

# Research Data Alliance 22nd Plenary Meeting, 14-23 May 2024, Virtual Feedback Analysis

The RDA Secretariat has thoroughly analysed the survey feedback collected from the Research Data Alliance's 22nd Plenary Meeting held virtually from May 14-23, 2024. This document presents the analysis, key considerations, and concrete actions to enhance future plenaries.

The feedback analysis was collected by the RDA from the official RDA P22 participant / speaker survey feedback, the RDA community members (via email and verbally), and the RDA Secretariat's self analysis. Attendee and Speaker/Organiser feedback analysis are listed.

## RDA P22 Attendee Survey Framework

### 1. Post-RDA P22 Survey Format

RDA P22 was attended by 511 online participants. The RDA P22 survey was open for two weeks after the plenary ended. A total of 61 attendees responded to the survey, approximately 12% of the total number of attendees.

#### Consideration (s):

- Two end-of-P22 surveys were made available to target session organisers/speakers and attendees separately. Surveys included between 12 and 16 questions each requiring approximately 10-15 minutes response time.
- Surveys provided an explanation of how participants' answers could assist the event planners going forward; certain questions were customised and optional.
- Both surveys were distributed during the closing plenary session, and they were open for two weeks. A couple of reminders were sent out to complete surveys.
- For a variety of reasons, opening the survey at the end of the plenary decreases the number of interested parties.

#### Action (s):

- Limit the time required to complete the survey to no more than ten minutes.
- Share questions via Menti during the closing session
- Distribute a QR code with a survey throughout the plenary

### 2. First-timer Attendees

If VP22 was your first plenary - did you attend the Newcomers Session? How useful was it?

Direct quotes from the responses:

- “**Extremely useful** and appreciated the chance to meet all of the secretariat and newcomers! Perhaps, have the **session on day one** and do a **round introduction**. Information provided was valuable.”
- “As my **first plenary** was **IDW 2023**, I felt I **did not get to know RDA** well. I expect in the long-term the shared resources will prove useful, it was **good to be given an overview**.”
- “I found its **friendly nature** very encouraging.”

#### Consideration (s):

- 22% of the respondents attended one of the newcomers sessions and 100% of them would attend another plenary.
- The session was held in an informal format and without powerpoint presentations. The content was based on the attendees' interests.

#### Action (s):

- Supplement the newcomers document with information on the newcomers sessions.
- Two sessions for newcomers are scheduled on:
  - Online sessions on 22 October 07:00 UTC and 17:00 UTC
  - In-person session with remote participation on 13 November at 22:15 UTC
- Attendees will be asked what questions they have, and the content will be prepared according to their interests.

### 3. Plenary Navigation

#### Did you find it easy to navigate the plenary?

Some direct quotes of the respondents:

- “Yes, “**my agenda**” option on **Whova** helped me organise.”
- “I was **overwhelmed** with the **number of WGs/IGs as well as community boards**, but it was a **pleasure to see** the geniality of the **RDA community**.”
- “The **web programme** provided a **great** overview, but the **Agenda in Whova** is **not very convenient** to use.”
- “It’s much **easier to navigate** the schedule on **Whova** than on the RDA website.”
- “**Information about** when would **repeats** be on the page of a session **would be helpful**.”
- “The only **annoying** thing was to follow **links from the agenda**, to the **description**, a link to open the RDA site. It would be good to **directly** have an **agenda** in the **Whova**.”
- “It was **not easy** on the small **phone** screen. It was **hard to find my agenda** and some of the **sessions** I signed up to had **disappeared** or **ran at different times** than I had noted.”
- “The **session descriptions** (proposal pages) should be updated to **include times** of the approved sessions, like “add to my agenda” Whova link.”

#### Consideration (s):

- The plenary programme schedule is very complex (up to 8 parallel sessions held in one breakout slot, long days, global time zones). Whova offers a couple of programme templates and the most suitable is always selected.
- A link to a session proposal with descriptions, agenda, and listed speakers is always available.
- Adding confirmed session times to session proposal web pages would be beneficial to many. However, manually adding details to 60+ sessions and updating them according to changes is laborious for organisers.

#### Action (s):

- The web platform programme is a current subject of improvement with the RDA web developers.
- A new field 'short description of your session' was added to the P23 session submission form. This should improve the overview of sessions once added under each programme element.

