

The Census Research Data Center Proposal Process

Rosemary Hyson
U.S. Census Bureau
NYCRDC Baruch

Outline

Initial proposal development

Development of a formal RDC proposal

Proposal review process

Post approval process

I. Initial proposal development

1. Identify and learn about the RDC data you plan to use
2. Familiarize yourself with the RDC program requirements
3. Contact the RDC Administrator
4. Create an account on the CES web site

1. Identify and learn about the RDC data you plan to use

CES web site

- [data descriptions](#)
- [discussion papers](#)
- [Annual Report](#)
- [CES seminar series](#)
- [NCHS](#)

NYCRDC web site

- [Helpful Links](#)

Census web site

- [survey/program pages](#)
- [Census program contacts](#)

RDC and CES staff

RDC Researchers

Virtual RDC

1. Identify and learn about the RDC data you plan to use

External data can be used with RDC data

Ask about other data that may be available

Keep in mind

- Timing and unit of observation of data
- IDs needed to link to external data

2. Familiarize yourself with the RDC program requirements

- Predominant purpose must be to increase the utility of Title 13, Chapter 5 programs
- Proposals—must address RDC program needs
- Research environment is unique to protect unique data

<http://www.ces.census.gov/index.php/ces/1.00/researchprogram>

<http://www.ces.census.gov/index.php/ces/1.00/researchguidelines>

Predominant purpose must be to increase the utility of Title 13, Chapter 5 programs

- 9 benefits criteria for projects using FTI
- 4 additional benefits if not using FTI
- RDC projects will produce benefits under criterion 11:

Preparing estimates of population and characteristics of population as authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5

- Proposals should include benefits under at least one additional criterion
- Benefits from analytical research relation to Census Title 13, Chapter 5 mandate formalized in Jan 07 memo from Census Director Kincannon

Proposals—must address RDC program needs

RDC proposals are not typical research proposals

RDC proposals evaluated on 5 criteria

- Benefits to the Census Bureau
- Scientific merit
- Need for non-public data
- Disclosure risk
- Feasibility

Research environment is unique to protect unique data

- All research must be conducted on-site
- No materials—data, programs, log files, results, notes—can leave the RDC lab unless cleared for disclosure
- Computing system is completely isolated
 - documentation for software and data sets are accessible
 - any external program code or data must be loaded to your directory by CES or the RDC Administrator
 - only data approved for your project are accessible;
 - only your project group is authorized to see undisclosed output
 - requests for disclosure must be submitted in advance and require supporting documentation

Other initial steps

3. Contact your RDC Administrator

- If you haven't already!
- [CES RDC locations](#)

4. Create an account in the CES proposal management system

- [CES web site "Create Account"](#)
- must include 2 page c.v.

II. Development of a formal RDC proposal

Elements of an RDC proposal

- Preliminary proposal information in CES proposal management system
- Project description
- Predominant purpose statement
- Abstract

Preliminary proposal information in CES proposal management system

- Prior to starting, you must have:
 - Created a CES web site account
 - Read the RDC Proposal Guidelines
- Sign in to the CES web site and select “Start a new proposal”
- Read and agree to the prerequisite checklist

Prerequisites Checklist

The screenshot shows the 'U.S. Census Bureau Center for Economic Studies' website. The main heading is 'Research Program' and the page title is 'Create Proposal'. There are navigation tabs for 'My Proposals', 'Affiliated Proposals', and 'My Reviews'. A search bar is visible on the left. The main content area features a '1. Prerequisites Checklist' section with the following items:

1. **Prerequisites Checklist**
Before submitting a proposal, please read and perform each checklist item.
Important: You must agree to have performed each checklist item to continue.
2. Enter Your Proposal Information
3. Review and Submit Your Proposal

Below the checklist, there are six numbered items for user agreement:

1. I have read the [research proposal guidelines](#)
2. I have coresponded with an [RDC administrator](#) about my prospective project
3. I understand that the predominant purpose of this project must benefit the Census Bureau data programs
4. I understand that there are usually lab fees for using an RDC
5. I understand that work is performed in a restricted access environment and only cleared results are allowed to leave the RDC
6. I Understand that the approval process may take a considerable amount of time, for example, if review by other agencies or data owners is required or if data availability issues exist

At the bottom of the page, there are two buttons: 'I Disagree and wish to return later' and 'I Agree and wish to submit a proposal'.

