BBSRC DATA SHARING POLICY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Version 1.4

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Why should I share my research data?

BBSRC supports the view of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development which states that publicly-funded research data are a public good produced in the public interest and should be openly available to the maximum extent possible. BBSRC believes that helping to make research data more readily available will reinforce open scientific enquiry, promote data quality, encourage diversity of analysis & opinion, and stimulate new investigations and analyses and thus provide best value for funding investment.

Who benefits from data sharing?

Everyone benefits from data sharing including investigators, the scientific community, funding agencies and the public. Research data are important not only for the researchers originating the work but also to the wider scientific community, which may wish to examine and use these datasets to underpin other investigations. Re-use of data can lead to new scientific understanding and examples of this already exist.

Which scientific areas and type(s) of data can be shared?

Data sharing is encouraged in all research areas where there is strong scientific need and where it is cost effective. Through a consultation BBSRC identified two further areas where there is a particularly strong scientific case for data sharing. These are:

- Data arising from high volume experimentation
- Low throughput data arising from long time series or cumulative approaches
- Data arising from biological modeling generated using systems approaches

At regular intervals, BBSRC will review scientific and technological developments in the biosciences to update the areas highlighted.

My research seeks supports from both the public and private sectors. How do I deal with the sharing of proprietary data?

BBSRC recognises that there may be circumstances where restrictions on data sharing will be required. Any Intellectual Property issues or plans for commercialisation should be highlighted in the case for support of the grant application. While BBSRC recognises that commercialisation may require periods of exclusive use of data, it should not preclude or unduly delay or prevent data sharing.

What is the timescale for sharing data?

The timescale for release for the data may differ for several reasons, however it is expected that timely release would generally be no later than the release through publication of the main findings and should be in-line with established best practice in the field. Where best practice does not exist, release within three years of generation of the dataset is suggested as a guide.

Does data sharing pertain only to published data?

No, Data Management Plans should encompass all data from funded research that can be shared regardless of whether the data have been used in a publication.

What do I need to include in my applications and where do I put the information about data sharing?

All applications seeking research grant funding from BBSRC must submit a Data Management Plan. This should include concise plans for data management and sharing as part of research grant proposal or provide explicit reasons why data sharing is not possible or appropriate. The Data Management Plan will be included in applications as a separate mandatory attachment no longer than one page in length. Applicants **must not** utilise this space allocation for any other purpose - as this will result in rejection of the proposal.

How will the Data Management Plan be assessed and will it affect the outcome of my application?

The statement on data sharing will be assessed by the reviewers and assessment Committees and Panels. It will be considered separately from the scientific merit of the proposed research; however, an application's credibility will suffer if peer review agrees that the plans for data sharing are inappropriate. In the case where a highly rated proposal has an inappropriate Data Management Plan Committees and Panels may choose to offer conditional awards and/or provide specific feedback to the applicants.

Will BBSRC provide funds for data sharing?

BBSRC expects applicants to utilise pre-existing data standards and resources for dissemination, where appropriate. Where justifiable, however, funding to support the management and sharing of research data (for example staffing, physical resources such as storage and networking capability) can be requested as part of the full economic cost of a research project. BBSRC also has specific funding mechanisms, for example the Tools & Resources Development Fund and Bioinformatics & Biological Resources scheme, which have key roles to play in supporting the Data Sharing Policy.

How will BBSRC monitor adherence to the data sharing policy?

Adherence to the proposed data management and sharing strategies set out in a funded proposal will be monitored through outputs uploaded to ResearchFish. There are a number of headings that are appropriate to record upload and sharing of data.

Can you provide specific examples of what a good Data Management Plan might look like?

We have decided not to do this as appropriate data sharing approaches will vary across the biosciences. We consider that researchers should determine their own strategies for data sharing, based on scientific benefit, using established standards and existing resources where possible, and following current best practice in their field. We do not wish to inadvertently influence the development of Data Management Plans.

Why does the data sharing policy only apply to research grants and BBSRC institute core strategic grant? What about studentships and fellowships?

In the first instance, we have focused on implementing the policy across our major research funding mechanisms and roll-out to these other areas will be considered in due course. Applicants to these other funding streams should, however, consider the policy when developing their applications.

I have a query on data sharing that I want to discuss with BBSRC. Who should I contact?

Queries on data sharing should be sent to data.sharing@bbsrc.ac.uk.