



Portage Research Intelligence Expert Group Institutional RDM Strategy Survey - Summary of Results

ISSUE

In May 2018, the Tri-Agency announced a draft Research Data Management Policy¹ with the objective of supporting Canadian research excellence by promoting sound data management and data stewardship practices. A central component of this draft policy was a requirement that each institution administering Tri-Agency funds create a strategy outlining how they will provide their researchers with an environment that enables and supports research data management.

Since the announcement of this draft policy, research institutions across Canada (post-secondary institutions, in particular) have been preparing to meet this new requirement for an institutional research data management strategy.

RESPONSE

Portage is a library-based network of Canadian experts on research data management. The network develops best practices, facilitates training, and advances national platforms for planning, preserving, and discovering research data. The network's Research Intelligence Expert Group (RIEG) gathers evidence to guide the promotion of best practices in Canada and inform the stakeholder communities about issues arising related to policy and practices.

Anticipating the announcement of the official Tri-Agency Research Data Management Policy, RIEG created an online survey to gather information on the successes and challenges Canadian research institutions are currently experiencing in developing their own institutional strategies on research data management. The survey measured where progress has been made and what more support Portage and other stakeholder groups could provide.

The online survey was publicly released on June 06, 2019 and closed June 28, 2019. The survey was advertised on various listservs and by direct invitation.

ANALYSIS

A. Response

The survey received 88 complete and partially-complete submissions from respondents who represented 63 research institutions across Canada. Figure 1 summarizes institutional representation, according to region and institution-type.

As seen in Fig 1., respondents overwhelmingly represented university institutions (76 %).

- 13/15 U15 research institutions were represented in the responses.
- 46/95 Universities Canada member institutions were represented in the responses.

¹ DRAFT Tri-Agency Research Data Management Policy - For Consultation.
http://www.science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_97610.html

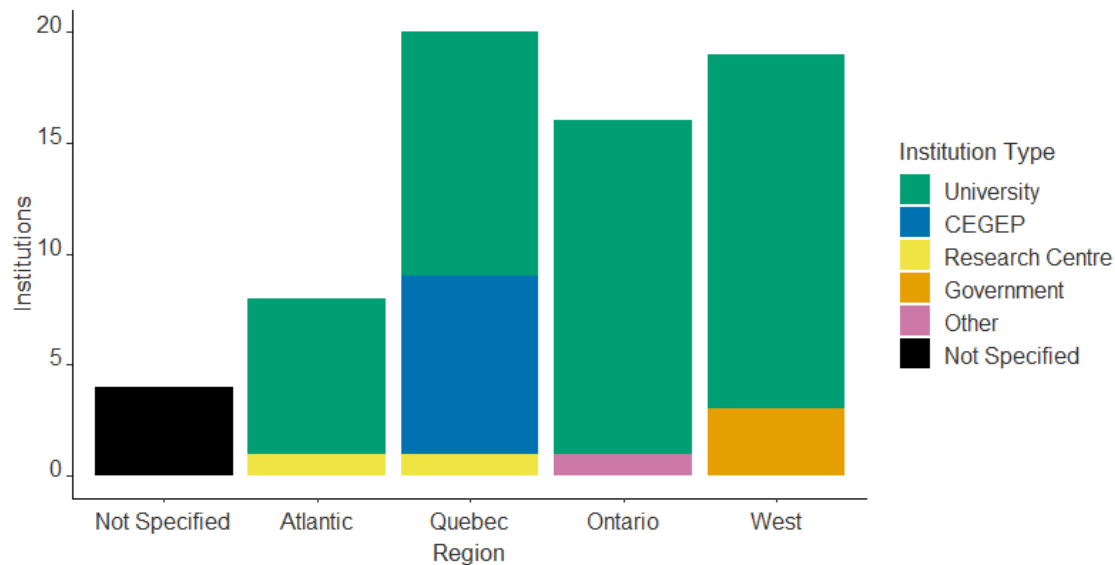


Figure 1. Count of research institutions represented in survey responses (n = 88), organized by region. Colour blocks represent institution type: University (n = 67), CEGEP (collège d'enseignement général et professionnel; n = 10), Research Centre (n = 3), Government (n = 4), Other (n = 1), and Not Specified (n = 4).

B. Development

The survey asked respondents to indicate the current status of their institution's strategy development via a "check-all-that-apply" style question. Figure 2 summarizes the responses with respondents broken out by the CRKN-band² of their respective institution. The CRKN Banding system provides a relative measure of comparison of research and teaching intensity among members of the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN). Note that Figure 2 summarizes data at the level of individual respondents and not institutions; therefore, institutions with multiple respondents (n = 19) may be slightly over represented.

