RDA Strategic Plan 2024-2028

Sustain, Empower, Innovate

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

After a decade of growth and development, the Research Data Alliance (RDA) presents its fifth strategic plan, titled 'Sustain, Empower, Innovate' which provides direction and vision for the organisation until 2028. This plan, focused on strengthening and widening the organisation, is organised into four strategic themes: 1) **Globalise** 2) **Sustain** 3) **Empower** 4) **Innovate**.

These themes emerged during a community consultation organised by the RDA Secretariat during the RDA's 20th Plenary Meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden, in March 2023. Community consultation was one of many activities organised during the RDA's 10th anniversary celebratory year that aimed to recognise the RDA's successes and lessons learned, and reflect on the past, present, and future of the organisation.

This strategic plan revisits the objectives and outcomes of the RDA's previous strategic plan (2020-2023), and reiterates the organisation's mission, vision and guiding principles. The section on 'Strategic Direction' provides an overview of the strategic themes, their key strategic areas, and priorities. To progress the RDA's Strategy, a series of concrete activities for each strategic area will be planned, accompanied by timelines and KPIs for each activity to monitor and measure their progress and completion. Successful execution of the RDA's Strategic Plan requires cooperation, collaboration and co-creation between the global community, and the RDA governance and organisational bodies.

The RDA: A Snapshot

Vision

Researchers and innovators openly share and re-use data across technologies, disciplines, and countries to address the grand challenges of society.

Mission

The RDA builds the social and technical bridges that enable open sharing and re-use of data.

Guiding Principles

- Openness
- Consensus
- Inclusivity
- Harmonisation
- Community-driven
- Non-profit and technology-neutral

13,900+
Community Members

80
Organisational & Affiliate Members

151
Countries

35
Regional Networks

150+
Community Groups

Figures reported as of December 2023.

Organisational Bodies

- Council
- Technical Advisory Board
- Organisational Assembly
- Regional Assembly
- Secretariat

RDA 2020-2023 Strategy Highlights

Highlights of the many achievements of the Research Data Alliance (RDA) Strategic Plan 2020–2023, structured under three overarching pillars, are:

1. PEOPLE

- Increased representation of the RDA in global areas (e.g., Southern Hemisphere) to extend its global presence and engage new professionals. From January 2020 to November 2023, the RDA's global community increased by 26%. Specifically, Latin American membership increased by 86% and African membership by 30%.
- Launch of the Communities of Practice (CoPs) framework to achieve a more fulsome and integrated community, and cultivate the culture of the RDA.
- Formalisation of engagement with Regions through structured partnership agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs). The RDA has progressed to six regional partners, 10 MoUs and an additional 20 members of its Regional Assembly.

2. PROCESSES

- The RDA Foundation (global legal entity) has increased its financial revenue in the period from 2020 to 2023 in addition to the definition and implementation of an in-depth financial sustainability plan.
- The RDA has pursued more relationship-driven funding to provide optimal sustainable support to the community and its products through the definition of a framework to engage with the private sector. The first private sector–RDA activities started in 2023.
- The RDA Secretariat concentrated on improving coordination among Working and Interest Groups through monthly community cross-fertilisation workshops as part of the 10 years of RDA (2013-2023) activities.

3. PRODUCTS

- Investment of finances and human resources to build and maintain a brand new collaborative web-based platform for the global community and its work.
- Recruitment of two new RDA Foundation (RDA global legal entity) staff members to offer increased services and support to the global RDA community.
- Increased awareness and identification of the RDA's contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) through the establishment of a specific RDA Interest group, active identification of RDA group contributions to specific SDGs, and awareness raising activities both internally and externally.

2024-2028 Strategic Directions

In the next five years (2024 – 2028), the RDA's strategy will focus on four key strategic themes:

1. GLOBALISE

Ensure the RDA is a truly global organisation

- Build and maintain capacity in global areas
- Consolidate and expand regional engagement

2. SUSTAIN

Secure organisational sustainability

- Promote sustainability within the RDA
- Optimise processes for financial sustainability

3. EMPOWER

Foster leadership for the future

- Support leadership in education and training
- Champion progress in research data management practice and policy

4. INNOVATE

Create impact in the global data landscape

- Harness the power of the community to innovate and advocate
- Maximise potential and impact of RDA Outputs and Recommendations
- Provide an effective environment for innovation and community growth within the RDA

1. GLOBALISE

Ensuring the RDA is a truly global organisation means establishing roots and engagement with multiple, relevant stakeholders across the globe. From funders to policy makers, and academia to industry, the RDA strives to ensure broad awareness of and engagement with international as well as regional and national champions and leaders. Globalisation requires actions dedicated to specific geographical areas, such as the Global South[1]. Emphasis will be placed on the identification of regional priorities, opportunities for cross-regional collaboration as well as multilingualism.

