



RESEARCH DATA ALLIANCE

rd-alliance.org

**Research Data Alliance
Foundation**

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RDA Foundation Public Financial Updates

Outlining the Research Data Alliance (RDA) financial status (Oct 2019)

With the finalization and inclusion of a new financial and organisational strategy in our portfolio, the Research Data Alliance would like to inform its members and stakeholders about the ways in which the Research Data Alliance and, specifically, the RDA Foundation is funded globally.

NB: all figures include are given in UK Sterling (GBP), the same as the RDA Foundation accounts, and are for 2018.

RDA Foundation

The Research Data Alliance (RDA) Foundation is a non-profit charitable organisation registered as a legal entity in the UK and is the official and legal representative of the RDA community as a whole. The RDA Foundation provides the core business operations of RDA and represents RDA globally. The RDA Secretary General¹ works directly for the RDA Foundation and is the company CEO. The Secretary General's responsibilities include leadership of RDA's membership, effective management of the RDA organisation, engagement with RDA stakeholders and organisations, and sustainable stewardship of a dynamic, active, and high-impact community. The Secretary General reports to the RDA Council and works closely with all members of the RDA community. The Secretary General is also responsible for the organisational structure and management of the RDA Foundation, working closely with the RDA Council Finance Subcommittee to ensure financial stability.

¹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/about-rda/organisational-bodies/rda-secretary-general>

RDA COUNCIL

The RDA Council² is responsible for the overall oversight, success, strategy, and sustainability of the RDA. The powers and authority of the Council are described in the RDA Governance Document³. Currently the RDA Council has 9 elected members. In addition, there are 5 consensus forming non-voting members representing the Technical Advisory Board (TAB), Organisational Assembly and Organisational Advisory Board (OA and OAB) and the Secretary-General. Elected Council Members also serve as Trustees for the RDA Foundation.

The Council Financial sub-committee⁴ recommends to Council and monitors policies and rules for sound financial practice of the RDA Foundation.

FOUNDING AND FUNDING RDA

In 2012, three major funding agencies funded regional grants / projects to support the set up and operations of the Research Data Alliance in their regions and globally. The original RDA funding agencies were, the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, the European Commission and the US National Science Foundation (NSF). During the period from 2012 to 2020, additional funders in the US supported specific regional (US-based) programmes and grants (Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, NIST).

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

In addition, the regional grant programmes (AU, EU & US) facilitate the availability of in-kind staff and personnel support for the RDA Secretariat⁵. This support ranges from 1 FTE to 0,025 FTE per annum, for an annual total of 2 FTE. This allows excellent regional and professional diversity to support and maintain the fundamental daily operations of the RDA.

The RDA web platform, the virtual platform used by the community to do their work and by the alliance to promote and communicate about RDA has been entirely funded by the European Commission through the RDA Europe grants since 2013.

Other sources of in-kind support include hosting RDA plenary Meetings. Host country organisations from across the globe have invested considerable effort and resources.

² <https://www.rd-alliance.org/about-rda/our-leadership/rda-council.html>

³ <http://dx.doi.org/10.15497/RDA00001>

⁴ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/about-rda/organisational-bodies/rda-council/rda-council-subgroups>

⁵ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/about-rda/our-leadership/rda-secretariat.html>

INCOME

RDA income is primarily from two sources, **Funding Agencies** and **Organisational Memberships**, with a further smaller ad-hoc **Other Funding** revenue stream.

FUNDING AGENCIES

The graph below outlines the total funding granted (2012-2020) by funding agencies to support the regional activities managed by the Grant management organisations and the proportion paid directly to the RDA Foundation. As the graph illustrates, 5% of these funds have been dedicated to supporting RDA Global activities (from 2014 upon establishment of RDA Foundation legal entity) with the remainder invested in RDA activities in the regions themselves. The implementation of these funds in the regions varies greatly depending on the national / regional strategy and the priorities for growth and maintenance of the RDA community. Some examples include, but are not limited to, early career programmes, fellowships, adoption grants, leadership meetings, RDA regional staff support, plenary meeting contributions and regional community travel support.

Contributions to the RDA Foundation support the global operating costs and are complimented by in-kind staff support from the regions.