Most respondents indicated they had assessed their institution's capacity, reviewed support material for strategy development, and formed, or were in the process of forming, a working group to develop their institution's strategy. Few respondents indicated they were in the final stages of planning with several commenting that the delay in the Tri-Agency's final policy had eased the pressure to near their conclusion. As one commenter noted « *Compte tenu du report de l'entrée en vigueur d'une politique des conseils sur la GDR, les travaux institutionnels sur cette question ont ralenti ; lorsque les attentes exactes des conseils seront connues, il sera plus facile de s'y remettre.* » [TRANSLATION: Given the delay in implementation of the RDM policy, institutional work on this issue has slowed; when the exact requirements of the Tri-Council are known, it will be easier to continue the momentum].

C. Working Groups

Most respondents (58 %) indicated their institution had formed one or more working groups to start developing their institutional strategy. For institutions that had formed working groups, on average more than four different offices were represented. Figure 3 presents the range of offices represented on these groups.

² CRKN-RCDR The Banding System. <https://www.crkn-rcdr.ca/en/banding-system>

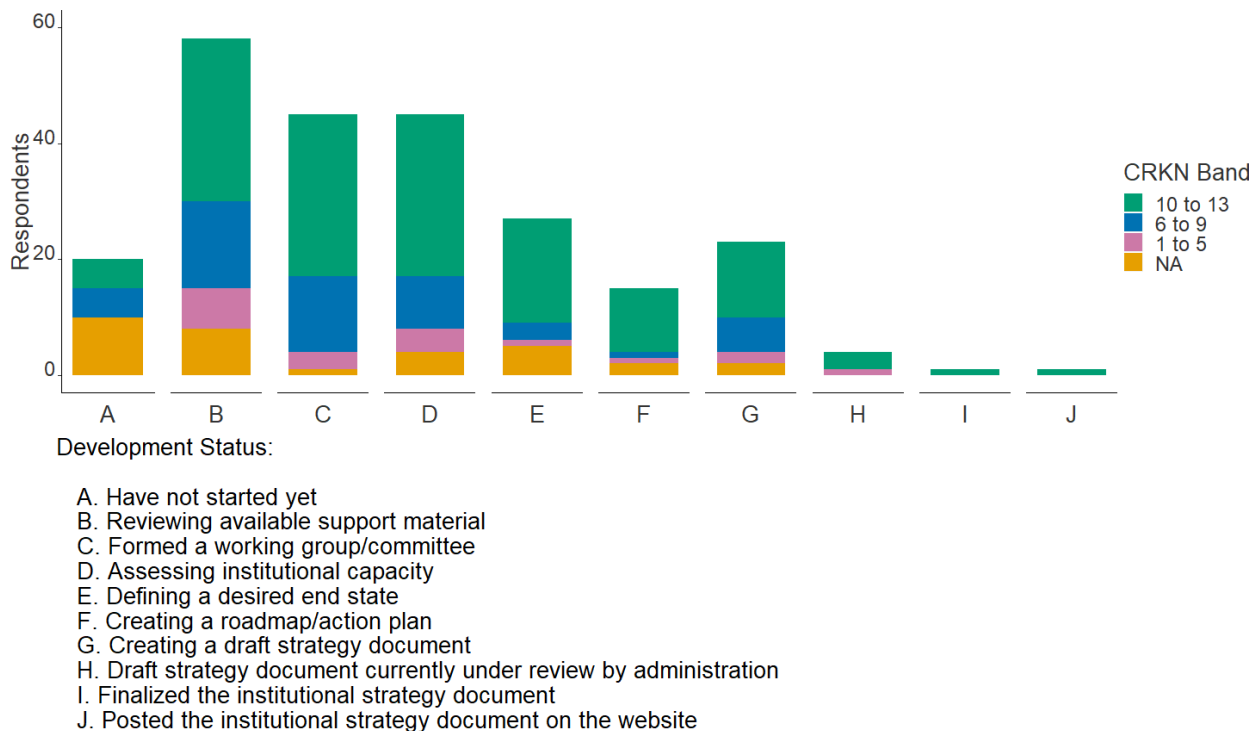


Figure 2. Status of institutional research data management strategies in development by respondents. Counts of affirmative responses for each stage of development are presented. Coloured bands represent the CRKN Band of respondents’ affiliated research institution. The CRKN Banding system³ provides a relative measure of comparison of research and teaching intensity among members of the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN). “NA” signifies the institution is not a member of CRKN.

