



RDA TAB Responsibilities and Processes

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Abstract: Document describing the roles, responsibilities, and processes of the RDA Technical Advisory Board (TAB).

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V0.01	This version is just some initial thoughts put down to focus the discussion. All points are open for discussion.
V0.02	This version incorporates suggestions from the first round of discussions. Some key remaining questions are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the right number of people on TAB? • Do we enforce regional balance in the TAB election process? If so, how? • How do we bootstrap the TAB election process?
V0.03	For comment by RDA Organising Group
V0.04	For comment by RDA Membership
V0.5	Including changes responding to comments on forum
V0.6	Incorporating outcomes of TF Teleconference on 3 May.
V0.6-2	Some small corrections
V1.0	Following comments from membership
V1.0-1	A few minor changes following comments from Council.
V1.2	Revision based on the community understanding of how the TAB works.
V1.2.1	Further revision and clarification of several issues
V1.3	Revision based on decisions made by council at the May 2014 council meeting.
V1.4	Suggested revisions based on Governance document update (June 2015)
V1.5	Suggested revisions to integrate responsibilities from Governance document and “What TAB does” document (August 2015)
V1.6	Suggested revisions by RDA OCC to fill gap in the TAB election process, and correcting region name, as discussed in Council meeting, May 2016
V1.7	Suggested changes to reflect TAB’s increase in size over the 2017-2019 period
V2.0	Suggested changes to remove sections on TAB responsibilities already outlined in the RDA Governance document, move detail on TAB work to “How TAB works” document, clarify term limits for TAB members and re-election of TAB co-chairs, order of balancing criteria, removal of role balancing criterion, and minor wording changes. Approved by Council December 2017. Added explanatory footnote and fixed some typos July 2018.

Background

The Technical Advisory Board (TAB) is responsible for the technical direction of the RDA and provides technical expertise and advice to the Council, as well as helping to develop and review RDA Working and Interest Groups to promote their impact and effectiveness, as outlined in the RDA Governance Document.

The TAB scope is primarily technical; it should only consider administrative or organisational matters where these impinge on the work of the TAB.

TAB responsibilities are outlined in the [RDA Governance document](#). More detail on TAB tasks and how TAB works can be found in the [“TAB: What we do and how we do it”](#) document.

Engagements with other RDA Bodies

- At least one of the TAB co-chairs is an observer member of the Organisational Advisory Board (OAB) to ensure better co-ordination.

- At least one of the TAB co-chairs is a consensus-forming but non-voting member of Council to ensure better co-ordination, to allow TAB to raise issues that need Council decisions, and to enable Council to ask for a TAB point of view on IG Charters and WG Case Statements.
- The Secretariat supports the work of TAB and provides a liaison to TAB.

TAB Reporting

TAB decides on the frequency and mechanisms for its meetings. Notes will be taken at each meeting. The decisions and outputs of the TAB are made public on the RDA Web site.

TAB reports to Council through an open report prepared twice a year one month before the plenary.

TAB Membership

From 2014 – 2017, the TAB consisted of 12 elected members including 2 co-chairs, and some observer participants as described below. From 2017-2019, TAB will expand by 1 member per year, so, starting in 2019 TAB will have 15 members. The process of increasing TAB membership over this timeframe is described in section "Expansion of TAB during 2017 – 2019", below.

TAB Members are expected to have demonstrated deep expertise and a broad overview about data issues, for example through active participation in the RDA activities.

The role of TAB members is to provide technical expertise, not to represent their employer or other organisational interests.

Term of elected TAB members

- TAB members are elected for terms of three years, with at most one consecutive re-election for another three-year term to total 6 years.
- A person can only be on TAB for a maximum of 6 out of 9 consecutive years.

TAB Membership Constraints

- TAB members must be members of the RDA.
- TAB members should **not** be on Council or OAB, with the exception of the TAB co-chairs as *observer* members.
- TAB members are likely to be members and/or chairs of Working or Interest Groups. However, in order to ensure the independence of TAB, TAB members should abstain from any decisions about Working or Interest Groups of which they are chairs.

Observers

The role of observer TAB participants is to ensure coordination of TAB with other RDA bodies. The observer members may include:

- At least one representative from the Secretariat, specifically the Secretary General or their delegate.
- A representative from the OAB, specifically one of the OAB co-chairs or their delegate.

TAB can also decide to invite other individuals to participate in their activities, for example individual experts brought in for specific tasks if and when needed and agreed by the TAB.