Preliminary proposal information in CES proposal management system

Summarizes proposal information:

- Researchers involved and affiliations
- Data sets requested—RDC and external
- Criteria met by proposed benefits
- Short proposal abstract
- Duration and funding for project
- RDC location(s) for project

Preliminary proposal information

U.S. Census Bureau *Center for Economic Studies*

Research Program

Search [My Account](#) → [Create Proposal](#) →
Create Proposal Form

entire site

1. Prerequisites Checklist
2. Enter Your Proposal Information
Please enter all information regarding your proposal.
Important: You must complete the form before moving to the final step. Use the **"Check Form"** button to alert you to any missing information.
3. Review and Submit Your Proposal

Title

Duration (months)

Funding
(other funding)

Primary Research Location (choose one)

- California Census RDC, Berkeley
- Triangle Census Research Data Center
- Michigan Census Research Data Center
- Chicago Census Research Data Center
- New York Census RDC, Cornell
- New York Census RDC, Baruch**

Research Personnel (add one or more)

- Baruch School of Public Affairs

Site Map

- Sign Out
- Contact Us
- My Account
- My Proposals
- Affiliated Proposals
- My Reviews
- Home
- Exam Schedule

Preliminary proposal information

Brief Description

In the space provided below, please write a brief 50-100 word description of your research project.

Research Datasets

In this step, you must provide a list of datasets required to complete your research project.

Please add all datasets that are required for the project. Note that all data are stored as SAS datasets. It is the researchers responsibility to convert the SAS datasets to alternative formats, if required.

The information provided for each dataset is the survey year and the survey name. You must individually select all survey coverage years required for your project. If your research proposal is approved, the datasets selected here are the only datasets to which you will be provided access. Failure to select all the data required for your research project at this point may necessitate that you resubmit your entire proposal.

Supplied by Census

Dataset

Coverage

1963
1964
1965
1966
1967
1968
1969
...

Preliminary proposal information

If you intend to supply your own data, you need to provide the name, unit of observation, number of observations, approximate file size in bytes and a brief description of each dataset.

Supplied by Other

Name	Unit of Obs	Observations	File Size

Research Benefits (choose one or more)

In this step, you will be asked to indicate how your research project best benefits the Census Bureau. Proposals must demonstrate that the research is likely to provide one or more Title 13 benefits to the Census Bureau. A research project must demonstrate that its predominant purpose is to benefit Census Bureau programs. If a project has as its predominant purpose one or any combination of the following, it will be considered to have as its predominant purpose increasing the utility of Title 13, Chapter 5 data.

- Evaluate Concepts/Practices Re Statistical Data Collection/Dissemination**
Evaluating concepts and practices underlying Census Bureau statistical data collection and dissemination practices, including consideration of continual relevance and appropriateness of past Census Bureau procedures to changing economic and social circumstances. (This is not to be used when you have FTI data sets)

- Analyze Demo/Social/Econ Processes Affecting Programs and/or Improve Product Quality**
Analyzing demographic and social or economic processes that affect Census Bureau programs, especially those that evaluate or hold promise of improving the quality of products issued by the Census Bureau. (This is not to be used when you have FTI data sets)

- Increase Utility of Data for Analysis**
Developing means of increasing the utility of Census Bureau data for analyzing public programs, public policy, and/or demographic, economic, or social conditions. (This is not to be used when you have FTI data sets)

Preliminary proposal information

Conduct or Facilitate Data Collection/Processing/Dissemination

Conducting or facilitating Census Bureau census and survey data collection, processing or dissemination, including through activities such as administrative support, information technology support, program oversight, or auditing under appropriate legal authority. (This is not to be used when you have FTI data sets)

Understanding or Improving Data Quality

Understanding and/or improving the quality of data produced through a Title 13, Chapter 5 survey, census, or estimate.

Improved Methodology

Leading to new or improved methodology to collect, measure, or tabulate a Title 13, Chapter 5 survey, census, or estimate.

