The School District of Philadelphia

Office of Research and Evaluation
440 North Broad Street
2nd Floor, Portal A
Philadelphia, PA 19130

RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE

PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

August 2017
Introduction

All individuals and organizations interested in conducting research within the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) must submit a request to the SDP Research Review Committee (RRC). Please submit proposals well in advance of the study start date; proposals should be submitted at least 6 months before their intended start date. This is to ensure that there is adequate time to address any questions or concerns that the RRC may have about your proposed project. All proposals submitted fewer than 6 months before their intended start date will be charged an additional stepped fee based on research timeline (maximum fee $120).

Your research proposal to the RRC must follow the Research Proposal Template provided below. Maximum proposal length is 12 pages, double-spaced; this does not include the Reference List and Supporting Documents but does include the Application to Conduct Research Cover Page. Preferred font is Times New Roman, 12 point. Page numbers must be located at the bottom of each page, either centered or right-justified. While Word documents are accepted, PDF versions of all documents are highly preferred.

All submissions must follow the Research Proposal Template. All sections must be included--labeled and in sequence--in each research proposal submitted to the Research Review Committee. If a particular section is not relevant to your proposal, please include the section header and describe why the section is not relevant (for example, if you are requesting information to conduct a national longitudinal survey, you will likely write “N/A. This is a national survey” in section f (Logic Model and Evaluation Plan). If an element is not applicable to the research being proposed, please supply the reason rather than leave the section blank. Blank sections in a proposal reflect an incomplete submission. Incomplete submissions or proposals that do not follow the RRC template are automatically denied approval.

One hard copy of the complete proposal must be delivered to Kelsey Weir in the Office of Research and Evaluation by the close of business on the submission date in order to be considered for that review cycle. Send one electronic copy (preferably in PDF form) of the complete proposal to the RRC at researchreview@philasd.org.

There is a fee for new proposal submissions. The fee amount is based on submission date (see LINK). This fee must be submitted as a money order made out to The School District of Philadelphia. It can be dropped off or mailed, along with your hard copy, to Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Evaluation, 440 N. Broad St., Suite 214, Philadelphia, PA 19130.

Before Submitting Your Proposal...

Please note that researchers submitting new proposals to the RRC must attend a Forum on Conducting Research in the School District of Philadelphia as part of the approval process. This forum provides detailed information about the District’s approach to evidence and research, as well as step-by-step guidance regarding the Research Review
Submission Process. Please contact researchreview@philasd.org for more information.

Research Proposal Template & Guide

Research Proposal Template: Outline

I. Application to Conduct Research Cover Page
II. Proposal Sections
   a. Project title
   b. Researcher(s)/Principal Investigator(s)
   c. Background/Study rationale
   d. Research question(s)
   e. Methodology
   f. Logic Model and Evaluation Plan
   g. Benefit of study to participants and to District
   h. Burden on study participants and on District
   i. Compliance with federal regulations (FERPA, HIPAA, PPRA)
   j. Plan for dissemination of findings
   k. Reference List
III. Supporting Documents
   a. Consent and assent forms
   b. Protocols
   c. Instruments
   d. Clearances (FBI, PA Child Abuse, and PA Criminal Background Check)
   e. Research Proposal Data Form
   f. Letter(s) of support
   g. Proof of IRB approval or exemption

Research Proposal Template: Element Descriptions

I. APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH COVER PAGE (please be sure to complete all relevant sections).

Completing the fillable PDF online and printing it out in hardcopy form is the preferred method of submitting this page. If you are unable to complete the form from the website electronically, you may re-create the page as a Word document and include it in your submission. Please make sure to address the following items:

1. **Name of Researcher/Principal Investigator**, with contact information.