## 4. Networking

### Did you take advantage of networking and informal discussion opportunities during the plenary?

Direct quotes of the respondents:

- “I found that much of the **"social area discussions"** in Whova was **off-topic** and rather **useless** from a serious information exchange point of view.”
- “I found a **networking** session **more useful** and **enjoyable** than I expected. **Session discussions** are **difficult** to join, as I **am new** to the field and **have little** to **contribute**.”
- **"Useful contacts** have been **established**.”
- “I **loved** that **flexibility** and it **encouraged** me to **attend** presentations on **subjects** I would not otherwise have learnt about. “
- “Please **cut on** cute **cat pictures**, it **isn't** what a **plenary** should be.”
- **"Social sessions** like the office hours maybe **need** some **structured** content as **nobody** is **willing** to **bring** their own **topics**.”
- “The **regional RDA gatherings** were a **good networking opportunity**. “

#### Consideration (s):

- 32% of respondents didn't have an opportunity to get involved in scheduled networking due to a different time zone, lack of time or opportunity.
- Whova allows each attendee to create a topic of discussion. The P22 organisers overview topics to control content not-relevant to the plenary.
- RDA Secretariat checks the community area to ensure that there is no inappropriate content that is not in line with the RDA code of conduct. Furthermore, content of marginal relevance to the plenary meeting but of interest to the attendees and valuable for networking and online interaction are encouraged.

#### Action (s):

- Promote the purpose of plenary sessions with attendees, as many have different expectations.
- Decision on 'Pet corner', the second most popular topic after 'Ask organisers anything' was set up by a community member, to remain if created by members in the future.

## 5. Pathways

### Did you use the plenary pathways (programme navigation) and did you find it useful?

43% of respondents found pathways useful and 25% did not know about them.

Direct quotes of the respondents:

- **"Too difficult to navigate** different icons and colours, and I **learned too late** that there were **tables** on the **RDA website** grouping sessions per pathways.”
- **"Not useful**. I navigated the programme by time / groups I follow (32% respondents)”
- “My problem was reading pathways, as the design and letters are not eye friendly.”

### Consideration (s):

- Many traditional conferences group sessions in the programme per pathways/topics of interest. That way, pathways are clearly visible. Plenary sessions have a complex programme schedule which is built based on group conflicts/time zones preferences. Pathways are often missed.

### Action (s):

- Promote confirmed sessions per each pathway to all attendees prior to plenaries
- Make announcements on how to filter the programme by pathways / tracks in Whova

## 6. If you were unsatisfied with the choice of sessions in your time zone please tell us why.

78% of respondents found a choice of session time zones suitable, whereas 22% didn't.

Direct quotes of the respondents:

- “Too **many sessions** in the **same time** slot, and it would have been better to access more than one session in the same time slot. Recorded videos are available, but I'd rather dedicate the whole day to the plenary session.”
- “Frustrated that the selection of **time zones** was **limited** to **3** options, which I'm sure made scheduling difficult on the organisers.”
- “Please **hold** any **repeat** sessions **at different time** slots.”

### Consideration (s):

- Three time zones covered all global time zones, so everyone, despite where they are, could attend.
- The layout of Plenary is based on simultaneous sessions because group interest is very high. Simultaneous sessions vary but do not exceed eight.

### Action (s):

- Keep the same programme layout (breakout sessions) for the future plenaries.
- Recordings are available for those who miss them

## 7. Do you like the length (6 days) and spread (2 weeks) of the Virtual Plenary?

92% of respondents found the VP22 length suitable.

### If the plenary duration didn't suit you, what changes would you make?

Direct quotes of the respondents:

- “**UK time zone** sessions were all **during school drop off and pick up**, so I **missed** a lot.”
- “**2 weeks** with the **repeat** sessions was **extremely useful**. **Recordings** are **useful** but **not the same**.”
- “It is **too compressed**, with **too many parallel sessions** in the breakout session time slots. If we are 100% virtual, why not schedule over 3 weeks?”
- “**Too long**. With recordings available, I'd prefer **fewer repeats** and a **shorter plenary**.”
- “It **went** by super **fast**. I could **easily** participate for **another week**.”

- “Repeat sessions should **not** take place **at the same times** (i.e 07:00 UTC in week 1 and 07:00 UTC in week 2) to allow for people to join from multiple time zones.
  - **22:30 UTC time** slot is **not** very **useful** - sessions in that time slot tended to be repeat and had very few participants. That **time** is **unsuitable** for **Asia** and parts of **Australia**, it would be **evening** for large parts of the **Americas**, which might explain why not many people joined.”
  - +4 more similar feedback received

#### Consideration (s):

- Organisers take major global public holidays into consideration to select dates for a plenary. The scheduling of the sessions ensured that at least two friendly time zones were covered across the globe.
- Sessions with long gaps between and with six days spread over two weeks allowed an opportunity to attend the plenary and focus on daily routine (work, etc.)
- Scheduling a plenary programme is very complex. It is based on group conflicts/time zones preferences. Therefore, some repeat sessions can't be scheduled in the same time zone.