Enhancing Data

Enhancing the data collected in a Title 13, Chapter 5 survey or census. For example, improving imputations for non-response, or developing links across time or entities for data gathered in censuses and surveys authorized by Title 13, Chapter 5.

Business Register

Identifying the limitations of, or improving, the underlying Business Register, Household Master Address File, and industrial and geographical classification schemes used to collect the data.

Preliminary proposal information

Data Collection

Identifying shortcomings of current data collection programs and/or documenting new data collection needs.

Sample Frame Maintenance

Constructing, verifying, or improving the sampling frame for a census or survey authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5.

New Estimates

Preparing estimates of population and characteristics of population as authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5.

Estimating Non-Response

Developing a methodology for estimating non-response to a census or survey authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5.

Statistical Weights

Developing statistical weights for a survey authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5.

Comments

If you would like to elaborate on the benefits listed, this space has been provided to do so.

Once you press the "Continue →" button below, all of the information you entered is uploaded to our system. If you are connected to the Internet through a modem, this upload process may take a few minutes. Please be patient and please refrain from pressing the "Continue →" button more than once.

Check Form

Reset Form

Continue →

Preliminary proposal information in CES proposal management system

- RDC Administrator is alerted when you enter preliminary proposal information
- RDC Administrator reviews and approves for document upload or asks for changes

Project Description

Project descriptions must include:

1. Typical components of any research proposal
 - Background, discussion of relevant literature
 - Proposed methodology
 - Data sets
 - Expected project duration
2. Components specific to the RDC program
 - Summary of proposed benefits to Census Bureau programs
 - Description of the research outputs you plan to request be disclosed
 - Description of how you plan to construct the analysis data set if combining multiple data sets, including external ones

Sample project descriptions on [NYCRDC web site](#)

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

PPS and benefits to Census Bureau
Title 13, Chapter 5 programs

- PPS describes and documents proposed benefits
- Benefits must be the *predominant purpose* of project
- PPS is template for certifying benefits at project end (Post Project Certification-PPC)

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS) Benefits criteria for non-FTI projects

1. Evaluating concepts and practices underlying Census Bureau statistical data collection and dissemination practices, including consideration of continual relevance and appropriateness of past Census Bureau procedures to changing economic and social circumstances
2. Analyzing demographic and social or economic processes that affect Census Bureau programs, especially those that evaluate or hold promise of improving the quality of products issued by the Census Bureau

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

Benefits criteria for non-FTI projects

3. Evaluating or analyzing public programs, public policy, and/or demographic, economic, or social conditions to identify potential complementary datasets, improve data quality, enhance data collection techniques or develop innovative estimation procedures
4. Conducting or facilitating census and survey data collection, processing or dissemination, including through activities such as administrative support, information technology support, program oversight, or auditing under appropriate legal authority

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

Benefits criteria for FTI & non-FTI projects

5. Understanding and/or improving the quality of data produced through a Title 13, Chapter 5 survey, census, or estimate
6. Leading to new or improved methodology to collect, measure, or tabulate a Title 13, Chapter 5 survey, census, or estimate
7. Enhancing the data collected in a Title 13, Chapter 5 survey or census. For example:
 - Improving imputations for non-response
 - Developing links across time or entities for data gathered in censuses and surveys authorized by Title 13, Chapter 5

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS) Benefits criteria for FTI & non-FTI projects

8. Identifying the limitations of, or improving, the underlying Business Register, Master Address File, and industrial and geographical classification schemes used to collect the data
9. Identifying shortcomings of current data, collection programs and/or documenting new data collection needs
10. Constructing, verifying, or improving the sampling frame for a census or survey authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS) Benefits criteria for FTI & non-FTI projects

11. Preparing estimates of population and characteristics of population as authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5
12. Developing a methodology for estimating non-response to a census or survey authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5
13. Developing statistical weights for a survey authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

Criterion #11 applies to most projects...

Preparing estimates of population and characteristics of population as authorized under Title 13, Chapter 5

- “Population” applies to businesses as well as households, housing units and individuals
- Regression model estimates describe variation outcomes
 - productivity varies with firm size
 - housing value varies by owner’s age and education

...but it is rarely enough for significant benefits

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

Criterion #5 applies to many projects ...

