



A Framework for the Creation and Management of RDA Communities of Practice (CoPs)

Document Metadata

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Title	A Framework for the Creation and Management of Research Data Alliance (RDA) Communities of Practice (CoP)
Description	<p>This document outlines the concept, conditions and working mechanisms for a new category of group within the Research Data Alliance, namely a Community of Practice (CoP). In the RDA, Communities of Practice (CoPs) form to build discipline or domain specific communities within RDA as well as to investigate, discuss and provide knowledge and skills on any specific discipline and/or research domain issues relevant to the community and RDA. Communities of Practice are composed of experts from the community that have an interest in the research domain / discipline and are committed to directly or indirectly enabling data sharing, exchange, and/or interoperability. Communities of Practice serve as platforms for communication and coordination among individuals, bridging the community outside and within the RDA, with shared interests.</p>
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1. Background

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who "share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly".¹

In the RDA, CoPs form to build discipline or domain specific communities within RDA as well as to investigate, discuss and provide knowledge and skills on any specific discipline and/or research domain issues relevant to the community and RDA. CoPs are composed of experts from that community that have an interest in the discipline / research domain and are committed to directly or indirectly enabling data sharing, exchange, and/or interoperability. CoPs serve as platforms for communication and coordination among individuals, building bridges outside and within the RDA, with shared interests.

CoPs serve to broaden disciplinary and domain stakeholder awareness of and involvement in RDA, acting as THE coordination focal point for RDA in a specific disciplinary / research domain area. Given the broad scope of the Research Data Alliance, the creation of CoPs will offer members a further mechanism to become engaged and involved in the community, as well as attract new members to RDA. CoPs will operate under the RDA Guiding Principles and Code of Conduct,² the values and foundations upon which RDA is built and with which it operates.

2. Communities of Practice within the Research Data Alliance

a. Context

When the Research Data Alliance (RDA) was launched in 2013, the initial medium foreseen for the community to collaborate was via the Working Group (WG)³ structure. Very soon after the first RDA Plenary meeting, it was clear that a further structure was required, in order to facilitate community discussion, collaboration and cooperation. Hence the Interest Group (IG)⁴ structure was launched. Following over seven years of growth and consolidation of the RDA, the time has come to offer a further structure to support the Work of RDA⁵ and the global RDA community, to achieve the RDA vision.

Communities of Practice have been represented in RDA for some time, mainly through the operation of discipline-specific Interest Groups. Their role has been pivotal, acting as windows of RDA to their respective communities and providing interconnections and links with other RDA groups. Those IGs have been operating on a slightly different basis than the groups that look into the specifics of data-sharing challenges (e.g. socio-technical aspects).

The concept of a CoP within RDA is based upon the notion that a specific discipline or domain area requires a forum and knowledge exchange platform, where both specific and generic data challenges can be discussed and resolved by experts

¹ Definition of Communities of Practice https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practice

² RDA Guiding Principles <https://www.rd-alliance.org/about-rda> and [Code of Conduct](#)

³ RDA Working Groups <https://rd-alliance.org/groups/creating-and-managing-rda-groups/creating-or-joining-rda-working-group.html>

⁴ RDA Interest Groups <https://rd-alliance.org/groups/creating-and-managing-rda-groups/creating-or-joining-rda-interest-group.html>

⁵ The Work of RDA is defined as activities conducted by the volunteer community through self-formed, focused Working Groups or exploratory Interest Groups. The Business of RDA is done by the governance boards to support the community. Business operations and sustainability facilitate the work of RDA.

from the community itself. RDA, as an open, international and community-based initiative, offers this neutral and accessible forum with logistical support.

CoPs will also support the specific community through:

- Raising awareness about the importance of opening up access to data repositories by research organisations and private stakeholders.
- Focusing attention on implementing good data management policies and RDA recommendations within institutions (supporting openness and development of or usage of standards to be applied to data infrastructures, tools, repositories, etc.).
- Highlighting the need for tools and existing standards to facilitate FAIR data management, and identify existing RDA recommendations and outputs to be implemented or set up RDA Working groups to develop new solutions.
- Linking existing communities and initiatives and advocating good data management practices across the board.
- Offering insight into discipline / domain data challenges and solutions.
- Building discipline and research domain specific as well as domain agnostic social and technical bridges, with and across communities.
- Sharing domain and discipline specific practices with broader data practitioner communities.
- Fostering understanding of and access to RDA for new members from discipline and domain specific communities.

b. Value of CoP to communities

An RDA CoP offers a discipline or domain the opportunity to create an open forum for the discussion, development and maintenance of specific and generic solutions to the data challenges faced by that community. RDA is open to all, and communities that are facing FAIR data, open data, open science and open research challenges can leverage this structure to learn from other communities, as well as technological experts and data professionals, and share their experiences and solutions in an open, transparent and collaborative manner.

