

## **Balancing Access, Ownership, and Impact: Lessons from Wits on Public–Private Research Data Sharing**

The global emphasis on open science, research transparency, and data-driven innovation has heightened the importance of public–private data sharing as a driver of research excellence, collaboration, and societal benefit.

This paper examines the dynamics of public–private research data sharing through the case of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). It aims to analyze stakeholder perspectives, institutional practices, and the challenges of balancing access, ownership, and impact in data-sharing ecosystems.

The study draws on Wits’ institutional experience and stakeholder engagement. It explores how researchers negotiate ownership, attribution, collaboration, and visibility; how research units manage stewardship, repository infrastructure, preservation, and governance; how funders influence practices through open access and data management requirements; and how publishers support dissemination via data availability policies, dataset citation, and impact metrics.

Findings highlight Wits’ efforts to strengthen research data management and sharing practices while addressing challenges related to privacy, intellectual property, ethics, regulatory compliance, interoperability, governance, and trust. The analysis underscores the relevance of internationally recognized frameworks such as the FAIR Principles and CARE Principles in promoting responsible and equitable data sharing. Additionally, the study identifies the need for enhanced data literacy among researchers, policymakers, and institutional stakeholders.

Lessons from Wits demonstrate practical strategies for building sustainable public–private data-sharing ecosystems. These strategies enhance research visibility, increase impact, and support innovation and societal development, positioning African institutions as key contributors to global knowledge networks.

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**Track Classification:** DIRISA