TAB resignation

- TAB members can resign at any time during their term. If a place on the TAB is vacated during a person's term, Council will determine how that slot will be filled.
- TAB members can be ejected from TAB on the grounds of not following the principles of RDA or TAB. Any decision in this regard will be made by Council on hearing evidence

TAB Elections

Aim

TAB makes decisions which are ideally informed by a broad range of expertise. To best support these decisions, TAB members should include representation from numerous domains of expertise. It will be necessary for the TAB as a whole to have a wide range of disciplinary and technical expertise and to be broadly considerate of different geographic and organizational factors. It is also desirable for the TAB to be balanced in respect of personal attributes. A diverse TAB makes better decisions for a diverse community and RDA members are encouraged to take this into account when voting. The TAB election process is designed to support the maintenance of some of these balances within TAB by making it clear which expertise and backgrounds the individual candidates have and by using a voting scheme where each member has multiple votes so that they are more likely to include votes for a range of candidates with a balance of expertise.

The TAB election process is run on a fixed yearly cycle, which is synchronised with an even-numbered Plenary so as to make best use of face-to-face discussions at the Plenary.

Nominations

Any RDA member can either nominate themselves as a candidate for election to the TAB or nominate another RDA member. Each candidate must submit a statement of fewer than 200 words by the designated deadline set by the Secretariat, which will be at least 1 month before the Plenary, describing the candidate's background and expertise including how they match the balancing criteria described below (region, discipline). The statements will be shown on the RDA website.

To complete each nomination, 3 seconders must submit a statement by the designated deadline. The seconders are expected to support the candidate by emailing a short statement to the Secretariat.

Voting

The TAB election process is run on a fixed yearly cycle, which is synchronised with even-numbered Plenary meetings so as to make best use of face-to-face discussions. All RDA members are eligible to vote in the TAB elections. An on-line voting system is used to conduct the election.

Process

RDA will ensure a balanced TAB by publishing information on each candidate in advance of the election, supporting informed membership voting, and by implementing an algorithm based on balance criteria. The Secretariat runs the election and takes the following steps:

- A list is prepared of which expertise is available in the TAB members who are remaining in post. This information is made available about one month before the Plenary for member review.
- Additional information is made available about one month before the Plenary in which each candidate makes clear what region they represent, and the range of expertise they would bring to TAB by selecting their expertise and background from a list of topics in which balance is to be achieved. A TAB nominee is expected to designate their region based on the location of their current workplace.
- Each member of RDA has a number of votes equal to the number of TAB members being elected.
- The voting opens at the start of the Plenary and continues for 2 weeks. Votes are cast online and the candidates with the most votes are elected to TAB with the caveat that the balancing criteria are met. The balancing algorithm (See 'Balancing Algorithm' section below) will be employed when the balance criteria are not met, and when any particular category of expertise and background is over- or underrepresented.
- In the unlikely event of a draw, the Secretariat will define a mechanism to ensure a fair outcome.
- The Secretariat confirms the validity of the election and announces the winning candidates as soon as the results have been confirmed.

Election of the TAB Co-Chairs

The TAB co-chairs are elected from the TAB members by the TAB members for a two-year term. At any given time, there are two co-chairs of the TAB. Term limits apply. The election process and term limits are described in more detail in the [What TAB Does document](#).

Co-chairs elections are staggered so that one co-chair will be elected every year. To ensure continuity, a TAB member who is elected as TAB co-chair in their first term on TAB will be considered to be automatically re-elected to TAB should their term as TAB member come to an end during their term as co-chair.

A TAB member who is in their second term on TAB should not stand for election as TAB co-chair if their term as co-chair would take them beyond their maximum time on TAB as described above in section "TAB Membership".

TAB needs to consider these implications carefully when electing TAB co-chairs.

Balancing Algorithm

The balancing algorithm is employed only if the TAB election voting does not produce the required balances in the new TAB.

Where a particular category would otherwise be under-represented or over-represented as a result of the voting, the balancing algorithm will eliminate the lowest ranked candidates from any over-

represented categories and in favour of the highest ranked candidates from underrepresented categories.

The following table gives a simple example. Say balance is required of expertise in three colours: RED, GREEN and BLUE with at least 1 and at most 6 from any one colour. Say there are eight continuing members of TAB whose expertise is as in the following table and the voting produces results for the new candidates as shown. Then, working down the list of new candidates ranked in order of the number of votes received, candidate New 1 is elected because they have the most votes and selecting New 1 does not exceed any quotas. However, candidate New 2 is eliminated as the maximum quota on RED has been reached. Continuing down the list, candidate New 3 is elected but candidate New 4 is eliminated so that the minimum quota for BLUE can be reached. Then candidate 5 is elected and all seats are filled.