Through this exchange of knowledge, individuals within a specific discipline or domain can learn about trends in those areas, learn from individuals' experiences in overcoming specific challenges and collaborate on implementing solutions to existing ones. As RDA has produced numerous Outputs⁶ relevant to many disciplines or domains, members within a CoP will bring insight on how best to apply them within the context of an area. Members within a CoP also gain the added experience of networking with individuals within their own disciplinary area, whereas within many Working and Interest Groups, members are often representative of various areas. Through direct interaction and coordination within the CoP, members gain added expertise while expanding their professional network.

CoPs also offer the possibility to generate collaboration and partnerships with industry, associations, organisations and media as well as discipline/domain-specific funding opportunities. CoPs could leverage on the RDA legal status to apply for funding and/or grants, based on a direct agreement with RDA Foundation representatives.

⁶ RDA Outputs have the following classifications: RDA Recommendations, Supporting Outputs and Other Outputs. See <https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-outputs> for details.

c. RDA motivation

The RDA vision is to enable researchers and innovators to access and reuse data across all disciplines, all technologies and all countries to solve the grand challenges of society. To achieve this vision RDA must build social and technical bridges to enable the open sharing and reuse of data. CoPs can be leveraged to achieve this vision; providing the multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary bridges, while supporting the promotion, endorsement and adoption of RDA outputs and good practices for data management and open science in a specific domain.

CoPs support the RDA to attract new individual, organisational, and regional members, including researchers and stakeholders from low and medium-income countries, establishing connections with other international initiatives.

3. CoP Rights and Responsibilities

Function	CoPs form to represent discipline or domain specific communities within RDA as well as to investigate, discuss and provide knowledge and skills on any specific discipline and/or domain issues relevant to the community and RDA. Members of a CoP are experts from the community that are committed to directly or indirectly enabling data sharing, exchange, and/or interoperability. CoPs serve as forums for communication and coordination among individuals with shared interests outside and within RDA.. Each CoP will represent RDA activities and achievements in their community and foster bidirectional communication and coordination between the CoP and its community through a series of initiatives, such as ambassador programmes, dedicated events, content, etc.
Membership	CoPs are open to participation from all RDA members with an interest in the CoP's domain / discipline. CoPs should have representatives from at least 10 countries across at least 3 continents. CoPs are encouraged to make sure the Global South is represented in their membership. Each CoP must have three or more Co-Chairs representing at least 3 continents who serve as the point of contact for the CoP.
Creation	The justification for creating a CoP should include a demonstration of substantial level of support for it. It should be global and have the backing of a significant number of individuals and organisations. It should be spearheaded by one or more productive RDA Working or Interest Groups which should have already produced one or more endorsed RDA Recommendation and / or Supporting Outputs. A CoP is established once its CoP Agreement has undergone community review, TAB review and OAB and RAB commentary and subsequent endorsement by Council.
Legitimacy	In order to ensure the proposed CoP is truly representative of the community and demonstrates institutional commitment, a CoP has to provide letters of support from major stakeholder organisations in the CoP's discipline / research domain. The RDA community at large has an opportunity to comment and provide feedback on the proposed CoP during the six week community review period.
Duration	There is no fixed duration for a CoP. Each CoP will undergo a review on an 18 month basis.

Termination	<p>CoPs are disbanded in one of the following cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On request from a majority of the co-chairs, and with evidence that two-thirds majority of the responding members agree. ● If Council considers the CoP to be violating its CoP agreement, the RDA Code of conduct or the RDA Guiding Principles. ● If the periodic review executed by RDA Council indicates the CoP should not continue. ● If the CoP is considered inactive.
Rights	<p>CoPs have access to appropriate administrative and communications support from the RDA Secretariat.</p> <p>CoPs are provided with a dedicated area on the RDA website, to which they will be offered access and editing rights, in conjunction with the RDA Secretariat.</p> <p>CoPs' efforts are supported by technical expertise and guidance from the TAB and are encouraged to work with the Regional Assembly Board (RAB) and Organisational Assembly Board (OAB).</p>
Responsibilities	<p>CoPs are responsible for progressing the activities described in their CoP Agreement and for upholding the RDA Guiding Principles and Code of Conduct, including achievement of progress via consensus.</p> <p>CoPs are expected to participate in Plenaries on a regular basis, at least in every other Plenary.</p> <p>CoPs are mandated to conduct open discussions on the RDA online platform during the course of their work, and to disseminate information via webinars, reports, or other means.</p> <p>CoPs can initiate new IGs and WG which follow the usual RDA processes, including for endorsement. The concept being that the CoP coordinates the discussions and when a specific topic discussion (IG) or solution (WG) is required, the co-chairs coordinate the people to create the charter / case statement and start the group process.</p> <p>CoPs must adhere to the RDA Outputs IP, licensing and branding policies.</p> <p>CoPs leverage the RDA WG mechanism to deliver Recommendations and can produce additional Supporting Outputs, just like an Interest Group.</p> <p>CoPs demonstrate and document adoption of RDA Recommendations and Outputs.</p>

