</p>
<b>Term</b>	<p>Council members serve for 3 years and may be re-elected.</p>
<b>Expectations and Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council members are expected to participate in all Council meetings and attend Plenary meetings in person.</li> <li>• Council members are expected to contribute to and represent the RDA in a manner that facilitates the successful accomplishment of its goals, mission and vision.</li> <li>• Council is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the RDA Operations Plan, including the annual plan of activities and budget which sets the organizational membership framework.</li> <li>• Council is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the RDA Organisational and Process Plan.</li> <li>• Council is responsible for approving new organizational members and affiliates and removing organizational members and affiliates if and when necessary.</li> <li>• Council is responsible for reviewing and evaluating all candidate IG Charters, WG Case Statements, and RDA Outputs for impact and alignment with the goal of the RDA.</li> <li>• Council is expected to promote Working Group outputs upon demonstration of plenary consensus and Technical Advisory Group endorsement.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council is responsible for setting RDA’s strategic direction and disseminating it by maintaining and evolving the RDA Strategic Plan.</li> <li>• Council is responsible for the ultimate vote on governance and organisational matters.</li> <li>• Council is responsible for the long-term financial sustainability of the Research Data Alliance (see note below).</li> <li>• Council members are the Trustees of the Research Data Alliance Foundation and have the financial and legal responsibilities described in the Articles of Association.</li> </ul>
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### RDA Secretariat

<b>Function</b>	The Secretariat supports the activities of the RDA, including logistical, scheduling, and other support. The Secretariat is responsible for maintaining, evolving, and getting Council approval for an annual Operations Plan. The Secretariat is funded through the RDA budget.
<b>Staffing</b>	<p>The Secretariat is led by a Secretary General, who is appointed and reviewed by Council. The Secretary General is responsible for the effective and efficient operation of the distributed Secretariat. All members of the Secretariat will work under the direction of the Secretary General. The Secretary General reports to Council. Poor performance by the Secretary General may result in dismissal by Council.</p> <p>Secretariat staff members are appointed by Council in discussion with the Secretary General. The size and constitution of Secretariat staff will be described in the annual Operating Plan and approved by Council.</p>
<b>Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Secretary General will participate as a non-voting observer member of the RDA Council</li> </ul>
<b>Expectations and Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Secretary General is the company secretary of the RDA Foundation.</li> <li>• The Secretariat will support the activities of the IGs, WGs, Plenary, Council, OAB and TAB as appropriate including logistical, administrative, and other support.</li> <li>• The Secretariat is responsible for operating the RDA in line with the RDA planning documents, including the RDA Organisational and Process Plan and the RDA Operations Plan.</li> <li>• The Secretariat is responsible for preparing and maintaining an annual Operating Plan which is approved by Council. The Operating plan includes a Financial plan, Staffing plan, and Activities plan.</li> <li>• The Secretariat is responsible for event and other planning for the RDA bi-annual Plenaries.</li> <li>• The Secretariat is responsible for communications and promotion of RDA efforts and outputs, including the development of appropriate reports to stakeholder groups and partners.</li> <li>• The Secretariat is responsible for open dissemination of RDA strategic</li> </ul>

	<p>documents, including the RDA Organisational and Process Plan, and the RDA Operations Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Secretariat is expected to work with the Council Nominations Committee and the TAB to conduct elections for Council and TAB members respectively.</li> <li>• The Secretary General is expected to provide operational and financial oversight to Council.</li> </ul>
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## RDA Technical Advisory Board

<b>Function</b>	<p>The Technical Advisory Board (TAB) provides technical expertise and advice to the Council. It also assists in developing and reviewing RDA Working Groups and Interest Groups to promote their impact and effectiveness. The Technical Advisory Group is responsible for the development, maintenance and evolution of technical documents.</p>
<b>Membership</b>	<p>Members of the TAB are elected from and by the RDA membership. TAB members normally serve for a term of 3 years and may be re-elected. Each year, approximately one-third of the TAB stand down and their positions will be filled by election. The TAB Election process is described in the TAB Election Process document.</p> <p>The Technical Advisory Board chooses two co-Chairs annually, who co-ordinate the work of the Technical Advisory Board.</p>
<b>Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The TAB will be supported by the Secretariat in executing its activities.</li> <li>• A co-Chair of the Technical Advisory Board will participate as a non-voting observer member of the RDA Council.</li> </ul>
<b>Expectations and Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Technical Advisory Board is responsible for guiding the technical work of RDA, through the development and evolution of technical documents.</li> <li>• The Technical Advisory Board is expected to cultivate candidate Interest Group Charters, Working Group Case Statements, and RDA Outputs that promote the RDA goals of adoption and impact.</li> <li>• The Technical Advisory Board is expected to work with RDA Working Groups to promote adoption and effectiveness of their Outputs.</li> <li>• The Technical Advisory Board is expected to work with Council to evaluate candidate Interest Group Charters and Working Group Case Statements.</li> <li>• The Technical Advisory Board is expected to advise RDA membership and Council on impact-oriented WG opportunities and discussion topics.</li> <li>• The Technical Advisory Board is expected to provide technical advice to Council to inform strategic approaches and decisions.</li> </ul>

## RDA Organisational Advisory Board

<b>Function</b>	The Organisational Advisory Board (OAB) is constituted from representatives of RDA Organisational Members and Affiliates and provides advice to Council on RDA organisational and process issues, overarching strategy, etc.
<b>Membership</b>	Organisational members who have been approved by Council will nominate a representative of the organisation to be a member of the Organisational Assembly, which in turn elects the OAB. The election process is described in the RDA Organisational Membership Processes document. Member organisations may replace their organisational representatives at their discretion.  The OAB will annually elect two co-Chairs, who coordinate the work of the OAB.
<b>Duration</b>	Organisational members may serve on the OAB as long as their organisations are approved organisational members of the RDA. Organisational approval and revoking organisational and affiliate membership is the responsibility of Council.
<b>Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The OAB will be supported by the Secretariat in executing its activities.</li> <li>• A co-chair of the Organisational Advisory Board will participate as a non-voting observer member of the RDA Council.</li> </ul>
<b>Expectations and Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The OAB provides input to Council on the organisational processes, structure, strategic direction, and sustainability of the RDA.</li> <li>• The OAB advises on developing the RDA Organisational and Process Plan.</li> <li>• OAB members are expected to subscribe to the RDA Guiding Principles and attend OAB meetings and the bi-annual Plenaries.</li> <li>• OAB members are expected to act as conduits between their organisations and the RDA.</li> </ul>

## RDA Support Model

In the medium to long term, the RDA will develop a sustainable financial model that will support its Secretariat, Events and other efforts. The development and implementation of this model will be the responsibility of the RDA Council.

In developing the RDA's sustainable financial model:

- The RDA Council, in consultation with other RDA bodies and stakeholders, will develop an overarching viable financial model for RDA.
- The RDA Council will develop a structure to determine the level of financial and in-kind support expected from OAB members.
- The RDA Secretary General will work with the RDA Council, OAB and TAB to develop a sustainable model for conducting and supporting the RDA Plenary

- The RDA Secretary General will work with the RDA Council to develop an appropriate vehicle for funding Secretariat staff and services (including website, promotional efforts and materials, auditing, administration, etc.)