A Proposal for a
Data Distribution Facility
for Canadian REALTORS®

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Data Distribution:
The supply of MLS® listing content for publication on member and non-member (i.e., third party) websites.

Consumers increasingly use multiple online channels to research purchases large and small, and The Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) wants to ensure REALTOR® listings remain front-and-centre to the property buying public. REALTORS® and consumers alike have embraced and integrated social media sites into their day-to-day, and it is important that interested REALTORS® can engage with consumers on this turf.

At the same time, it is critical that the integrity and quality associated with the REALTOR® trademark and MLS® listings is maintained and strengthened. Property buyers need to be confident that whenever and wherever they see the REALTOR® logo on a listing, the information is accurate and up-to-date.

To this end, CREA has designed a Data Distribution Facility (DDF) — a permissions-based system that will enable brokers and sales persons to share their listings with other brokers and sales persons, send their listings to third party web sites using a console on REALTOR Link®, and to receive ongoing feedback on the success of their internet marketing efforts. At the same time it will help protect the REALTOR® and MLS® marks as signs of quality information.

Background

Data Distribution is an issue that has generated a lot of discussion within organized real estate, going back as far as the MTC Forum in Victoria in 2009.

At that time there was no consensus on what the industry should do, so the MTC formed a Data Distribution Task force to conduct research, consult with the industry and determine a future direction for IDX, data distribution and CREA's role in its delivery.

Much deliberation, consultation and staff work has been done since the Task Force made its initial recommendations. We have consulted with the Large Boards, franchisors, and other stakeholders. Legal opinions have been sought and delivered and have, importantly, shaped the proposal.

In mid-January the CREA Board approved a proposal from the MTC for the establishment of a national data distribution facility on a **priority** basis.
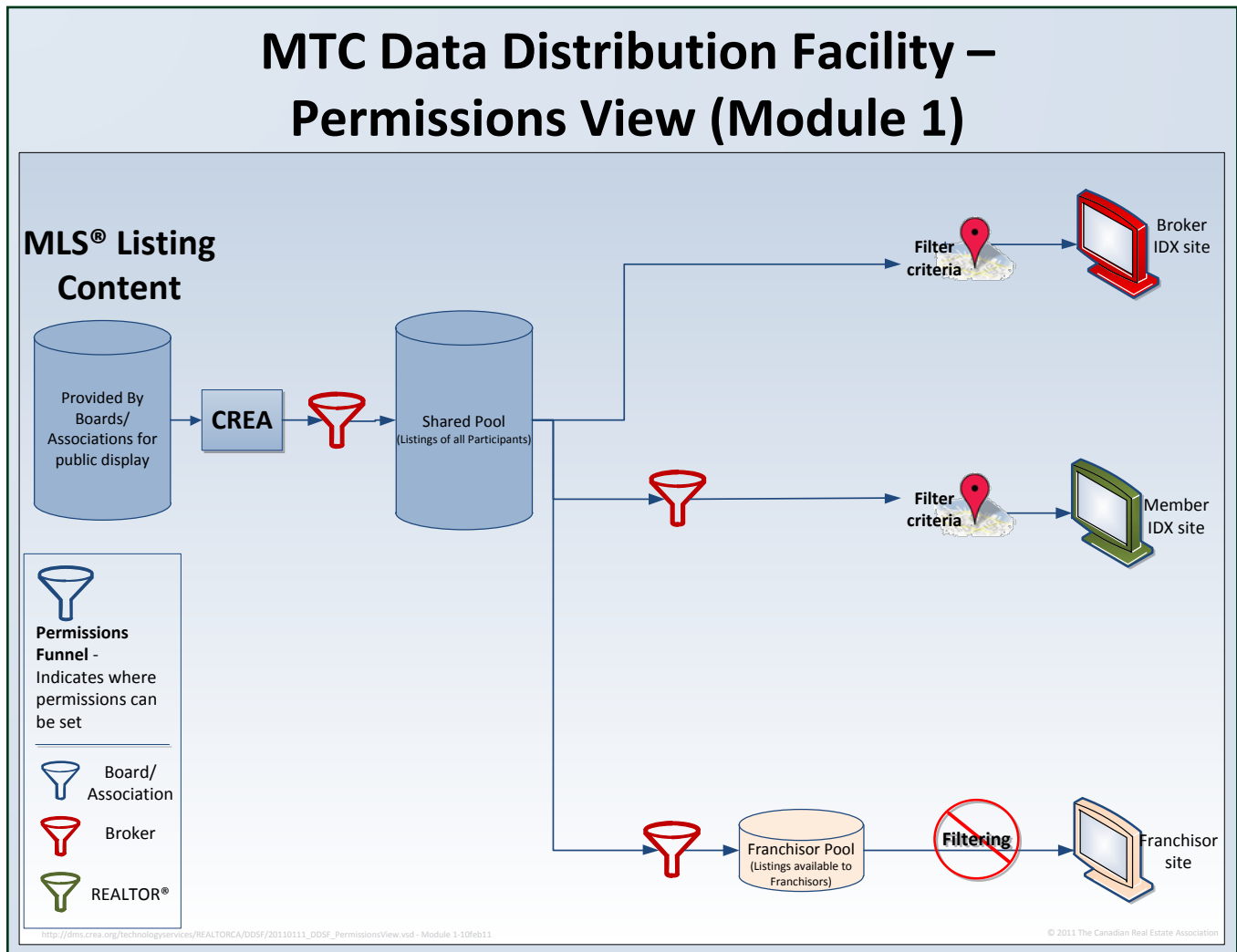
Proposed Data Distribution Facility