a. Communities of Practice within the RDA structure

	Community of Practice	Interest Group	Working Group	Birds of a Feather
<i>Endorsed by Council</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Reviewed by TAB</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Regular Public Reports</i>	Yes (every 18 months)	No	No	No
<i>Agreement (CoP) / Charter (IG) / Case Statement (WG) Open for Comment</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Ambassadors</i>	Yes	No	No	No
<i>At least 2 Co-Chairs</i>	Yes (at least 3 (from at least	Yes	Yes	No

	Community of Practice	Interest Group	Working Group	Birds of a Feather
	three different continents)			
<i>Regular Plenary Meeting Presence</i>	Yes (at least every 2nd)	Yes (at least every 3rd)	Yes	Yes
<i>Recommendations</i>	Yes (via RDA WG mechanism)	No	Yes	No
<i>Adoption plans</i>	Optional	Not obligatory	After completion	No
<i>Outputs</i>	Yes (via RDA WG / IG mechanism)	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Discipline / Domain Specific Mandatory</i>	Yes	No	No	No
<i>Value of RDA for (creation and maintenance of public RDA for disciplines web pages)</i>	Yes	Yes, if relevant	No	No
<i>Limited Duration</i>	No, but Council review every 18 months	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Ongoing activity and regular interaction with RDA</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>International Membership</i>	Yes (at least 10 countries across 3 continents)	Yes (at least 3 continents)	Yes (at least 3 continents)	Not Required
<i>Critical Mass (at least 100+ members)</i>	Yes	No	No	No
<i>Letters of Support</i>	Yes	No	No	No

b. How does a CoP interact with other groups?

CoPs are umbrella groups bringing together and coordinating the work of IGs and WGs in a specific domain or discipline within the RDA, and coordinating interaction with the domain / discipline outside RDA. Each CoP will have at least one associated Interest or Working group, but multiple WGs and IGs can be part of the CoP.

RDA community members can be CoP members without being a member of any IG or WG involved with the CoP. IGs and WGs, operating under the “umbrella” of the CoP, still follow the standard RDA WG and IG processes and procedures and have the same status within the organisation including “reporting” to the Council and TAB and other relevant governance bodies. All community consultation and review will be open to the whole RDA community. The figures below illustrate only some examples of possible positioning and interaction of communities of Practice within the RDA structure and particularly its relationship and interlinking with existing RDA WGs and IGs.

