

DDI Alliance Strategic Plan, 2024-2027

For two decades, the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) has been the most advanced set of standards for describing both quantitative and qualitative research metadata in the social, behavioral, economic, and health sciences. Long before the FAIR Principles, DDI products were vehicles for implementing interoperability and facilitating data exchange in the real world. More recent additions to the DDI product suite have continued in that tradition. Future development of existing and new products will, at their core, seek to address these challenges, which are posed within an evolving data and technology landscape.

The DDI Alliance commits to meeting our users' needs and championing innovation. To do this, we will work during the 2024-2027 time period to align and consolidate DDI standards and toolchains into a truly integrated product ecosystem, with clear signposting for users. This work will position us in the future as a global first-choice provider for interoperable metadata and data standards and tools.

Looking ahead to the next three years, the DDI Alliance commits to the following three priorities:

- Engaging the DDI community
- Expanding the DDI community
- Aligning DDI development

We plan to address these priorities by launching targeted campaigns aimed at specific user groups. These campaigns will involve a range of activities such as conducting market research, identifying DDI champions, recruiting potential new members and users, and developing tailored support materials and events. All campaign efforts will be aligned with the goals of the priorities detailed below.

Engaging the DDI community

1. **Build community through products and events:** Belonging to a community is one of the most cited reasons for DDI membership. We will enhance our successful community engagement initiatives and introduce new community-building products and events to address member needs that are currently underserved.
2. **Renew active and engaged membership at the institutional level:** Strong institutional support of DDI is key to long-term membership. Institutional support should not be dependent on single individuals. A renewed emphasis on marketing and outreach will be aimed at strengthening institutional support and planning for the changing roles of long-standing contributors to the Alliance effort (especially when a specific member representative moves on).

Expanding the DDI community

1. **Understand DDI users:** Successful products solve users' needs. Our outreach work will focus on understanding our existing and potential DDI users -- identifying who they are and the reasons behind their use of DDI. This knowledge will serve as a foundation for driving innovation in future product development.
2. **Develop audience-specific training materials:** Training is a key component for encouraging uptake and has long been recognised as a basic need. As part of understanding DDI users and integrated into marketing plans, we will focus on understanding training gaps for existing and emergent stakeholders, and develop appropriate audience-specific training materials.
3. **Build partnerships with other standards:** The DDI Alliance will look for opportunities to develop partnerships and alliances that raise the visibility and potential uses of DDI in the wider data management landscape and influence funders and other policy-related organizations.

Aligning DDI development

1. **Alignment of product lines:** Significant new developments across all DDI product lines have been made, especially over the past five years. Aligning the development processes for products should aim to deliver efficiencies and support a better understanding of the level of interoperability of both DDI products and other related standards, whilst incorporating new features that are appropriate for their specific user audiences.
2. **Improve documentation:** Field-level documentation is crucial to understanding and uptake of individual products. Product development will focus on improving documentation that includes practical implementation and usage guides, use cases, examples of instances, and best practices.
3. **Support tools development:** Tools drive DDI uptake. We will support the creation of tools to lower barriers to entry, through the Developers Group and involvement in international research projects that contribute to the advancement of tools development.