



MEMORANDUM

TO: MLDS Governing Board
FROM: Ross Goldstein
DATE: August 21, 2017
SUBJECT: Development of Protocol for External Researchers

Purpose

The purpose of this agenda item is to update the MLDS Governing Board on the Center's development of a comprehensive new protocol for the appointment and management of External Researchers as *Authorized Staff of the Center*. As authorized staff of the Center, the researcher will be able to conduct research using the System to improve the State's education system and guide decision making by State and local governments, educational agencies, institutions, teachers, and other education professionals.

Restrictions

Direct access to data in the Maryland Longitudinal Data System is restricted to Authorized Staff of the Center. Without staff access, a researcher is limited to only de-identified, aggregate data. To adequately conduct research specified in state statute (Md. Code, Ed. Art., §24-703(f)(4) and (5)), and outlined in the MLDS Research Agenda, researchers need access to unit-record level data. To support the research directives and the mission of the MLDS Center, the Executive Director may designate researchers as authorized staff of the Center

Background

Under current regulations, there are two ways researchers can have access to the MLDS.

1. Member of the Research Branch (COMAR 14.36.06.01C2a) - A faculty member within the University System of Maryland (USM), may be assigned to the Research Branch of the Center through the MOU with the University of Maryland, School of Social Work and College of Education. This includes the Principal Investigator, Research Director, Statistician and Associate Research Director as well as other researchers from within USM who work under the auspices of the Research Branch.
2. Temporary Researcher (COMAR 14.36.06.01C2b) - Additional researchers identified by the Director of the Research Branch may become authorized staff and receive research access to the MLDS. In 2015, the Governing Board considered procedures that would limit the number of temporary research appointments to two and require a referral from a member of the Governing Board. To date, one temporary researcher appointment has been granted (for Baltimore's Promise).

Over the past year, there have been more researchers interested in having access to the MLDS; either as a member of the Research Branch or as a temporary researcher. Accordingly, the Center needs a clearly articulated process for selecting qualified researchers who are proposing work on topics that fit within the Research Agenda and have the potential to provide meaningful policy insights. This will allow the Center

to leverage its collaborative relationship with the research community throughout Maryland and better utilize the System's rich store of data to inform stakeholders and policy makers, in a way that is controlled, clear, and transparent.

Other state longitudinal data systems (SLDS), who have been in operation longer than the MLDSC, have developed policies and procedures for researcher access. Center staff reviewed these policies to inform the Center's protocol. In particular, Center staff reviewed:

- The University of Texas at Austin Education Research Center Policies & Procedures: General Information;
- Ohio Longitudinal Data Archive (OLDA) Access Procedures; and
- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, IES Data Security Office, Restricted-Use Data Procedures Manual.

To date, Center staff have a document in development that includes the components identified as necessary for a controlled and transparent process.

Outline of Protocol

Applicants who wish to utilize data from the MLDS must develop and submit a proposal to the MLDS Center. If the proposal is approved, the researcher must complete the Center's Restricted Use Data Agreement, security background check, non-disclosure agreements, IRB and reporting requirements. The full process includes the following steps:

1. Research Proposal and Reader's Summary
2. Review Process
 - a. MLDS Center Internal Review
 - b. Research and Policy Board Review
 - c. Final Determination
3. Restricted Use Data Agreement
4. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval
5. Access to the MLDS
6. Conduct Research
7. Conclusion of Research

Process

- Additional internal review with Center staff
- Review with Research and Policy Advisory Board
- Review with Data Governance Advisory Board
- Incorporation of feedback from Advisory Boards and other stakeholders
- Present to the Governing Board for final review and approval

Action

Informational only