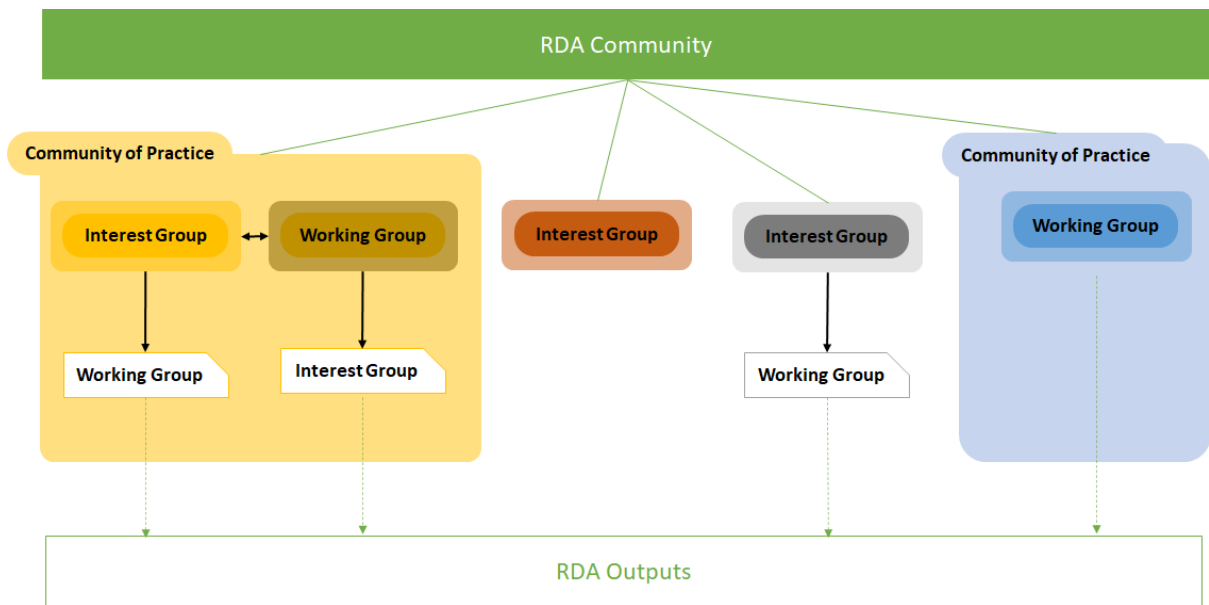


Figure 1: Example 1 of positioning of CoPs within the RDA group landscape

The first example illustrates CoPs that have either one or more Interest groups, spin off Working groups that generate RDA Outputs - specifically endorsed recommendations. The other type of CoP demonstrates the Working group activity within the CoP and the production of RDA Outputs. RDA Interest and Working groups operate in the same way as before.

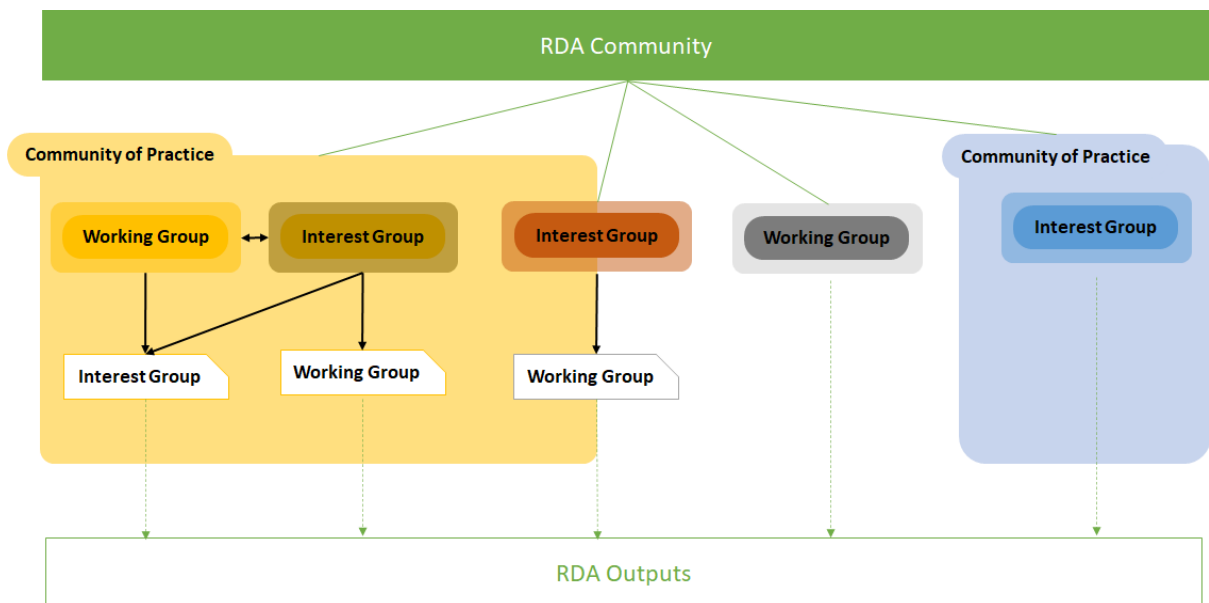


Figure 2: Example 2 of positioning of CoPs within the RDA group landscape

This example illustrates how CoPs can interact and work with existing Interest Groups who continue to deliver their charter and RDA Outputs but work in collaboration with a CoP on areas of mutual interest and benefit. It also illustrates a potential CoP with a restricted discipline / domain focus, spearheaded by an IG and focusing mainly on coordination and engagement of the community in RDA.

These are just two potential examples of the positioning of CoPs within the RDA working structure.

