

# Data Management Plan FAQ

The following FAQ's were developed to extend the information provided by the FSP DMP FAQ web page ([https://www2.usgs.gov/fsp/faqs\\_data\\_management\\_planning.asp](https://www2.usgs.gov/fsp/faqs_data_management_planning.asp)). This list also presents exemplary solutions from USGS science centers that are currently in practice.

**Note: Always refer to specific guidance that may be provided by your funding source or science center to understand their requirements first and foremost.**

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## Where does a data management plan fit into my project workflow?

Business practices that affect project workflows vary among science centers and funding sources; however, in general terms, DMP creation should occur between the proposal stage and accepted funding stage of the project. Below are three example project workflow diagrams showing when a DMP is required to be completed. The DMP may need to be updated at various other project milestones as well, see question, "[How do I know what DMP content to complete or update at each stage of my project?](#)" below for more information on updating a DMP.

- WARC Example [[Image 1A](#)]
- [Alaska Example](#)

## What happens when my funding source requires use of a different DMP template?

A DMP developed to meet the requirements of a funding source is usually acceptable if it captures, at a minimum, the same information as the science center format. Deficiencies should be addressed as an addendum to the funding source DMP.

## Who uses a DMP?

There are numerous users of a DMP. The author uses the DMP to plan how data will be handled throughout its lifecycle, updating the document throughout the project. Additionally, the

author uses a DMP to capture and record relevant information in a timely manner that can be used later on for other requirements such as metadata. Project staff use the DMP to help understand roles and responsibilities of various team members, especially in teams involving partners from different organizations. Data managers and communication teams can use the information to ensure that preservation and data sharing activities are done appropriately. Funding sources can use DMPs to promote transparent, high quality, and discoverable products. Lastly, in the event of a FOIA request, your FOIA officer can use the DMP as substantiating material. The DMP, considered part of a formally agreed upon project work plan, legally establishes who is responsible for providing free public access to the data and what data are proprietary if they are used by the USGS.

## How do I know what DMP content to complete or update at each stage of my project?

You may need to develop your DMP throughout your project to maintain accurate and useful content. Understanding the [USGS Science Data Lifecycle](#) will help you develop DMP content; however, specific guidance may also be provided by your funding source or science center. Here are two example approaches used in the USGS that show content requirements at each stage of a project:

### A Single Document with Color Coding

The [NCCWSC DMP template](#) uses a color coded approach within a single document. Fields shaded gray are not required for proposals. If a project is funded, all fields are required.

### Multiple Short Form Documents

The [Alaska Science Center approach](#) is an example where multiple “short” forms are employed at key project stages and for specific product types. Together, all the forms create a comprehensive DMP template. For instance, the proposal form is used for a proposed project. Once a project is funded then a more comprehensive DMP is developed according to the scope, needs, and what is known about the data to be collected. This might entail the implementation form, the Table of Contents form, and a new data form for each data set, as an example.

## Why does my DMP seem similar to other project documentation?

DMPs are focused on the data-related aspects of the project and work together with other descriptive project documents such as a proposal, project plan, or BASIS+ entry. Often DMPs contain planning, roles and responsibilities sections that collect similar information to that found in other documents, but this “duplicate” content is necessary for anyone outside of your project to understand your DMP. [See [Image 5A](#) for illustration]

