Dataset Metadata Guide

Form: DM.GENERAL

Version 1.0.1 - Updated Feb. 2019

This guide was created to assist individuals submitting data using the **DM.GENERAL** dataset metadata form. This form is for creating new or updating existing dataset metadata with accompanying data in a tabular format. This guide was meant to be used in conjunction with the example completed **DM**.**GENERAL** form provided.

* required
** required if applicable

Sheet 1: General

This sheet provides the primary metadata elements for a dataset: label, title, abstract, LTER keywords and other keywords

Label*: The label is a short name given to the dataset to be used in the local data catalog listing only, and is included with other metadata when archiving the datasets with long-term, NSF-approved data archives. Please see the example. The data manager may edit your submitted label in order to conform to existing practices.

Title*: This is one of the 5 essential LTER-required fields used to support standardized metadata browsing and searching: "The dataset title should be descriptive, mention the data collected, geographic context and research site (what, where), and possibly, the time frame (when)."

Abstract*: This is one of the 5 essential LTER-required fields used to support standardized metadata browsing and searching: "Include an abstract rich with descriptive text, analogous to a paper's abstract. Taxonomic information may be appropriate. This is a good place to indicate whether the dataset is ongoing or complete. Some general terms regarding methods, instrumentation or measurements should also be included."

LTER Keywords: LTER keywords are also one of the 5 essential LTER-required fields. The data submitter may find suitable keywords from the [LTER Controlled Vocabulary](#) themselves, or leave this field blank to be filled out by the data manager.

Other Keywords: Optionally, the data submitter can provide any other keywords they would like to be assigned to this dataset. The keywords will be used for searching and browsing in the local data catalog, and also submitted to any NSF-approved long-term data archives.

Sheet 2: People and Projects

The sheet is for providing information about people and projects (funding) involved in creating and/or maintaining this dataset.

PROJECT(S) / FUNDING*: Please list any research projects and award numbers (if available) for all research projects supporting this dataset through any portion of funding.

CREATOR(S)*: A dataset is the primary researcher or individual responsible for this dataset and any scientific or other questions that other users may have about it. Usually there is a single individual creator listed, but listing more than one is possible if appropriate. An example of this case is when a researcher continues the scientific stewardship and responsibility of a long-term dataset upon retirement of its previous creator.

OTHER PERSONNEL: If appropriate, please list any other individuals responsible for creating or maintaining this dataset in a significant way, i.e. in a way that affects the quality or character of the dataset or if attribution is required.

Sheet 3: Methods / Protocols

Use this sheet to document methods and protocols used at any stage (sampling, laboratory analysis, processing, etc.) of creating this dataset and are pertinent to the interpretation and reuse of the dataset. In general, a method describes how something was done and a protocol prescribes procedures that were used and usually has a URL where it can be found or downloaded, and a creator. The description for a method describes the actual procedures used, while the description for a protocol simple describes what the protocol is for.

Sheet 4: Data Table Description

The sheet describes the data table being submitted or updated. The tabs for both the Data Table Description and Data Table include an index of (1). If multiple data tables are being submitted for this dataset, please copy these tabs and increment the index for each additional data table, making sure the indexes for each description-table pair match.

Data Table Description*: Please provide a general description of the data table, indicating what measurements are included and how it relates to the dataset, e.g. primary data table.

Data Fields

Please provide complete metadata for each data field contained in the data table. Also, the order of the fields defined should match exactly the order of the associated data table.

CRUISE/EXPEDITION KEY: Indicates if a field contains the cruise or expedition key used to differentiate data from across multiple data collection deployments. It is only required if the dataset spans multiple cruises or expeditions. Usually, only one field will be indicated as such.

CATALOG LABEL*: This is the label that will used when publishing to the data catalog. It should be a simple, easy-to-read label that provides the user a general idea of what the field contains. Units of measurement do not need to be included in the label unless desired since they are included in the metadata. Some researchers prefer to include them in the label.

DEFINITION*: The definition is the most important metadata field for each data column. It should describe the data field completely in order to provide necessary information (within the context of all other dataset metadata) to facilitate data reuse by other researchers appropriately familiar with the scientific subject and methodologies.

UNIT**: The unit of measurement for this data field. Use "N/A" or leave blank if a unit is not applicable to this field, otherwise it is required.

CODES**: Please list any codes used for each data field, such as for missing values or other indicators for circumstances other than available data values.

Sheet 5: Data Table

Please copy the data to this sheet if possible. If the data table is too large then just include along with the metadata form as a file name DataTable*N*.(csv|xlsx|tsv), where *N* matches the associated "Data Table Description (*N)"* tab.