Standards Development and Review Process and Procedures

Version 3: January 2020

The Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) Alliance develops specification and technical products supporting the documentation, management, and integration of social science data and other data about human activity. Current specification and technical products include:

## Specification Products

* *DDI Codeboo*k: The product development line aimed at providing the comprehensive documentation needed to effectively use and analyze social science data focusing on simple surveys and data sets.
* *DDI Lifecycl*e: The product development line aimed at documenting and managing data across the entire life cycle of research data from conceptualization to publication and beyond.
* *XKOS:* extends SKOS for the needs of statistical classifications. It does so in two main directions. First, it defines a number of terms that enable the representation of statistical classifications with their structure and textual properties, as well as the relations between classifications. Second, it refines SKOS semantic properties to allow the use of more specific relations between concepts. XKOS adds the extensions that are desirable to meet the requirements of the statistical community.
* *Disco: D*efines an RDF Schema vocabulary that enables discovery of research and survey data on the Web. Based on DDI XML formats of DDI Codebook and DDI Lifecycle. The specification supports the discovery of microdata sets and related metadata using RDF technologies in the Web of Linked Data. The vocabulary leverages the DDI specification to create a simplified version of this model for the discovery of data files.

## Technical Products

* *DDI Controlled Vocabularies:* The lists of standardized terms that provide semantics (definitions of the meaning of metadata elements) and content (declaration of instructions for what and how values should be assigned to elements) rendered in multiple consistent formats to support discovery, understanding, and use of the controlled vocabulary.

Additional products may be under development and added to this list as approved for publication.

# Requesting Changes

Anyone, including non-members of the DDI Alliance, may request corrections or expansions to DDI specification or technical products . Corrections or extensions of current content should be submitted via the issue tracker for the Technical Committee. Proposals for new content area should be directed to the Technical Committee.

A proposal for new content should reflect the input of the DDI community concerned with the topic area. To help the community assess the proposal during review, the proposal must include:

* a complete draft statement of content and functionality
* information about the business case for the proposed change
* the objectives that the added content will achieve.

The proposal will be presented to the Scientific Board for approval. Once approved, the group proposing the expansion should coordinate work with the Technical Committee to develop the proposed addition within the product’s development framework, which allows for iterative testing of the model. To be reviewed for eventual merging within a project the final proposal should provide:

* a revised model with object level documentation
* high level documentation regarding how the new coverage meets the requirements of the underlying use cases (including examples where relevant)

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# Technical Review

The Technical Review of new content is performed iteratively during development. The extent of technical review varies by the complexity of the change in the model. The Technical Review should include members of the DDI community familiar with the product as well as the usage needs addressed by the change. The Technical Review is to confirm the level of change (see below), verify that the modeling and design standards of the product are followed, and evaluate the success of the change in addressing the issue or need it is intended to address. Each product follows its own versioning line which adheres to Semantic Versioning (semver.org) guidelines.

## Technical Review

Patches require a Technical Review by the Technical Committee. A Patch may be implemented immediately following a Technical Review..

For Minor Version Changes, the Technical Review may be limited or bypassed if the Executive Director determines that the process of developing the proposed changes involved sufficient input and review by Member Organizations concerned with the area of coverage.

Major Version Changes involve a Technical Review addressing each specific area of change. At the discretion of the Executive Director with advice from the Technical Committee, multiple areas of change may be rolled into a single Technical Review. Given the scope of change, Major Version Changes generally involve the development of one or more Working Groups or extensive consultation between the Scientific Board and the Technical Committee.

# Public Review

After Technical Review, the proposal is posted for a Public Review of at least one month. A Patch does not require a Public Review. The package for a Public Review must include:

* Revised model with complete object level documentation
* High level documentation and examples where appropriate
* Change log
* Report on the results of the Technical Review

The Executive Director will distribute the revised specification to the public, primarily by posting on the public Web site. All public comments will be published and openly available. Any issues raised during this Public Review must be publicly answered by the Technical Committee. The period of Public Review may be extended at the discretion of the proposal Lead, the Technical Committee, or the Executive Director.

# Scientific Board Vote

Each Member Organization has one vote which is cast by their Designated Member Representative. Associate Member Organizations do not have voting rights.

Minor Version Changes and Major Version Changes require a vote.

Each Designated Member Representative member of the Scientific Board is asked to give the Executive Director a “Yes” or “No” vote. The period of the vote shall be no less than one month.

The Scientific Board strives for consensus, justifying its decisions and interpretations in terms of principle and of empirical practice. To be approved, a proposal needs more than 50% of cast votes in favor and less than 25% of cast votes against. (A vote to abstain counts as a cast vote. Missing votes will not count either way. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that all members have the opportunity to vote.)

If at the end of the vote, neither a “Yes” vote nor a “No” vote has been achieved, the Executive Director will consider the votes and make an informed decision as to whether to accept the specification or to restart the process at some earlier stage. The Executive Director must explain his or her decision in writing to the Membership. Ordinarily, the Director will override a substantial vote of the Membership only when he or she perceives that the proposal would compromise the DDI as an international standard. The decision of the Executive Director may be vetoed by a two-thirds vote of the Executive Board.

# Publication of the Approved Version Change

Once accepted, The Technical Committee will incorporate corrections noted in the Public Review and prepare the new version of the specification or technical product for publication. This will include a revised model, a technical implementation, appropriate documentation as a usable guide, and revised high-level technical documentation. The Technical Committee will review corrections with the Executive Director to determine if an additional review period is needed. Timing of publication is dependent upon resources and will be determined by the Executive Director in consultation with the Technical Committee.

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# New Product Proposal

Proposals for new standards or technical products may be initiated as working groups of the DDI Alliance. To help the community assess the proposal during review, the proposal must include:

* a complete draft statement of content and functionality
* information about the business case for the proposed product
* the objectives the new product will achieve
* position within the suite of products supported by the DDI Alliance
* identification of a core group to work on the development of the product
* a maintenance plan

The proposal will be presented to the Scientific Board for approval. Once approved the new proposed product would be developed along the same lines as changes to any current products including close coordination with the Technical Committee.