

RDA TAB Responsibilities and Processes



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Abstract: This document describes the roles, responsibilities and processes of the RDA Technical Advisory Board (TAB).

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RDA TAB Responsibilities and Processes

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.
V2.1	Updated after Governance document revision in September 2020
V2.2	Updated to reflect Council feedback October 2020

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

- TAB participates on Council to ensure better coordination and 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.
- TAB participates on the Organisational Advisory Board (OAB) and the Regional Advisory Board (RAB) to ensure better coordination.

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 Website.

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

Function	The Technical Advisory Board (TAB) provides technical expertise and advice to the Council and helps to develop and review RDA WGs, IGs and CoPs to promote their impact and effectiveness.
Membership	Members of the TAB are elected from and by the RDA membership. Each year, approximately one-third of the TAB stand down and their positions are filled by election. The TAB members normally serve for a term of 3 years and may be re-elected for an additional term. The TAB chooses one Co-Chair annually for a term of two years as described in section 'Election of the TAB Co-Chairs' below. The two Co-Chairs coordinate the work of the TAB.
Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The TAB is supported by the Secretariat in executing its activities.• At least one of the Co-Chairs of the TAB participates as a non-voting consensus-forming member of the RDA Council.• At least one of the Co-Chairs of the TAB participates as a non-voting consensus-forming member of the OAB.

<p>Responsibilities</p>	<p>The TAB has three streams of activity: technical, strategic, and organisational. In each of these, the TAB members should not promote special interests, domains, regions or disciplines.</p> <p>From a strategic perspective, the TAB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provides advice to the Council to inform strategic approaches and decisions; ● Advises the RDA membership and the Council on impact-oriented WG opportunities and discussion topics. <p>From a technical perspective, the TAB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultivates candidate CoP Agreements, IG Charters, WG Case Statements, and RDA Outputs that promote the RDA goals of adoption and impact; ● Assesses candidate CoP Agreements, WG Case Statements and IG Charters and provides feedback to ensure they are achievable and meet the RDA goals; ● Assigns a TAB member as liaison for each WG and IG; ● Works with RDA WGs and IGs, the RAB and the OAB to promote adoption and effectiveness of their Outputs; ● Works with the Council, if requested, to evaluate CoP, IG and WG Outputs; ● Works with the OAB if requested to help them evaluate CoP, WG and IG Outputs; ● Reviews and approves session proposals ahead of Plenaries and provides guidance to WG and IG Chairs for their proposal submissions; ● Works with WG and IG chairs ahead of Plenaries to solicit attendance. <p>From an organisational perspective, the TAB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reviews the group meeting schedule for Plenaries to minimise clashes. ● Coordinates with the OAB on the adoptability of outputs.
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TAB Membership

TAB consists of 15 members. TAB consists of 15 elected members. TAB members are expected to have demonstrated 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.

- An individual can only serve on one of the RDA governing and supporting bodies, as listed in the RDA Governance Document, at a time. Note that neither the RA nor the OA are such bodies.
- 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 abstain from any decisions about Working or Interest Groups of which they are chairs.

Additional TAB Participants

The role of additional 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;
- a representative from the Regional Advisory Board (RAB), specifically one or both RAB co-chairs or their delegate;
- a member of the Secretariat to provide support as needed.

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 and regions. 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 backgrounds the individual candidates have.

Nominations

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

To complete each nomination, 3 RDA members must submit a seconding 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 yearly cycle, which is synchronised with Plenary meetings so as to make best use of greater engagement, where possible. 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 at least one month before 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 for member review about one month before the scheduled vote.
- Additional information is made available at least one month before the scheduled vote. Each candidate indicates what region and discipline they represent. A TAB candidate is expected to designate their region based on the location of their current workplace.
- Each RDA member can give one vote for each vacancy on TAB.
- 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 any particular region or discipline is over- or under-represented.
- 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 new TAB members as soon as the results have been confirmed.
- In the event of a region not having reached the minimum number of TAB members required, or if there are not enough TAB candidates to fill all vacant seats on TAB, Council will make a decision on how to resolve the situation.

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 underrepresented or overrepresented as a result of the voting, the balancing algorithm will eliminate the lowest ranked candidates from any overrepresented categories, in favour of the highest ranked candidates from underrepresented categories who did not reach the number of votes to be elected.

The following table gives a simple example: in this case, balance in expertise is required in three colours: RED, GREEN and BLUE with at least 1 and at most 6 from any one colour, and there are eight continuing members of TAB whose expertise is as in the following table. 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 three and maximum of six from any one region.

Region	Minimum quota	Maximum quota
North America and South America	3	6
Europe and Africa	3	6
Asia and Oceania	3	6

Quotas for balancing by region

Balancing for Discipline

RDA is using the Fields of Science and Technology FOST² 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 See <http://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/38235147.pdf> (Annex 1)

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

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

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.

Role of TAB Co-Chairs

- The two TAB Co-Chairs coordinate the work of the TAB. This includes generating TAB meeting agendas and facilitating the regular TAB meetings
- At least one of the TAB Co-Chairs participates as a non-voting consensus-forming member of the RDA Council.
- At least one of the TAB Co-Chairs participates on a similar basis on the Organisational Advisory Board.
- At least one of the TAB Co-Chairs participates on a similar basis on the Regional Advisory Board.

Term of a TAB Co-Chair

- TAB Co-Chairs are elected for 2 years at a time with a maximum of one consecutive re-election (i.e. maximum 4 years).
- The Co-Chair elections are staggered so that one co-chair is elected each year.
- If a Co-Chair is elected in the third year of their first term and wishes to continue for the normal two years, they will be deemed automatically re-elected to TAB for another three-year term.
- After completing their time as Co-Chair (either one or two consecutive two-year periods), a TAB member is ineligible to be re-elected as TAB co-chair until 2 years have passed.

Nomination and Election of TAB Co-Chair

Nominations Timing

Nominations take place after the TAB election results have been published, and before the first meeting of the newly established TAB, so that TAB can introduce nominees in their first meeting.

Nomination Eligibility

All TAB members in TAB are eligible to be (self-) nominated for the position of a co-chair

The TAB Co-Chairs need to be available to commit to the responsibilities described under “Role of the TAB Co-Chairs” above. The two Co-Chairs together should represent two different regions. Diversity is encouraged.

Submission of Nominations

The current Co-Chair collects the nominations, which should include a brief biography and a statement of why the person wishes to be chosen as Co-Chair, and communicates them to TAB and Secretariat.

Election Process

If there is only one nominee, that person becomes TAB Co-Chair. If there are two or more nominees, there will be an election through a secret ballot. The Secretariat runs a voting process using a Web form or similar, which will be open for a defined time period, usually a week. Each TAB member has one secret vote, which needs to be cast during that period. If a nominee has a simple majority of votes, that person is elected as the new Co-Chair. If there is a tie for first place, there will be a random draw between the nominees that are tied.

Voting Eligibility

All TAB members are eligible to vote.

Timing of Voting

Voting should happen as soon as possible after the first TAB meeting of the new TAB.

Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, e.g. when a TAB Co-Chair steps down before the end of their term, Council will make a decision on how to resolve the situation in consultation with TAB.

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.

Upon termination of their term on Council, a Co-Chair may continue to engage for a limited time, with the approval of Council members, to ensure a smooth, efficient and timely handover to the new Co-Chair.