4. Establishing a Community of Practice

- **Establishment:** At least one existing IG or WG, as outlined above, optionally together with one or more IGs, and/or WGs decides to establish a CoP and develops their CoP Agreement (based on the RDA CoP Agreement template provided), with guidance provided by the RDA Secretariat if needed. A CoP is established once the CoP Agreement has been endorsed by Council at the end of the endorsement process described below.
- **Endorsement:**
 - CoP submits the CoP Agreement, together with letters of support from major stakeholder organisations outlining commitments (for example, staff committed to support CoP, use of some infrastructure, outline of case studies to work on, plans for adoption of outputs, commitment to RDA Organisational Membership (already and OM or intention to become and OM), etc.)
 - CoP Agreement is open for Community Review (6 weeks)
 - TAB start review (during community review period)
 - OAB and RAB commentary invited (during community review period)
 - TAB review is provided to the CoP at the end of the community review period
 - CoP co-chairs consider and respond to TAB review and community comments and provide an updated Draft agreement to be reviewed by TAB or to be sent to the Council
 - Secretariat compiles review package for Council (Agreement, letters, community comments, TAB review, OAB and RAB commentary received, CoP response / feedback to review and comments (where relevant)) (maximum 1 week)
 - Council reviews and provides one of four outcomes (see Review Process) to the CoP (within 2 weeks)
- **Active time:** Upon endorsement, the CoP becomes active and is expected to fulfil its function and responsibilities as per the “RDA Communities of Practice” table above.
- **Termination** - see “RDA Communities of Practice” table above.

5. CoP Agreement Elements

The following are a list of elements to be covered by the agreement.

- **Scope/Focus:** What discipline / research domain is represented by this CoP (and where are the boundaries with other related/bordering disciplines / research domains)?
- **Mutual Engagement:** How will participation with the community internal and external to RDA be established? What collaborative relationships are planned? These relationships should be the ties that bind the members of the community together as a social entity.
- **Joint Enterprise:** How will the joint enterprise be organised? In other words what interactions will bind them together. The joint enterprise is defined by CoP members and is sometimes referred to as the 'discipline / research domain' of the community.
- **Shared Repertoire:** Finally, as part of its practice, the community produces a set of communal resources, which is termed their shared repertoire; this is used in the pursuit of their joint enterprise and can include both literal and symbolic meanings. What elements will be included in the repertoire and how will they be publicly shared?

- **Internal and External Community & Stakeholder Engagement:** How will the CoP interact with other pertinent existing RDA groups? What eventual new IGs and/or WGs will be proposed directly by the CoP? Who are the key stakeholder organisations within the proposed discipline / research domain and how will they be linked to the CoP? What commitments are planned (in terms of staff, adoption, use cases, etc.)? What is the planned approach to engage with the discipline / research domain of focus and its key stakeholder organisations and planned approach to encourage broader community engagement and participation? What collaboration and partnerships with industry, associations, organisations and media as well as discipline/domain-specific funding opportunities are planned? What are the plans for ambassadors?

6. RDA Operational and Governance Support to CoPs

a. Support

CoP efforts are supported by technical expertise and guidance from the TAB and advice and support from both the Organisational Assembly and Regional Assembly. TAB provides at least one liaison for each CoP.

CoPs have access to appropriate administrative and communications support from the RDA Secretariat. Each CoP will have a liaison from the Secretariat to provide this support.

b. Managing and monitoring CoPs

The TAB and Secretariat liaisons will be available to provide support to the CoP, and will initiate a conversation with the CoP Co-Chairs if they see any issues with the CoP, or if the CoP does not participate in two consecutive Plenaries.

c. Termination of CoPs

There is no fixed duration for a CoP. Each CoP will undergo a Council review (see 8.) on an 18-month basis, based on the endorsement date. The reasons to disband a CoP are outlined in the “RDA Communities of Practice” table above.

7. Potential challenges and barriers

a. Competition/Overlapping Issues

As an open, inclusive, international, multi-disciplinary international forum, RDA does not wish to create competition or to “reinvent the wheel”. Proposers and drivers of CoPs will be asked to present letters of support from their stakeholders, to ensure that the creation of a CoP under RDA is supported and driven by the community itself and does not compete with existing internal and external structures. An RDA CoP should speak for a well-defined, large, globally representative community and be accepted and recognised by that community.