2. **Title of Study**. To avoid confusion, be sure to use the same title consistently throughout the proposal, in funding applications to outside entities, and in communication with principals, teachers, students, and parents.
3. **Type of Study.** Currently the District is only accepting the following types of research:
   a. Academic Study
   b. Ph.D. Dissertation
   c. National Survey
   d. Progress Monitoring (Grant-Mandated Evaluation)
   e. Program Evaluation

   We are aware that these types of studies are not necessarily mutually exclusive, so you may select more than one. **If you are proposing a Grant-Mandated Evaluation or Program Evaluation,** please be sure to include the name of the program and/or the grant and grantor.

   **If you are submitting a proposal for a Ph.D. Dissertation,** additional requirements apply to you and your research proposal. Please see our website for more information.

   **PLEASE NOTE:** The RRC requires that all Program Evaluations be conducted by a third-party evaluator. Progress Monitoring (Grant-Mandated Reporting) may be conducted by a program but must still be approved through the RRC. **RRC will not approve proposals for Program Evaluation from programs seeking to evaluate themselves.**

4. **Duration of study.** Identify the proposed start date and end date of your study, as well as when the RRC can expect a copy of your final report.

   **PLEASE NOTE:** The RRC will approve studies for up to three years. At that time, you must submit a new proposal to extend your work.

5. **Names of schools, grades, divisions, and offices involved in – or related to – the project.** Please be sure to indicate whether the schools have already been selected or whether they are TBD. You may use the District’s website to identify possible participants, but do not contact schools directly until the RRC has approved your proposal and cleared you to contact them.

6. **Data:** Please let us know whether you intend to request District administrative data. If so, please provide a preliminary description of what types of information will be required and for which years. **NOTE:** Please check publicly available data to determine whether you will need to make a data request for this proposal. You can find more information about the publicly available data on our website.

7. **Structured Abstract.** (limit: 300 words)¹

   ¹The Structured Abstract is used to communicate the essence of your research project to Administrators and others within the District who are involved in deciding whether the project aligns with District goals and needs. Additionally, it
**Background.** Briefly describe the background of the problem under investigation (i.e., provide the context of the study).

**Purpose.** Provide the goal of the study or identify the research question(s).

**Population.** Describe the study participants or research subjects (e.g., 42 high school principals).

**Intervention (May not be relevant for all studies).** Describe the practice, program, or intervention(s) under investigation.

**Design.** Identify the basic research design of the study (e.g., quasi-experimental design with two schools in the treatment group and two in the comparison group; cluster randomized trial in which schools are the unit of assignment; questionnaire administered to a random sample of elementary school students; qualitative design with observations and interviews; etc.).

**Data collection and analysis.** Provide a brief description of the data collection and analyses plans (e.g., posttests will be conducted 1 month after the last class and results will be analyzed using analysis of variance).

**Please note:** your structured abstract, void of any identifiers, may be shared publicly.

8. **Applicant Signature.** Please be sure to sign the form.

II. PROPOSAL SECTIONS

Please use Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, double spaced; maximum page length is 12 pages, including the cover page.

A. **Project Title**
   - This should be sufficiently clear to convey both the topic of the study and the populations and/or contexts where your research will be conducted.

B. **Researcher(s)/Primary Investigator(s)**
   - Identify the study’s principal investigator by name and title. If the principal investigator is a doctoral student, please identify the dissertation advisor as well. If the primary researcher is not the main contact person, please identify the main contact person in addition to the primary researcher.
   - Include contact information for all persons listed. Please provide: institution or organization affiliation, mailing address, phone number, and email address.

C. **Background/Study Rationale**
   - Succinctly identify the purpose, scope, and duration of the study and identify the purpose, scope, and duration of this study.
   - If you are evaluating a program, provide a concise description of the intervention, program, or procedure to be carried out and/or evaluated. Address: what, when, where, who, and how. If you are proposing to evaluate an intervention already underway in

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serves as the official record of your project in our research database. Thus, it is critical that the Structured Abstract succinctly and accurately describe the entirety of your research project.
District schools, please include a description of the program.

- Optional: Present a concise, targeted summary of relevant literature to provide context for the study.

