Engaging with the Research Data Alliance

**The Value of the Research Data Alliance to Organisations performing Research**

***The Research Data Alliance’s vision is Researchers and innovators openly sharing data across technologies, disciplines, and countries to address the grand challenges of society***

The Research Data Alliance (RDA) is a community-driven organisation whose mission is to develop the social and technical data infrastructure needed to drive innovation surrounding data sharing and data interoperability.

Established in 2013, RDA supports more than 8,400 international members representing 137 countries, has generated 32 concrete outputs (eight of which are recognized as European ICT technical specifications) with over 95 documented adoption cases (May 2019).

The Research Data Alliance enables data to be shared across barriers through outputs developed by focused Working Groups and Interest Groups, formed of volunteer experts from around the world and drawn from academia, private sector and government. Participation in RDA is open to anyone who agrees to its guiding principles of openness, consensus, balance, harmonisation, with a community driven and non-profit approach.

RDA has a grass-roots, inclusive approach covering all data lifecycle stages, engaging data producers, users and stewards, addressing data exchange, processing, and storage. It has succeeded in creating the **neutral social platform** where international research data experts meet to exchange views and to agree on topics including social hurdles on data sharing, education and training challenges, data management plans and certification of data repositories, disciplinary and interdisciplinary interoperability, as well as technological aspects.

The distinction between the two major components of the Alliance is important to explain as a preamble to the engagement possibilities.

* The **Work** of RDA is done by the volunteer community through self-formed, focused Working Groups and exploratory Interest Groups to build the social and technical connections or bridges.
* The **Business** of RDA is to support that community and facilitate the building and using of the bridges that enable open sharing of data.

There are thus a number of different ways for an organisation performing research to engage with the Research Data Alliance.

## WHY SHOULD ORGANISATIONS PERFORMING RESEARCH ENGAGE WITH RDA?

Every research performing organisation has specific responsibilities around the management and quality of research data outputs created at the organisation.

***Shaping and adopting international agreements that affect management and quality provide a way for the organisation to manage risk and create strategic advantage****.*

The Research Data Alliance offers many solutions and benefits for organisations performing research and their staff:

* As a bottom-up, international organisation with multi-disciplinary and multi domain data professionals collaborating to identify and create research data interoperability solutions, the Research Data Alliance offers a **neutral forum** for the creation of open, international agreements on technical, social and governance mechanisms for research data interoperability – this enables an organisation to shape, gain early access to and adopt agreements in areas that are crucial to its purposes;
* RDA is a **global platform and network** offering a unique opportunity to interact and collaborate with leading organisations, institutes and funders – this enables organisations to extend and sustain their international network and key staff at the institution to engage with the best in the world on organisational best practice and policies in open science and research data management;
* Many fields of research depend on being able to locate, understand and reuse data produced elsewhere. RDA groups produce **guidelines, tools, methods and infrastructures** to make this process efficient and develop the skills necessary to use them, giving organisations an advantage in speed and efficiency of research, and the capacity to share, check and expand their guidelines for best practices in managing the data lifecycle;
* Access to an international forum that facilitates the **harmonisation, integration and/or implementation** of standards and methods for data interoperability;
* Opportunities to partner with expertise to augment **specific communities of interest** and corresponding data interoperability solutions;
* A means of **managing institutional risk** with regard to data management and data quality obligations of a research performing organisation;
* Access to an extraordinary **network of international colleagues and organisations** with a broad set of experiences, perspectives, practices, and intellectual frameworks relevant to data-driven innovation.

## what is the benefit to rda OF engaging with ORGANISATIONS PERFORMING RESEARCH?

Organisations that have research data management at their core and part of their overall strategy offer significant contributions to the Research Data Alliance by:

* Augmenting the worldwide network of international, expert data and information professionals collaborating on research data challenges with organisational representatives;
* Contributing to the development and maintenance of high-quality Outputs and Recommendations to solve global, current and relevant data interoperability problems;
* Creating and shaping RDA's future Recommendations and Outputs, ensuring it is addressing real-world challenges;
* Proposing and developing solutions as well as use cases to actual data interoperability challenges;
* Acting as RDA adopters who amplify, direct, and promote RDA Recommendations for the greatest effect and utility in their communities.

