

FAQ on Data Management Plans

1. Which funders require a data management or sharing plan?

Most of the UK research councils (bar EPSRC) and some key health funders require researchers to submit a data management or sharing plan as part of their grant application. The DCC provides a summary at: www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/policy-and-legal/overview-funders-data-policies

Others funders, such as the EU and British Academy, do not require a DMP but may ask about dissemination plans or check that appropriate standards are being used when creating digital resources. Although the EPSRC does not ask for DMPs to be submitted as part of grant applications, it still expects them to be in place.

2. What needs to be covered in a DMP?

Each funder has specific guidelines which should be referred to. For example health funders often place more emphasis on data sharing.

Typically researchers are asked to cover:

- Description of the data to be collected / created
- Standards / methodologies for data collection and management
- Ethics and Intellectual Property concerns or restrictions
- Plans for data sharing and access
- Strategy for long-term preservation

The DCC provides a summary of DMP requirements and links to each funder's guidance: www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/data-management-plans/funders-requirements

3. Is there a set format / template to follow?

Each funder has slightly different guidelines, however DMPs are usually expected to be a couple of pages of A4. A brief summary of key stipulations is noted below.

AHRC - The Technical Plan must be written as a single document and has a page limit of four pages. Mandatory headings under four sections are given to structure the plan.

BBSRC – The “statement on data sharing” will be included as an additional page in the case for support. Eight themes are proposed that applicants may wish to cover.

CRUK – Data sharing plans are required but no page limit is noted. Eight themes are listed that should be considered.

ESRC - Data management and sharing plans should be submitted as an attachment to the Je-S form. A number of themes are outlined that plans are expected to cover.

MRC – Data Management Plans should be concise, specific and informative. A 3-page template is provided. If this is not used, the same topics must be addressed.

NERC - A mandatory, single page, Outline Data Management Plan (ODMP) is required. This should address three issues. A full DMP will also be written in collaboration with the NERC Environmental Data Centres once funded. Templates are provided.

STFC – The STFC does not stipulate a specific format for data management plans and applicants may structure them in the way most appropriate to the project. Eight areas are noted that plans should address as a general guide.

Wellcome Trust - Applicants can structure their data management and sharing plans in a manner most appropriate to the proposed research. They should be clear and concise, avoid repetition of methodological detail included elsewhere in the grant application, and be proportionate. Seven questions are given that should be considered.

4. Are there tools and guidance that can be referred to?

Most funders provide specific guidance in their research data policies or DMP requirements. Designated data centres may also provide advice.

The DCC provides a How-to guide on developing DMPs: www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/how-guides/develop-data-plan

And the ICPSR, a social science data archive in the USA, provides a framework for creating a DMP, which includes example answers:

www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/content/datamanagement/dmp/framework.html

The DCC also offers an online tool called DMPonline to help researchers write DMPs to meet specific requirements from their funder and institution:

<https://dmponline.dcc.ac.uk>

5. Are there any example plans to look at?

A handful of example plans are available. These are listed below.

An AHRC Technical Plan from the University of Bristol:

<http://data.bris.ac.uk/research/planning/files/2013/08/data.bris-AHRC-example-Technical-Plan-v2.pdf>

Example plans from the cross-council (BBSRC, ESRC & NERC) Rural Economy & Land Use programme: <http://relu.data-archive.ac.uk/data-sharing/planning/examples>

20+ scientific DMPs submitted to the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the USA by researchers at the University of California San Diego:
<http://rci.ucsd.edu/dmp/examples.html>

6. What help is available at the Open University?

The Open University has a set of Research Data Management guidance webpages on the intranet: <http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/library/main/supporting-ou-research/research-data-management>

A set of high level Institutional Principles on research data management have been approved by Research Committee and will be incorporated into the OU's [Research Code of Practice](#).

7. Can support be costed into grant proposals?

The RCUK Common Principles state that:

“It is appropriate to use public funds to support the management and sharing of publicly-funded research data.”

The DCC held an event with funders to discuss what aspects could be costed in and how, and RCUK guidance has since been released. Details are available on the RDMF event page: <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/events/research-data-management-forum-rdmf/rdmf-special-event-funding-research-data-management>

Projects are advised to distinguish between the costs that are incurred during a project and those that arise afterwards. In-project costs could cover items such as hardware, staff and expenses. These should be included in the direct costs for a project. It is expected that post-project costs will largely fall into indirects. Where an institution is going to provide a data repository, costs should be met through FEC.

Some funders make basic statements on eligible costs, as outlined in the DCC overview of funders' data policies. Only Cancer Research UK makes an explicit statement that will not provide additional funds for RDM as it considers timely and appropriate data management and sharing an integral component of the research process.