The facility will be comprised of three modules, each of which is permission based. At each stage brokers will be able to decide if they wish to share listing content on their own website and/or to display listing content on third party sites.

The facility will provide those who do opt in with a dashboard that allows for choices about where their listings may be sent or shared. The dashboard will also provide reports on the marketing success of information being displayed on websites, so that any member can see how their listings are performing and assess the effectiveness of their advertising efforts.

There will be a choice between templates – for example, one which allows for a shallow listing with a link back to the Brokerage or REALTOR® site or a full listing that would mirror what is available on REALTOR.ca and also provide a link back to their own sites.

MTC Data Distribution Facility – Permissions View (Module 1)

MLS® Listing Content

Provided By Boards/ Associations for public display

CREA

Shared Pool
(Listings of all Participants)

Filter criteria

Broker IDX site

Filter criteria

Member IDX site

Filtering

Franchisor Pool
(Listings available to Franchisors)

Franchisor site

Permissions Funnel - Indicates where permissions can be set

Board/ Association

Broker

REALTOR®

http://dms.crea.org/technologyservices/REALTORCA/DDSF/20110111_DDSF_PermissionsView.vsd - Module 1-10feb11

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Module One (Diagram 1), the National Shared Pool Module, will enable brokers to contribute their listings to a national data pool and receive a feed from that pool to display all other participants' listings on their websites. Brokers that decide to contribute their listings to the national data pool will also have the option of including their listings in a data feed provided to franchisors for display on the franchisors' websites.

Each broker will be able to determine whether they wish to participate in Module One or in fact in any module. Opting in or out for Module One will be on a blanket basis, meaning that a broker or salesperson cannot selectively opt out of providing their listings to another participant. All of a participant's listings will be available to all other participants; however, individual listings may be excluded if instructed to do so by the seller.

Participants will be able to display and filter information based on a certain set of objective criteria.

For example a broker may wish to only display information from one province or one board area or they may wish to only display condominiums. Using filters, a broker can focus on certain types of listings. We are currently in the process of confirming with provincial regulators that members may display information on properties which are listed outside the province in which they are licensed.

Brokers may choose to allow their salespeople to participate in the national data pool – that will be his or her choice. Lastly Module One will enable members that are participating in the national pool to send their listings to national franchisor websites.

Based on legal advice, Board participation in Module One will be mandatory. Structuring the facility in this manner is pro-competitive, as it gives brokerages the ability to choose whether or not they want to participate in the module, and will reduce the risk of raising significant competition concerns

Module One will be the first stage in the DDF roll out.