## HOW CAN YOUR ORGANISATION ENGAGE WITH RDA?

There are a series of different engagement mechanisms for an organisation to engage with the Research Data Alliance:

* Organisations can become **Sponsors** of Research Data Alliance Business and / or Work activities. The cost of supporting the Work of RDA is outlined below.
* Organisations can become **Supporters** by contributing to the Business of RDA through an annual financial contribution to be agreed directly with the RDA Foundation. Indicatively contributions of this kind have been between GBP £20,000 to GBP £60,000 per annum.
* Organisations can join RDA as **organisational members[[1]](#footnote-2)** and pay an annual subscription fee based on the number of employees (< than 50 employees: USD $1,000 per year | 50 and <250 employees: USD $2,000 per year | >250 employees: USD $10,000 per year).[[2]](#footnote-3)
* Research organisation representatives can become **Individual RDA community members**. Individuals are invited to join as a member and adhere to RDA’s guiding principles and code of conduct. Individual membership is free of charge, but a time commitment is expected from members actively involved in Working and Interest Groups.

## RDA SPONSOR & SUPPORTER OPTIONS

Any of the support / sponsorship programmes outlined below (or others proposed by the research organisation itself) for the RDA community members can be funded / sponsored by an organisation and can be administered directly by the organisation, through close collaboration and an MoU with the RDA Foundation. Alternatively, the RDA Foundation can administer the programme directly on behalf of the organisation, with clear reference to and visibility for the supporter. In the latter case, the RDA Foundation would request an administrative overhead of 5-10% to be agreed directly with the organisation.

## *RDA PLENARY MEETING SPONSORSHIP*

The RDA Plenary meeting is the twice-annual meeting where RDA community members meet to discuss possible new topics, advance Working and Interest Group activities, and to conduct RDA business. These Plenary meetings serve as important milestones in the life of Working and Interest Groups, especially in terms of achievements and outputs. Furthermore, the RDA coordination groups such as the Council, RDA Funders Forum, Technical Advisory Board, Organisational Assembly, Organisational Advisory Board, Secretariat and other RDA committees also take advantage of these face-to-face opportunities to interact with members on the current state, progress, achievements, and future plans. Organisations are invited to sponsor RDA Plenary meetings. Different levels of sponsorship and corresponding visibility are outlined in the sponsorship packages issued by the local organisers. Details of past, upcoming and future Plenaries are available online.[[3]](#footnote-4)

## *ORGANISATION OF RESEARCH DATA MEETINGS*

In collaboration with RDA, other research data organisations and funders, organisations can support and drive the organisation of **high-level events** targeted to funders, research institutes, industry, etc. focused on specific topics of global interest and importance. RDA would be seen as an independent international forum for discussing and actioning these topics with organisations across the globe. The organisation could consider proposing a topic and sponsoring one of the events.

## *DATA EXPERT / FELLOW / Early Career programmes*

Organisations and funders have supported **data expert, fellow and early career programmes** in RDA in the past, with different durations and formats and financial contributions. Some examples are the RDA Europe early career programme which specifically supports participation to RDA Plenary meetings by covering the costs (travel, subsistence, visa and registration fees). RDA US has run Fellow programmes using funding from organisations to support 3-6 month activities which run before and after a plenary meeting. All programme participants can showcase their data research activities at a Plenary meeting, in addition to other exposure to RDA members and groups.