D. Research Question(s)

- List the specific research question(s) guiding the study.
- Provide definitions of terms that may be specific to your area of inquiry to ensure clarity and understanding.

E. Methodology

- Sample(s). Provide a detailed description of the research participants. Include expected number of students, teachers, parents, classrooms, and/or schools involved in the study, any special participant characteristics (e.g., age, gender, principal of an elementary school, etc.), and describe the method by which participants will be selected.
- Research Method and Design. Describe the research method you will employ (e.g. quasi-experimental, randomized control trial, descriptive analysis of quantitative data, ethnography etc.) and pertinent details about the specific research design. Justify your selection of this method and design for your research.
- Data Collection. Describe the process and procedures for collecting data. This should include a brief description of any instruments (e.g. surveys, observation protocols) and/or District-held data. Identify personnel who will be collecting the information and present a timeline (e.g., A 10-minute pre-test will be administered by research staff prior to the implementation of the proposed reading program. One month after the conclusion of the reading program, research staff will once again administer a 10-minute post-test.).
- If you are seeking student level data from the District, please complete the following two steps: (1) fill out a Research Proposal Data Form and include a copy of it in part III of the Research Proposal (see Section III. E. below) and (2) review The School District of Philadelphia Standard Terms for Research Data License Agreements. Your signature on the Cover Page indicates that you have read the agreement and understand that a violation of any of the terms set forth in the agreement will result in the immediate withdrawal of approval to conduct research in the School District of Philadelphia and possible legal action if warranted.
- There will be a fee associated with filling all data requests (effective March 15, 2012). The minimum charge is $50.00. However, once your proposal is approved and your data request is reviewed, you will be sent a Data Agreement that will include the estimated cost for filling your data request. Please recognize the final cost may be more or less depending will depend on the actual time spent retrieving and assembling your data. Once you sign and return the Data Agreement, you will be invoiced for the request. You will also be asked to fill out our online data request form when are you ready to receive your data.

F. Logic Model and Evaluation Plan

- Please include a logic model by either using the provided template or a template of your own.
- The logic model and research question(s) should be reflected in the accompanied evaluation plan.
Evaluation plans should include:
  o *Data collected.* Show the alignment between the data you will be collecting and the research questions listed previously. You can also include a brief reference to the data sources and/or instrumentation, but please include detailed plans in the **Methodology** section.
  o *Planned analyses.* Present plans for analyzing or interpreting the data. If using quantitative analysis, please identify the statistical test (e.g. ANOVA, multiple regression etc.) and the variables included.

The following links can be used to help develop a logic model and evaluation plan for your research project:
  o [http://betterevaluation.org/plan/define/develop_logic_model](http://betterevaluation.org/plan/define/develop_logic_model)

**G. Benefit of Study to Participants and to District**
  • Describe the benefits of participation for the study participants. If any incentive or compensation is planned, offer a brief description.
  • Describe the benefits of participation for the District.
  • Describe how your study relates to the strategies and actions outlined in the District’s Action Plan.

**H. Burden of participating in study on participants and on District**
  • Describe the burden that participation will place on the study participants. Address burden in terms of level of risk involved, time commitment, psychological impact (e.g., stress), etc.
  • Describe the burden participation is expected to place on school based and District staff. Include an assessment of burden in terms of: finances, personnel, time requirements, administrative costs (e.g., searching for and collating data from District sources), etc.

**I. Compliance with federal regulations** *(see FERPA, HIPAA, PPRA)*
  • Describe how consent and/or assent will be obtained.
  • Describe how confidentiality and anonymity of research participants will be maintained.
  • Identify the procedure for storing data.
  • Describe how and when the data will be destroyed.

**J. Plan for Dissemination of Findings**
  • Provide the expected venues for sharing study results (e.g., via submission to peer review journals, research conferences, presentations in academic settings, public reports, governmental documents and datasets, etc.).
  • Describe how your results will be shared with the District. This includes administrative staff, as well as practitioners.