MTC Data Distribution Facility – Permissions View (Module 2)
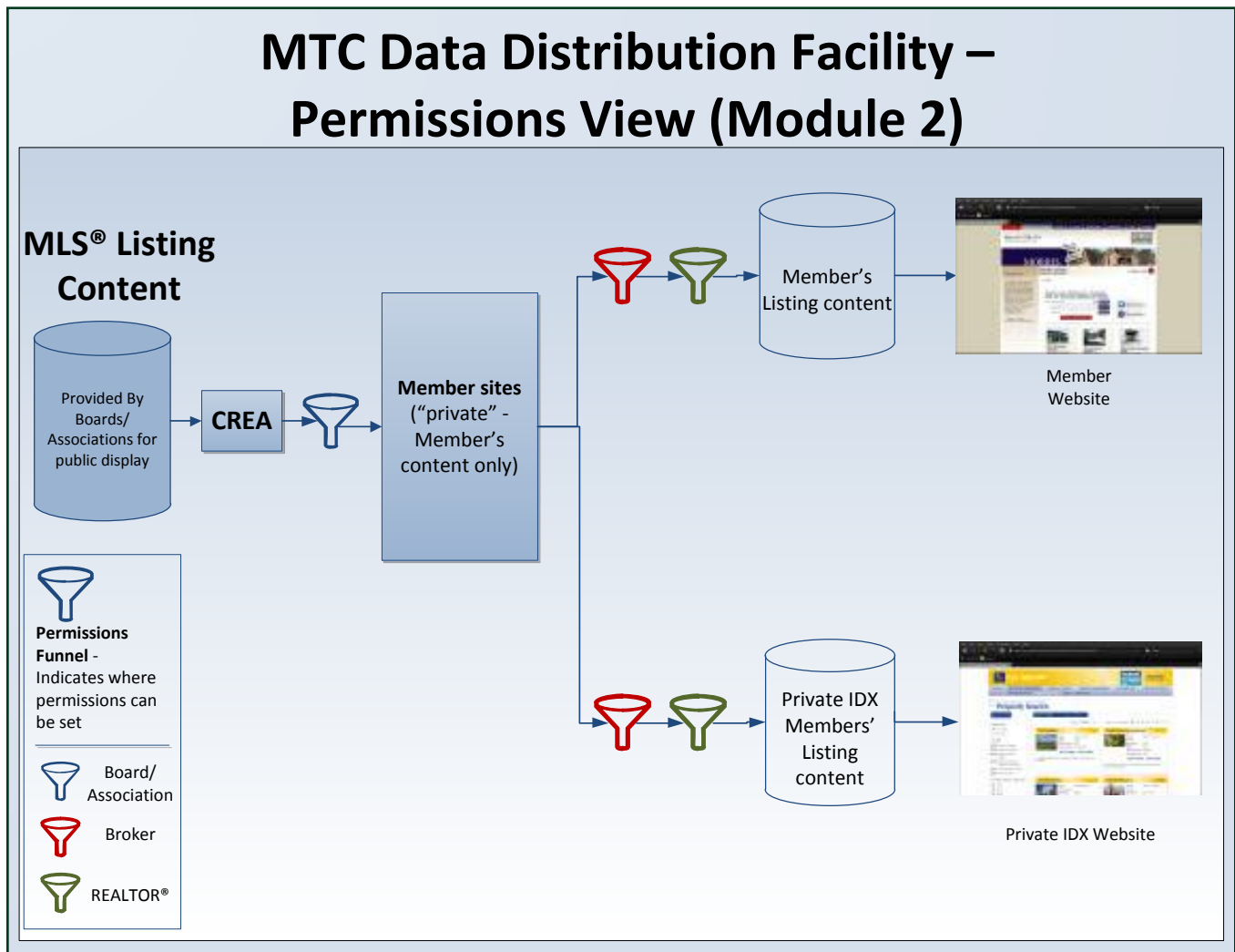
Module Two (Diagram 2), the Private DDF Module, will enable brokers and salespeople to create Private Websites. This module will also enable participating brokers and salespeople to have their listings fed back to their own website to ensure consistency and accuracy of data and to give them the ability to track the success of their website as a marketing tool.

