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Update: Research Data Management in Canada

by Caroline Winter | 21 May 2021 | English, Observations, Observations and Responses | 0 comments



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This observation was written by Caroline Winter, with thanks to Jeff Moon for his feedback and contributions.

At a glance:

Title	Tri-Agency Research Data Management Policy
Creator	Government of Canada
Publication Date	March 2021
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In March 2021, the Government of Canada announced the release of the [Tri-Agency Research Data Management Policy](#) (RDM Policy). A draft of this policy for consultation was released in May 2018 (see “[Tri-Agency Research Data Management Policy](#)”).

Building on the [Tri-Agency Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management](#) (2016), the RDM Policy's objective is "to support Canadian research excellence by promoting sound RDM and data stewardship practices," recognizing the diversity of standards and practices related to research data across and within disciplines (Government of Canada 2021b; see "[Tri-Agency Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management](#)" and "[Partner Response to Tri-Agency Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management](#)" by Lisa Goddard [UVic Libraries]).

In addition, the RDM Policy emphasizes the need for a "distinctions-based approach" to managing data associated with research by and in collaboration with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities in Canada (2021b), and support the [Setting New Directions to Support Indigenous Research and Research Training in Canada 2019–2022](#) strategic plan.

This RDM Policy builds on Canada's approach to RDM that includes the [Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications](#) (2015) and supports the [FAIR \(Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable\)](#) principles for data management and stewardship. Although it states that research data collected with the support of public funding should be "where ethical, legal and commercial obligations allow, available for reuse by others," it states explicitly that it is "not an open data policy" (Government of Canada 2021b).

The RDM Policy includes requirements for institutions and researchers. In summary, institutions must develop publicly available RDM strategies to promote the importance of RDM within their community and support researchers in putting strong RDM practices in place, including by providing the necessary digital infrastructure. Researchers should build RDM into their research methodologies, and some funding opportunities will require data management plans (DMPs) as part of the application. Researchers are required to deposit all digital research data, metadata, and code into a recognized digital data repository and to make this data as open as possible (Government of Canada 2021b).

These requirements will be implemented incrementally over the next two years. Many implementation dates are still to be determined, but two key dates are as follows:

- Spring 2022: The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) will determine which funding opportunities will require data management plans (DMPs) after an initial pilot program.
- March 1, 2023: Institutional RDM strategies must be posted (Government of Canada 2021b).

RDM in Canada and the INKE Partnership

The [Canadian Association of Research Libraries \(CARL–ABRC\)](#), an INKE Partnership member, has [voiced support for the RDM Policy](#), noting that CARL and Portage have been actively involved in its development through stakeholder consultations and the publication of CARL Portage's [Draft Policy Response](#) (2021). The [Portage Network](#), an initiative of CARL, was launched in 2015 to support the management and stewardship of research data in Canada, including developing partnerships to provide necessary digital infrastructures.

In April 2021, Portage and the New Digital Research Infrastructure Organization (NDRIO) [announced that Portage's operations were fully integrated into NDRIO](#). NDRIO is a national, not-for-profit organization founded in 2019 as part of [Innovation, Science and Economic Development \(ISED\) Canada's digital research infrastructure strategy](#) (see "[NDRIO and the Canadian Digital Research Infrastructure Strategy](#)"). This integration was planned in agreement with CARL and with previous funding from ISED, flowing through [CANARIE](#) (Portage 2021). NDRIO recently announced some preliminary information about its [Inaugural Funding Opportunity \(IFO\)](#).

The Government of Canada's [policy announcement](#) points to [Portage resources](#) designed to support institutions as they develop their strategies. Chief among these resources is an [Institutional Research](#)

[Data Management Strategy Template](#) and accompanying [guidance](#), prepared by the Portage Institutional RDM Strategy Working Group (now the National Training Expert Group) (2021a). The template outlines four suggested components of an institutional RDM strategy—raise awareness, assess institutional readiness, formalize RDM practices, and define a roadmap—and provides an outline of a plan that institutions can customize to meet their needs (Portage 2020). Eight new videos providing guidance on the first and second of these components will be released soon.

In addition to this template, CARL Portage partnered with the University of Alberta to develop an open, national, and bilingual data management planning tool – the [DMP Assistant](#). CARL Portage also collaborated on national, multi-disciplinary repository initiatives including providing support for a national instance of Dataverse through the [Ontario Council of University Libraries \(OCUL\) Scholars Portal Dataverse](#) and collaborating with [Compute Canada](#) to develop, pilot, and launch the [Federated Research Data Repository \(FRDR\)](#).

The Tri-Agency RDM Policy and Open Scholarship

The RDM Policy emphasizes that RDM is an essential component of research excellence because it helps ensure the replicability and accessibility of data created with public funding. CARL’s statement of support echoes this point, highlighting the cultural factors involved: “Given growing awareness of the importance of data in addressing key societal issues, RDM has emerged as a critical element in research and scholarship across disciplines and borders. A strong culture of data management benefits researchers, funders, institutions, and society. It supports discovery and fuels innovation” (2021).

Because it facilitates the stewardship, preservation, and accessibility of research data, Canada’s new RDM Policy plays an important role in furthering open scholarship.

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