



D5.3 - FINAL EVALUATION OF THE FACILITATION SERVICES BASED ON FEEDBACK AND QA/QC ACTIONS

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CODATA	Committee on Data of the International Science Council
CoRDI	Conference on Research Data Infrastructure
D	Deliverable
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable
EC	European Commission
EOSC	European Open Science Cloud
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable
FSTP	Financial Support for Third Parties
IDCC	International Digital Curation Conference
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NFDI	National Research Data Infrastructure [Germany]
RDA	Research Data Alliance
TAB	Technical Advisory Board
WG	Working Group
WP	Work package



Executive Summary

This deliverable presents the final assessment of the Facilitation Service implemented under WP5 of the RDA TIGER project. The purpose of the deliverable is to evaluate the design, implementation, outcomes, and sustainability of the Facilitation Service. The deliverable builds on earlier reports (RDA TIGER D5.1 and D5.2) and provides a standalone, summative evaluation at the end of the project.

The Facilitation Service provided structured, in-kind support to RDA Working Groups across their full lifecycle, including support for work planning, governance and process alignment, meeting coordination, liaison with other RDA TIGER services, and assistance with output finalisation and endorsement. Over the project duration, 20 RDA Working Groups received facilitation support. The Service continued to evolve throughout the project in response to WG needs and feedback.

By the end of the project, facilitated WGs had produced or were finalising 12 RDA outputs, including Recommendations and Supporting Outputs, with additional outputs expected beyond the project's formal end. The Facilitation Service played a central role in sustaining momentum in volunteer-based groups, improving coordination and clarity of roles, and supporting compliance with RDA processes.

Evaluation of the Facilitation Service demonstrates very high levels of user satisfaction. Of the 24 feedback responses focused on the Facilitation Service, all respondents reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied.” Feedback highlighted improved organisation, sustained progress despite external constraints, and strong support for WG co-chairs, particularly those new to the RDA environment. Facilitation was recognised as a critical form of “soft infrastructure” enabling effective collaboration and high-quality outputs.

The deliverable concludes that the Facilitation Service fully met its objectives and delivered significant added value to the RDA and EOSC ecosystems. Sustainability pathways for the Service include its integration into the *The Research Data Alliance (RDA) Framework for engagement with the private sector* and document-based sustainability via several guidance resources developed by the project, notably the RDA Welcome Pack and the Facilitation Handbook for RDA Working Groups.



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1. Introduction

The RDA TIGER project was established to strengthen the development, testing, and adoption of community-driven, EOSC-aligned standards by providing structured support mechanisms to the RDA Working Groups (WGs). Among these mechanisms, the Facilitation Service has played a central role by offering targeted, in-kind expertise that strengthens WG coordination, engagement, and adherence to the RDA processes.

Deliverable D5.3 provides the final evaluation of the Facilitation Service. It outlines how facilitation was implemented, how it supported the life cycle progression of the RDA WGs, and how it contributed to the quality, visibility, and completeness of WG outputs. The deliverable considers both quantitative indicators, such as the number of groups supported and the range of facilitation tasks performed, and qualitative dimensions, including WG feedback, internal reflections within WP5, and insights gathered through conference presentations and community interactions.

D5.3 builds on earlier deliverables, including D5.1 that described the conceptual structure of the Service and its place within the RDA WG lifecycle¹, and D5.2 that documented its mid-term implementation, including emerging challenges and preliminary observations². In this final evaluation of the Facilitation Service, we assess how the Service has matured, how it has responded to evolving RDA WG needs, and how it has integrated with other RDA TIGER services and support mechanisms. The deliverable also reflects on the broader significance of facilitation in research data communities, presenting lessons learned that can inform current and future RDA procedures and workflows.

Deliverable D5.3 has been prepared in parallel with several other deliverables that contain the final evaluations of other RDA TIGER support services.³ The delivery of these other services has been anchored in the Facilitation Service, as will be explained later in this report. The majority of the reporting and analysis of these other services is done in their

¹ Rettberg, N., Delipalta, A., & Asmi, A. (2023). RDA TIGER D5.1 Definition and handbook of the Facilitation Service (Version 1). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8096642>

² O'Connor, R. (2024). D5.2 First Evaluation of the Facilitation Services. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12599362>

³ For the final evaluation and lessons learned of other RDA TIGER services to RDA WGs, please refer to the RDA TIGER deliverable D2.4 (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877228>) for the Communication Service, the RDA TIGER deliverable D3.5 (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877303>) for the Engagement and Landscape monitoring and the RDA TIGER deliverable D4.3 (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17762711>) for the Output Support Services. RDA TIGER deliverable D1.4 (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17876865>) provides an overview and lessons learned of the external and direct support mechanisms offered by the project to RDA WGs and RDA TIGER deliverable D6.5 (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877446>) provides an overall analysis and evaluation of the project and its services.

respective deliverables and the reader is directed to these deliverables throughout this report where relevant.

2. Outcomes for the Facilitation Service

D5.2 outlined the intended outcomes for the Facilitation Service. These were: WG life cycle completion; Additional guidance materials; Service stage update; Professionalisation of services.⁴ An update of these intended outcomes provides the basis for this report. However, in the interests of concision it is necessary to give an overview of how each intended outcome was addressed here.

- **WG life cycle completion:** Table 1 includes an update on the progress of all RDA WGs which received/are receiving support from the RDA TIGER Facilitation Service. As can be seen from the ‘WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement’ and ‘Current WG life cycle stage’ columns, all WGs receiving support have made progress since the Facilitation Service support commenced. Beyond the obvious benefit to the target communities and audiences of these WGs of there being new RDA community-endorsed Recommendations produced, another intended benefit from the Facilitation Service was that the Service would “stimulate greater community willingness to actively participate in WGs.” It is worth noting here that just four of the WGs supported by the Facilitation Service have published Recommendations or Supporting Outputs by the end of the project.⁵ Despite this, all WGs that received Facilitation Service are expected to continue their progress toward producing their intended outputs in 2026. Of the 20 WGs supported by the Facilitation Service, not one has withdrawn from the support programme or decided not to continue in its work.
- **Additional guidance materials:** D5.2 suggested that the Facilitation Service would produce four additional guidance resources: the Welcome Pack, the Facilitation Best Practice Handbook, a good practice advice document for RDA co-chairs, and guidelines for improving accessibility in WGs.⁶ Of these, the Welcome Pack⁷, the RDA Working Facilitation Best Practice Handbook⁸ and the Facilitation Tips & Tools Guide⁹ are available; only the document on accessibility has not been produced. The RDA

⁴ D5.2, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12599362>, pp. 33-34.

