

# The NFDI Data Stewardship Network

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## Abstract:

The emerging role of *data steward* has become increasingly important for the management of research data (RDM) in the scientific disciplines and large research projects such as Collaborative Research Centres and Clusters of Excellence, in the NFDI consortia, and in infrastructure institutions such as libraries and computing centres. [1,2] Their responsibilities are diverse, including quality control, metadata management, infrastructure development, training, and ensuring compliance with legal and ethical standards. Data stewards often specialise in particular aspects of RDM, depending on the specific needs of their discipline, project, or institutional setting. Despite the diversity of tasks, they often face similar challenges, such as limited resources, a lack of standardised procedures and the need for professional training. [3,4] The DataStew project has identified five prototypical profiles for data stewards, characterised by their competencies, tasks, institutional location, and professional and RDM background. [4]

It is evident that data stewards often have previous experience in research or have acquired some knowledge of RDM. When data stewards are recruited from research, their initial knowledge of RDM and networking experience is mostly rudimentary. This situation highlights the lack of established structures and practices for data stewards to orientate themselves by, which affects their effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, there is a need to develop and make knowledge accessible, and a strong, evolving community to address important questions about the needs and support required to build such a community. Initial efforts to build a community are being made, for example, by the TU9-UAG FDM. They offer an annual workshop, *Data Stewardship goes Germany* [5], which this year focuses on building a community. Additionally, several entities, such as the section Training & Education and consortia such as NFDI4Health, are working on scaling up the continuing education of data stewards. [6]

In addition, institutionalisation is important to ensure the long-term success of RDM. Most data stewards work on a project-by-project basis, which is not a durable solution and can lead to conflicts. [4] Structures need to be created that provide a stable framework for the evolving roles of data stewards and to meet the challenges of achieving widespread acceptance of NFDI services and standards. With a community of data stewards acting as multipliers, NFDI issues can be disseminated in local settings, and data stewards in universities can be empowered to make effective use of new technologies and disseminate them further locally.

In summary, the current landscape of data stewards in research shows both significant progress and challenges. Establishing clear structures, fostering a vibrant community and institutionalising the role of data stewards are essential steps towards improving the effectiveness of RDM. Therefore, we would like to discuss with you the urgent need that all basic services share: Namely, to increase the awareness and adoption of basic services by the community and to strengthen the commitment of institutions to provide basic services. What actions can we possibly take, e.g. by designing a basic service for data stewardship with a focus on institutionalisation and networking?

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[6] <https://indico.cern.ch/event/1408259/timetable/?layout=room#20241021.detailed> (last check: 2024-05-24)

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