



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

**RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE**  
**PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS**

**November 2018**

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# Introduction

## Before Submitting Your Proposal...

Please complete the steps below before you submit your proposal for Research Review Committee review:

### 1. Attend a Research Forum

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. In addition, all student researchers are required to have a phone consultation with a RRC member. Please contact [researchreview@philasd.org](mailto:researchreview@philasd.org) to schedule a consultation or for more information on the Forums.

### 2. Have a Personal Consultation (for Student researchers)

Contact the Research Review Committee at [researchreview@philasd.org](mailto:researchreview@philasd.org) to schedule a Personal Consultation. The consultation will be conducted over the phone; it allows the RRC to learn about your potential research and guide you as to whether or not it will be possible in its current form within the District.

### 3. Determine the applicable submission fee based on your intended start date

Please submit proposals well in advance of the study start date; RRC recommends submitting at least 6 months before the intended start date. Applying in advance will ensure that there is adequate time to address any questions or concerns that the RRC may have about your proposed project. To encourage early submissions, our submission fees are stepped based on the submission and intended start dates, the fee being lowest for submissions more than 6 months ahead of the intended start date. We do not have expedited review option. Please see our [fee schedule](#) for details.

The submission fee **must be submitted as a money order** made out to The School District of Philadelphia.

### 4. Complete the proposal and applicable supporting documents

Make sure your research proposal to the RRC includes all information and documentation listed below.

**After you hit the SUBMIT button on the online form, you will be prompted to download a copy of your submission. Please download, print, sign and deliver one hard copy** of the complete proposal, along with your submission fee, to the Research Review Committee in the Office of Research and Evaluation. Proposals must be received by 5PM Eastern Time on the submission date in order to be considered for that review cycle.

Submission Address for hard copies and money orders is:

Research Review Committee,  
Office of Research and Evaluation,  
440 North Broad Street,  
Portal A, Suite 214,  
Philadelphia, PA 19130

## Types of Research the Research Review Committee Accepts for Review

### What does the RRC consider “research”?

The RRC defines research very broadly. You must submit a proposal to the RRC if you propose to: (1) conduct analyses of administrative data that is not already publicly available; (2) collect any information from students, parents, teachers, or administrators; (3) conduct or record observations in a classroom, school, or after-school setting; and/or (4) recruit students, parents, or school personnel to participate in research-related activities. This includes (but is not limited to) all observations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys. If you have any questions, please email [researchreview@philasd.org](mailto:researchreview@philasd.org).

### What kinds of studies does the RRC review?

The District permits five types of externally-conducted research.

#### 1. Academic Study (Non-Dissertation)

Academic Studies are any study, whether grant-funded or not, proposed for the sole purpose of answering a specific question and/or expanding upon the current literature in any given field. Academic studies are not being completed in fulfillment of a degree (see Ph.D. or Ed.D. Dissertation, below).

#### 2. Ph.D. or Ed.D. Dissertation

Ph.D. or Ed.D. Dissertations are accepted for review by the RRC, but are subject to additional requirements. The RRC reviews Master’s thesis research proposals only for school-based SDP employees, subject to additional requirements. The RRC does not accept applications for research from Undergraduate level students. Please see our [student researcher requirements document](#) for more information.

#### 3. National Survey

National Surveys are broad-scale, nationally-sampled studies that typically contribute to federally supported or mandated work.

#### 4. Progress Monitoring for Grant-Mandated Reporting

Progress Monitoring is considered by the RRC to be minimally-invasive data collection and/or requests of aggregate administrative data. Activities may NOT include any work attempting to measure program impact. This proposal type is included to allow approved program operators to collect information about program implementation and progress to submit to funders as part of grant requirements. Individual level administrative data cannot be provided to program operators.

#### 5. Program Evaluation

Program Evaluation projects measure the implementation, effectiveness, and/or impact of programs or interventions. Because of the nature of program evaluation, the RRC requires all program evaluation applications to be submitted by third party evaluators. Program operators are not permitted to evaluate themselves.

## Research Proposal Submission Guide

**Starting November 2018, the Research Review Committee will accept research proposals only through an online application.** Please prepare the following information and documents and have them ready before you start filling out the online form so you are ready to enter the information or upload supporting documents when prompted.

