

Make Data More Accessible.

An overview of mechanisms for promoting stakeholder engagement with research data.

Research Participants



Direct-to-individual communications

Data summaries, insights, and findings can be directly communicated to participants through mediums like newsletters. Contact information used for this purpose likely requires ethics board approval. Participants should be able to opt in or out of such communications.



Community presentations

Community events provide opportunities to share data with community members in group settings and engage in dialogue. Local partners will have insight into the best ways to structure such events. Researchers should [consider the audience, timing, and content.](#)

Research Collaborators



Data repositories

[Repositories](#) facilitate the discovery and sharing of data with other researchers. Use a repository without membership fees such as [Dataverse](#) to promote accessibility for non-US collaborators. Consult [this ICPSR guide](#) for info on how to prepare a data deposit.



Institutional contracts

Data Use Agreements (DUAs) and Data Transfer Agreements (DTAs) can also facilitate data sharing. These may be used when sensitive data is moving between researchers or institutions. Consult [research contracts offices](#) for help with DUAs and DTAs.

Communities



Non-academic communications

Research findings can be disseminated to the community through local papers, radio programs, or other contextually appropriate channels. [Policy memos](#) share findings with policymakers. Local partners can advise as to the suitability of different communication channels.



Data walks

Inspired by museum exhibits, [data walks](#) are “an interactive way for community stakeholders... to engage in dialogue around research findings about their community.” Data are curated in “stations” visited by small groups who then discuss and engage in collaborative interpretation.



Community Advisory Boards (CABs)

[CABs](#) are groups of community members representing research participant population(s). They may advocate community perspectives, provide insights guiding research conduct and interpretation, and seek to minimize harm and maximize benefit for their communities.



Dashboards

[Dashboards](#) provide real-time insights into data, usually through visualizations. Studies may have varying financial resources or access to programmers to create dashboards. Consider technical literacy, accessibility, and relevant insights for the dashboard’s target audience.

Plan early for data accessibility.

Like other parts of the research process, making data accessible entails the oversight of ethics boards working to protect human subjects and their data. Researchers should consider tradeoffs between accessibility and subject privacy when considering how data is collected, used, and shared. A plan for how data will be shared and used, and by whom, should be carefully considered before drafting consent forms, IRB applications, and data management plans (DMPs). Unconsidered consent form language can result in obstacles to data accessibility during or after a research project. Consult [ICPSR’s Recommended Informed Consent Language for Data Sharing](#) for common pitfalls and best practices.

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