STRATEGIC AREA	PRIORITY
1.1. Build and maintain global capacity	1.1.1. Increase RDA engagement in the Global South 1.1.2. Collaborate with global projects and initiatives 1.1.3. Encourage multilingualism in RDA activities
1.2. Consolidate and expand regional engagement	1.2.1. Support, maintain and innovate existing regional relationships 1.2.2. Engage new regions

[1] For the purposes of this Strategy "Global South" refers to countries and regions in the regions of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. The United Nations' Finance Center for South-South Cooperation maintains arguably the world's most reputable and reliable list of Global South countries. As of early 2022, the list includes 78 countries in all, which are referred to as the "Group of 77 and China" http://www.fc-ssc.org/en/partnership_program/south_south_countries

2. SUSTAIN

The RDA's core asset is its community. Providing optimal support to sustain the community is, therefore, a primary objective of this strategic plan.

To date, the ability of the RDA, as an organisation, to provide different types of support needed to sustain and develop community activity has been limited by available funding. In recent years, considerable effort has been invested in supporting organisational and affiliate members, and in identifying areas of collaboration through joint activities with other initiatives of relevance to the community. The outcomes of this include a substantive growth in the organisational membership and a public-private partnership pilot.

It is envisaged that under this plan these activities will continue. There will be a continued focus on the development of the organisation to achieve scalability required to keep pace with the development of the community. Financial sustainability will continue to be a priority, with a focus on further income diversification. It is vital that the RDA further expands its recognition as a key player in the field to establish a basis upon which the financial and organisational sustainability can thrive.

STRATEGIC AREA	PRIORITY
2.1. Promote sustainability within the RDA	2.1.1. Provide coordination for Working and Interest Groups
	2.1.2. Ensure RDA Outputs and Recommendations remain current and relevant
	2.1.3. Continue to develop RDA staff expertise and organisational knowledge
2.2. Optimise processes for financial sustainability	2.2.1. Further diversify funding sources to ensure RDA meets its strategic objectives
	2.2.2. Expand relationships with funders, ministries, national governing bodies and others to communicate the value of the RDA and realise financial sustainability

3. EMPOWER

The development, facilitation and prioritisation of requirements for effectively empowering people to become leaders and agents of change within the research data management ecosystem is crucial. Strategic areas and priorities focus on education and training of existing and emergent leaders through the provision of resources, infrastructure, guidance and mentorship; and, raising awareness of the importance of reliable research practice and policy.

STRATEGIC AREA	PRIORITY
3.1. Support leadership in education and training	3.1.1. Raise awareness of training resources and opportunities where available and needed 3.1.2. Explore collaboration between the RDA and higher education institutions, as well as international Open Science organisations and initiatives, to raise awareness of and participation in the RDA and its groups. 3.1.3. Encourage and recognise contribution, service and involvement in both the RDA community and governance
3.2. Champion progress in research data management practice and policy	3.2.1. Raise awareness of the relationship between best practice research data management and research integrity 3.2.2. Advocate the importance of best practices in research data management for sound science policy development and implementation 3.2.3. Ensure the recognition of best practices in research data management and open research

4. INNOVATE

By its nature, the RDA is an innovative organisation in terms of its mission, vision, guiding principles and global membership. As the RDA enters its next phase of growth and development, it will be important to continue to provide opportunities for community innovation by addressing emergent data-related themes and collaborating with partner organisations to tackle grand societal challenges. This strategic theme focuses on maximising the innovation potential and impact of the RDA's work by enabling greater dissemination and adoption of RDA outputs; and, by identification of new data-related themes of interest.

STRATEGIC AREA	PRIORITY
4.1. Harness the power of the community to innovate and advocate	4.1.1. Demonstrate the innovative value of the RDA to a broad range of stakeholders 4.1.2. Encourage innovation to address emergent themes impacting research data, including but not limited to Artificial Intelligence (AI), High Performance Computing (HPC) and research software
4.2. Maximise potential and impact of RDA Outputs and Recommendations	4.2.1. Engage in outreach and promotion to increase adoption of RDA Outputs and Recommendations 4.2.2. Measure impact of RDA Outputs and Recommendations to maximise value and potential 4.2.3. Facilitate the conversion of RDA appropriate Recommendations to standards
4.3. Provide an effective environment for innovation and community growth within the RDA	4.3.1. Map, develop and maintain the RDA landscape to clarify boundaries and identify overlaps or gaps in provision 4.3.2. Review and revise RDA structures and processes to enable growth

Implementation

The implementation of this strategic plan is of crucial importance for both the RDA as an organisation, as well as for the broader RDA community. To facilitate the execution of this plan and the monitoring of progress, the RDA Secretariat will manage a separate internal implementation plan. The latter will outline the activities, deliverables and actors associated with the different strategic areas and priorities. The implementation plan will be developed over an 18 month timeline and will include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure progress. The implementation of the ambitions described in this strategic plan are a shared responsibility of the RDA bodies as well as its global community. Together, and driven by the core values of the organisation, we will be successful in creating new opportunities and further strengthen the RDA as an open, inclusive, and influential global forum.

IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST,
GO ALONE.

IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR,

Go together

- African Proverb

Thank you to all the members, organisations, and funders that are instrumental to the RDA.

Join the RDA Family