## *TESTING, ADOPTION & IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS / PILOTS*

There are many different formats of **pilot schemes and projects** that can be directly funded by organisations to enhance the take up and validation of the RDA outputs and recommendations. Some examples of projects to date include:

* RDA US Adoption Grants: financial support for project personnel to integrate RDA Recommendations into existing infrastructure environments. Budgets of at most USD $35,000 for the period of February 1, 2018 to November 1, 2018 were envisaged.
* AGU / RDA US FAIR Data: a project funded by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation focusing on the practical implementation of RDA Outputs in the Earth & Space sciences domain. Funding supports staff, travel and events.
* RDA EU Collaboration Projects: financial support for short term 3-6 months testing or adoption projects of RDA outputs in European organisations. Financial contribution of approx. EUR €15,000 per project is foreseen with funding of approx. 15 projects over a period from May 2018 to March 2020.
* The Australian National Data Service (ANDS) supported the definition, implementation and roll out of the practical and easy to use **23 (Research Data) Things programme**[[4]](#footnote-5) which is open to all anywhere in the world to customise and implement in their organisation. It is based on the RDA 23 Things: Libraries for Research Data output generated by the Libraries for Research Data Interest Group. Designed to build capability and a community of practice around research data management, the programme was targeted to librarian and research support staff though it is open to all those interested in learning more about the subject from any part of the world.

## *RDA PLENARY MEETING TRAVEL SUPPORT*

Supporting the costs of RDA community members to attend RDA plenary meetings and do the work of RDA, advancing the Working and Interest Group developments and deliverables. Organisations wishing to do this could **open a call for expressions of interest** focusing on a specific topic, discipline, domain, technology, etc.

## *RDA data awards / scholarships*

Creation of **a programme to offer visibility and recognition to data excellence**. Possible awards could be for innovative implementation of RDA outputs in SMEs / industry or indeed for excellent research conducted using RDA outputs (or the ICT Technical Specifications = Standards). Scholarships could cover specific data science education in particular domains etc. The format of this RDA Award or Scholarship programme would be sponsored by an organisation with the management of the programme to be under the RDA Foundation and thus the Foundation receiving financial support for administrative aspects.

## *RDA TRAINING / EVENTS*

Creation of a **training course or series of focused events** (including webinars), organised and supported by an organisation, where the core objective is to raise awareness of and increase impact of RDA activities and outputs.

## GETTING ENGAGED with the research data alliance

**What format does engagement come under?**

* Supporter / Sponsor agreements are defined directly between the RDA Foundation (legal representative of RDA) and the organisation in question;
* Organisational members[[5]](#footnote-6) sign an agreement with RDA Foundation (legal representative of RDA) and pay an annual fee based on the number of employees (< than 50 employees: USD1,000 per year | 50 and <250 employees: USD2,000 per year | >250 employees: USD10,000 per year)

**Participate:**

* Get your staff involved in the Working and Interest Groups of relevance to you <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups>
* As an organisational member, you can participate in the Organisational Assembly and even be elected to the Organisational Advisory Board
* Propose a new group to discuss and resolve a research data challenge that you are facing <https://www.rd-alliance.org/creating-and-managing-rda-groups.html>
* Follow and contribute to the discipline specific areas of interest to your organisation on the RDA web site https://rd-alliance.org/rda-disciplines
* Leverage on the RDA web platform to promote your organisation’s research data related events and news <https://rd-alliance.org/node/52346> / ~ <https://rd-alliance.org/node/52347>

**Attend:**

* Engage with the RDA Community at the RDA biannual Plenary meetings <https://www.rd-alliance.org/plenaries>

**Adopt / Implement:**

* Adopt an RDA Recommendation or Output <https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/all-recommendations-and-outputs>
* Understand the research data interoperability solutions available for implementation in your organisation https://rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/all-recommendations-and-outputs
* Follow and / or repurpose the 23 (research data) Things programme for your organisation <http://www.ands.org.au/working-with-data/skills/23-research-data-things>

1. https://www.rd-alliance.org/get-involved/organisational-membership [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Any organisation can become an organisational member and get the benefits of this type of engagement with RDA. Upon membership, the organisation / institution becomes a member of the RDA Organisational Assembly and a representative of the organisation can self-nominate to be included in the Organisational Advisory Board (OAB). RDA OAB co-chairs are observers on RDA Council. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://rd-alliance.org/plenaries [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. http://www.ands.org.au/working-with-data/skills/23-research-data-things [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. https://rd-alliance.org/get-involved/organisational-membership [↑](#footnote-ref-6)