Brokers, of course, can choose to participate in this Private IDX Module, and can choose to allow their salespeople to participate in it.

For example, this module could be used to feed a local specialty website like www.eastern-ontario-lake–properties.ca or www.downtown-high-end-condos.ca.

In this module Boards and Associations can only opt out if they are offering a comparable service to their members.

Module Three (Diagram 3)

MTC Data Distribution Facility – Permissions View (Module 3)
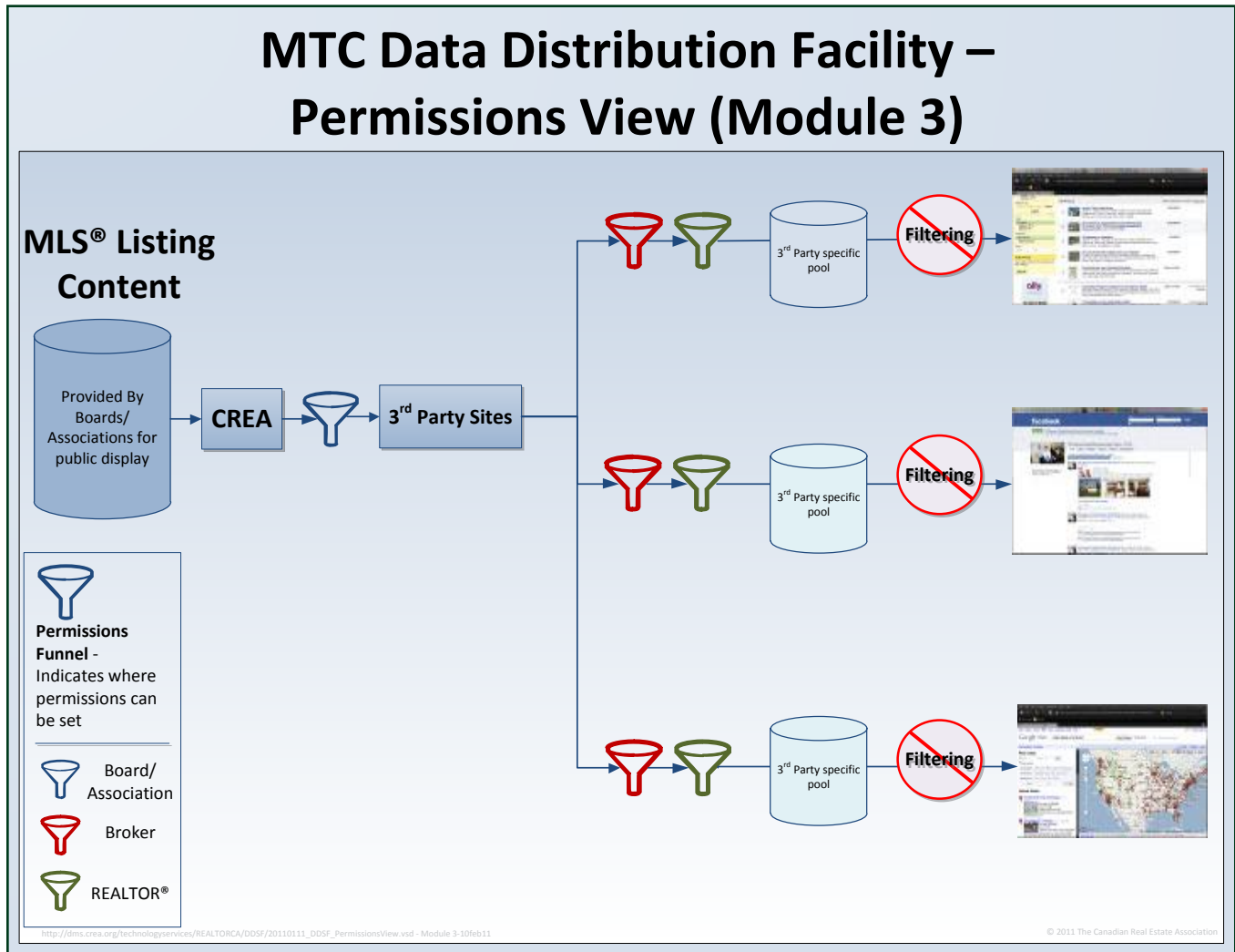
Module Three (Diagram 3) involves the distribution of data to third parties outside of organized real estate.