⁵ These WGs are the Multi-Omics Metadata Standards Integration (MOMSI) WG, Artificial Intelligence and Data Visitation (AIDV) WG, RDA & ReSA: Policies in Research Organisations for Research Software (PRO4RS), and Wind Energy Community Standards WG.

⁶ D5.2, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12599362>, p. 33.

⁷ Papadopoulou, A., Allison, R., Lehtsalu, L., & O'Connor, R. (2025). RDA TIGER Welcome pack - An onboarding guide for RDA Working Groups. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17791908>

⁸ Papadopoulou, A. (2025). RDA Working Group Facilitation Best Practice Handbook. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18012145>

⁹ Papadopoulou, A. (2025). Facilitation Tips & Tools Guide. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18011922>

TIGER project proposed a Birds of a Feather session for the RDA Plenary 23 in Costa Rica to discuss the topic of accessibility in the RDA and how this can be improved, building on the experiences of the RDA TIGER facilitators and supported WGs; however, this session was not accepted to the programme. A session on the topic of ‘Equity, diversity and inclusiveness in and for RDA activities’ was accepted at the RDA Virtual Plenary 24¹⁰, proposed by community members not related to the RDA TIGER project. This session included discussion of how accessible the RDA is for members with disabilities. This session was attended by several RDA TIGER project consortium members and the discussion on how to align the ‘lessons learned’ of RDA TIGER with the potential Interest Group discussed at this session will continue beyond the end of RDA TIGER.

- **Service stage update:** At the time of writing D5.2, the Facilitation Service was at a sufficient level of maturity that the Service stages and their attendant tasks and activities could be defined sufficiently.¹¹ Because of this, no significant updates were now required to the Service stages themselves. Nevertheless, two new tasks and activities have been added in comparison to the list compiled in D5.2 and can be found in the Facilitation Service update in Section 4 below. These are ‘Support for Working Group re-engagement’ and ‘Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs’ and are described in further detail in section 3 below.
- **Professionalisation of services:** Extensive discussions took place within the RDA TIGER consortium and between the RDA TIGER project and the RDA Foundation on the optimal ways to make the Facilitation Service (or some variation thereof) available to the community beyond the end of the project. In summary, the decision was reached to include this as part of the RDA’s overall strategy to engage with industry and the private sector; this is described further in *The Research Data Alliance (RDA) Framework for engagement with the private sector*¹² and in section 5 below.

3. Facilitation Service Update

In total, 22 RDA Working Groups (WGs) or prospective RDA WGs received some form of in-kind service support from the RDA TIGER. Of these, 20 WGs or prospective WGs received Facilitation Service support.¹³

¹⁰ The session agenda and link to the recording are available here:

https://www.rd-alliance.org/members/louise-bezuidenhout/plenary-participation/?application_id=174475

¹¹ D5.2, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12599362>, pp. 16-25.

¹² Access the Framework here:

<https://www.rd-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/RDA-Private-Sector-Engagement-Framework-v2.pdf>

¹³ The 2 RDA WGs that received in-kind support other than Facilitation Service support received support from the Communication Service; these two groups included the RDA Global Open Research Commons (GORC)

In the last year of the project, 7 people provided Facilitation Service to the RDA TIGER WGs: Ryan O'Connor (Senior Facilitator, RDA Europe), Liise Lehtsalu (Senior Science Officer, RDA Europe), Athina Papadopoulou (Science Officer, RDA Europe), Pablo Rodriguez-Sanchez (Research Software Engineer, Netherlands eScience Centre), Carlos Martinez-Ortiz (Community Manager, Netherlands eScience Centre), Walter Baccinelli (Research Software Engineer, Netherlands eScience Centre), and Nina Grau (Project Officer, CODATA).

3.1 Working Groups Supported via Facilitation Service

Table 1 provides an overview of all the RDA WGs that received Facilitation Service support from RDA TIGER, both RDA TIGER Pilot WGs as well as those WGs that applied for support via the RDA TIGER Open Call¹⁴.

The table gives the date when the RDA TIGER Facilitation Service support commenced, the life cycle stage the WG was at at the start of the Facilitation Service, and the groups' current life cycle stage as of November 2025. The WG life cycle stages refer to those defined in D5.1.¹⁵ These WG life cycle stages are: (1) Partner Engagement; (2) Workplan Creation; (3) Case Statement¹⁶; (4) Approval; (5) WG period; (6) Output Submission; (7) Review and Endorsement; (8) Communication and Engagement.

The majority of WGs that received Facilitation Service support were in the early stages of their life cycles when the Service support commenced. The corresponding entries for each WG in the 'Facilitator tasks and activities' column are an exhaustive collection of the tasks and activities that were carried out by facilitators for each WG during Service delivery. These

Implementation Model WG and the RDA National PID Strategies WG. Please see RDA TIGER D2.4 (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877228>) for the final overview and evaluation of the Communication Service. A number of RDA WGs also received direct and external support from RDA TIGER; please see RDA TIGER D1.4 (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17876865>) for an overview of this support.

¹⁴ For the call text, application materials, and evaluation materials, see Lehtsalu, L., Delipalta, A., O'Connor, R., Heikkurinen, M., & van Reterghem, T. (2023–2025). RDA TIGER Direct and External Support Mechanisms Supporting Documentation [Data set]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17896431> and Saldner, S., O'Connor, R., Delipalta, A., Asmi, A., Rettberg, N., Lehtsalu, L., & Heikkurinen, M. (2025). RDA TIGER Support Services: Application forms, evaluation forms, scoring sheets (1.0.0) [Data set]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17734784>. RDA TIGER D6.5 (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877446>) includes a final overview of the Selection Committee procedures.

¹⁵ D5.1, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8096642>, p. 9.

¹⁶ In the RDA internal workflows, Case Statement was renamed to Statement of Work in early 2025. The internal structure and intent for these documents remains unchanged. The Statement of Work (ex Case Statement) is a document in which prospective groups present a rationale and a proposed work plan to the RDA Technical Advisory Board and for the RDA Community to review. To be consistent across RDA TIGER deliverables about the WG life cycle, we continue to refer to Statements of Work as Case Statements here.



tasks and activities were defined in D5.2.¹⁷ The ‘WG name’ column contains hyperlinks to the relevant WG pages on the RDA website.

¹⁷ D5.2, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12599362>, pp. 8-25.



Table 1. RDA TIGER-supported RDA Working Groups (WGs)

*includes both RDA TIGER Pilot WGs and WGs that applied through the Open Call process; Pilots 4 & 5 did not receive Facilitation Service support.

WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
Pilot Demonstrator 1 - Community-based catalogue of requirements for trustworthy Technical Repository Service Providers WG (TRSPs WG)	June 2023	1. Partner Engagement	6. Output Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing work plan to deliver case statement (timelines and responsibilities); • Providing support for scheduling and running of meetings; • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries and/or support/facilitation during the plenary sessions; • Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary; • Providing assistance with finalisation and delivery of Outputs.
Pilot Demonstrator 2 - Alignment of multilingual vocabularies in the Social Sciences and Humanities WG	June 2023	1. Partner Engagement	5. WG Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making suggestions for the WG membership; • Promoting WG to potential members; • Discussing work plan, timelines, and responsibilities; • Providing support for scheduling and running of meetings; • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries and/or support/facilitation during the plenary sessions; • Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs; • Supporting Working Group re-engagement.



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WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
Pilot Demonstrator 3 - FAIRification of Genomic Annotations WG	June 2023	1. Partner Engagement	6. Output Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making suggestions for the WG membership (new groups), in coordination with the RDA TIGER Landscape service; • Discussing initial ideas for scope and objectives of the WG with co-chairs; • Discussing work plan, timelines, and responsibilities; • Providing support for running of meetings; • Ensuring that all RDA processes and rules are followed by WG members; • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries; • Identifying additional co-chairs; • Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary; • Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs; • Providing assistance with finalisation and delivery of Outputs; • Ensuring that relevant RDA processes and rules are followed.
Pilot Demonstrator 6 - Small Uncrewed Aircraft and	June 2023	1. Partner Engagement	5. WG period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making suggestions for the WG membership (new groups), in coordination with the RDA TIGER Landscape service; • Discussing initial ideas for scope and objectives of the WG



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WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
Autonomous Platforms Data WG				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> with co-chairs; Discussing work plan, timelines, and responsibilities; Creating the RDA TIGER support package following consultations with WG Group co-chairs; Providing support for running of meetings; Providing advice on upcoming plenaries.
Harmonised terminologies and schemas for FAIR data in materials science and related domains WG	June 2023	1. Partner engagement	6. Output submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinating group activities to keep them well-defined and in-scope; Providing support for running of meetings; Ensuring that all RDA processes and rules are followed by WG members; Providing advice on upcoming plenaries (and support/facilitation during the plenary sessions); Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary; Providing support and advice for RDA TIGER grants; Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs.

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WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
Policies in Research Organisations for Research Software (PRO4RS) WG	June 2023	1. Partner engagement	6. Output submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing support for planning and running of meetings; • Providing support in preparation for upcoming plenaries; • Making suggestions for the WG membership (new groups), in coordination with the RDA TIGER Landscape service; • Providing assistance with finalisation and delivery of Outputs • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries; • Ensuring that all RDA processes and rules are followed by WG members; • Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs.
Wind Energy Community Standards WG	October 2023	1. Partner engagement	7. Review and Endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating group activities to keep them well-defined and in-scope; • Providing support for running of meetings; • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries; • Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary; • Discussing initial ideas for scope and objectives of the WG with co-chairs; • Identifying additional co-chairs; • Providing assistance with finalisation and delivery of



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WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
				Outputs; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs.
RDA/CODATA Data Systems, Tools, and Services for Crisis Situations WG	October 2023	4. Approval	5. WG Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinating group activities to keep them well-defined and in-scope; Providing support for running of meetings; Ensuring that all RDA processes and rules are followed by WG members; Providing advice on upcoming plenaries (and support/facilitation during the plenary sessions); Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary.
EOSC-Future/RDA Artificial Intelligence & Data Visitation WG	October 2023	5. WG period	7. Review and Endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing advice on upcoming plenaries; Connecting RDA TIGER services such as Communications and Landscape and Output services; Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary; Providing support and advice for RDA TIGER grants;



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WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with RDA TIGER Communications Service to support communication of WG activities and dissemination of intermediary outputs; • Providing assistance with finalisation and delivery of Outputs; • Ensuring co-chairs are aware of resources available to them (for example the Communications Service and the Outputs Service), as well as all processes for finalising and delivering the planned Outputs or Recommendations.
RDA/WDS TRUST Principles Outreach and Adoption WG	October 2023	5. WG period	6. Output Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing support for running of meetings; • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries and/or support/facilitation during the plenary sessions); • Ensuring co-chairs are aware of resources available to them (for example the Communications Service and the Outputs Service), as well as all processes for finalising and delivering the planned Outputs or Recommendations; • Making suggestions for the WG membership (new groups), in coordination with the RDA TIGER Landscape service; • Connecting RDA TIGER services such as Communications and Landscape and Output services; • Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other



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WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
				WGs.
Building Immune Digital Twins WG	November 2023	1. Partner engagement	5. WG Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinating group activities to keep them well-defined and in-scope; Providing support for running of meetings; Ensuring that all RDA processes and rules are followed by WG members; Providing advice on upcoming plenaries and/or support/facilitation during the plenary sessions; Providing support and advice for RDA TIGER grants; Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs Connecting RDA TIGER services such as Communications and Landscape and Output services; Providing assistance with finalisation and delivery of Outputs.
FAIR Mappings WG	December 2023	1. Partner Engagement	5. WG Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting identification of additional co-chairs; Discussing initial ideas for scope and objectives of the WG with co-chairs; Discussing work plan to deliver the Statement of Work (timelines and responsibilities);



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WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding WG co-chairs through the criteria for Case Statement writing and submission process; • Providing support for scheduling and running of meetings; • Promoting WG to potential members; • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries and/or support/facilitation during the plenary sessions; • Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary; • Connecting RDA TIGER services such as Communications and Landscape and Output services; • Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs.
Health Data Commons GORC WG	March 2024	1. Partner Engagement	5. WG Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying additional co-chairs; • Discussing work plan to deliver Case Statement (timelines and responsibilities); • Guiding WG co-chairs through the criteria for Case Statement writing and submission process; • Promoting WG to potential members; • Providing support for scheduling and running of meetings; • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries and/or



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*includes both RDA TIGER Pilot WGs and WGs that applied through the Open Call process; Pilots 4 & 5 did not receive Facilitation Service support.

WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
				support/facilitation during the plenary sessions; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting RDA TIGER services such as Communications and Landscape and Output services;
Multi-Omics Metadata Standards Integration (MOMSI) WG	June 2024	5. WG period	6. Output submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinating group activities to keep them well-defined and in-scope; Providing support for running of meetings; Ensuring that all RDA processes and rules are followed by WG members; Providing advice on upcoming plenaries and/or support/facilitation during the plenary sessions; Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary; Providing assistance with finalisation and delivery of Outputs; Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs.