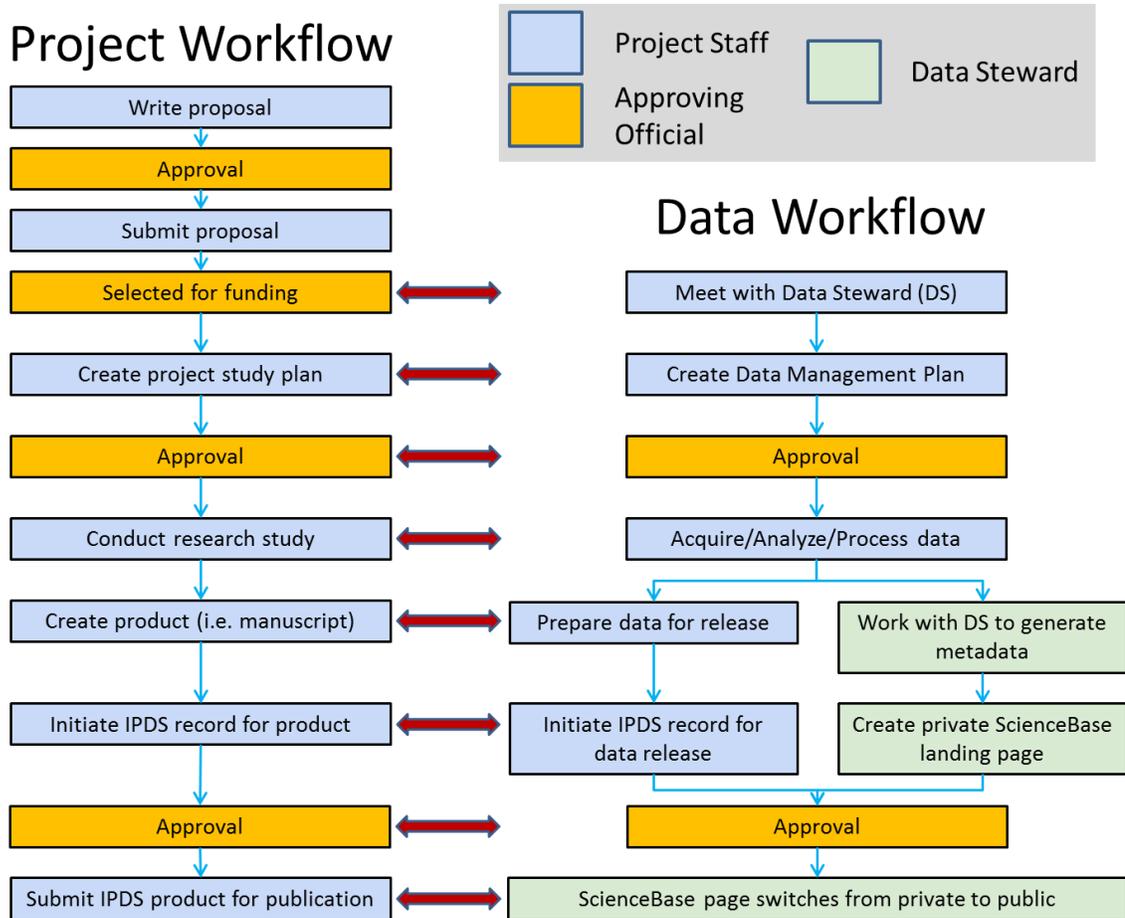
## How can I manage all of my project and data documentation including a DMP?

There are many ways to organize and store DMP files. It's most important that you simply develop a consistent strategy. Organization and naming conventions can be associated with other useful elements of a project such as project IDs, project stages, fiscal year, or any combination. Storage options to consider include databases, single files, or folders of content. Online data management and documentation tools can also affect the management of your documents. You may choose to create content or use forms that can be loaded and stored in the software tool.

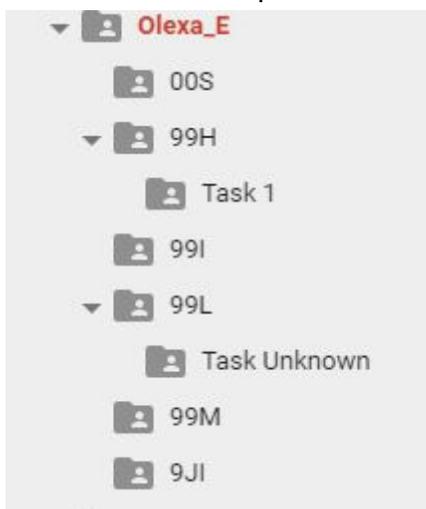
The Great Lakes Science Center and the Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center (NOROCK) are two examples of centers that conceptualize project documentation as a bundle, where a project folder comprises many documents and forms that describe the project and data. The bundle includes documents such as a Study Plan, a DMP, and a metadata questionnaire. NOROCK additionally uses Google Drive to house research documentation (proposals, Project Work Plans, DMPs, etc.). The file structure on Google Drive uses the folder hierarchy shown in [Image 6A](#). This example is for a single PI, but a similar structure was set up for all researchers. The PI creates the task folder named according to each BASIS+ account and uploads the relevant files.

# Appendix of Images

## 1A. WARC Project and Data Management Workflow Chart



## 6A. NOROCK Folder Set Up



## 5A. Data Management and Project Management Venn Diagram