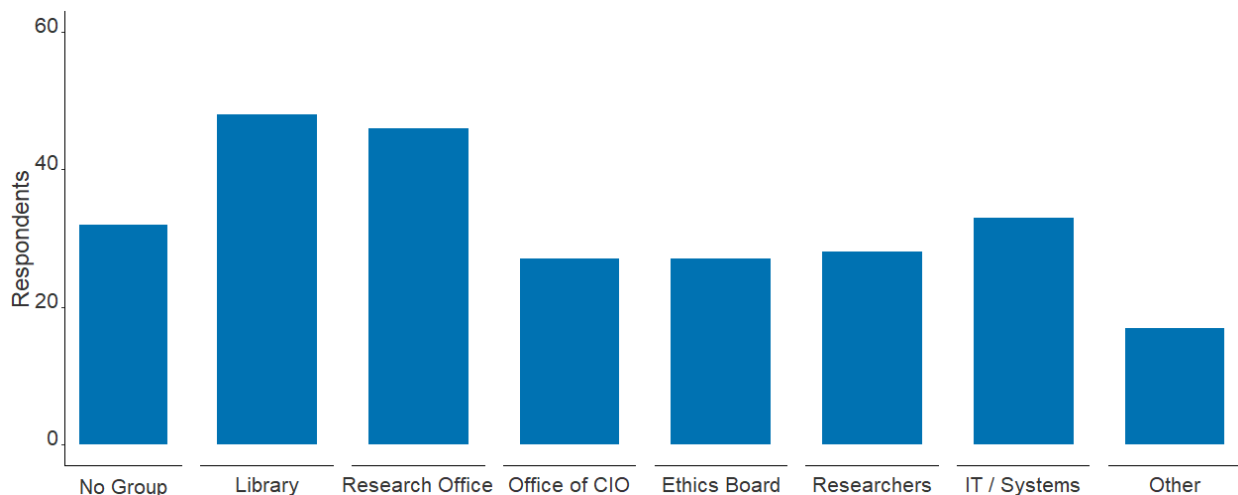


Figure 3. The range of offices or departments represented on working groups tasked with developing institutional strategies at the institutions of respondents. Total affirmative responses for each office/department are presented.

³ CRKN-RCDR The Banding System. <https://www.crkn-rcdr.ca/en/banding-system>

D. Guidance & Training

Respondents are using a range of tools and supports to develop their institutional strategies, as summarized in Figure 4. Most respondents are using the Portage Institutional Strategy Template and Guidance Document⁴, which 70 % of respondents rated as being helpful or very helpful. As well, many respondents indicated they are using existing policies at their own institutions to inform their strategies.

Suggestions from respondents for additional guidance and support frequently referenced the need for sample strategies and best practices documents. Communication tools that institutions and/or departments could adopt in their outreach and promotion were also suggested, for instance, the National Science Foundation's "Dear Colleague" series of letters⁵.

Interest ratings for methods of receiving additional support are summarized in Figure 5, with webinars and online documentation being of especially high interest. For in-person training, local or regional workshops were rated more favourably than national-level training, indicating a possible gap in more localized support/connection. Some comments reflected a particular interest in knowing what actions peer institutions in their region/province were taking.

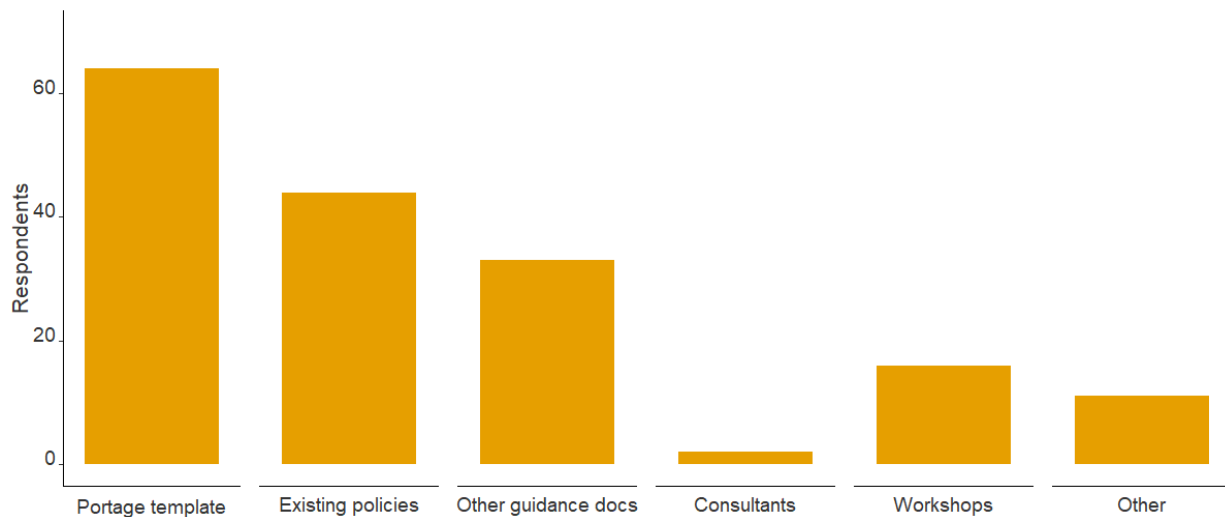


Figure 4. The range of resources being used to develop institutional strategies by survey respondents. Total affirmative responses for each resource type are presented.