Table 1. RDA TIGER-supported RDA Working Groups (WGs)

*includes both RDA TIGER Pilot WGs and WGs that applied through the Open Call process; Pilots 4 & 5 did not receive Facilitation Service support.

WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
Computational Modelling of Health Data WG	October 2024	1. Partner engagement	3. Case Statement ¹⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with potential/target WGs prior to application; Making suggestions for the WG membership, in coordination with the RDA TIGER Landscape service; Discussing initial ideas for scope and objectives of the WG with co-chairs; Identifying additional co-chairs; Guiding WG co-chairs through criteria for Case Statement writing and submission process; Promoting WG to potential members; Providing advice on upcoming plenaries; Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs.
Ethics in Agricultural (Ag) Data WG	October 2024	5. WG Period	6. Output submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making suggestions for the WG membership, in coordination with the RDA TIGER Landscape service; Discussing work plan, timelines, and responsibilities; Promoting WG to potential members; Coordinating group activities to keep them well-defined and in-scope; Providing support for running of meetings;

¹⁸ See footnote 14.



Table 1. RDA TIGER-supported RDA Working Groups (WGs)

*includes both RDA TIGER Pilot WGs and WGs that applied through the Open Call process; Pilots 4 & 5 did not receive Facilitation Service support.

WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary; ● Enabling ongoing engagement and input from WG members; ● Supporting Working Group re-engagement; ● Providing assistance with finalisation and delivery of Outputs.
Mapping the Landscape of Digital Research Tools II	October 2024	3. Case Statement ¹⁹	5. WG period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supporting identification of additional co-chairs; ● Discussing work plan to deliver Case Statement (timelines and responsibilities); ● Providing support for scheduling and running of meetings; ● Providing advice on upcoming plenaries and/or support/facilitation during the plenary sessions; ● Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs.
GORC International Implementations WG	January 2025	5. WG period	5. WG period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discussing work plan, timelines, and responsibilities; ● Creating the RDA TIGER support package following consultations with WG Group co-chairs;

¹⁹ See footnote 14.



Table 1. RDA TIGER-supported RDA Working Groups (WGs)

*includes both RDA TIGER Pilot WGs and WGs that applied through the Open Call process; Pilots 4 & 5 did not receive Facilitation Service support.

WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing clear advice on what support the group can receive from the RDA TIGER Facilitation Service; • Promoting WG to potential members; • Highlighting where RDA TIGER services resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary; • Enabling ongoing engagement and input from WG members; • Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs.
Common Application Programming Interface (API) for machine-actionable Data Management Plans (maDMPs) WG	January 2025	3. Case Statement ²⁰	5. WG period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting identification of additional co-chairs; • Discussing work plan to deliver Case Statement (timelines and responsibilities); • Providing support for scheduling and running of meetings; • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries and/or support/facilitation during the plenary sessions.
Reproducibility Checklist WG	April 2025	1. Partner engagement	4. Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with potential/target WGs prior to application; • Discussing initial ideas for scope and objectives of the WG with co-chairs;

²⁰ See footnote 14.



Table 1. RDA TIGER-supported RDA Working Groups (WGs)

*includes both RDA TIGER Pilot WGs and WGs that applied through the Open Call process; Pilots 4 & 5 did not receive Facilitation Service support.

WG name	Date of TIGER support commencement	WG life cycle stage at TIGER support commencement	Current WG life cycle stage (as of Nov 2025)	Facilitator tasks and activities
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses work plan, timelines, and responsibilities; • Providing clear advice on what support the group can receive from the RDA TIGER Facilitation Service; • Identifying additional co-chairs; • Guiding WG co-chairs through criteria for Case Statement writing and submission process; • Responding to Community Review and/or Technical Advisory Board (TAB) review feedback; • Promoting WG to potential members; • Providing support for running of meetings; • Ensuring that all RDA processes and rules are followed by WG members; • Providing advice on upcoming plenaries; • Highlighting where RDA TIGER services' resources may be available and signposting the WG co-chairs to the relevant application processes, providing guidance as necessary.



3.2 Summary and Lessons Learned from Facilitation Service Update

At the end of RDA TIGER, the project is providing Facilitation Service to 20 RDA WGs, including 4 RDA WGs that joined the project already in proposal phase as Pilot Demonstrator WGs. Nine of the 20 RDA WGs receiving Facilitation Service support are in the *WG period*, i.e., these groups are actively working; seven WGs are in the *Output submission* period, i.e., they are preparing their final outputs and/or have submitted (some) outputs already for RDA community review; two WGs are in the *Review and Endorsement* stage, i.e., they have completed their final Recommendations, which have been endorsed by RDA Council or are in the final stages of being endorsed; one WG is in the *Approval* period, i.e. they have submitted their Statement of Work (previously Case Statement)²¹ and this is now in the review and revisions stage; one WG is in the *Case Statement* period, i.e. they are preparing their Statement of Work (previously Case Statement) for submission to the RDA.

Compared to the overview of the groups presented in D5.2, which presented a snapshot of RDA TIGER at M18 and when 14 RDA WGs or prospective WGs received Facilitation Service support, out of which seven groups were either in *Case Statement* or *Approval* periods²², now at the end of the project more groups are in the *WG period* and *Output submission* periods, as expected. Moreover, all those groups in the *Case Statement* and *Approval* periods in D5.2 are now in *WG period* or *Output submission* period. Considering, however, that almost 18 months separate the two deliverables, we would expect some of these WGs from D5.2 to have finalized their activity, particularly those groups already in the *Output submission* period in D5.2.

We can take the following lessons from this. RDA WGs are based on volunteer effort, both by WG members and co-chairs, and such effort must be balanced with other professional obligations. In 2025, the work of several RDA TIGER-supported WGs was also delayed by geopolitical events, in particular the long US federal government shut-down which impacted the extent to which members and co-chairs in several WGs could contribute. Even though the nominal period of activity for RDA WGs is 18-24 months, the dynamics of groups and members' ability to contribute effective time to groups can and does lead to longer periods of activity. The Facilitation Service supports the continued momentum and cohesion of groups through these extended periods of activity, including helping co-chairs identify reasons for delays to WGs' work plan and troubleshooting solutions. However, as has been repeated elsewhere in the RDA TIGER documentation and previous deliverables, facilitators

²¹ See footnote 14.

²² D5.2, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12599362>, pp. 8-15.



are not in a position to step in when members and co-chairs, i.e., the experts, do not actively contribute to moving the WG forward.