**K. Reference List**
  • Include references for all citations, using the American Psychological Association (APA) format.
III. APPENDICES

A. Consent and Assent Forms
   - **Most studies require active consent.** Passive consent is only approved in cases where student records are not used and student activities are solely academic.
   - Please include a copy of the forms you will ask participants to sign.
   - Consent forms should be printed on the researcher’s stationery and not on that of any office or school within the School District of Philadelphia.
   - **Consent forms may not state or imply that school staff or administrators endorse the study;** language may only indicate that the researchers have been given permission by school administration to seek participants for inclusion in the study.
   - Parent consent forms must be obtained for all research surveys, assessments, interviews, etc. with students. Parental consent must be obtained prior to commencement of any data collection involving students.
   - Parent consent forms should be free from jargon and written in language easily understood by parents and guardians; we suggest that text be composed at an eighth grade reading level.

B and C. Protocols and Instruments
   - Include copies of any protocols or written procedures (e.g., interview protocols).
   - Include copies of all instruments planned for use in the study. All instruments should be in final form to prevent delay of RRC decision. If your instruments are not finalized at the time of your submission, please indicate as such and provide an estimated date for completion.
   - Include a schedule or timeline that indicates when the evaluation activities will take place. Please be as specific as possible.

   **PLEASE NOTE:** To increase response rates, limit survey fatigue, and increase the validity of survey data, the Office of Research and Evaluation has established a District-wide survey calendar. By September of each school year, the survey calendar is finalized. This calendar reserves several administration windows for external research approved via the RRC process. If you are proposing to administer a survey, you may be asked to offer the survey within a particular window or may be denied if your target sample is already at capacity.

D. Clearances
   - Any person entering a school and having at least one contact with a student must have an FBI clearance, a PA Child Abuse Clearance, and a PA Criminal Background Check. Clearances must be current (i.e., issued within one year prior to application to conduct research in the School District of Philadelphia).

   FBI clearances obtained through the Cogent system no longer provide an official hard copy. You must submit to us a copy of the receipt obtained at the fingerprinting site. This receipt contains the following information: your name, registration ID number, transaction type, payment type, registration date, fingerprint date, verification number (i.e., the number beginning with “PAE”) and TCN number. District personnel will access Cogent to obtain official FBI clearance reports.
**PLEASE NOTE:** Effective January 2017, all clearances submitted must be valid within ONE YEAR of approval date. This applies for each new proposal if a researcher is listed on several studies. For example, a researcher submitting in January 2017 should have clearances that are no older than February 2016. Once approved, clearances need only be updated every 36 months unless a new proposal is submitted.

E. Research Proposal Data Form
- As noted in section II.G. above, please provide a copy of the completed Research Proposal Data Form.
- If the RRC approves your proposal, this document will serve as the basis for your Research Data Agreement. **When a Data Agreement has been signed, you will be asked to submit an online request through the system when you are ready for your data.**

F. Letters of Support
- If you are already working with a District employee on an intervention in the schools or if you have gained District support through some other ongoing relationship, please include a letter of support from your contact person.
- If your proposal is approved, the RRC will grant you permission to contact the school principal(s) to secure his or her support for your project. Only if this is the case, you should meet with the principal to explain the research proposal and obtain a signature on the Principal Support to Conduct Research in Schools form.
- If the Researcher/Principal Investigator is a doctoral candidate, a support letter from the Chair of the candidate’s dissertation committee is required. This letter should indicate that the proposed research project has been approved by the candidate’s dissertation committee.

G. Proof of Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval or Exemption
- Please include proof that your research has been approved or deemed exempt by an Institutional Review Board (IRB).
- If you must receive RRC approval before your IRB will review your proposal, the RRC will issue a conditional approval, with final approval contingent upon proof of IRB approval or exemption being submitted to the RRC before commencement of research.