This might include parties such Facebook Marketplace, ZooCasa, Kijiji , Craigslist, etc.

Brokers who want to send their listing content to third parties can opt in or out, and can decide if they wish to leave that decision to their salespeople. There will be no filtering.

If they opt in, brokers, and/or their salespeople, will then decide which third party sites they wish to send their listing content to. This will be managed by the dashboard referred to previously.

REALTORS® are embracing social media and on-line marketing, but currently there is no mechanism to ensure that the listings placed on third party sites are branded, accurate or up-to-date. The facility will address those challenges through contracts with the third party website operators.

Again, Boards can opt out if they have a similar offering available for their members.

Third Party Requirements for Participation
CREA will develop the DDF in a manner that protects both our members and our marks.

CREA will ensure there are strict criteria followed by all third parties involved in Module Three. For example:

- there will be a requirement to refresh data daily;
- further syndication of data will be prohibited;
- the use of data to generate referral fees from CREA's members will be prohibited;
- third parties involved will need to ensure information is sent back to CREA to enable statistical reporting to members via the console; and
- CREA's trademarks must be used properly.

What Happens Next

Delegates to CREA's Annual General Meeting (AGM) on April 2nd will be asked to approve a rule change that will require Boards and Associations to adopt the DDF policy that we are creating, and, therefore, pave the way for the implementation of the DDF. The specific rule change will be included in the AGM package to be sent out at the beginning of March.

In advance of the AGM, CREA will be offering webinars (**schedule appended**) open to all Boards and Associations, leadership and staff. CREA will also provide draft policies and procedures in advance of the AGM, and will ask for feedback from Boards and Associations on those policies.

Final approval of implementation plans and policies will be subject to CREA Board of Directors approval.

How will the DDF benefit REALTORS®?

- More exposure for listings
- Easily display listings on specialty and social media sites
- Ability to keep listings, wherever they appear, consistent, accurate and up-to-date
- The ability to choose and customize where listings appear across multiple sites
- Viewing statistics so that the effectiveness of internet marketing strategies can be assessed

How will the DDF benefit organized real estate?

- Branded REALTOR® and MLS® listing content across multiple internet sites
- Up-to-date, consistent, and quality REALTOR® and MLS® listing content across sites
- Consistent, branded listings will protect our intellectual property and strengthen our trademarks
- A permission based system allows customized decisions on advertising

Finally

We want more eyeballs on more members' listings. We want members to have maximal control of how and where their listings appear. We want them to have ongoing feedback through the facility dashboard to judge the efficacy of their online marketing.

We want REALTOR® listings to be branded no matter where they appear.

We want to ensure that those listings are of the same quality and caliber as the information available on Boards' MLS® Systems.

This facility will accomplish all of this. We look forward to talking about this with you in the coming weeks.

For more information please contact:
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Data Distribution Facility WEBinar Schedule

DATE	LANGUAGE
Thursday, March 3	ENGLISH
Friday, March 11	FRENCH
Tuesday, March 15	ENGLISH
Thursday, March 17	ENGLISH
Thursday, March 22	ENGLISH
Thursday, March 24	ENGLISH
Tuesday, March 29	FRENCH
Thursday, March 31	ENGLISH

All webinars will be held at 2 pm EST.

Technical and contact information for CREA WEBinars can be accessed on REALTORLink® here (**http://www.realtorlink.ca/content/webinar/**)