Table 1 highlights that facilitators' tasks are comparable across the supported WGs. Here the table does not illustrate fully what has emerged in discussions between the RDA TIGER facilitators at bi-weekly WP5 meetings; that even when the tasks are the same, how these tasks are implemented and experienced by WGs can be quite different. Facilitation is based on interaction between facilitators, WG co-chairs and WG members. In some cases, facilitators have assumed, for shorter or longer periods of time, leadership roles more suitable for WG co-chairs in order to ensure continuity of groups. The lesson learned was that the role of the facilitators is not fixed but dynamic. In the project, we carefully observed these dynamics and reflected on them during WP5 meetings; we also reacted to specific situations by discussing the nature of the Facilitation Service with the relevant groups and seeking to direct group dynamics appropriately. This 'lesson learned' is also part of an extended analysis of service gaps across RDA TIGER delivered in RDA TIGER D6.5; please refer to D6.5 for a discussion on how service gaps were conceptualised and mitigated through feedback resolution and analysis by the project partners.²³

Finally, the table above also highlights that the Facilitation Service acted as a central service within RDA TIGER that linked the supported RDA WGs to other available RDA TIGER support mechanisms and services (i.e., Communication Service, Landscape & Engagement Service, Output Service). This evidences the liaison and networking role that facilitators performed for the WGs they supported. A lesson we learned as a project was that, with the multiplicity of services available, not all these services developed and matured equally. The Facilitation Service assumed a central position in the RDA TIGER service portfolio and acted as a liaison with other services for the supported groups; this was noted from the outset as the project's services were designed and this held true as the service was delivered. However, it should be noted here that facilitators often also assumed some tasks of other services (most notably in the area of communication); this was done in concert with the Communications Service and was motivated by an intention to streamline the delivery of the services.²⁴

4. Evaluation of Facilitation Service

In this section, we provide an update on the Service stages and their respective tasks and activities, which builds on the extensive review of the same in D5.2 and includes here the addition of two new tasks and activities, as well as an overview of the role facilitators played in delivering the project's direct and external support mechanisms; next, this section

²³ D6.5, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877446>, Section 2.2 "Policy gap".

²⁴ D2.4, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877228>, Section 2.

considers the feedback gathered on the Facilitation Service throughout the project; finally, the Facilitation Service-specific key performance indicators (KPIs) are presented.

4.1. Update of Service Stages

D5.2 reviewed the Facilitation Service stages and their respective tasks and activities, analysing the initial description of each service stage, task and activity as they had been described in D5.1 and updating them where necessary.²⁵ This review included the addition of new tasks and activities which were required by the supported WGs and were within the scope of the Facilitation Service, though not necessarily listed or explicitly described in D5.1. As noted above, another iteration of this extensive review was deemed not necessary for this deliverable. By the time of writing D5.2, the Facilitation Service was of sufficient maturity that the interim review, analysis and update described there remain relevant.

Nevertheless, based on the further experiences of facilitators and WGs receiving RDA TIGER support, two specific tasks and activities have emerged and should be added to the catalogue described in D5.2. These are as follows (note that, where applicable, these have been included in Table 1 above):

- **Support for Working Group re-engagement:** Two WGs have required support close to the midpoint of their lifecycles for re-engaging with the existing membership and reaching out to different communities in order to recruit new members. The Facilitation Service carried out this task by initially deciding whether a re-engagement was needed, then compiling - also by requesting the support of the Landscape Service - a list of those individuals, groups, and organisations to contact in relation to the re-engagement (both within and external to the RDA community), and working with the Communications team to put together some communications material to promote re-engagement activities. These re-engagements were accompanied by open webinar-style WG meetings where the co-chairs introduced the WG aims to any newcomers, outlined the achievements of the WG so far, and sought input on the next steps. In both cases, the re-engagements successfully recruited new members to the WGs and those new members have actively contributed to the continued activities of the groups.
- **Supporting and promoting cross-fertilisation with other WGs:** During the project, twoCross-fertilisation webinar series were held, one in late 2024²⁶ and the second in late 2025²⁷. These 5 public webinars brought together selected RDA TIGER-supported WGs whose work had common areas of concern and which also aligned in some way

²⁵ D5.2, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12599362>, pp. 16-25.

²⁶ See

<https://www.rd-alliance.org/events/rda-tiger-cross-fertilisation-webinar-series-semantic-interoperability/>

²⁷ See <https://www.rd-alliance.org/events/rda-tiger-cross-fertilisation-webinar-series-making-mappings-fair/>

with the issues described in the EOSC Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). The facilitators identified these common areas of concern, gauged the interest and capacity of WG co-chairs to contribute, and moderated and ran these sessions as a way to foster engagement across WGs and to support knowledge exchange between them. This task also includes support for WGs to engage with other groups outside of the parameters of the Cross-fertilisation webinar series. The task included liaising with RDA TIGER Communication Service around the organisation of the webinars and delivered 5 well-attended webinars (c 20 participants on average per webinar) that facilitated alignment and harmonisation between RDA TIGER supported WGs.²⁸

4.1.2 Facilitator Role in the RDA TIGER Direct and External Support Mechanisms

The RDA TIGER project provided a number of direct and external support mechanisms to the RDA WG members, the RDA WGs, and legal entities seeking to test and adopt the RDA WG outputs. The project deliverable D1.4 provides a comprehensive overview of the RDA TIGER direct and external support, and lessons learned.²⁹ Here, we consider the role of the RDA TIGER facilitators in the project's delivery of direct and external support mechanisms. Facilitators contributed to the delivery of both direct and external support mechanisms.

Direct support included grants to the RDA WG members to organise or attend the RDA WG meetings that took place either at RDA Plenaries or at other points in the groups' work plans. The project administered this support via the RDA TIGER Open Call and two dedicated calls for RDA TIGER Travel Grants, as outlined in deliverable D1.4. The role of the facilitators for the direct support mechanisms included promoting the available direct support to the supported RDA WGs and responding to any questions which emerged in the course of this promotion.

External support mechanisms included external expert grants, which allowed the RDA WGs to receive subcontracted expertise. It also included Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) (i.e. 'cascade grants'), which permitted the RDA WGs or legal entities to develop projects that supported RDA outputs development, testing, and/ or adoption. The project also administered the external expert grants through the RDA TIGER Open Call and the Financial Support for Third Parties through two dedicated calls for RDA TIGER Cascade Grants; some external expert grants also included a public call for external experts. The administrative procedures related to external support mechanisms are outlined in deliverable D1.4.

²⁸ See also D2.4, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877228>, Sections 3, 4.

