

Summary of New Org Consultations: Fall 2019

New Org Consultations

Through September to mid-November 2019, the Applicant Board of the New Digital Research Infrastructure Organization (New Org) undertook a significant stakeholder engagement process including: 6 national face-to-face stakeholder consultations in Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Saskatoon, and Vancouver; and 4 virtual online sessions. One more virtual session is planned shortly with further details on the engagedri.ca web site. The consultations were framed around a series of questions focused on governance and membership.

Over 210 stakeholders participated in the 10 sessions and provided thoughtful and valuable advice to the Applicant Board on outstanding governance issues within very tight timeframes. Participants represented the broad diversity of the Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) ecosystem including researchers, university and college administrators, librarians, post-secondary IT professionals, DRI ecosystem organizations, along with private industry.

Context: National DRI Strategy and New Org

Responsibility for delivering Canada's DRI ecosystem is highly distributed with many actors across multiple delivery layers and no formal mechanisms to ensure coordination and planning.

In 2018, the Federal government committed \$572.5M to a DRI Strategy to ensure researchers have access to the digital tools they need. The DRI Strategy provides \$375M for a national not-for-profit organization – New Org – to advance and invest in national DRI activities in data management (DM), research software (RS), and advanced research computing (ARC). The DRI Strategy commits New Org to work with CANARIE and the Compute Canada Federation to transition ARC, RS and DM and collaborate with CANARIE going forward.

The Applicant Board undertook community consultations to address outstanding issues including designing the required governance and membership models and associated structures and processes, recruitment of Members and the installation of the Inaugural Board by early 2020. The Inaugural Board will oversee operational start up activities, including transition planning as well as undertake future strategic planning.

The Governance Discussion

Board Composition, Researcher Council and Name

The federal government has provided direction to the Applicant Board that the Inaugural Board should reflect equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles,

including best efforts to ensure 50% female representation. As well there should be appropriate representation of: geography, independent directors, and directors with knowledge of ARC, RS and DM. The Chair is to be an independent director.

A Researcher (or User) Council composed of researchers with linkages to the Board was proposed as a key success factor to ensure that New Org is focused on the needs of researchers.

Participants in the consultation sessions were asked to provide input on the following governance questions:

- Is a Board of Directors of 12-15 directors appropriate?
- Is there a preferred process for recruitment of potential directors?
- What should the roles and responsibilities of the Researcher Council be?
- How should the Researcher Council be constituted?
- How can the Researcher Council most effectively advise New Org?
- And finally, as New Org is simply a placeholder name, what should the name of this organization be, and what should it reflect?

Governance: What We Heard So Far

- Given the level and breadth of responsibilities as well as the diversity of needs and requirements facing New Org, a 15-person Board was seen as appropriate.
- There was strong support for best efforts toward EDI principles in the selection of Board members.
- The New Org Board must reflect the diversity of research institutions it serves, and must have access to international expertise.
- The Board recruitment process needs to be open and transparent, and based on a documented competency matrix reflecting good governance competencies, knowledge of DM, ARC and RS, and researcher needs.
- There was broad support for the need for the Researcher Council, but also recognition that getting it “right” would be difficult and critically important.
- The Researcher Council needs to be multi-disciplinary, representative of institutions across the country, geographically representative, have gender balance, include early career researchers, and it must have its role formally embedded in the activities of New Org.
- The name of the organization needs to be bilingual, and reflect the national role of New Org.

The Membership Discussion

Membership Model, Criteria and Fees

It was proposed that New Org would be a membership organization with two categories of members – voting and non-voting – where voting members would be

academic research institutions, and non-voting members would be other key DRI ecosystem stakeholders (e.g. associations or organizations with related expertise or services).

Eligibility for membership would be based on the Tri-agency definition of eligibility for funding where members are drawn from a broad range of post-secondary institutions including universities, colleges, polytechnics and research hospitals.

All services from New Org will be accessible by researchers regardless of institutional membership in New Org. Therefore the value of membership will need to be clear.

The collection of membership fees will provide the new organization a revenue source that is not bound by the federal contribution agreement and can be directed to other activities aimed at increasing services to researchers

Participants in the consultation sessions were asked to provide input on the following membership questions:

- Is the proposed membership model e.g. voting and non-voting members appropriate?
- Does the Tri-council definition of eligibility for funding make sense for the voting members?
- How should non-voting members (or associate members) defined? e.g. other DRI ecosystem stakeholders i.e. CARL, CUCCIO etc.
- What role does each group play and what rights do they hold?
- How should the membership fee model be structured e.g. flat rate + research intensity component or research intensity only?
- What level of fees is appropriate to ensure that there is engagement but not a barrier to participation?

Membership: What We Heard So Far

- The proposed membership model is appropriate, given that it supports inclusion and maximizes opportunities for research institutions and other organizations active in the DRI ecosystem to be involved in New Org.
- The model should ensure that there is a balance of interests in New Org – reinforcing the connection to researchers and research institutions, and leveraging the expertise and national vision of organizations serving the DRI ecosystem.
- The adoption of the Tri-Council definition as voting members was seen as appropriate in that voting members would have a research mandate, research-training mission and the ability to carry out research.
- The importance and value of membership will need to be clearly documented and shared to ensure initial and on-going involvement by members in New Org.

- Membership fees are necessary to demonstrate commitment and provide discretionary funding for New Org, but should not be a barrier to membership in the organization.
- A differentiated fee model would be the best approach to reflect the diversity of membership.

Next Steps

We are in the process of finalizing the governance and membership model based on your feedback. We will be posting the final model shortly at www.engagedri.ca.

Additional feedback and input is welcome by email to info@engagedri.ca. **Final comments on the governance and membership questions need to be received by no later than Thursday, November 28, 2019.**

We are also in the process of defining the Inaugural Board competency matrix and recruitment process and will post this information for comment and input by the community. Please continue to monitor this site for further updates and details.