The Research Data Alliance (RDA) Framework for engagement with the private sector

This document outlines a framework for the Research Data Alliance and the private sector to collaborate for the benefit of the global data community and to achieve the RDA vision of researchers and innovators openly sharing and reusing data across technologies, across disciplines and across countries to solve the grand challenges of society.

Contents

1 Context

Established in 2013, the RDA is a global, consensus-based, community-driven organisation of over 15,000 individuals, 100+ organisational members and over 35 regional networks from 150+ countries, whose mission is to provide a platform to drive innovation surrounding data sharing and interoperability. The RDA enables data to be shared and re-used across geographical, technological and disciplinary boundaries, through outputs developed by groups and volunteer experts from around the world, and drawn from academia, the private sector and government. The global RDA community has produced over 150 flagship outputs and recommendations, openly available for adoption and implementation.

RDA offers access to a global community of data experts, using open and community driven mechanisms to develop open science, open research and FAIR solutions in support of digital transformation. This framework to engage with industry / private sector has been developed to act as an instrument to add value to the RDA community, by offering professional and timely services to support the global volunteer effort, driving the creation of RDA recommendations and outputs. There are many important benefits and opportunities for the RDA community and individual experts including increased communication and clarity on RDA recommendations, long-term recommendation sustainability and important global visibility and impact through partnership with global organisations. Finally, this framework is defined in response to the recommendations and priorities defined in the RDA Financial Sustainability Plan[1], the RDA Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023[2], and the RDA Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028[3].

2 RDA Vision, Mission and Values

The Research Data Alliance vision is that researchers and innovators openly share and reuse data across technologies, disciplines, and countries to address the grand challenges of society. This vision is achieved through the RDA Mission of *building the social and technical bridges that enable open sharing and reuse of data*. The RDA conducts both its business and its work according to the six fundamental Guiding Principles or values, namely:

- **Openness** – Membership is open to all interested individuals who subscribe to the RDA's Guiding Principles. RDA community meetings and processes are open, and the deliverables of RDA Working Groups will be publicly disseminated.
- **Consensus** – The RDA moves forward by achieving consensus among its membership. RDA processes and procedures include appropriate mechanisms to resolve conflicts.

---

[1] https://www.rd-alliance.org/strategy/rda-financial-sustainability/
[2] https://www.rd-alliance.org/strategy/strategic-plan-2020-2023/
[3] https://www.rd-alliance.org/strategy/strategic-plan-2024-2028/

research data sharing
without barriers

- **Inclusivity** – The RDA seeks to promote broad, balanced and inclusive representation of its membership and stakeholder communities.
- **Harmonization** – The RDA works to achieve harmonisation across data standards, policies, technologies, infrastructure, and communities.
- **Community-driven** – The RDA is a public, community-driven body constituted of volunteer members and organisations, supported by the RDA Secretariat.
- **Non-profit and technology-neutral** – The RDA does not promote, endorse, or sell commercial products, technologies, or services and the development of open and reusable recommendations and outputs within the RDA is mandatory.

All activities conducted as part of and governed by the private sector engagement framework must adhere to these Guiding Principles[4] and the RDA Code of Conduct[5].

3 Framework Concept

The RDA facilitates many activities leveraging on the well-established, community driven, open mechanisms of the RDA global community. This framework includes methods for the private sector to engage with the RDA:

3.1 Working groups to solve research data challenges

RDA Working Groups (WGs)[6] are formed to develop concrete solutions and recommendations to support the open sharing and reuse of research data. The members driving the work are international experts working in an open and community driven, consensus forming manner. All outputs, deliverables, results etc. of the RDA community activities (WGs etc.) are governed by the RDA guiding principles and are open and reusable by the whole community. RDA WGs have a duration of between 12-24 months, however facilitated WGs can have a shorter life span (RDA COVID WG (see section 4.1.1 below) ran for 6 months and produced six versions of recommendations).

> Private organisations are encouraged to sponsor facilitation activities to ensure that the volunteer community work is coordinated by a dedicated, independent RDA staff member or expert, a portion of whose time is dedicated to managing and facilitating the group work.

The group structure and composition are the same as all RDA working groups, with a dedicated expert Technical Advisory Board (TAB)[7] member and at least two international co-chairs expert in

---

[4] https://www.rd-alliance.org/how-rda-works/
[5] https://www.rd-alliance.org/about/code-of-conduct/
[6] Full details on RDA Working Group (WG) process at https://www.rd-alliance.org/working-groups/
[7] https://www.rd-alliance.org/about-rda/our-leadership/rda-technical-advisory-board.html

research data sharing
without barriers

the focus area. All RDA community members are invited and encouraged to join the group and contribute to the discussions and outputs.