#### Action (s):

- As a part of the RDA Secretariat's plenary analysis presented to the RDA Council members, it was confirmed that future virtual plenary meetings will be reduced from two weeks to one.

## 8. Please provide any other feedback, ideas or suggestions for improving the RDA Plenaries and your experience.

Direct quotes of the respondents:

- “It was a **terrific plenary**, and **wonderfully planned!** **Two-week** structure **worked perfectly**, as it allowed me to attend sessions as well as continue keeping up with my work.”
- “I am severely visually impaired and the conference system has problems in web accessibility, which prevents me from participating smoothly. I understand that it is not easy to improve, but I regret that FAIR does not extend to people with disabilities.”
- “**Many sessions** were **cancelled**. It was 3 out of 9 for me. Some of the chairs were in other sessions at the same time.
  - One **session** I was in was **cancelled 10 minutes in**. It turned out **they** were **presenting in another session**. “
- “**Descriptions** of some sessions **said** that they are **relevant for researchers**, but were **in fact not**. The chairs did not acknowledge anyone other than data stewards/librarians, so I eventually left the session. A few of the **repeat sessions** were **cancelled** and I was counting on them; it would be good to **provide a reason on why** that was done (e.g. were the chairs unavailable or there wasn't enough interest).”
- “It would be great if a **draft programme** could be **shared** with session **chairs ahead** of **publication** to the wider community so we can swap times.”
- “**Plenaries** are **indispensable milestones** to **maintain** the **momentum** in the **group** activities and for the RDA community to maintain and develop its interest and participation in the RDA.”
- “A **recommendation** would be to **have simultaneous translation for the LA community**, the **English** accents are a bit **complex**.”

#### Consideration (s):

- Sessions were cancelled last-minute by no show or chairs being unavailable. These are Birds of a Feather sessions where only one presenter was available. Organisers were not informed about any last-minute cancellations.
- Each P22 programme time slot covered a minimum of 2 friendly time zones. 22:30 UTC accommodated early-to-mid-morning in Australia, Northern Asia, afternoon in the Western Americas, and early evening in the Eastern Americas.
- A draft programme is always shared with session chairs first. Up to 3 weeks is given to request any programme changes. [Communication with session chairs](#) for the first time was launched at VP22.
- The P22 registration did not include a question about any accessibility requirements attendees might have. Zoom was integrated into Whova and was opened in a new window which might have caused issues for a visually impaired attendee.
- Providing a simultaneous translation for all sessions in different languages is very costly.

#### Action (s):

- Sessions cancellation policy is on the Secretariat/TAB agenda of discussion.
- Any session cancellations will be announced and as an addition, a reason for the cancellation will be given.
- An additional field asking if organisers need to be aware of any accessibility requirements is already added to the 23rd Plenary registration. Organisers will monitor each request on an individual basis.
- Promote the benefits of using Zoom's free multilingual subtitle feature during sessions.
- The RDA is setting up a taskforce on accessibility together with the RDA Secretariat and the EU office

## RDA P22 Session Chairs/Speakers Survey Framework

### 1. Did you receive enough support from the tech staff during your session?

99% of responded session chairs received enough support.

Direct quotes of the respondents:

- “**Tech support was very helpful and supportive.** No improvements needed.”
- “I **could not join the session early** to test my setup. When I joined, **I was abruptly criticised** by the support person for not joining early. The same support person mis-clicked and moved me out of a breakout room, which led to disruption. My session was one of the first ones, and the **experience soured my enthusiasm.**”

#### Consideration(s):

Whova was set differently to previous plenaries and therefore did not let session speakers enter Zoom 25 minutes before the start. The issue was addressed and immediate access given.

#### Action (s):

- Continue providing a high level of support for session chairs/speakers to help them in planning their sessions.

### 2. How did you feel about the duration of your virtual session? Is 90 minutes the right length or would 60 minutes work better?

According to 87% of surveyed session chairs, 90-minute sessions are ideal and they would prefer not to reduce them. The remaining 13% of respondents felt 60-minutes would work better for virtual plenaries.

Direct quotes of the respondents:

- “**90** is definitely the **right length**. **60** minutes would be **too short**.”
- “I attend another conference that has **60-min** BoF sessions, and they are **too short** to get any real work done.”
- “**90** min **allows** actual **conversations** to break out.”
- “Given purely virtual, **some seemed** a bit **long** with 90 minutes and not that many participants.”
- “**90 is too long**, but in the end, there is always **plenty** of **discussion** that is relevant, **rich** and **moves the topics forward!**”
- “**60 works better for virtual** sessions - harder to keep energy levels high.”

**Consideration(s):**

- Plenary meetings are working meetings where 90 minutes are given for discussion and audience networking.