²⁹ D1.4, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17876865>

The role of the facilitators for the external support mechanisms was more extensive than their role for the direct support mechanism, outlined above. Facilitators promoted the external support mechanisms to the supported RDA WGs and responded to any questions that emerged. For external expert grants that included a public call for external experts, the facilitators were also present when the relevant groups developed their public calls for external experts and when the co-chairs discussed and decided on the applications received. In these situations, facilitators acted as liaisons between the groups and WP1 and verified the procedures around the open call for external experts. This supported the effective administration of the external expert grants by RDA TIGER. The administrative procedures related to the external expert grants involved both WG co-chairs and facilitators more closely than originally expected because of the co-chairs' subject-matter expertise, as explained in deliverable D1.4.³⁰

In summary, facilitators adopted a communication role in the delivery of the RDA TIGER direct and external support mechanisms but also carried out a key facilitation role in the specific case of external expert grants, where they acted as a liaison between the groups and WP1 and supported the management of the external expert grants by the project. The effectiveness of facilitators' activity is demonstrated by the high number of WGs that received Facilitation Service support also applying for, and receiving, direct and external support from RDA TIGER. As evidenced by the statistics compiled in D1.4, six of the nine RDA WGs that benefitted from RDA TIGER Travel Grants also benefitted from the Facilitation Service, five of the eight RDA WGs that were awarded external expert support also benefitted from the Facilitation Service, and four of the seven FSTP grants benefitted the development, testing and and/or adoption of outputs by RDA WGs supported by the Facilitation Service.³¹

4.2 Feedback to the Facilitation Service

The Facilitation Service benefitted from close contact with the co-chairs and members of the supported WGs throughout the project. A result of this was that the majority of the feedback received through both formal (via the project's feedback form) and informal (through conversations with WG co-chairs and members) was on the Facilitation Service itself, affording the project the opportunity to respond to the rich and varied feedback. This section considers the formal feedback received for the Facilitation Service through the project's feedback form distributed to RDA WGs receiving RDA TIGER Services, feedback on the Facilitation Service received through presentations to communities outside this audience, and then at the service quality indicators.

³⁰ D1.4., <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17876865>, pp. 17, 19.

³¹ D1.4., <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17876865>, Tables 2, 3, 4.



4.2.1. Feedback submitted via from feedback forms

Overall, the project received 35 feedback responses via its feedback form. Of these, as is shown in Table X below, the majority were concerned with the Facilitation Service.

Table 2: Number of feedback responses per RDA TIGER Service	
Service	Number of responses
Communications	4
Facilitation	24
Landscape and Engagement	1
Output Support Services	1
Overall Support	4
RDA TIGER	1

Of the 24 respondents who focused on the Facilitation Service, all were either “Satisfied” (1 response) or “Very satisfied” (23 responses) with the service they received. This level of overall satisfaction is in line with what was reported in D5.2 regarding feedback on the service.³² However, it is worth noting that there was a concerted effort by the project overall to encourage more feedback from those in receipt of services; compare the nine relevant responses from D5.2 to the 24 here.

Though this feedback was very favourable toward the Facilitation Service and reflected both the desire for the Service itself and satisfaction in how it was delivered, respondents also had the opportunity to provide further feedback on what potential improvements or additions to the Facilitation Service (and other RDA TIGER services) they might appreciate; the relevant questions on the feedback form were the following:

- *Please let us know about your experience with RDA TIGER service delivery providing concrete examples, suggestions for improvement and any other feedback you deem relevant.*
- *Do you have suggestions for improvement to the service description?*
- *Do you have any other general comments or suggestions for improvement of the RDA TIGER services?*

³² D5.2, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12599362>, pp. 26-28.

Section 3.2 in D6.5 analyses in detail the suggestions received in response to these questions and considers the responses in the context of the framework of service gaps (i.e., Knowledge Gap, Policy Gap, Delivery Gap, Communication Gap, Perception Gap, Service Quality Gap) used to structure how the project gathered and responded to feedback.³³ The reader is advised to review section 3.2 in D6.5 to see the results of a full analysis of this feedback and to get a sense of how this feedback was addressed by the project overall.

However, it is worth providing an excerpt of this analysis here to give a sense of some of the feedback received in the responses to the questions above.

Table 3: Feedback on aspects of RDA TIGER support services³⁴	
Aspect of support services	References in feedback
General organisation, WG operations, WG momentum	15
Meeting organisation	7
Communications materials and collaterals	4
WG outreach, dissemination of activities	4
Internal WG communications	2
Statement of Work production	2
WG outputs production	1
Conflict resolution	1

Some particularly encouraging feedback included:

- A response noting the impact of the facilitator on the WG and the “huge difference in moving things forward, which otherwise would not happen due to busy schedules of all involved.”
- Another response referenced how the support was of benefit from the perspective of someone new to the RDA and to co-chairing a WG, with the support providing “an invaluable asset to improving our educational awareness around [the] RDA

³³ D6.5, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877446>, Section 3.2.

³⁴ Table excerpted from D6.5, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877446>, Section 3.2.

deliverable process and procedures that could potentially delay progress otherwise.”

- One respondent complimented their facilitator, who “has been absolutely awesome” in their support of the WG.
- A respondent put the support into the context of similar Working Group-type enterprises which take place in other organisations: “TIGER support is honestly the best support system I've seen for working groups anywhere.”

As mentioned above, facilitators had frequent, direct interactions with the WGs they supported and, as such, had opportunities to discuss with WG co-chairs and members about aspects of the service design and scope, service delivery, and other RDA TIGER services available to WGs. These interactions were not recorded formally or systematically; however, facilitators could bring any topics or concerns to the fortnightly WP5 meetings where all facilitators were given the opportunity to raise anything they wished to discuss with the WP5 lead and the other facilitators. These discussions were valuable in that they allowed any issue which arose in WG settings to be troubleshooted as the project progressed, and gave other facilitators an idea of how to address issues should they arise in different WGs.

4.2.2. Feedback received in response to presentations, conference engagements

In addition to the feedback the project collected via its dedicated feedback mechanisms and discussed at regular WP5 meetings, RDA TIGER also presented the Facilitation Service in talks and poster sessions that garnered informal feedback and initiated discussions about the value of the Facilitation Service, and facilitation more in general.