Your application will be saved on your browser with a cookie. If you've enabled cookies and have not cleared the browser cache, you can come back to your application on the same computer and browser at a later time. We recommend that you prepare all documents ahead of time and complete the application in one sitting. The application will be submitted only when you hit the SUBMIT button at the end of the form.

### Information you will be required to enter in the online form:

- Name and Contact Information for Researcher(s)/Primary Investigator(s)
- Title of Study
- Proposed start and end dates of the study
- Names of schools involved in the project (if applicable)
- Names of any District divisions, offices or personnel who are involved in the project
- For academic studies including dissertations and national surveys: Area of research (e.g. Literacy, career readiness, student health, teacher effectiveness, etc.)
- For Program Evaluations: Name of Program (see [note 1](#) at the end of this document)
- For Progress Monitoring and Grant Mandated Reporting: Name of funder and grant
- Description of administrative data that you intend to request. Please be as specific as possible including time periods, level of aggregation, or subgroups (see [note 2](#) at the end of this document).

### Document Checklist:

*All applicants* will need to upload the following primary documents in a single zip file.

Please include documents in this order. For instructions for how to make a zip file, visit:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Zip-File>

1. [Structured Abstract](#)
2. [A complete proposal](#) that includes the following sections:
  - a. Project title
  - b. Background/Study rationale
  - c. Research questions
  - d. Methodology
  - e. Logic model and evaluation plan (for programs)
  - f. Benefit of study to participants and to the District
  - g. Burden of participating in study on participants and on the District
  - h. Compliance with federal regulations
  - i. Plan for dissemination of findings
  - j. Reference list
3. Support Letters (if available)
4. Image of the Money Order

☐ In addition, *all applicants who will carry out any Human Subjects research* will need to upload the following [supporting documents](#), preferably combined as one PDF, in a single zip file.

Please include documents in this order. For instructions, visit:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Zip-File>

1. Recruitment method and associated scripts
2. Consent and assent forms
3. Protocols (for interviews, focus groups, observations)
4. Instruments (for surveys and assessments)
5. Letter of IRB approval or exemption
6. Clearances (PA Criminal Background, PA Child Abuse, FBI fingerprint background)

☐ Applicants whose research does not involve contact with Human subjects but consists of secondary analysis of *individual level* (identified or deidentified) administrative data will need to upload the following:

1. Letter of IRB approval or exemption

## Required Documents

### 1. Structured Abstract

The structured abstract is used to communicate the key features of your research project. It serves as the official record of your project in our research database.

Please follow the outline below while writing your abstract, addressing all relevant sections. Please limit the abstract to 300 words.

- *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 may be shared publicly, including on the RRC website.

### 2. Outline for the Research Proposal

Please use Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, double spaced; maximum page length is 10 pages excluding the references. 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.

#### 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. Background/Study Rationale

- Provide a brief description of the purpose, scope, and duration of the study. If the study is part of a larger project, please provide enough information so that the RRC can understand the context and relationship of the proposed study to the larger project.
- If you are proposing to evaluate a program/intervention/approach (whether it is new or existing), include a concise description of the program/intervention/approach itself.
- Optional: Provide a targeted summary of relevant literature to provide context for the study.

**c. 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.
- Methods, instruments, and data requests need to be consistent with the research questions listed.

**d. 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 as it relates to the research questions.
- *Data Collection*. Describe the process and procedures for collecting data. This should include a brief description of all proposed 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).

**e. Logic Model (for Program Evaluations and Progress Monitoring Only)**

- Please include a logic model for the program being evaluated.
- The following links can be used to help develop a logic model and evaluation plan for your research project:
  - [https://www.bttop.org/sites/default/files/public/W.K.%20Kellogg%20Logic Model.pdf](https://www.bttop.org/sites/default/files/public/W.K.%20Kellogg%20Logic%20Model.pdf)
  - [http://betterevaluation.org/plan/define/develop\\_logic\\_model](http://betterevaluation.org/plan/define/develop_logic_model)
  - <http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/edcomm/pdf/CIS/CIS1097.pdf>
  - [http://www.fcr.org/documents/essa/essa\\_guide\\_sea\\_appendix\\_b.pdf](http://www.fcr.org/documents/essa/essa_guide_sea_appendix_b.pdf)

**f. Benefit of Study to Participants and to District**

- Describe the benefits of participation for the study participants including whether incentives or compensation for participants will be provided.
- 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.

**g. 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, lost instructional time, psychological impact (e.g., stress), and any other relevant factors.

