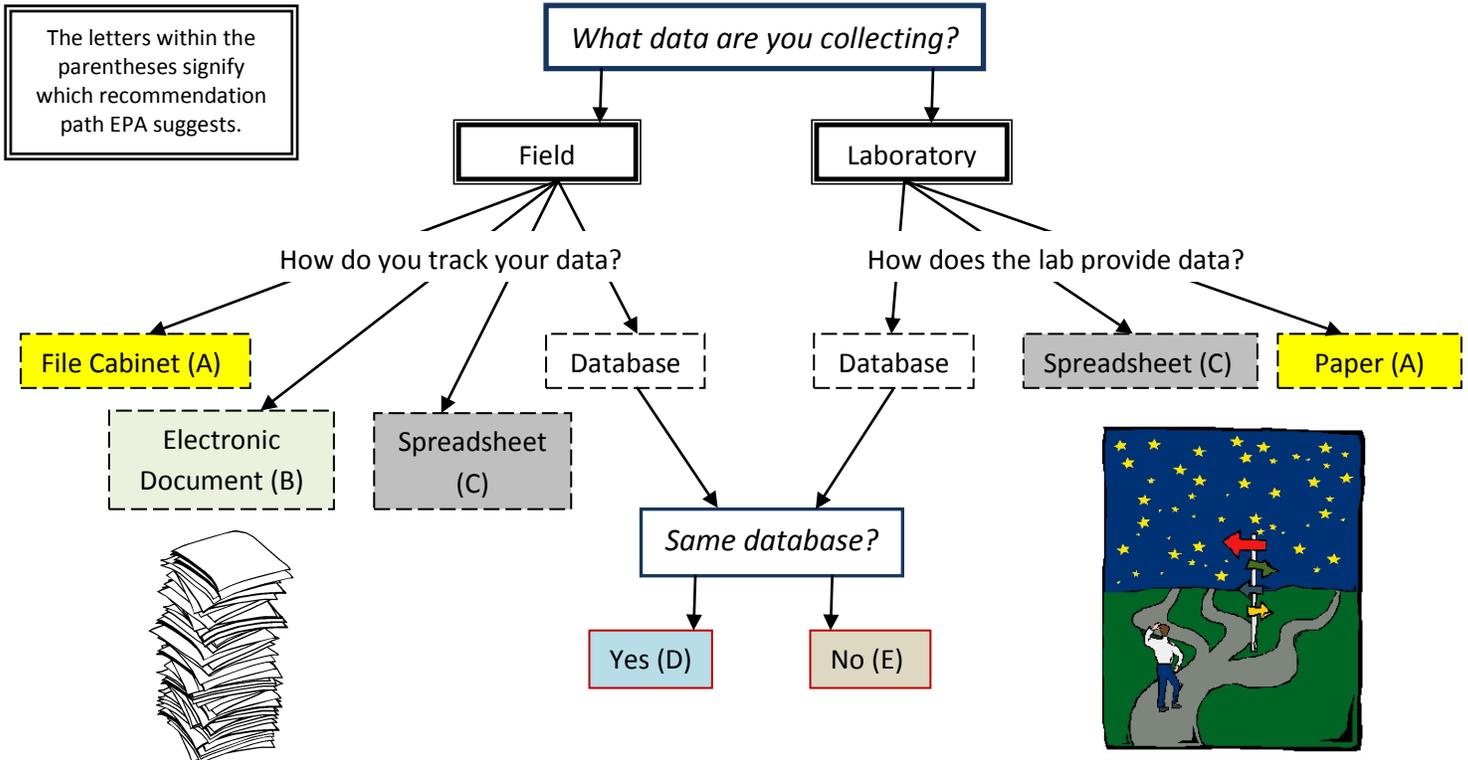


## Roadmap to Data Management



**Recommendation A:** It is difficult to re-use or share data in paper form, and you risk losing your data over time. We recommend that you use the STORET/WQX compatible template\* as a first step to getting your data into electronic format. From there, you can develop your data management capabilities to your needs. EPA recommends that you request your lab to report data in an electronic format. You should be able to specify exactly what format you want, possibly even in a WQX-compatible format.

**Recommendation B:** While these documents are electronic (Microsoft Word, Notepad, etc), they are still not an effective method for managing data. It is difficult to sort or do any data analysis if the data is in a document. We recommend that you use the STORET/WQX-compatible template\* as a first step to try to get your data in a more manageable format.

**Recommendation C:** Many options exist if you have all your data in spreadsheets. You don't necessarily need to use the STORET/WQX-compatible template\*, although you may not have all the necessary data elements in order to share with EPA. You can use the WQX-compatible template as a guide for your spreadsheets. We recommend that you develop a consistent standard format for your spreadsheets. We also recommend that you create a storage plan for naming and tracking spreadsheets, and to ensure that you keep one master version of the spreadsheet to avoid versioning control losses.

**Recommendation D:** Databases are the best way to ensure you have consistent, correct, and current data. They generally require strong technical knowledge and take a while to learn. If you have a database, you are most likely meeting your data management needs. All data sharing options are available. You are likely able to adjust your data into STORET/WQX-compatible format and share the data with EPA's STORET warehouse.

**Recommendation E:** We recommend that you combine all your data into one database. Databases are powerful because you can store multiple types of data together in an easily accessible format. See Rec. D.

\*EPA provides tribal water quality programs a free Excel template that is compatible with STORET/WQX.  
 \*\*For more information, please contact Audrey Johnson at [Johnson.audrey1@epa.gov](mailto:Johnson.audrey1@epa.gov) or Christopher Chen at [chen.christopher@epa.gov](mailto:chen.christopher@epa.gov).