

Annual Members' Assembly (8-9 Dec 2021) Post-meeting Q&A

This document provides answers to questions received from participants at the Members' Assembly 2021 that were not fully addressed during the meeting. Please note that some questions have been edited for brevity or clarity. The answers shared below have been prepared by the IATI Secretariat. For any additional questions, please contact info@iatistandard.org.

I. Institutional and Governance Matters

Question 1:

Shared by: Steven Flower, Open Data Services Cooperative

We haven't seen much use of the Working Groups in regards to technical matters. Members agreed at the 2019 MA that Working Groups could be a mechanism to focus and advise on technical issues. Are there plans for technical Working Groups in 2022? I understood they'd support specific challenges, rather than widespread 'technical' matters, e.g. a Working Group on Validation Rules, or a Working Group on Location Data, etc.

Response:

As per the SOP, working groups are mandated by either the Members' Assembly or Governing Board in response to needs outlined in the Strategic Plan and / or operationalisation of the annual work plan. As we finalise our 2022 work plan, the Secretariat / Board focal points will identify any areas where working groups may be useful.

The specific topics proposed here can be taken up within the technical community on Connect through communities of practice (COPs), and these suggestions are welcome.

Question 2:

Shared by: Yohanna Loucheur, Global Affairs Canada

The report of the IWG mentions the earlier recommendation to have an executive coordinator for the IATI Secretariat. This will have to be a priority. That didn't happen but we don't know why.

Response:

The Board found that strengthened management and oversight arrangements proposed by the Secretariat through its transition planning would address the needs without creating a separate new post. The Board has however approved filling this position as proposed in the 2022 work plan.

Question 3:

Shared by: Michelle Levesque, IOM

Would it be possible to provide a link after the meeting to the current Institutional Terms of Reference for IATI?

Response:

The link is here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wSnECFnXbtoMPPPEUVi_XoNte3DHSKZe/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103231026540899392153&rtopf=true&sd=true and also available as an annex to the MA Paper 2b on Institutional Arrangements

Question 4:

Shared by: Yohanna Loucheur, Global Affairs Canada

We should proactively think about more ways for the community to share their views on Board business throughout the year (e.g. by sharing the agenda of Board meetings ahead of time). This could also happen in a more proactive way so that members can reach out to their constituency representatives as there is very little engagement right now.

Response:

Thank you for this very useful feedback. The Board will take this matter into account at its next meeting.

II. Technical Estate / Data Quality

Question 5:

Shared by: Herman van Loon, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

The Validator is the cornerstone for improving data quality, unfortunately the functionality to check the validity and the existence of references to other organisations and activities is still missing. This functionality is key for network transparency and traceability, and an important goal in the strategic agenda. Although mentioned in the last MA, no progress seems to have been made. It is also unclear if this functionality is on the agenda for next year. Will this critical data quality functionality be delivered in 2022?

Response:

The IATI Validator follows the IATI rules contained in the [Standard](#), these are made up of MUST and SHOULD statements. Adding a check for the presence of org-ids and activity-ids, and if they are being used by another organisation goes, beyond the current rules. The validator delivers according to its TOR, and suggestions to add additional functionality can be proposed by the community, and can be considered and developed.

In 2021, the priority for the Validator was delivering the Validator public API. As we detail our work plan for 2022, we will consider and develop plans for all of our tools, including the Validator, and will seek Community inputs in this process.

Question 6:

Shared by: Herman van Loon, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

The Datastore was delivered with many flaws in September 2020 and was discontinued before the summer of this year. The community version of the old IATI Datastore is now a temporary solution. Nowhere in the annex 3 of paper 5 mentions the Datastore. When will the problems with the Datastore be fixed and when will progress about software development be presented more clearly?

Response:

As mentioned in the [newspost](#) of 6 December 2021, our first priority is releasing the Datastore API, which was 'softly' launched in early December and fully launched on 11 January 2022. This is the first, key step in the journey to improve access to IATI data. The next step will then be the Datastore front end; work is underway building a web application for this now that the API is launched. We will detail this next stage for the Datastore, including how we will engage with the Community, early in 2022.

During the discussion on this question, there was reference to the Datastore review, which was conducted by Vitamin Software. The functional and technical report is [here](#).