- 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), and any other relevant factors.
- h. Compliance with federal regulations (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 and data security measures employed.
  - Describe how and when the data will be destroyed.
- i. 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 and school staff.
- j. Reference List**
- Include references for all citations, using the American Psychological Association (APA) format.

## Supporting Documents for Human Subjects Research

If your research involves activities such as interviews, surveys, observations, or focus groups with students, parent/guardians, principals, teachers, or other staff at the District, please provide the following:

### 1. Recruitment plan and scripts:

- Describe how you will recruit participants for your study and how you will introduce your study to them. Submit any verbal, email, flyer, and/or letter recruitment scripts.

### 2. Consent and Assent Forms

- **Most studies require active consent.** Passive consent is only approved in cases where student records are not used and student involvement is not outside the usual instructional activities they would otherwise be engaged in.
- Adult participants (parents, teachers, principals, etc.) need to be consented before they participate in any research such as observations, surveys, or interviews.
- Parent consent forms must be obtained for all research (surveys, assessments, interviews, etc.) with students. In addition, child assent forms must be obtained if the student is younger than 18. Parent consent and student assent forms must be completed before any data collection involving students may start.
- 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.
- Child assent forms should be written in very simple language; we suggest that text be composed at a third grade reading level.
- 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.

### **3. Protocols**

- Include copies of any protocols or written procedures (e.g. interview protocols, focus group protocols, etc.).

### **4. Instruments**

- Include copies of all instruments planned for use in the study (e.g. surveys, assessments, etc.). 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.

### **5. 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.

### **6. Clearances**

- Any person entering a school must have an FBI fingerprint background clearance, a PA Child Abuse Clearance, and a PA Criminal Background Check.
- Clearances must be current (i.e., issued within one calendar year prior to application to conduct research in the School District of Philadelphia). 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.
- If the applicant is a SDP staff, employment clearances on file with the Office of Talent can be used. Please provide copies with your proposal.
- For FBI clearance on IdentoGO: use **1KG6XN** as the “Service Code.” Once the background check is completed, IdentoGO system generates an FBI clearance report but allows users to view it only one time. Make sure you download and save this report to submit in your application.

## Notes

### 1. Note about the Third Party Evaluator Requirement for Program Evaluations

The District values rigorous, unbiased, and impartial evaluations of implementation and impact. Therefore, RRC will not approve proposals for Program Evaluation from programs seeking to evaluate their own programs in District schools. Providers wishing to conduct an evaluation must work in partnership with an independent, third-party evaluator.

After completing the proposal process and receiving RRC approval, program providers may be approved to collect information related to program implementation for progress monitoring or grant-reporting requirements (but not for evaluation or analyses related to the impact of the program). If this applies to you, please choose “Progress Monitoring/Grant Mandated Reporting” track. The RRC will assess the burden on participants, the quality and appropriateness of all data collection instruments, and whether proposed activities will interfere or overlap with other District research initiatives.

Please note: All requests for non-aggregate data will be provided *only* to third-party evaluators.

### 2. Note about Requesting SDP Administrative Data for Secondary Analysis

If you are seeking administrative data from the District, please complete the following three steps:

1. School District of Philadelphia makes many data points publicly available at the school and grade level. Before requesting data, please check the following websites to make sure the data you need are not already publicly available.: (<https://www.philasd.org/performance/programsservices/open-data/>), SDP School Profiles (<https://dashboards.philasd.org/extensions/philadelphia/index.html>), and District Wide Survey (<http://schoolsurveys.philasd.org/>) websites to make sure what you are requesting is not already publicly available.
2. Review The School District of Philadelphia [Standard Terms for Research Data License Agreements](#).
3. Describe the data you are requesting as explicitly and in as much detail as possible in the online form once prompted.

If you are requesting individual-level or identifiable data, you will need to justify your request referring to FERPA regulations. When your proposal is approved and your data request is reviewed, you will be sent a draft Data Agreement that will include the data you requested, the data we can provide, the estimated cost for fulfilling your data request, and the Standard Terms for Research Data License Agreement. Once you sign the agreement, your use of the data provided will be subject to this agreement.

There will be a fee associated with filling all data requests, depending on the actual time spent retrieving and assembling your data. You will be invoiced after the data request is fulfilled. Once you sign and return the Data Agreement, you will be asked to fill out our [online data request form](#), which puts your request into our data request fulfillment workstream.