The RDA identifies a series of international experts to be invited to a dedicated kick-off brainstorming workshop to discuss, identify and define the focus of the WG and a statement of work is drafted by the facilitator. Once defined, all RDA community members can participate and contribute to the WG.

3.1.1 Periodically assessing engagement

In accordance with the RDA Guiding Principles[8], the progress of the working group and specifically the model of a public private partnership leveraging on open, global expertise is analysed at 3-month stages, through surveys and open consultation with the community and the experts involved in the working group. The results of these analyses are shared with the private partnership organisation and the RDA community at large and serve to fine tune and modify the model for the benefit of both parties and act as a basis for further agreements. No confidential or personal data is shared in the outcome reports.

3.2 High-impact, global community-oriented activities

Other activities that allow the RDA to maintain its principles of openness and community led initiatives, while at the same time providing a concrete output on topics of interest and importance to our global stakeholders, is the delivery of dedicated events, focused roundtables, reports, white papers, etc. Collaboration with a private sector organisation allows the RDA to deliver outcomes focusing on specific thematic areas, while at the same time including our stakeholders and delivering an output of high value and high impact to a private sector organisation, the RDA community and the open research / open science community at large. Section 4.1.2 gives a concrete example of collaboration between the RDA and a private sector organization in 2025.

3.3 Promoting and communicating the activities

The RDA and the private partnership organisation jointly agree on frequent community updates on progress and achievements to be disseminated and communicated to the RDA community and a broader audience. All communications are co-branded, and the content mutually approved. Any publications resulting from the activities reference the support / sponsorship.

4 Outputs & By-Products

The outputs of both types of activities are open and available to the RDA community via the RDA web platform and follow the existing processes and procedures for RDA Outputs &

---

[8] RDA activities are conducted according to six fundamental guiding principles, namely Openness, Consensus, Inclusivity, Harmonization, Community-driven and Non-profit and technology-neutral. Full details on these guiding principles are available online at https://www.rd-alliance.org/how-rda-works/

research data sharing
without barriers

Recommendations[9]. This includes the licensing of RDA outputs and recommendations as per procedures[10]. Specifically, all RDA Recommendations and Supporting Outputs are under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)[11] and all authors, generators, contributors and users of RDA Recommendations are governed by these licensing regulations.

4.1 Examples of RDA outputs & by products

4.1.1 Facilitated RDA Outputs & Recommendations example

An example of a specific, facilitated (not sponsored) project within the RDA global community was the work executed in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 WG, from April 1st through June 30th 2020 created more than five releases of the recommendations and guidelines, leading to the final endorsed version, "RDA COVID-19 Recommendations and Guidelines for Data Sharing," with ongoing efforts to add and review materials.

- RDA COVID-19 Recommendations and Guidelines for Data Sharing, final release, published 30 June 2020
- RDA COVID-19 Recommendations and Guidelines for Data Sharing Infographic
- RDA COVID-19 Guidelines and Recommendations - the prior 5 releases
- RDA-COVID-19 WG Zotero Library
- DS Wizard Navigation Tool for the RDA COVID-19 Recommendations
- MindMap Navigation Tool for the RDA COVID-19 Recommendations

In terms of academic publications, two examples include[12]:

1. Example of implementation of RDA COVID-19 WG recommendations: Austin, CC, Widyastuti, A, El Jundi, N, Nagrani, R, RDA-COVID19-WG (2020). **COVID-19 Surveillance data and models: Review and analysis**. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3695335

2. Example of benefits of RDA and global community collaboration: Pickering B, Biro T, Austin CC, et al. **Radical collaboration during a global health emergency: development of the RDA COVID-19 data sharing recommendations and guidelines** [version 1; peer review: awaiting peer review]. Open Research Europe 2021, 1:69 (https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.13369.1)

RDA | Oracle for Research (OfR) Facilitated working group

A further example is the RDA | Oracle for Research (OfR) collaboration to facilitate the production of the *Mapping the Landscape of Digital Research Tools (MaLDReTH) Recommendation*. The

---

MaLDReTH model provides a comprehensive reference guide for designing, adopting, and implementing digital research tools to enhance infrastructure development and research productivity by promoting integrated infrastructure approaches, improving tool interoperability, streamlining data flows, and optimising researcher experiences across institutions. The [RDA-OfR Mapping the Landscape of Digital Research Tools Working Group](#) output allows professionals, tool developers, organisations, publishers, and funders to use the model to better navigate, select, and implement appropriate digital research infrastructure tools.

