

The R Consortium and the R Foundation

by *Martyn Plummer*

Abstract The R Consortium was announced at the useR! 2015 conference in Aalborg, Denmark on 30 June. It is a non-profit organization set up to provide infrastructure for the R community. The purpose of this article is to explain some of the background to the setting up of the Consortium and how it interacts with the R Foundation.

One of the most striking developments in the recent history of R is the extent to which it is now used in a commercial environment. This success has generated new demands for the R project. In particular, there has been an ongoing conversation about how commercial organizations can make financial contributions to the R project and support infrastructure for the R community. This is of particular concern to companies based in the United States, who may find it difficult to make donations to the R Foundation for Statistical Computing, as we are a non-profit organization based in Europe. It was also clear that the interested companies wanted to play an active role in supporting infrastructure for R. Representatives from companies based in the United States discussed these issues with the R Foundation at the [DSC 2014](#) meeting in July 2014, where it was decided that the best way forward would be to create a trade association under the name “The R Consortium”. Members of a trade association (formally, a non-profit organization under US Internal Revenue code 501(c)(6)) are businesses that agree to work together to advance a common interest.

Once the idea of a trade association was approved by the R Foundation, representatives of the founding members, including John Chambers representing the R Foundation, worked with the Linux Foundation to follow the legal steps to create the Consortium. The Linux Foundation has wide experience in setting up what they call “collaborative projects”. The R Consortium is one of many such projects now listed at <http://collabprojects.linuxfoundation.org/>. Other examples include the Core Infrastructure Initiative and the Open Virtualization Alliance.

All current members of the R Consortium, apart from the R Foundation, are commercial organizations, and their status within the R Consortium (platinum, gold, or silver) depends on their level of financial contributions. The R Foundation has a special status in the bylaws of the R Consortium, and has permanent membership without making any financial contributions. This membership includes a seat on the R Consortium Board of Directors, where our representative is currently John Chambers. In addition, the R Foundation has a representative on the [Infrastructure Steering Committee](#) (ISC), the body that decides what projects should receive funding from the R Consortium. Our current representative on the ISC is Luke Tierney.

In November 2015, the R Consortium announced its first funding award to Gábor Csárdi to develop [R-hub](#). At the time of writing the ISC also has a [call for proposals](#) set to end on 10 January 2016. Grants awarded by the R Consortium could have values up to \$20–30k. Proposals are open to everyone, not just members of the R Consortium.

The stated goals of the R Consortium emphasize that it will not influence the development of R itself (noted in the R Consortium [FAQ](#)); this remains entirely under the control of the R Core Team and the R Foundation remains the sole representative of the R project at the organization level.

It should also be noted that the R Consortium was set up to answer the particular needs of companies in the United States. The R Foundation is also open to collaboration with other non-profit organizations working to support the development of R world-wide.

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