⁴ Portage Releases Draft Institutional RDM Strategy Template. <https://portagenetwork.ca/news/institutional-strategy-template/>

⁵ National Science Foundation New Dear Colleague Letters. https://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=127138

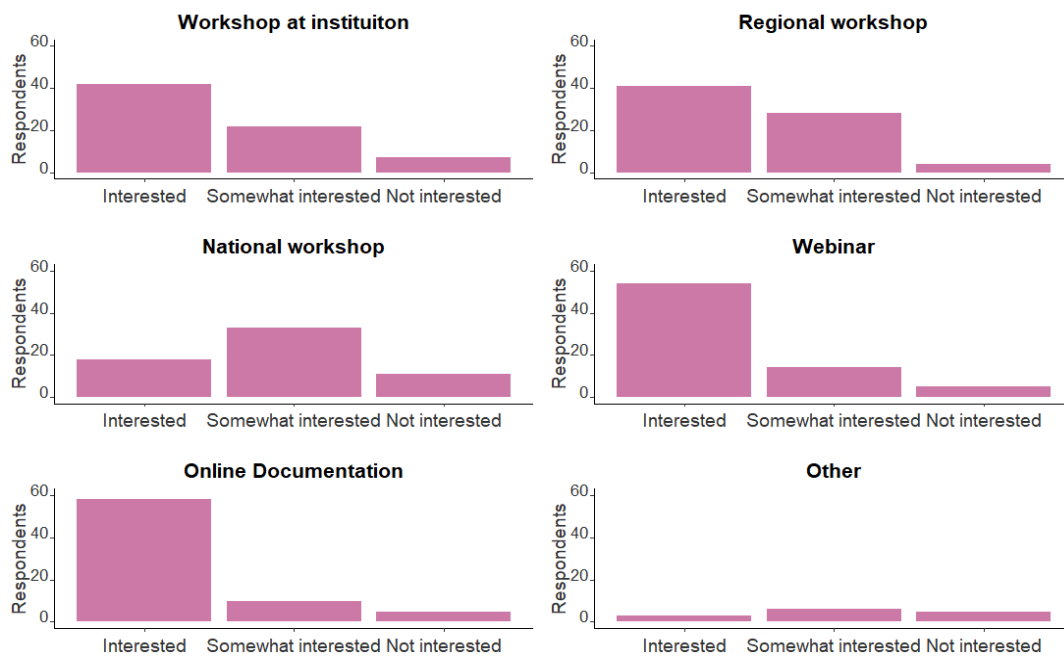


Figure 5. Respondent ratings of interest in the method of delivery of training and guidance to support the development of institutional strategies. Individual ratings are presented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Tri-Agency has taken significant steps to make sure research institutions are aware of the impending requirement for data management strategies. This survey found that while many institutions have successfully begun the process of developing their strategies, there exists a significant level of hesitation to move forward. Respondents indicated reluctance on the part of their institutions to move too far ahead of any final Tri-Agency policy, but we anticipate that the announcement of the Tri-Agency’s official Research Data Management Policy will spur institutions into considerable action.

In the near future, there are actions that the Tri-Agency, the Portage network, and other organizations supporting research data management could take to support institutions:

- Collect and share exemplar strategies: As published strategies become available, there should be a concerted effort to inventory them in a single online location to improve accessibility.
- Develop communities of practice: Stakeholders want opportunities to meet counterparts at regional peer institutions to receive further guidance, compare notes, learn from one another’s approaches, and develop strategies.
- Provide more explicit best practices: Institutions need clear guidance on how to best meet the requirements outlined in the Tri-Agency’s draft Research Data Management Policy and Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management⁶.

Given the state of flux surrounding this topic, we suggest that RIEG conduct a follow-up survey assessing new progress made after the announcement of the Tri-Agency’s final Research Data Management Policy. As well, results from another survey conducted by RIEG in September 2019 that assesses institutional capacity to support research data management should also provide more detailed information on how Canadian research institutions are developing and allocating resources to support their evolving research data management services.

⁶ Tri-Agency Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management.
http://www.science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_83F7624E.html