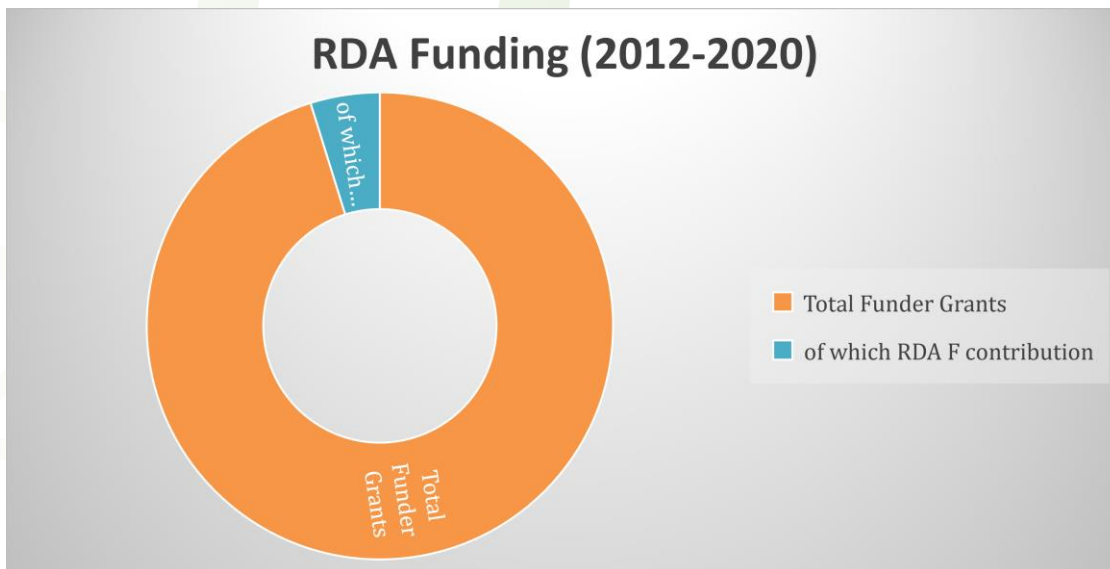


Figure 1 – RDA Funding from 2012 to 2020 including RDA Foundation contribution (from 2014)

ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

In 2014, with the establishment of the RDA Foundation, RDA offered organisations across the globe the possibility of becoming a member of RDA based on an annual fee or subscription⁶. Income is collected directly by the RDA Foundation on an annual basis. Fees / subscriptions are based on organisation type and size and come under three levels \$1,000 USD, \$2,000 USD and \$10,000 USD annually. In 2018, RDA had 48 organisational members for a total of £61.500 income. Our forecast for 2019 is an increase of 15% (£10.000+) in revenue.

OTHER INCOME SOURCES

In 2018, direct donations from international funding agencies were secured for a total of £20.000 with a further commitment for 2019 and other income revenues under discussion.

2018 INCOME OVERVIEW

The diagram below outlines the income received by the RDA Foundation in 2018, shown in UK sterling (GBP) as accounts are generated in GBP. Total income was GBP 229.200

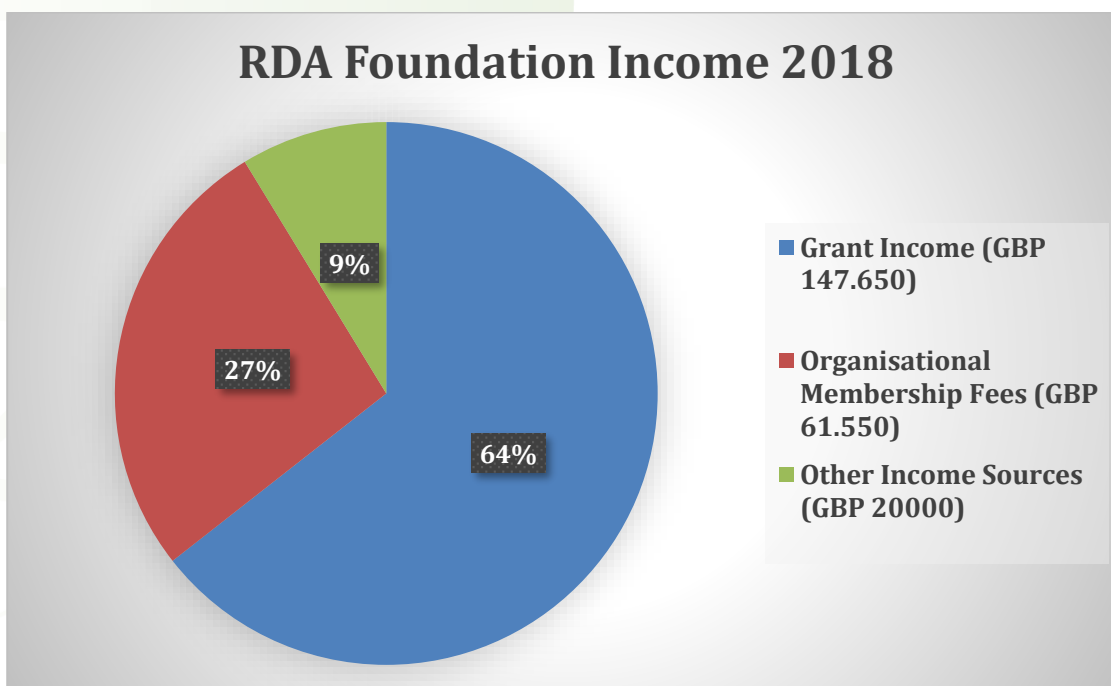


Figure 2 – RDA Foundation Income in 2018 according to source

⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/get-involved/organisational-membership>

The **RDA Organisational Membership** has seen a consistent increase in Memberships, and renewal rates since its launch in 2014. This source of direct funding for the RDA Foundation is essential, offering a direct connection between RDA and global organisations. As a direct source of financial support, it is a revenue stream that we intend to grow in the future.