b. Internal RDA group Overlap/confusion

CoPs will be encouraged to interact with existing RDA Working and Interest Groups to leverage expertise and outputs. TAB will support CoP Co-Chairs and Secretariat in understanding eventual overlap with existing groups. A CoP may engage with other networks or institutions outside of the RDA, a distinct aspect that

distinguishes it from an IG or WG. Especially when an IG matures and grows to the point where it desires CoP status, there is no requirement to retain a distinct IG with the same scope. However, a CoP may promote the formation of new IGs and WGs with more narrowly defined scopes than the CoP. The CoP is encouraged to use its networks to assist related IGs and WGs, and to play a coordinating role.

c. **Limit on number of CoPs**

RDA governance bodies, during the initial review and the endorsement phases of CoPs, will carefully consider the community feedback, size of the proposed CoP and related activities, RDA operational capacity and existing CoPs, to ensure that the number of communities operating are representative and can be offered suitable support. As a new category of activities within RDA, the initial number of CoPs will be limited. This will allow all parties involved to fine tune the proposed process. This limitation will be reviewed and modified in the second half of 2021.

d. **Conflict resolution**

There may be instances where only certain members of an IG or WG wish to move towards becoming a CoP and conflict within the group may emerge, putting at risk the group itself.

A CoP should serve as an umbrella and/or focal point for RDA activities and members related to a defined domain. It would be undesirable to have more than one CoP with substantial overlap in domain. If conflict cannot be resolved, the RDA could approve the CoP and the IG or WG could persist as long as its scope is clearly not as broad or identical. But it couldn't become a rival CoP.

8. CoP 18-month Review and Evaluation

Every 18 months, from the initial endorsement date, CoP will be evaluated and reviewed by Council. Feedback may also be sought from members of the CoP, the related stakeholder organisations and the RDA community. CoPs are expected to produce regular (every 18 months from endorsement) public reports to the RDA community that are assessed by Council. Elements of the review will include:

- i. Progress on goals and objectives of CoP Agreement
- ii. CoP's development within the overall discipline /domain landscape and RDA CoP specific contribution
- iii. Engagement and Outreach activities and related metrics
- iv. CoP Membership growth
- v. Increase in stakeholder organisation support
- vi. Significant interactions with key stakeholders in the discipline / research domain and their results (if any)

Review Process & Feedback:

- CoP submits the public report and any related (internal) documents to Secretariat at the end of the 18 month period
- TAB provides feedback and comments on public report to be included in package for Council
- Secretariat prepares the review package for Council (maximum 2 working days)

- Council reviews the documentation and provides feedback to CoP (2 weeks)
- CoP may request clarification, revision or further information. In the event that CoP disagrees with the feedback received, a meeting will be organised with CoP co-chairs and representatives of Council, the Secretary General and any other relevant RDA representatives (e.g. Secretariat and TAB Liaisons);
- The reviewed and approved public report will be published on the RDA web site

Annex 1: CoP Agreement Template

Overview

In order to be considered by the RDA Council as a recognized RDA CoP, founding members should develop an agreement to be assessed by the community, the TAB, and RDA Council. The CoP Agreement, together with supporting letters and organisational commitment, should be submitted to the RDA Secretariat via enquiries [at] rd-alliance.org.

The CoP should be organized as specified in the Agreement. It is expected that there will be at least 3 Co-Chairs from at least 3 different continents, who will lead the CoP and be responsible for communication within the RDA and more broadly.

The Co-Chairs will take primary responsibility for the quality, scope, timeliness, and usefulness of the work in progress. The Co-Chairs will ensure that there is an effective organizational structure in place for the CoP and that there are individuals, groups, and processes that can ensure progress in animation of the network, increasing the membership, infrastructure and tool development, and in the development and editing of policy and written documents, and other tangible outcomes. For more information on group Co-Chairs roles and responsibilities, please visit the RDA Group Chairs' Primer⁷.

A CoP Agreement describes:

1. What is the discipline / research domain use case (will the CoP produce something useful)?
2. What is the business case (will people join and contribute to it)?
3. Is there capacity (are the right people involved to animate, implement and drive it)?
4. Is there support from the community that the CoP intends to represent?

Agreement Content

An agreement must contain the following components:

1. **Introduction:** A detailed articulation of what issues the CoP will address, how this CoP is aligned with the RDA mission, and how this CoP would be a value-adding contribution to the RDA community.
2. **User scenario(s) or use case(s)** the CoP wishes to address, and what triggered the desire for this CoP in the first place.
3. **Objectives:** A specific set of focus areas for discussion and action.
4. **Value Proposition:** A specific description of who will benefit from the creation and animation of the CoP and what tangible impacts should result.
5. **Engagement with existing work in the area:** A specific description, with tangible outputs and metrics, of the planned dissemination and communication, outreach and engagement, incentivisation, endorsement and adoption activities.