While most RDA TIGER talks and posters mentioned facilitation, the Facilitation Service was specifically presented on two dedicated occasions. These presented an occasion for focused discussions not only within the RDA community but with the Open Science community at large about the value and impact of facilitation in the Open Science space:

- Lightning talk “RDA TIGER: Soft Infrastructure to Facilitate Community-Driven Standards for Research Data Management” at the International Digital Curation Conference (IDCC) in February 2025³⁵;
- Poster “Lost in Collaboration? Soft Infrastructure for Effective RDM Working Groups” at the Conference on Research Data Infrastructure (CoRDI) in August 2025³⁶;

³⁵ Lehtsalu, L., Papadopoulou, A., & O'Connor, R. (2025, March 4). RDA TIGER: Soft Infrastructure to Facilitate Community-Driven Standards for Research Data Management. 19th International Digital Curation Conference (IDCC25), The Hague, Netherlands. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14965049>

³⁶ Lehtsalu, L., O'Connor, R., Rettberg, N., & Zänkert, S. (2025). Lost in Collaboration? Soft Infrastructure for Effective RDM Working Groups. Conference on Research Data Infrastructure 2025 (CoRDI), Aachen. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16995565>



Both the lightning talk and the poster identified facilitation as a soft infrastructure that enables the effective development of technical infrastructures and data sharing solutions and practices. At the IDCC, the discussion that followed the delivery of the lightning talk recognised the value of facilitation and approached also the question of sustainable funding for this key enabling activity that often remains unnoticed. The preparation of the CoRDI poster enabled RDA TIGER to exchange with NFDI about the Facilitation Service. Like the RDA TIGER project, Base4NFDI infrastructure is tasked, among other things, with providing facilitation support to NFDI Sections (see poster for details). The comparison of the two facilitation services, their opportunities and challenges, again highlighted the potential value – or in the case of RDA TIGER the proven value – of facilitation to enabling effective collaboration of data experts in developing adoptable solutions for data sharing and reuse. The poster was well received and the poster session at CoRDI evidenced community interest in facilitation services.

4.3 Key Performance Indicators

As with the other RDA TIGER support services (i.e., Communications, Landscape & Engagement, Outputs) the Facilitation Service has its own service-specific Key Performance Indicators or KPIs (elsewhere in the project also referred to as “quality indicators”).

Table 4: Facilitation Service KPIs			
KPI	Description	June 2024 total	Final total
5.1	Number of WGs supported by WP5	14 (10 via Open Call application; 4 RDA TIGER Pilot Demonstrator WGs)	20 (16 via Open Call; 4 RDA TIGER Pilot Demonstrator WGs)
5.2	Number of virtual meetings organised	30 (20 at RDA P22, 10 outside RDA Plenary)	49 (21 VP22 sessions, 14 VP24 sessions, 14 WG-related public sessions)
5.3	Number of physical meetings organised	5 (at RDA Plenary 21, in Salzburg, Austria)	18 (5 at RDA Plenary 21, 12 at P23, 14 at P25)



Table 4: Facilitation Service KPIs

5.4	Number of WG outputs finalised	0 (no supported WGs had yet to complete their life cycle)	12 (6 Recommendations, 4 Supporting Outputs and 2 Other Outputs)
5.5	Number of WG case statements supported	11 (5 endorsed, 3 in approval process, 3 in draft prior to submission)	12
5.6	Number of people participating in the WG sessions	-	-

As there were no targets set for these KPIs, by looking at them alone it would be difficult to determine to what extent the Facilitation Service was successful. However, considering the favourable feedback received and the success the service has had in getting WGs initiated, these figures can be seen as representing evidence of the positive impact of the service. Similar to the analysis of the feedback received on the Facilitation Service, D6.5 analyses in detail these KPIs and how these figures were achieved and the reader is encouraged to read section 4.5 of that document for a fuller understanding of these KPIs.³⁷

It is worth noting here, as clarified in D5.2, that KPI 5.6 above was not tracked as the WP5 and WP6 leads decided that without the figures from other RDA WGs on the numbers of people attending WG meetings to compare, there was little value in tracking this specifically for RDA TIGER WGs. The data about the number of participants in RDA WG meetings is not available in general (i.e. RDA as an organisation is not tracking this information). The KPI is included in Table 4 for completeness.

5. Sustainability

As the core support service of the RDA TIGER project, the question of sustaining the Facilitation Service beyond the end of the project has been central to all discussions about how to ensure that the project's results, as well as the processes and procedures it developed, could be sustained after the end of 2025.

The main focus of resources throughout the lifecycle of the project was the support services, which are by definition time-bound and dependent not only on the resources available from the project but also on interest from potential recipients of the services. The Facilitation

³⁷ D6.5, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877446>, Section 4.5.

Service in particular is tied up in the question of the availability of resources to provide it. Through the feedback the project has received formally and informally, the popularity of the service and the impact it has had in terms of the amount of WG activity it has supported, sustaining the Facilitation Service in some capacity is deemed important. However, there remains the difficulty of how to do this beyond the end of the funding period; below are the routes to potentially sustaining the service for the benefit of the RDA community via partnerships with external organisations, documentation and guidelines, and instantiation of the lessons of the Facilitation Service in standardised, centralised support from the RDA.

5.1 Industry/private sector partnerships

As the Facilitation Service is dependent on the availability of facilitators to deliver it, discussion of its sustainability must consider a model or models to provide funding for facilitators' time. The consortium discussed several possible routes that would allow for a sustainable funding model, including developing the service to be applicable not only to RDA WGs but also to similar initiatives outside the RDA. Examples include multi-collaborator groups, open- or close-ended initiatives, task forces, Horizon Europe project work package groups, laboratory teams, or inter- or cross-community collaborations.

It was decided that the most appropriate route to sustainability would be to include the Facilitation Service as part of the RDA's existing 'Framework for engagement with the private sector'.³⁸ This would allow for outside organisations or initiatives to request the formation and support for a potential RDA WG on a specific topic, for which they would provide funding. The outline of this model can be found in section 5 of the Framework.

During the RDA TIGER project's lifespan the service model it developed has been adopted by RDA Europe's counterparts in RDA-US based in the United States of America. The RDA-US TIGRUS support programme³⁹ focused on developing facilitation services for both RDA Working Groups and other related external (i.e., non-RDA) groups addressing data use and sharing challenges in the USA. This service model was closed based on the RDA TIGER Facilitation Service; the RDA TIGER Facilitation Service team coordinated closely with the TIGRUS team, presenting a joint plenary session at RDA VP22⁴⁰ where both initiatives discussed how they were delivering services and responding to users' needs. Though this does not present anything significant in terms of sustainability for the project consortium

³⁸ Access the Framework here:

<https://www.rd-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/RDA-Private-Sector-Engagement-Framework-v2.pdf>

³⁹ Details on the service launch can be found here:

<https://rda-us.org/rda-us-launches-tigrus-facilitation-program/>

⁴⁰ Further information on the session with links to presentation materials and recordings:

<https://rda-us.org/rda-us-program-office-involvement-in-the-rda-22nd-plenary-meeting/>

that developed and delivered the original Facilitation Service, it does show that the service model as it is is adoptable and adaptable in other locations or fora, and that there is a potential user community requiring some version of facilitation support.