Candidate	Classification	#Votes	Count of	Count of	Count of	Elected?	Reason
			RED	GREEN	BLUE		
Continuing 1	RED		1	0	0		
Continuing 2	GREEN		1	1	0		
Continuing 3	RED		2	1	0		
Continuing 4	GREEN		2	2	0		
Continuing 5	RED		3	2	0		
Continuing 6	GREEN		3	3	0		
Continuing 7	RED		4	3	0		
Continuing 8	RED		5	3	0		
New 1	RED	100	6	3	0	YES	
New 2	RED	90	7	3	0	NO	max RED
New 3	GREEN	80	7	4	0	YES	
New 4	GREEN	70	7	5	0	NO	min BLUE
New 5	BLUE	60	7	5	1	YES	
New 6	BLUE	50	7	5	2	NO	
New 7	RED	40	8	5	2	NO	
New 8	GREEN	30	8	6	2	NO	
New 9	GREEN	20	8	7	2	NO	

It is clear that care needs to be taken in choosing quotas since the imposition of too many quotas or quotas that are too strict could lead to the election of candidates with lower electoral mandate.

Dimensions requiring Balance

The aim is to achieve a TAB with sufficient breadth of expertise to enable it to discharge its responsibility effectively. It will be necessary, for example, for the TAB to make judgements which are cognisant of best practice in a broad range of disciplines. It will also be necessary for the TAB to

have knowledge of initiatives across different geographical regions. It is appropriate therefore for quotas to be implemented in the balancing algorithm for these dimensions¹.

The TAB election algorithm ensures that TAB members will come from diverse regions and domains. We encourage members to promote other aspects of diversity in TAB through their nominations and voting.

Balancing for Region

If we begin with the standard 7 continent model: Asia, Africa, America, Antarctica, Europe and Australia; and discounting Antarctica, it is overly constraining at the time of writing to require representation from all 6 continents. If instead we group the continents into three regions by longitude: (North America and South America, Europe and Africa, and Asia and Oceania), we can give quotas that ensure some degree of balance whilst not being overly constraining, for example by requiring a minimum of two² and maximum of six³ from any one region.

Region	Maximum quota	Minimum quota
North America and South America	6	2
Europe and Africa	6	2
Asia and Oceania	6	2

Quotas for balancing by region

Balancing for Discipline

RDA is using the Fields of Science and Technology FOST⁴ 2007 in the OECD Frascati model to classify R&D into fields which are then divided into approximately 40 second level fields. (Note that Computer and information sciences is a subcategory of 1. Natural sciences.)

1. Natural sciences
2. Engineering and technology
3. Medical and health sciences
4. Agricultural sciences
5. Social sciences
6. Humanities

Using these six categories with a maximum quota of five with no minimum quota is meant to achieve disciplinary balance.

¹ Note that, prior to the 2018 TAB election, a third balancing criterion (Role) was applied. This was removed by Council decision in December 2017.

² Note that when TAB will have grown to 15 members in 2019, the minimum number of TAB members per region will increase to three.

³ Note that when TAB had 12 members (before October 2017), the maximum number of TAB members per region was five.

⁴ See <http://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/38235147.pdf> (Annex 1)

Discipline	Maximum quota	Minimum quota
Natural sciences	5	None
Engineering and technology	5	None
Medical and health sciences	5	None
Agricultural sciences	5	None
Social sciences	5	None
Humanities	5	None

Quotas for balancing by discipline

Order of balancing criteria

If multiple balancing criteria apply, they will be applied in the following order:

1. Region
2. Discipline

Expansion of TAB during 2017 – 2019

Due to the increase in Working and Interest Groups that RDA experienced from launch through 2017, TAB suggested progressively expanding TAB to 15 members. Council accepted this suggestion in July 2017. The process to reach 15 members over a period of 3 years was defined as follows:

- At each TAB election in 2017, 2018, and 2019, 4 members step down, as their terms expire.
- At each TAB election in 2017, 2018, and 2019, the RDA membership elects 5 new members. Hence, TAB membership is increased as follows:

TAB election	2017	2018	2019
TAB members	13	14	15

- From 2020 onwards, TAB elections will again follow the process as described in section TAB Membership, above, with 5 members rotating off annually.

To reflect the change in numbers, the regional balance criterion changed from “a maximum of 5 from any one region” to “a maximum of 6 from any one region”, starting with the TAB election in 2017.

With the TAB election in 2019, the regional balancing criterion changes from “a minimum of 2 [...] from any one region” to “a minimum of 3[...] from any one region”.