⁷ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/creating-and-managing-rda-groups/rda-working-and-interest-group-chairs-roles-and>

- a. A brief review of related work and plan for engagement with any other existing RDA groups;
 - b. Eventual new IGs and/or WGs to be proposed directly by the CoP;
 - c. Interaction with key stakeholder organisations within the proposed discipline / research domain;
 - d. Description of the CoP's planned approach to engage with their discipline / research domain and its key stakeholder organisations and planned approach to encourage broader community engagement and participation, including proposed ambassadors.
 - e. Outline of proposed collaboration and partnerships with industry, associations, organisations and media as well as discipline/domain-specific funding opportunities.
6. **Outcomes:** Outline what the CoP intends to accomplish and how it plans to measure achievement. Include examples of WG topics or supporting IG-level outputs that might lead to spin off IGs and/or WGs later on.
 7. **Adoption Plans (optional):** If applicable, please provide specific plans for adoption or implementation of RDA outcomes within the organizations and institutions represented by CoP members, as well as plans for adoption more broadly within the community.
 8. **Operational Mechanisms:**
 - a. **Leadership:** Describe how the CoP will be managed, how often it will meet and how it will maintain momentum between Plenaries. Include details on how the CoP will develop consensus, address conflicts, stay on track and within scope, and move forward during operation.
 - b. **CoP:** Provide a description of the CoP's mode and frequency of operation (e.g. on-line and/or on-site, how frequently will the group meet, be updated, etc.).
 9. **Timeline:** Describe draft milestones and goals for the first 18 months, including the mandatory Public report to be submitted to Council for review every 18 months.
 10. **Potential Group Members & Supporting Organisations:**
 - a. **Leadership:** Include proposed chairs/initial leadership and eventual plans for chair rotation.
 - b. **Member Participation:** Outline which communities will be involved, what skills or knowledge should they have, and how will you engage these communities.
 - c. **Supporting Organisations / Institutional Commitment:** include evidence of support from key stakeholder organisations, associations, etc.
 11. **Adherence to RDA Guiding Principles and Code of Conduct:** the application must include a confirmation that the CoP will operate according to the RDA Guiding Principles and Code of Conduct.

CoP Establishment Review Process

CoPs undergo a formal review (*see Figure 3 below*) before they are recognized and endorsed by RDA.

Step 1. At least three members write up an Agreement using the ***RDA Communities of Practice Agreement Template*** (*insert link*), and send the completed draft to the RDA Secretariat at enquiries@rd-alliance.org. While writing your Agreement, please keep the following elements in mind:

- There should be at least 3 co-chairs (from at least two different regions) leading the initiative – this helps to keep the group going and balance workload;
- There should be a balance of expertise and geographic representation - members are international experts, and the group spans at least at least 10 countries across 3 continents;
- The proposed CoP should provide a forum for communication and coordination around the discipline and/or research domain of interest within and outside the RDA;
- The group should be technology and product neutral – it should not promote one specific product or technology nor develop or endorse solutions that may lead to technology lock-in.

Step 2. The Secretariat puts the Agreement out for Community Review. During the Community Review phase (6 weeks), all members of the RDA community, as well as OAB and RAB, are invited to read and comment on any aspects of the document.

Simultaneously, the Agreement goes to TAB for review. During the TAB Review phase, 2 members of the TAB will review the Agreement according to the following criteria:

***Focus and Fit:** Are the CoP objectives aligned with the RDA mission? Is the scope too large for effective progress, too small for an RDA effort, or not appropriate for the RDA? Overall, is this a worthwhile effort for the RDA to take on? Is this an effort that adds value over and above what is currently being done within the community?*

***Capacity:** Does the initial membership list include sufficient expertise, and disciplinary and international representation? Are the people involved in the CoP sufficient to make tangible progress? What individuals or organizations are missing? Have key stakeholders provided letters of support?*

***Impact and Engagement:** Is it likely that the CoP will engage the intended community? Is there evidence that the research community wants this? Will the outcome(s) and activities of the CoP foster data sharing and/or exchange?*

The TAB reviewers will come to one of three conclusions, providing appropriate supporting material: the Agreement is sufficient, requires revision, or is rejected. Depending upon the conclusion, another revision of the Agreement may be in order. This cycle may need to be repeated until the CoP and TAB are satisfied with the content.

