

ATTACHMENT I – PROJECT TOPIC

Development of a Prototype for the Standard Application Process Portal

Key Objective

The objective of this project is to develop multiple prototypes of an online portal that allows users to search for confidential data held by federal statistical agencies, apply for access to that data, and allows data providers to review those applications and render a decision. This portal supports the implementation of Section 3583 of the Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act of 2018. An online [portal](#) does currently exist with some of the functionality described in this project. A future portal would expand the current product to allow for expansion to non-statistical and state agencies in the future as well as additional functionality and higher workloads. The prototype portal would allow users to access a metadata catalog of federal statistical agency data assets. Users could apply for access to data by completing an application and submitting it to the relevant agencies. Data providers would be able to access these applications, review them, provide feedback when needed, and render a final decision.

Background

The 2018 Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act, also referred to as the Evidence Act, requires that a standard application process (SAP) be developed for requests for confidential data from federal statistical agencies. This legislation applies to statistical agencies that are covered under the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA). This standard process includes a single point of entry for data requests, a single application, and a standard set of criteria used to evaluate each application. This standard process is designed to streamline the application process and make it easier for data users to apply for data from federal agencies.

In addition to the legislation, a policy provides guidelines for the implementation of this standard process. This policy, [M-23-04](#), was issued by OMB in 2022 and includes required functionality for the SAP, governance, and criteria used to review applications for confidential data.

In order to operationalize this standard application process, an online portal is needed where data users can search for data and apply for access to that data. This SAP portal is intended to serve as the ‘front door’ to apply for access to confidential data from 16 federal statistical agencies and units.

A person wishing to apply for data would go to the portal and once there, search for data using an extensive metadata catalog of data offered by the statistical agencies. The catalog will provide information about each dataset, such as a description of the data, what agency holds the data, who needs to approve, information about how it was collected, and technical documentation. Once data is selected, the applicant completes an online application describing who will be working on the research

and the nature of the research. Once they complete the application, they submit the application, and the application is routed to the agencies whose data is being requested for their review. Agencies then review and provide feedback and an approval or denial, based on standard criteria.

This project requires the development of a prototype portal with the following functionality:

1. Ability for a user to create an account.
2. A metadata catalog with information about confidential data assets, including documents such as technical documentation. The required metadata fields will be provided by NCSSES and are guided by an OMB [policy](#) on the SAP. Metadata should be easily searchable, viewable, and downloadable by all users in different metadata formats.
3. An application that allows users to request access to confidential data. The application fields will be provided by NCSSES. The application must allow:
 - a. Allows requests for multiple datasets per application;
 - b. Users to indicate parameters for data selected, such as years or geographic area, based on available metadata.
 - c. For skip patterns and upload of documents depending on specific criteria including but not limited to metadata fields, agency, and/or dataset selection;
 - d. Allow for users to save their application, close and return;
 - e. The ability to make changes to all fields, including datasets selected, after an application has been initiated;
 - f. Print and/or download the application and its content.
4. An application workflow that allows agency data owners to review applications requesting access to their data. This includes the ability to:
 - a. View an application within the system;
 - b. Download an application, including an option that allows for export of the application information into agency project tracking systems;
 - c. Record an approval or rejection of an application through the assessment of various criteria. In the case of a rejection, agencies must be able to indicate the review criteria on which the rejection is based. Agencies must be able to record comments with those comments visible by the agency and applicant after the final disposition is recorded.
 - d. Prior to a final disposition, agencies must be able to request one or more revise and resubmits, requiring that the applicant make changes to the application before a determination is made. The agency data owner must be able to record feedback in the portal in order to communicate the necessary changes to the applicant. A history of this feedback must be maintained and be accessible by data providers and applicants.
5. Implementation of varying review periods depending on the data selected and reviews required. Includes ability to implement a limited review period for some agencies who do not review applications year-round and the ability for an agency to request a time extension.
6. Implementation of a notification system that informs both the applicant and the agency data owner of the submission of an application, key milestones in the application review process, and the remaining timing in review period.
7. Implementation of a reporting system with a dashboard that allows the derivation of key aggregate metrics associated with the portal usage (e.g., number of submitted applications, review determination aggregations, etc).

Information Gaps

This project will identify:

- Options for development of an online portal to streamline data request applications for federal agency data assets.
- Options for presentation of a metadata catalog of federal agency data assets.
- Options for transferability and portability of a federal asset

Key Evidence Building Considerations

- Key focus questions (address one or more) to assess innovation in the following areas: data acquisition, data security, and engagement:
 - How can the technological barriers to agency data requests be streamlined and/or overcome?
 - What types of collaboration and stakeholder engagement are needed to help inform these questions?