

Meeting of the DDI Alliance Executive Board

August 28, 2013

Minutes

Present

- George Alter, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research
- Mari Kleemola, Finnish Social Science Data Service
- Steve McEachern, Australian Data Archive
- Ron Nakao, Stanford University
- Gillian Nicoll, Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Anita Rocha, University of Washington, Center for Studies in Demography & Ecology
- Leanne Trimble, University of Toronto Scholars Portal
- Mary Vardigan, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ex officio)

After a round of introductions, the DDI Alliance Executive Board (EB) discussed the following items and issues.

Meeting Logistics

The EB agreed to meet regularly every two months (more often if important issues arise), with Doodle polls used to establish availability. Due to the geographic spread of the members, meeting times will vary. Whenever possible, business will be conducted over email.

Executive Board Chair

The EB will need to elect a Chair and Vice Chair from within the group soon. The Chair serves for two years; responsibilities include chairing the EB meetings and the Annual Meeting of Members. It was agreed that any EB member interested in nominating someone or putting his or her name forward for these positions should contact the Executive Director.

Budget

The organization closed FY2013 with a surplus, leading to reserves of \$117,333. The surplus was mainly the result of not paying a consultant (\$20K) during the year.

For FY 2014 there is a projected deficit of around \$16K. Included in the expenses for the year is a one-time cost for registering the DDI mark and \$10K for a meeting related to the DDI model. This led to a discussion of ways to increase revenue.

A question was raised about whether the EB has the authority to set membership fees and in particular to adopt a tiered fee structure. The new Bylaws state that one of the purposes of the EB is to “set Alliance membership fees and length of membership term for each institutional classification of membership subject to the ratification by formal resolution at the Annual Meeting of Members.”

The notice of renewal of membership fees will go out in May 2014, so the EB would have to establish/ratify a new fee structure before the next meeting in Toronto and that new structure would take effect on July 1, 2014.

The group discussed the fact that it is important to increase revenues to match growing expenses and new plans/initiatives. This argues for developing a longer budget projection with adequate reserves (projecting out at least three years) that will give us a sense of the amount of extra revenues needed. Such a budget and plan with a longer timeframe was recommended by the members at the Annual Meeting. It was pointed out that having more money will permit us to move faster and accomplish more in a shorter period. It is hoped that more NSIs will join the Alliance due to synergies with the GSIM work, so this may help to increase revenue as well.

It was decided to set up a smaller group to start on a three-year plan and budget driven by the strategic priorities of the Alliance. Gillian, Steve, and Ron will work on this and have a draft by the next meeting (early November).

It was also noted that members proposed a 10 percent fee increase for FY2015 but had said a year earlier at the meeting in Washington, DC, that most could afford an extra 20 percent. This sort of fee increase needs to be considered as an alternative to, or in combination with, any kind of tiered membership or sponsorship model.

Information Model for the DDI Specification

Developing the new model-based DDI specification will be an ongoing expense for at least the near term. The roadmap to achieve the data model has been adjusted to reflect a later start with the first set of deliverables available at the end of the first quarter in 2015. Some [summary information](#) about future plans for the model is available.

We are in the process of establishing a set of “sprints” to make rapid progress. The first sprint will be held at Dagstuhl in October and the second after EDDI, which is to take place in Paris in December. As accommodations in Paris are expensive, other locations are being investigated for the second sprint. Ideally, the Alliance would be able to pay accommodations for sprint participants.

There is also a need for a dedicated project manager for the modeling work. Such a position helped GSIM make rapid progress in creating its information model. We have put out some preliminary feelers to see if people have time for this, but we should continue to look for good people for this role.

High-level Strategic Priorities

The priorities listed in the recent [METIS paper](#) are: (1) Move the new governance structure forward; (2) Develop a model-based DDI specification; (3) Encourage more membership in the Alliance through increased outreach efforts, especially to NSIs. The EB needs to think about whether these are the right priorities for the future as it starts its term.

DDI Mark to Protect IP

The members have agreed to have the University of Michigan register a Collective Mark for DDI and we need official confirmation to move ahead. The EB agreed that we can move forward with this. One issue we need to investigate is whether there are any issues around countries not covered under the Madrid filing.

Enhancing Revenue

The EB considered two models for a tiered membership – one based on commitment to using DDI and one based on number of employees in member organizations. It was noted that we need to have compelling membership privileges appropriate for each tier, such regular updates on developments for those that contribute more.

The EB didn’t like the term “commitment model” nor the designations of Gold, Silver, and Bronze. The ICPSR model is that the more you benefit, the more you pay, but this is harder to justify for DDI membership. The EB also rejected any form of paying more to get more influence. DDI has always operated by the principle of equal voting rights among members.

In-kind contributions are very important. How can we recognize this type of contribution in a tiered membership scheme? It was decided to establish another small group (Anita, Leanne, Mari) to look at the revenue side of the equation, which would include

investigating increases to membership dues, a tiered membership structure, and sponsorship opportunities.

Training

Members at the Annual Meeting had asked the EB to reevaluate the Training Principles and possibly to add some information about the Alliance policy around for-profit training (see discussion in [May 2013 minutes](#)). It was thought that the document needed more clarity around whether the Alliance was encouraging or discouraging commercial training.

The EB mentioned that this discussion paralleled an earlier Alliance discussion on whether the Alliance should be involved in tools development or leave this to other entities. The EB thought that the Alliance ideally shouldn't be responsible for tools or training, but could serve as a clearinghouse for training materials. The most important focus of the Alliance is the specification itself. However, anything the Alliance does regarding training should not be seen as a threat to commercial/outside training as there is room for both models – peer-to-peer and consultant training. The Alliance does need some high-level training about the importance of DDI and the business case for using the standard. This could be a project the Alliance undertakes. The Alliance could also perform a sort of certification function, not pedagogical, but focused on whether the training results in accurate DDI.

The discussion turned to the status of the current [Training Principles](#) document, which was approved by the Steering Committee but not formally approved by the membership. The EB decided that it wants time to review the document and perhaps replace it with another mechanism to determine what kinds of training are needed and identify gaps. A small committee may need to be constituted to review the current situation and make recommendations. At this point the EB is not comfortable with the current Training Principles document and will have subsequent discussions resulting in a new proposal.