



Australian Government
Australian Taxation Office

Operating Charter

Digital Service Provider Architecture Reference Group (DARG)

Table of Contents

1. Context	3
2. Terms of Reference	3
3. Membership	4
4. Operations	5
Appendix A – Definitions of Roles and Responsibilities	7
Appendix B – Membership selection criteria	8
Version control	9

1. Context

This original document is provided by the ATO's [Digital Partnership Office \(DPO\)](#), as the authority on ATO engagements with Digital Service Providers (DSPs), for the purpose of standardising engagements by ATO-DSP groups.

All ATO engagement groups with DSPs are required to use a common charter (but may modify some operational details by consensus of the group).

This charter is underpinned by the [ATO consultation protocol](#).

This charter has been established for the ATO-DSP Architecture Reference Group (DARG).

Decisions and activities of the group (including documentation, where applicable) can be found [here](#).

2. Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of this group is:

For the ATO and Digital Service Providers (DSPs) to establish agreed positions or recommendations regarding messaging patterns and implementation matters related to ATO wholesale service interactions, including the bulk lodgement capability (Bulk Data Exchange or BDE), our digital reporting channel known as Standard Business Reporting (SBR) and the API gateway known as Digital Services Gateway (DSG).

The group will help shape the direction of the ATO's digital strategy by providing a whole of digital service industry perspective regarding technical-focused and strategic matters.

The group helps shape decisions that impact DSP's digital service directions and provides a whole of digital service industry perspective. The group will annually evaluate the ongoing need to continue.

2.1 Scope

The scope of this group is:

- 2.1.1 Technical and architectural design issues for wholesale digital services supporting the Australian taxation and superannuation system, in the context of whole of government and whole of industry.

Excluded from the scope of this group are:

- 2.1.2 Matters which are of a business or strategic nature which should be referred to the relevant project or initiative group.
- 2.1.3 Technical and architectural design issues that are specific only to a project or initiative, which can be managed via the normal ATO change process.

3. Membership

3.1 Appropriate representation

The group is established with appropriate industry representatives who are best placed to help shape decisions that impact the digital direction and provide a whole of digital service industry perspective.

- 3.1.1 Participating ATO staff will be selected by the ATO lead for the group.
- 3.1.2 The ATO will select DSPs by way of either expressions of interest and/or direct approach to ensure an appropriate representative group is engaged.
- 3.1.3 The maximum number of digital service industry members is 15, not including presenters and government representatives.
- 3.1.4 Representatives are desired from DSP service segments which are impacted according to the purpose of the group. For this group, industry segment representative selection criteria are listed in [Appendix B](#).

3.2 Term of appointment

- 3.2.1 ATO/DSP group membership may be refreshed every two years, by a selection process.
- 3.2.2 If appointed, the industry co-chair term will run for one calendar year and refresh annually.

3.3 Expectations of members

All members (ATO and DSP) are expected to follow the [ATO consultation protocol](#); and

3.3.1 BE ELIGIBLE

- 3.3.1.1 Have subject matter knowledge, skills and experience related to the purpose and scope of the group.
- 3.3.1.2 Ensure they meet legislative requirements regarding their personal tax obligations and maintain integrity of their tax affairs.

3.3.2 BE REPRESENTATIVE

- 3.3.2.1 Represent fairly and responsibly the wider group of DSPs and/or clients, rather than specific issues affecting a single individual or company.
- 3.3.2.2 Act in the best interests of the tax and superannuation systems.
- 3.3.2.3 Have a capacity and willingness to seek views and be a conduit for peers in their industry and/or market segment to provide input or receive feedback.

3.3.3 ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE

- 3.3.3.1 Contribute to the effectiveness of the group in meeting its purpose as defined in the terms of reference of the group.
- 3.3.3.2 Engage in constructive, open and frank discussion through bringing a members' perspective to group discussions (excluding commercial sensitivities).
- 3.3.3.3 Work together in a collegial manner with other members and other representatives associated with the group ethically and with courtesy, respect, and integrity, and abiding by any embargo arrangements.
- 3.3.3.4 Maintain a satisfactory attendance record for meetings (see membership roles and responsibilities description in [Appendix A](#)).

3.3.4 ACT WITH DUE DILIGENCE

- 3.3.4.1 Not use their membership for any commercial advantage, including marketing or access to privileged information.
- 3.3.4.2 Each person who represents a company or organisation is responsible for making their company or organisation aware of the responsibilities associated with membership of the group.
- 3.3.4.3 Members will declare any conflict of interest to the secretariat.

4. Operations

4.1 Roles

NB: Definitions of these roles are in [Appendix A](#).

- 4.1.1 **Chair:** Meetings will be jointly chaired by the ATO and a member of the Digital Service Provider industry within the current membership.
- 4.1.2 **Secretariat:** The ATO will supply secretariat support through the Digital Partnership Office.
- 4.1.3 **Co-Chair:** An industry co-chair may be elected periodically for one year.
- 4.1.4 **Industry co-chair:** Define and set the agenda in consultation with DSP members, work alongside the ATO co-chair to ensure the meeting reaches a productive outcome.
- 4.1.5 **Members:** Participate and contribute.

4.2 Frequency of meetings

- 4.2.1 Meetings are scheduled three times per year, in line with the DSP Strategic Working group (SWG).
- 4.2.2 Meetings may also be held "out-of-session" at the discretion of the chair.