For further analysis of sustainability routes for the RDA TIGER project results overall, see section 5 of D6.5 (section 5.1.5 in particular contains details of the cost model for this).⁴¹

5.2 Guidance documents

As an initiative of the RDA TIGER Facilitation Service, guidance documents have been developed as a core component of strengthening and sustaining facilitation within the RDA, and beyond. These documents serve three main purposes:

1. To support facilitators and WG co-chairs during the active delivery of the RDA TIGER services;
2. To provide lasting, reusable resources for WGs beyond the project's timeline, and;
3. To disseminate lessons learned about facilitating volunteer-based, international working groups in RDA TIGER.

The guidance produced by the RDA TIGER Facilitation Service covers both procedural and practical aspects of WG operation and practical tips and tools for WG leaders, members, and facilitators. Materials include explanations of RDA processes, step-by-step instructions for engaging with services (e.g., Communications, Landscape, Grants), templates and checklists for co-chairs, and recommendations on effective meeting coordination and WG organisational practices. These resources have already demonstrated value by increasing clarity, efficiency, and consistency across WGs supported by RDA TIGER.

As the project concludes, the guidance documents contribute to the sustainability of the Facilitation Service by sharing best practices and knowledge developed within RDA TIGER, enabling future groups to build on a tested and well-structured foundation.

5.2.1 Welcome Pack

The RDA Welcome Pack⁴² was designed to provide Working Groups (WGs) with a practical, easy-to-navigate guide to engaging effectively with the RDA and accessing the support available through RDA TIGER. It brings together essential information about the RDA's mission, governance, and structure, as well as key templates, tools, and workflows to guide WGs from inception through to final outputs. By summarising this information and including

⁴¹ D6.5, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17877446>, Section 5.1.

⁴² Papadopoulou, A., Allison, R., Lehtsalu, L., & O'Connor, R. (2025). RDA TIGER Welcome pack - An onboarding guide for RDA Working Groups. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17791908>



it in an easy-to-navigate Welcome Pack, the guide aims to streamline the onboarding process, reduce barriers for new WG members, and ensure consistency and best practice across RDA activities.

5.2.2 Facilitation Handbook for the RDA Working Groups

The RDA Working Group Facilitation Best Practice Handbook⁴³ is a practical guide designed to support the coordination and effectiveness of the RDA Working Groups. Drawing on the experience of the RDA TIGER project, and most specifically the Facilitation Service, the handbook provides clear, actionable guidance for facilitators and co-chairs as they navigate the complexities of collaborative, international group work.

The handbook outlines the core roles and responsibilities of facilitation within the RDA WGs, including meeting planning, communication management, expectation setting, and stakeholder engagement and also offers tools and techniques to maintain momentum and ensure inclusive participation. The handbook clarifies how facilitation aligns with key RDA processes, such as Statement of Work development, output finalisation and endorsement, and interactions with the RDA Secretariat and TAB.

Overall, the handbook aims to strengthen WG coordination, improve collaboration, and support the delivery of high-quality, adoptable RDA outputs.

5.2.3. Facilitation Tips & Tools Guide

The Facilitation Tips & Tools Guide⁴⁴ captures the practical knowledge, techniques, and lessons learned from implementing the RDA TIGER Facilitation Service. Although the guide is inspired by the facilitation practices and approaches used to support RDA WGs, it is meant to include tips and tools that are organisation-neutral and applicable to anyone coordinating collaborative group work.

5.3 Professionalisation of WG processes and operations

The RDA is a complex organisation, with many processes and protocols to be adhered to regarding the set up, endorsement, and operation of new WGs. For individuals who are not familiar with the RDA and are contributing to WGs for the first time it may feel challenging to get involved in a WG; this is even more true for those who are taking a co-chair role for the first time. The Facilitation Service provided proactive support for individuals to navigate the

⁴³ Papadopoulou, A. (2025). RDA Working Group Facilitation Best Practice. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18012145>

⁴⁴ Papadopoulou, A. (2025). Facilitation Tips & Tools Guide. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18011922>

RDA environment and to alleviate some of the organisational responsibilities of co-chairs, allowing them to focus more on contributing to their WGs' activities. It is worth noting here that the Facilitation Service supported 96 co-chairs among its 20 supported WGs.

The guidance documents discussed above provide a framework for all WGs to operate in a similar way beyond the end of the RDA TIGER project, making it easier to navigate the RDA environment; the aim here is also to make processes more robust by lowering barriers to access (e.g. for new members and/or co-chairs) and by making often implicit processes and workflows explicit. Additionally, RDA TIGER facilitators kept an overview of a significant number of WGs and discussed with each other on a regular basis the progress and difficulties encountered by their WGs. Having a group of facilitators interact with WGs helps ensure consistency and identify common issues, reducing the chances of "reinventing the wheel" and contributing to sustainability.

6. Conclusion

The RDA TIGER project was the first initiative of its kind in the RDA community. The Facilitation Service was the most prominent aspect of this as it connected directly to 20 WGs, nearly 100 co-chairs and hundreds of members of the RDA community. In absolute terms the service was a success; all the feedback and discussions which fed into its design, delivery and updates indicated the extent to which it was viewed favourably by the RDA community, supported WG members' and co-chairs' contributions to their WGs, and responded to requests from those in receipt of the service.

One of the main themes that has recurred, as facilitators have discussed the wrap-up of the service and hand over of different aspects to WG co-chairs and members, has been the need for co-chairs and members to become accustomed to WG activity without RDA TIGER support (this topic was discussed in D6.4 with respect to the services moving from "delightful novelties" into "basic needs", as per the Kano model for product development and customer satisfaction⁴⁵). The wrap-up of service has necessitated both technical and organisational handover (e.g. storage spaces for WGs, calendar invites and meeting links) as well as ending established, trusted working relationships and working routines between facilitators, co-chairs and WG members. Though this has not been reflected in any formal feedback, further iterations of this or similar initiatives would do well to consider a more gradual 'off-boarding' procedure for cases where WG activities are set to continue beyond the end of the facilitation support.

⁴⁵ Heikkurinen, M., O'Connor, R., Lehtsalu, L., & Papadopoulou, A. (2024). D6.4 Report on feedback of the Services and corrective actions. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12571122>