Step 3. If any comments are received, the CoP co-chairs and writing team addresses them and provides the revised Agreement to the Secretariat. (2 weeks at most)

Step 4. Secretariat prepares the review package for Council (Agreement, letters, community comments, TAB review, OAB and RAB commentary received) (maximum 1 week)

Step 5. Council then reviews the Agreement in consultation with TAB (2 weeks), and makes one of four possible decisions⁸:

- ***Recognized and endorsed as is.*** Strong Agreement. Group is recognized as an RDA CoP and should commence its work.
- ***Recognized and endorsed subject to specific revisions.*** Worthwhile CoP concept, changes need to be made to strengthen the Agreement and meet approval criteria. After the approach has been modified, the CoP will be recognized by RDA and commence its work.
- ***Encouraged but not presently endorsed.*** Good CoP concept but needs refinement. The CoP needs to mature its concept and refine its Agreement for approval. Council (via Secretariat) will provide specific feedback and clarification on what is needed.
- ***Not endorsed.*** The CoP is not a good fit for the RDA or does not meet other criteria for approval. Council will provide specific feedback and clarification.

Step 6. Once again, any revisions required must be completed, and the cycle repeated until Council is satisfied with the content.

Step 7. Upon approval, Secretariat will help the CoP with its working, communication, and recording processes. Joint activities with RDA affiliates and organizational members are encouraged.

⁸ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/creating-and-managing-rda-groups/creating-or-joining-rda-working-group.html>

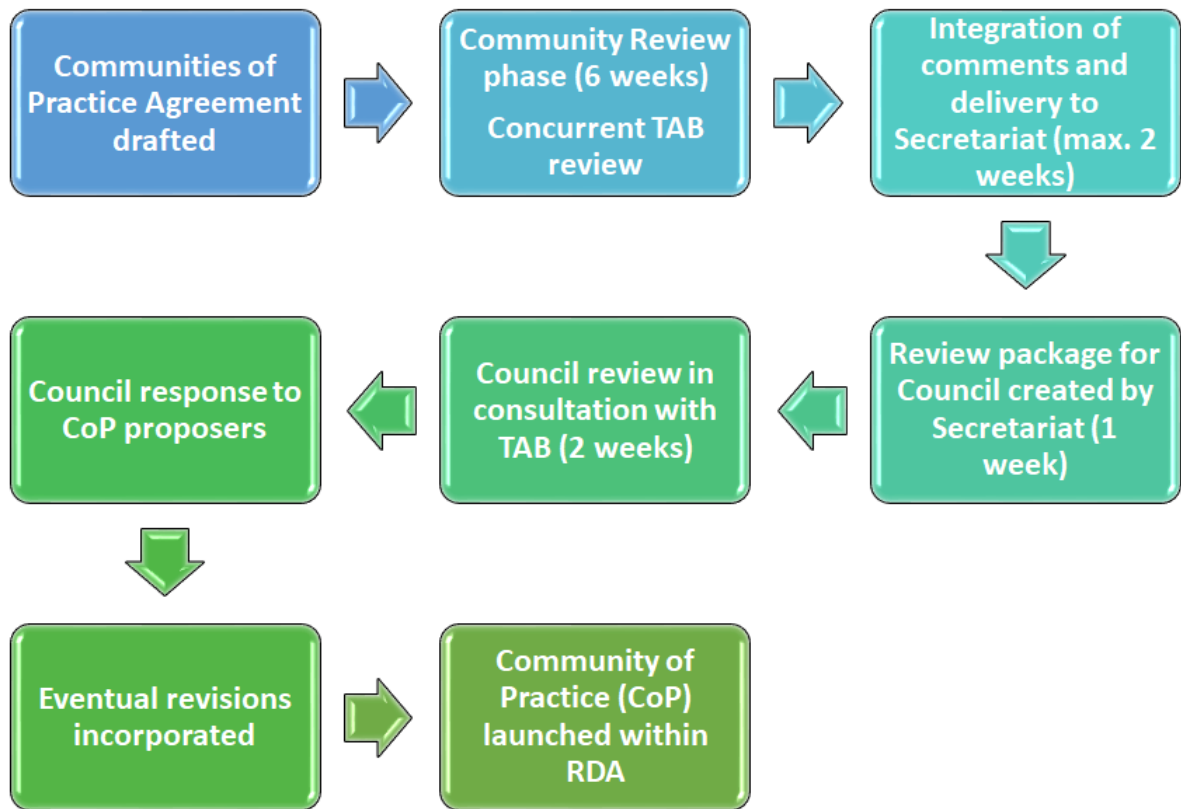


Figure 3. Communities of Practice Agreement Review Process