Open Science Policy Statements for AHA Funded Research

Public Access

"Outbound" Public Access

The American Heart Association (AHA) requires that all journal articles resulting from AHA funding be made freely available in PubMed Central (PMC) and linked to an AHA award within 12 months of publication. It is the responsibility of the awardee to ensure journal articles are deposited into PMC.

Mechanism

The AHA has adopted the procedures established by the Health Research Alliance (HRA) which enable awardees to deposit publications directly into PMC.

"Inbound" Public Access

All original research articles in the 11 subscription-model AHA journals ("inbound" research) are made freely available on each respective journal website 6 months after publication. All non-original research articles are made freely available on each respective journal web site 12 months after publication. Scientific statements and clinical practice guidelines are made freely available immediately on publication.

The Journal of the American Heart Association (JAHA) is the AHA open access journal. Because it utilizes an author pays model, the author pays for publication costs and retains copyright. The AHA is granted a nonexclusive license of all rights of copyright in and to the article. JAHA articles are deposited in PMC on publication.
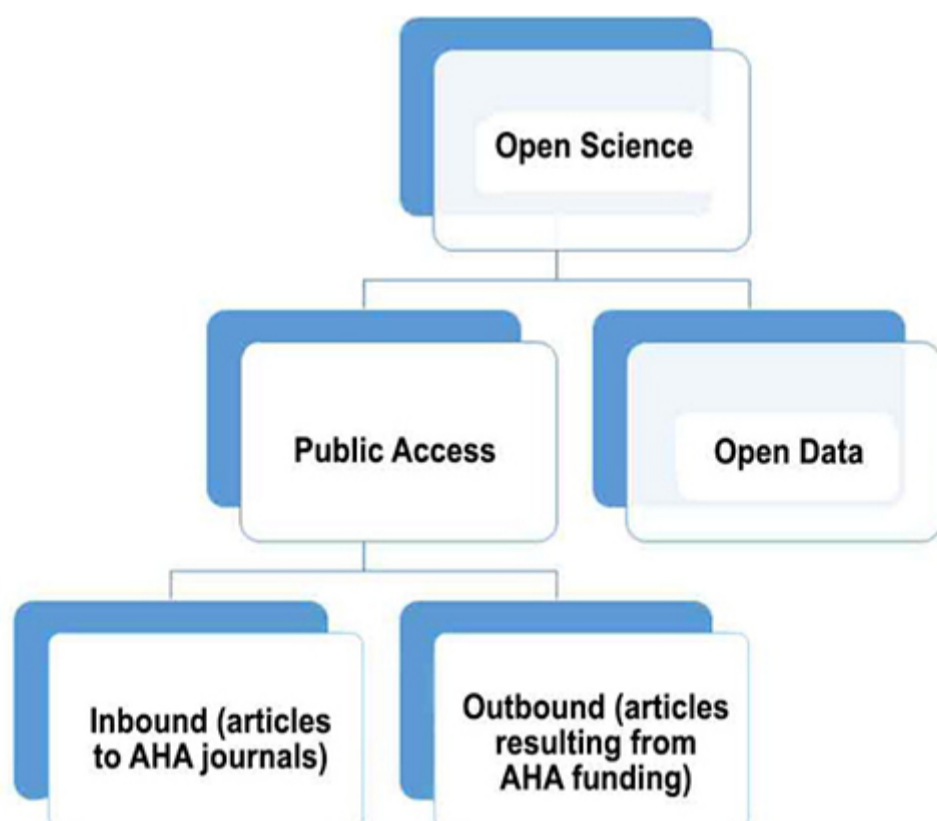
Open Data

The AHA requires certain applicants to include a data sharing plan with the application. Any factual data that is needed for independent verification of research results must be made freely and publicly available in an AHA-approved repository within 12 months of the end of the funding period (and any no-cost extension). Recipients of the following early-career awards are exempt from this policy: AHA Predoctoral Fellowships, AHA Postdoctoral Fellowships, and Institutional Undergraduate Student Fellowship Program.