4.1.2 Sponsored community-oriented activities example

In 2025, the Research Data Alliance (RDA) and Microsoft jointly organised a series of expert roundtables which aimed to stimulate global community dialogue, foster meaningful discussions, and identify practical frameworks and best practices for responsible advancement in impactful fields of value to both the global RDA community and Microsoft. The main objective of the activity was to produce thematic focused white papers.

The two main themes of the activity were:

• Data Readiness and Data Centric AI Skills

• From HPC to Quantum: Shaping the Future of Research Computing

The roundtables were structured to maximise global engagement and inclusive dialogue. Sessions were scheduled to accommodate participants across diverse time zones, ensuring broad international participation.

To gather valuable insights for the roundtables the RDA leveraged its position as an inclusive and open discussion platform, with a global community presence across all continents, and experience in data driven innovation. Concurrently, Microsoft contributed its expansive technological expertise, and its technology driven global research initiatives. Invited attendees at the roundtables included leading researchers, policymakers, funders, data stewards, technologists, and industry leaders. By engaging both public and private sector partners, these dialogues aimed to foster a constructive discussion among stakeholders who are driving the advancements and usage of these technologies.

The outputs of this activity are openly available:

- Kurapati, S., Hanahoe, H., Collinson, M., Clare, C., Chiang, R., & Allison, R. (2025). RDA and Microsoft White Paper: Data Readiness and Data-Centric AI. Research Data Alliance. https://doi.org/10.15497/RDA00134
- Kurapati, S., Hanahoe, H., Collinson, M., Clare, C., Chiang, R., & Allison, R. (2025). RDA and Microsoft White Paper: From HPC to Quantum - Shaping the Future of Research Computing. Research Data Alliance. https://doi.org/10.15497/RDA00135

research data sharing
without barriers

5 Facilitation support from RDA Secretariat

5.1 Dedicated "facilitated" RDA Working Group support

The table below outlines the activities and facilitation steps involved in the execution of a dedicated "facilitated" RDA Working Group. The exact timing & dedicated person effort is defined within the contractual agreement.

Activities	Facilitation Steps
Contractual	Negotiation & definition Administration Assessment & adjustment Negotiation & renewal Termination
Content	WG focus identification & definition WG documentation Recommendation curation
Outreach	Press releases community communications Promotion of results Press & communications campaigns
Logistics	Chairs identification & co-ordination WG member management Monthly meetings Documentation generation & stewardship Surveys, webinars, meetings Sponsor coordination & communication

5.2 Sponsored community value activities effort & support

The table below outlines the activities involved in the execution of a sponsored community value activity. The exact timing and dedicated person effort is defined within the contractual agreement.

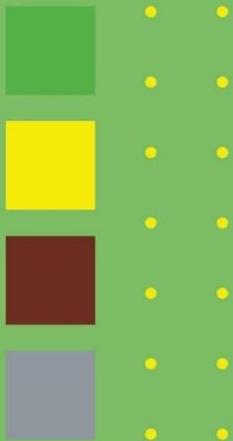| Activities	Steps
Contractual	Negotiation & definition Administration Assessment & adjustment Negotiation & renewal Termination
Content	Community activity focus identification & definition Engagement definition (white paper, report, article, etc.) Curation
Outreach	Press releases community communications

research data sharing
without barriers

	event management
	Promotion of results
	Press & communications campaigns
Logistics	stakeholder identification & co-ordination
	Coordination meetings
	Documentation generation & stewardship
	Sponsor coordination & communication

6 Costs

The total cost for the delivery of all activities is agreed with the private organisation directly. The facilitation is executed by a member of the RDA staff (either the core global office or one of the regional contacts). The agreement, upon review of the achievement of expectations and results by the RDA and the private organisation, and upon mutual accord, may be renewed at an additional cost for a further period to extend the activities and timeline or to deliver further areas of activity.

7 Contractual Agreement

The engagement with the private sector is governed by a mutually agreed contract including all details of the open deliverables, outputs and the licensing aspects. The contract includes details on the costs, payment schedule and details of the RDA assigned facilitator for the duration of the work.

research data sharing
without barriers

research data sharing
without barriers

rd-alliance.org