Five essential factors for data sharing

To accelerate data sharing, we propose five essential factors:

1. Clear policy
   - From funders, institutions, journals/publishers and individual research communities. Setting out unambiguous and specific requirements for data management and sharing would lead to a shift in researcher behaviour.

2. Better credit
   - Data sharing needs to be worth a researcher’s time. With more formal recognition through data citations, authorship, inclusion in research assessments and career advancement, data sharing will increase.

3. Explicit funding
   - For data management and data sharing, as well as data publishing. Policy without access to dedicated funding to enable compliance is unlikely to result in increased data sharing.

4. Practical help
   - For organising data, finding appropriate repositories, and provision of faster, easier routes to share data (infrastructure). The majority of researchers don’t know how or where to make their research data available.

5. Training & education
   - To answer common questions from researchers on data sharing and to help build skills and knowledge. Communicating the benefits of best data practice, and addressing common areas of concern, would go a long way towards making data sharing the norm.

None of these essential factors can be solved by one stakeholder alone: we must act together, and we must act now, to encourage data sharing across discipline and geographic boundaries. Support from all stakeholders – funders, institutions, publishers, and the wider research community – could make all the difference.