The **Regional Engagement Strategy** launched in late 2018 aims to allow new regional funders to support RDA on a regional and global basis (like AU, EU & USA). This strategy is beginning to bear fruit and we expect the first commitments to be announced before the end of 2019.

RDA Plenary Meetings are organized by local hosts and the financial responsibility is taken on by them. From 2019, the RDA Foundation has stipulated a **5% commission** on the net registration fee income. This commission is waived in the event of a financial loss of the organisation of the Plenary Meeting by the local hosts.

The RDA Council is coordinating a **Membership Task Force** to assess our overall membership models (Individual – free, Organisational – annual fee, and Regional – grant). Ad-hoc **Donations** are being considered under this task force.

Financial support to RDA from funding agencies is critical and essential as it preserves and allows RDA to operate according to its fundamental guiding principles⁷. Our goal is to achieve a 50 / 50 balance from funders and other sources by 2022.

EXPENDITURE

Expenses for the RDA Foundation, which totalled approx. £220.000 in 2018, are categorized accordingly:

1. Personnel Expenses: salaries and travel
2. Administrative Expenses: accounting and bank costs
3. Legal & Fiscal Expenditure: legal and VAT fees
4. Other Expenses: ad hoc expenses related to events

⁷ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/get-involved.html>

RDA Foundation Expenditure 2018

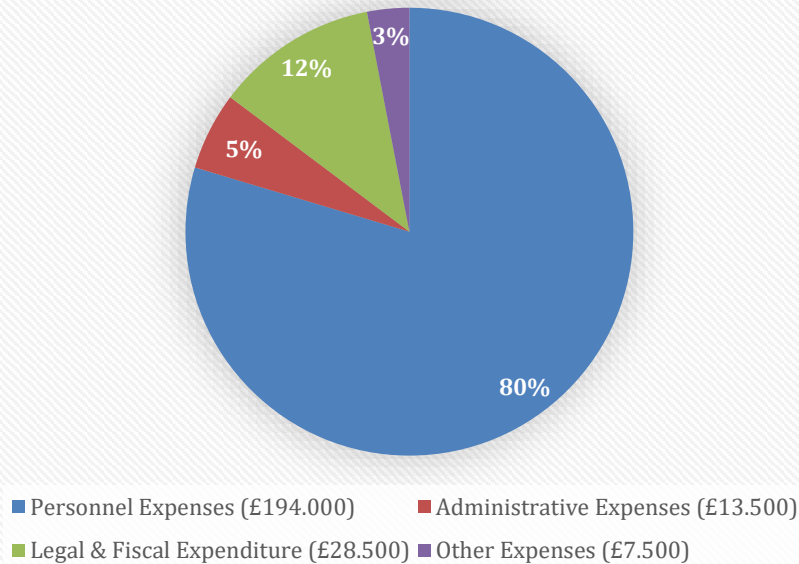


Figure 3 – RDA Foundation Expenditure in 2018 according to category

In 2018 we had higher than usual Legal and Fiscal expenses due to personnel contracts and back dated VAT.

CONCLUSION

Thanks to the diligence and efforts of **The RDA Foundation team** (Hilary Hanahoe (Secretary General), Bridget Walker (Executive Assistant) & Nima Babaahmadi (Financial Officer)) and the **RDA Council Financial Subcommittee** (Edit Herczog, Kevin Ashley & Jason Haga), we have a very comprehensive public overview of RDA income and expenses. This is crucial for the RDA Council in establishing a budget, and allowing us to determine strategic priorities that are consistent with budget resources.

We continue to support and improve our regional engagement strategy and sources of revenue, but these sources will take some time to nurture and secure. As we continue through 2019 and 2020, a primary goal of the RDA Council is to continue to carefully track income and expenses and work to diversify our revenue while still maintaining and supporting our community and the organisation's vision, mission and, most importantly, our guiding principles.

The funding strategy for the future is to increase revenue from organisational memberships, increase by 5% funder contributions to RDA global and identify other sources of income for approx. 20% more than 2018. Achieving these financial goals would allow the RDA Foundation to manage and deliver fundamental RDA community services directly (e.g. web platform, output maintenance support, plenary meetings).