4.3 Format of meetings

- 4.3.1 Meetings are conducted face-to-face as a preference, with telepresence and WebEx where necessary.
- 4.3.2 Where possible, face-to-face meetings should be organised to leverage off the travel of members (for example, to align with DSPANZ or other events).

4.4 Participation

- 4.4.1 Member substitution in meetings is only allowed if agreed in advance by the group and the chair.
- 4.4.2 Guest participants may be invited to contribute to meetings from time to time by the chair or secretariat (usually to provide subject matter expertise).

4.5 Documentation and record keeping

Documentation is distributed according to agreed principles established with DPO in addition to the following:

- 4.5.1 All artefacts and documentation should be made available to all DSPs via an externally open system. (e.g., [Software Developer website](#)). Draft documents can be withheld at the discretion of the chair.
- 4.5.2 All meetings will be posted in advance on the [upcoming engagements](#) page within the Software Developers website in an effort to avoid clashes which may cause inconvenience to participants.
- 4.5.3 Action items and issues should be recorded in a common register hosted by the ATO's DPO and made available for members.
- 4.5.4 Membership lists (name & company) will be maintained and published for public visibility.

This groups' operating documents (agendas, artefacts, outcomes, etc) can be found [here](#).

4.6 Governance

This group reports outcomes and organisational details to:

- The ATO's [Digital Partnership Office](#); and
- The ATO's [Consultation Hub](#) for the [National Tax Liaison Group](#)

Appendix A – Definitions of Roles and Responsibilities

1. Chair

- Defining and approving the agenda and forward direction of the group.
- Ensuring that outcomes are reported to the appropriate stakeholders in a timely manner.
- Representing the group in other forums.
- Conducting meetings.

2. Secretariat

- Defining and setting the agenda for discussion and forward roadmap.
- Administrative and organisational tasks.

3. DSP Co-Chair: (in conjunction with the chair and the secretariat)

- Defining and setting the agenda from the perspective of DSPs.
 - Conducting meetings.
- NB:** Appointing a co-chair position is optional.

4. Members

- Attending and participating as per member expectations.
 - Substitutions are permitted per below policy.
- SUBSTITUTION POLICY:** Member substitutions are possible only if pre-arranged and approved by the chair. Substitutions will only be considered if they meet the membership criteria.

Appendix B – Membership selection criteria

1. DSP service segments

Representatives are desired from DSP service segments which are impacted according to the purpose of the group. For this group, industry segment representatives may include (but not exclusive to):

- Business Accounting
- Business Registry Services
- Investment bodies
- Payroll
- Procure2pay
- Tax preparation
- Superannuation
- Other segments that are approved by the chair

2. Levels of experience

Representatives are desired from DSPs with different levels of experience sets (new to established; entrepreneur to large corporate).

3. DSPANZ

DSPANZ representation is desirable but not mandatory.

4. Qualifying representatives

Representatives qualify as per [section 3 'Membership'](#) in this Operating Charter.

Version control

Ver	Date	Distribution	Description	Modified by	Approved by & date
0.01	05/12/2017	Draft	First draft for establishing the DARG, and membership, leveraging the operating charters of the SWG and charter of the TWG , and using charter template from DPO	Gary Anderson	n/a
1.00	1/2/2018	DARG Web-page	Ratified by DARG 01 FEB, with change as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.3.3 Appointing a co-chair position is optional 4.1.3 Co-Chair: A DSP co-chair, if required, is elected periodically for one year. The 2018 DARG determined that a DSP co-chair is not required. 	Gary Anderson on behalf of DARG members 01 FEB '18	DARG 01/02/2018
1.01	21/6/2018	DARG Web-page	Modified 4.2.1 to read as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.2.1 Meetings are scheduled bi-monthly on a Thursday afternoon. 	Gary Anderson (DARG Secretariat)	DARG meeting 21/6/2018
1.02	23/01/2019	DARG Web-page	Modified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The group will help shape the direction of the ATO's digital strategy by providing a whole of Digital Service industry perspective regarding technical-focused and strategic matters. 3.2 ATO-DSP group membership is refreshed yearly by a selection process. 4.1.2 Secretariat: The ATO will supply secretariat support. DPO@ato.gov.au is the secretariat for this group. 4.1.3 Co-Chair: A DSP co-chair is elected periodically for one year. 4.2.1 Meetings are scheduled three times per year in line with the DSP Strategic Working group. 4.3.1 Meetings are conducted face to face or otherwise as agreed by participants. 4.3.2 Where possible, face-to-face meetings should be organised to leverage of the travel of members (for example, to align with ABSIA or other events). 	Kate French	
1.03	17/01/2022	Draft	In addition to some formatting updates to ensure the charters are streamlined across all relevant groups, minor edits have been made to the document per below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1.3 clarified maximum number of digital service industry members 3.2.1 clarified member refreshment 4.1.1 and 4.1.3 re-worded requirements as co-chair no longer needs to be DSPANZ (per sign-off from Anita) 4.5.2 removed hyperlink to internal website, as charter is intended for an external audience Appendix B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated to align with current markets per our EOIs 	Steph Handcock	N/A

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			- Updated as DSPANZ chair is desirable but no longer mandatory.		
2.0	25/02/2022	Draft	Updated section 2 Terms of Reference - Purpose to ensure all digital channels are covered by the charter.	Steph Handcock	

