

Research and Development (R&D) is defined in the discussion paper as “activities to advance knowledge, contribute to society and create better public policy, undertaken by a range of actors including universities and the private sector.” R&D is indicated in Figure 5 as the purpose with strongest public support, for example to “Identify ways to help small business become more competitive and productive.”

However consider another example that could arguably fit the R&D purpose: “Identify ways to help large multinational corporations (e.g. pharmaceuticals) identify new markets and increase profits.” Such corporations would no doubt choose other words to present their case for data sharing, but this is literally their bottom line. One can imagine that this might enjoy far less public support. How would such requests be decided?

One avenue to explore may be to charge government royalties on commercial products developed using shared government data. If this process led to a significant financial return to the community, a fair share of the benefits, it may indeed receive public support.