Compliance Threshold

Applicants will be prompted to answer each of the following questions when completing a data plan in the application:

1. What data outputs will the research generate?
2. When will the data be shared?
3. Where will the data be made available?
4. Are any limits to data sharing required?

Any costs associated with preparing data for sharing may be covered by award funds and must be tracked in the project budget and financial reports. In most circumstances, additional grant funds will not be required to comply with the Open Data Policy.

Opt-Out Conditions

Certain applicants may seek exemption from the Open Data policy. These applicants must submit an opt-out request with the application to explain why the Open Data policy should be waived. Although the applicant may provide other rationale, most opt-out requests fall into one of the following four categories:

- Human Subject Grounds: As the National Science Foundation explains, "[H]uman subject's protection requires removing identifiers, which may be prohibitively expensive or render the data meaningless in research that relies heavily on extensive in-depth interviews." Data sharing may not violate privacy regulations stipulated by HIPAA or fail in any way to safeguard the rights of research participants. It is the responsibility of the applicant to make a case for why the use of the HIPAA Safe Harbor de-identification method would not be feasible for their data.
- Superseding Regulations Grounds: Governing laws or institutional policies may limit the release of certain data.
- Intellectual Property (IP) Grounds: Although data sharing may not protect IP, opt-out requests citing protection for potential or anticipated IP will not be approved until after IP rights are established.
- Financial Grounds: Data sharing should not cause an undue financial burden for the awardee.

Data Types

Because the AHA supports a wide range of research, the nature of the data collected varies greatly. Any factual data that is needed for independent verification of research results must be included in the data sharing plan.

All data must be properly documented. This documentation, sometimes referred to as metadata, is necessary for others to properly use and interpret the data. Consistent with NIH guidelines, the metadata must provide "information about the methodology and procedures used to collect the data, details about codes, definitions of variables, variable field locations, frequencies, and the like. The precise content of documentation will vary by scientific area, study design, the type of data collected, and characteristics of the dataset."

Embargo Period

Awardees should make their data publicly available as soon as possible. All pertinent data must be made freely and publicly available within 12 months of the end of funding period (and any no-cost extension).

Acceptable Repositories

Because of the wide range of projects funded by the AHA, no single repository is universally preferable. Therefore, the AHA grants awardees flexibility to select the repository most compatible with their data. Any repository approved by the AHA must meet the following criteria:

- *Re-Use:* The repository must guarantee to any interested party free access to the data without restriction on research reuse.
- *Security*: The repository must describe how datasets are stored and confidential information is protected.
- *Stability:* The repository must assure that the data will be available for the indefinite future, regardless of whether the repository is dismantled.

- *Subject Focus:* The repository should be compatible with the subject matter. If a repository emerges as the standard resource in a field (e.g., GenBank for DNA sequences), the awardee is encouraged to use that repository to better disseminate the research results to like-minded investigators interested in building upon the research.
- *Metadata:* The repository must require the awardee to provide sufficient metadata to explain the data to others. These metadata must be searchable so that repository visitors can easily locate desired datasets.
- *File Formats:* The repository should accommodate all file types generated by the awardee.
- *Machine Extraction*: Preferably, the repository will feature machine-readable and machine-interpretable functionality to enable third-party users to more easily locate the data.
- *Reception to AHA Data:* The repository must be willing to accept data submitted by AHA-funded researchers.

If a desired repository is not currently approved by the AHA, the applicant may request in the application that the AHA consider the repository for approval. If the repository is approved, it will be added to the list of [AHA Acceptable Data Repositories](#).

Recipients of non-exempt awards beginning January 1, 2015, and after must comply with both the outbound Public Access policy and the Open Data policy.

AHA Open Science Policy

- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Steps for Open Science Compliance (PDF](#))
- [HIPPA Compliance for Open Data Policy (PDF)](#)
- [AHA Approved Data Repositories](#)
- [Sample Data Plans](#)

Contact Us

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