Understanding and/or improving the quality of data produced through a Title 13, Chapter 5 survey, census, or estimate

- projects that compare Census data at the micro level or aggregate level with external data
- if micro data have been little used—provides needed feedback on quality

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

Criterion #5 applies to many projects ...

January 2007 memo from Census Bureau
Director Kincannon

Ensuring that resulting data meet the highest standards of quality and utility requires significant supporting analytical research, including research by Special Sworn Status researchers participating in the Census Research Data Center program...

Accordingly, and to continue fulfilling its mandate at the highest level of technical excellence, it is the policy of the Census Bureau to undertake analytical research for authorized purposes...

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

In addition to Criterion #11, the PPS should

- have strong benefits under criterion #5, and/or
- appeal to one or more of the other criteria

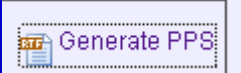
Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

Information sources to help identify benefits

- Potential RDC Methodological Topics
- RDC Administrator
- Census Bureau program contacts
- CES Annual Report
- CES Discussion Papers
- Research Opportunities at the Census Bureau
- Summary of Census Bureau Research Problems Identified by Senior Staff

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

Writing the PPS

- RDC Administrator approves preliminary information
 - Proposal #
 - status = RDC REVIEW
- clicking  produces a RTF document with
 - benefits criteria proposed for the project
 - listing of FTI in requested data sets
 - other proposal information
- IRS will approve the project based on review of PPS only—projects using FTI must make sure PPS is clearly written and justifies all years of data requested
- Group benefits discussion in a logical way—discuss 2 or 3 benefits in the same section if they fit together

Predominant Purpose Statement (PPS)

Writing the PPS

Include statement at the end that the project researchers will:

- Produce a Post Project Certification explaining how the proposed benefits were or were not realized
- Produce technical memo(s) for the relevant Census Bureau program with details of the benefits
- Submit papers from their research to the CES Discussion Paper series
- Inform CES of the publications and presentations resulting from the research project

Sample PPS on [NYCRDC web site](#)

Abstract

Abstract should summarize:

- proposed benefits to Census Bureau programs
- proposed research question, data and methodology

Proposal Submission

RDC Administrator will submit your final proposal to CES when:

- Administrator considers proposal complete
- RDC-specific Project Review process has approved it for submission

Proposals—NCHS

NCHS RDC projects can use a Census RDC

- considered under NCHS, not Census requirements (unless using Census RDC data)
 - NCHS guidelines and program contacts
 - NCHS review
- proposal must be entered in CES management system
- projects subject to the local RDC fee policy
- if approved by NCHS, must follow “Post Project Approval” steps for CES projects
- projects already approved for the NCHS RDC may request a transfer to RDCs

III. Proposal review

5 criteria for approval

- Benefits to the Census Bureau
- Scientific merit
- Need for non-public data
- Disclosure risk
- Feasibility

CES Proposal Review guidelines

Proposal review

Reviews by

- CES and Census bureau subject matter and data experts
- external researchers (scientific merit)
- relevant Census Bureau programs/offices (benefits, feasibility)
- other data custodians/sponsors:
 - IRS, HUD, BLS (benefits, feasibility)
- RDC Disclosure Officer and other disclosure experts (disclosure)

Proposal review

Review outcomes

- expect 3-6 months (more if FTI) from final submission to CES
- Approved or Not Approved
 - Not Approved may indicate a revised proposal would be considered
- decision, synopsis, copies of expert reviews are sent to the lead PI

IV. Post project approval

Special Sworn Status application

- Forms, fingerprinting and documentation
- Training
- RDC Administrator checks forms
- SSS package sent to Office of Security
- May send back corrections/clarifications

Approval = Census Bureau badge
Start at the RDC!

Post project approval

Issuance of Census Bureau badge

1. Census Bureau computer ID
2. Project account setup
3. CES Account and Data Request Form

External data

- external data form
- CD/media with external data
- use permission documentation

Researcher RDC orientation

Project officially begins at first researcher log-in

Post project approval

Researcher RDC orientation

- Lab policies and information
- Security policies and procedures
- Data documentation and other tools
- Disclosure request procedures
- Annual progress report
- SSS renewal
- Project closing requirements

Revise and resubmit policy