**Action (s):**

- **None applicable.**

### **3. If you did have a repeat session, did you think it was necessary (considering the fact that the recordings were available 24h after your initial session)?**

Only 33% of respondent group chairs held a repeat session and 67% didn't.

Direct quotes of the respondents:

- “**Not** that **many** people **showed up** to the repeat session, but it's **hard to know** whether the **recordings** of the **first session had an impact** on that.”
- “Yes, in **our case** very **important** for America and Asia, respectively.”
- “I **co-chaired two sessions**. It had **advantages** and **disadvantages**. It was **hard** to have **all speakers available** in two sessions, and I had to **play a recording** in a **repeat** session. I find a **repeat reached to more RDA members** from different geo-locations.”
- “I **had a repeat** session in **all of the sessions I chaired**. They were unfortunately **scheduled for the same time slot** in each case. This was **due** to only being able to choose **3 time options** in the **application**.”
- “**Yes** because it **enables more people** to participate if they are interested and it is a more inclusive option.”
- “I chaired a **repeat** session but it **had only 5 attendees**. This was **23:30-01:00** my time so **not ideal**. **Some people may have found the recording useful**. I **don't see** the point of a **repeat** session if **not many people turn up** and the **recording** is available.”
- “We chose **not to repeat** as it was a **lot to commit to when recordings** are **available**.”

**Consideration(s):**

- Due to the programme complexity, the high number of sessions, and the many elements considered during the application and scheduling processes, some original and repeat sessions will clash.
- There is no data to trace who watched the recordings and when in order to evaluate how it affected low attendance on repeat sessions.

#### Action(s):

- Repeat sessions are not going to be used for the future virtual plenaries.

#### 4. As a session chair, what is the biggest challenge in holding a virtual plenary session?

- Getting the **audience involved/ engaged** - 36%
- **Get all speakers and co-chairs in the same time zone** - 25%
- Holding sessions in the unfriendly time zone - 24%
- Encouraging **speakers to pay registration** fees to join sessions - 15%
- **Arranging speakers logistics**, getting them to confirm, sorting out challenges when they don't realise they have to register to attend.
- **Not knowing** in advance **how many people** are likely to **attend** the session.

#### Consideration(s):

- The RDA is a global organisation. In 2024 we are focusing on the Global South, therefore, P22 aims to cover all global participants. Accommodating all time zones remains the biggest challenge.
- Sometimes attendees are not engaged for various reasons. P22 organisers produced recommendations for session chairs where tips of engagement audiences were listed.
- Even though Whova allows you to add a session of interest in a personal calendar, it is unknown how many attendees will join a session beforehand.

#### Action(s):

- The RDA Secretariat will continue taking all feedback into consideration and look for innovative ideas to improve future plenaries.

#### 5. Please provide any other feedback, ideas or suggestions for improving the RDA plenaries and your experience.

Direct quotes of the respondents:

- "Some **info** from organisers to **justify registration cost** would be **positive** and would **help** make the case to Group **members/invited presenters to pay easier.**"
- "I **liked** the **Plenary** a lot. I **know the challenges** for the **Secretariat** which had to hold the Plenary for two weeks across all time zones in addition to the hard work with the web site. We need to **have two Plenaries per year** for keeping the Group momentum and community engagement in the RDA. THANK YOU!"
- "**More integration** between the **documentation management** (now somebody's **Google Drive?**) used for the session notes and the **RDA website** itself. Some content of session notes will remain very useful long after the conclusion of the Plenary. It would have been good to know in advance about the "TAB meets chairs" session, I only learned about this by chance."
- "In general **virtual conferences are difficult** to fully **engage** with. No magic way to improve this."

#### Consideration(s):

- Whova is a platform that RDA has used since P18 (2021) and the community is familiar with it. It has an excellent price / quality ratio and offers a series of valuable features and functionalities (e.g. networking, integrated registration).

- All P22 programme sessions (incl. Networking, TAB meets chairs, co-located events) were included on the web and Whova's programme. Whova announcements were made 60-30 minutes prior to each session.
- Collaborative notes are created, shared, and available via the RDA Google Drive. These are linked to the web programme and remain accessible to everyone all the time. If notes were to be created on the website, only RDA members logged in with active accounts would be able to access them.
- The introduction of one-day registration tickets is not effective since the RDA's effort for managing tickets manually via Whova platform is complicated, laborious and time-consuming
- Organisers aim to make fees as cost effective as possible. Plenaries cannot be offered for free since organising them involves costs. P22 registration costs were low. Many resources, including the web platform, stated that all speakers must be registered to participate and the cost breakdown was explained.

**Actions (s):**

- Analyse the current registration policy based on the community feedback.
- Collaborative notes will remain created as Google documents.