Calculate data management costs for your research project

The capture, management and sharing of research data often carries a cost, requiring staff time and other resources to be allocated. The School encourages researchers to consider their project's data-related costs at the earliest opportunity and write these into the proposal budget where possible.

Research funder policy on data management costs

Many funders allow data-related costs to be claimed in research bids, but it is less common for charities, interest groups, and other small organisations.

RCUK funders (MRC, ESRC, NERC, etc.) and Wellcome Trust state applicants may claim up to 5% of the project's total budget for data-related activities, but establish a small number of rules:

- Data-related costs must be processed during the project's funding period. If activities or services are planned for the post-project phase, the PI must ensure invoices are paid before the close of the project grant or arrangements are made to retain funds for the purpose.

- Data-related activities should be claimed as direct costs (i.e. performed by the project team) or indirect costs (performed by central services), but not both.

- Long-term storage costs should not be included in cases where research data is expected to be deposited with a funder designated repository, such as the UK Data Service.

- The project budget must be itemised and sufficiently descriptive to identify how costs are incurred. E.g. data capture and cleaning, data sharing.

- The Data Management Plan and Justification of Resources must contain information on the activities that will incur costs and clearly explain the reason that these resources are needed.

Review the guidance for your chosen funder and funding call to determine conditions.

Permitted costs:

Data-related costs that you may wish to consider include:

- Staff time for data anonymisation, cleaning, preparing data for sharing, etc.
- Training courses on STATA, R, Nvivo, etc.
- Hardware purchases, such as tablets or phones for use in the field.
- Software licence costs
- Technical services such as cloud storage, server maintenance, domain hosting charges, etc.

Book an appointment

To discuss your data management and sharing costs, contact the LSHTM Research Data Management Service at researchdatamanagement@lshtm.ac.uk.

Further information:
- LSHTM: Calculate research data management costs
  https://lshtm.sharepoint.com/Research/Research-data-management/Pages/rdm_costs.aspx
- 4C Project: EU-funded project that investigated digital preservation costs http://www.4cproject.eu/
- National Institute of Mental Health: Data Sharing budget spreadsheet
  https://data-archive.nimh.nih.gov/ndct/s/sharedcontent/plan/applicants.html
- UK Data Service: Data Management costing tool and checklist
  https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/manage-data/plan/costing
- Wilhelm, Oster, & Shoulson (2014). Approaches and Costs for Sharing Clinical Research Data
  https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2014.850