Question 7:

Shared by: Herman van Loon, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

It remains unclear what the requirements are for the IATI new publishing tool. What functionality will be delivered and in what time frame for the community?

Response:

The requirements for the publishing tool were made publicly available via the [newspost](#) on 27 September, which announced the publication of the RFP for this tool. This is still available to view on the UNOPS procurement [site](#). As mentioned at the MA, the procurement process is nearly complete and we will shortly announce the result and high level timeframes.

Question 8:

Shared by: Herman van Loon, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

We would like the Secretariat to be more transparent about software development in general, and more specific about plans, functionality of products, delivery dates, delays, and setbacks. In addition, the vast technical community should be consulted more robustly - e.g. specification of functional and non-functional requirements for core IATI components, the Datastore, the Data Validator and publishing tools - it would be far better if the technical community could be involved in developing these beforehand, rather than just informed afterward. I.e. Terms of Reference for technical work should be shared with the community and discussed before they are finalised and used in tenders / sent to contractors.

Response:

We try to be transparent in all aspects of our work, via quarterly overview [newsposts](#), specific update [newsposts](#) as tools are developed, sessions at the Virtual Community Exchange events, communities of practice, etc. Nonetheless we acknowledge this feedback and will seek ways to proactively engage the community more robustly at appropriate points throughout these processes.

We seek input from the community at the requirements-gathering phase of developing new tools. In line with best technical practice and our governance arrangements, Terms of Reference (including functional and non-functional

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requirements) are then developed internally with input from the relevant board Focal Points.

Question / proposal 8:

Shared by: Herman van Loon, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

The Netherlands shared the following additional proposals regarding the technical estate and data quality:

A. Planning of work on existing technical tools should be made SMART and shared with the community.

Response:

We appreciate this feedback and welcome suggestions on how best to communicate plans for our tools and systems. In the past year, we published our plans and roadmap from the 2020 Technical Stocktake, as well as quarterly newposts, which provide more detail on what we have done/planned to do with our tools. We have also used the Virtual Community Exchanges in April and October to present on our integrated platform, API Gateway and Validator. As we detail our work plan for 2022 we will include SMART objectives for our core tools as part of that process.

B. A Data Publishing Working Group should be established as a counterpart of the Data Use Working Group, which can coordinate activities and advise the board on improving data quality.

Response:

As per the IATI SOP Working Groups are mandated by either the Members' Assembly or the Governing Board; they are time-bound, advisory and formed to address a particular need (e.g. the Institutional Arrangements Working Group, the VCE working group) and then they stand down.

At present we have Publishing and Data Use Communities of Practice, where we encourage community members to participate and where Data Quality issues are discussed. We will ask the Board Focal Points on Data Quality to consider if there is a need for a Data Quality Working Group.

III. IATI Community / IATI Connect

Question / proposal 9:

Shared by: Herman van Loon, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

The Netherlands shared the following proposals regarding IATI Connect / the IATI community:

a. The annual work plan budget for the community should not just be spent on Connect or organising events, but also on bridging the gap with the community.

B. Goals for community engagement should be made more concrete and measurable, specifically the platform should not be considered a success as long as parallel discussions are still happening on Discord or elsewhere.

C. A group of 'key users' for Connect should be put together to advise the way forward for the platform.

Response:

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We appreciate this feedback and welcome creative ideas by the community to help bridge any existing community gaps. We agree a platform and community events are merely tools for community-building. In 2022 we plan more qualitative engagement opportunities for all community segments. We acknowledge that making our community platform successful is a shared responsibility, and agree part of this success depends on the extent to which community discussions are taking place through third party platforms. We call upon our whole community to channel all public discussions to IATI Connect, and/or provide the Secretariat with feedback on how to mitigate any usability issues.

To address the issues raised the Secretariat will:

- Establish a 'user feedback group' to address usability issues (e.g. improving navigation);*
- look into the possibility of 'Connect Ambassadors'/key users who could play a prominent role in stewarding relevant content to the platform;*
- provide more detailed/measurable Connect-metrics in the Results Framework, as to measure success of engagement more precisely (plus provide regular Analytics-updates).*

All these (and more) recommendations will be included in a Connect Roadmap which will be discussed and shared with the wider community in early 2022.