



NJSDS External Access Request Phase I

Background

The New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS) is the State of New Jersey's centralized longitudinal platform for administrative data. NJSDS connects people to data to improve policy outcomes by providing access to information supporting research and evaluation. Four New Jersey state agencies contribute data and resources to the data system. They include:

- New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE),
- New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL)
- New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA), and
- New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE).

NJSDS is hosted and administered by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

In recent years, the system has piloted external data access to solicit important research benefitting the state. Moving towards its goal of facilitating external data access to qualified users, Phase I of the data request process will be active from March 1 through June 27, 2025. Following this phase, there will be a temporary pause in the application process to review feedback, improve processes, and launch an updated process.

External data users must comply with the system's [acceptable use policy](#) and [data access and use policy](#).

Approved requests will align with the NJSDS research areas listed in the current [research agenda](#). These include: exploring pathways through services and systems to understand outcomes and patterns of service use; assessing outcomes of human capital investments, program participation, service receipt and factors and experiences that impact long-term outcomes; and exploring predictive analytics to offer early intervention warnings.

Data Request Type

There are two options for data requests: aggregate and de-identified individual level records. Aggregate-level data requests are summary information that our research team will prepare and share as a table via email. These summary tables have gone through quality checks and disclosure reviews and will be shared with requestors and posted on our website.

Staff from NJSDS participating agencies may request data through an internal process by submitting the [participating state agency request application](#).

Sample aggregate table

Graduation Year	Median Earnings	Percent Employed	Year Post-Graduation
2014	30,521	52%	1
2015	32,144	55%	1
2016	32,910	55%	1
2017	33,877	56%	1
2014	37,333	61%	2
2015	39,648	62%	2
2016	40,365	62%	2
2017	42,199	63%	2
2014	42,914	63%	3
2015	44,925	63%	3
2016	46,335	64%	3
2017	48,692	64%	3

Individual-level data requests are subject to further review and requirements as outlined below. This data does not include personally identifiable information but still contains information about an individual. Approved requestors will never see an individual's name or identifiable information, but will receive information about their school enrollment or employment, for example. Approved requestors will receive access to de-identified data in a secure cloud-based platform for a limited time period following the completion of required documentation.

The following information is related to individual-level data access requests.

Eligibility

Researchers must meet the following eligibility requirements for data access:

- Minimum training in research methods and the research process. To meet this requirement, applicants should meet one of the following criteria:
 - Earned a Ph.D. or equivalent degree, OR
 - Be a current student in a graduate degree program and sponsored by a faculty member with a Ph.D. or equivalent degree, OR
 - Provide documentation of equivalent experience in supervised or independent research.
- Work must be conducted within the United States.
- Researcher must have a sponsoring employer, educational institution, or organization.
- Obtain approval from an Institutional Review Board (note that Rutgers University is affiliated with Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative [CITI Program] and has reciprocity with institutions involved with that program).
- Researcher must agree to sign the NJSDS Non-Disclosure Research Agreement.

Proposal Detail

Proposals should provide a brief synopsis of the research plan. Proposals are limited to 3 single-spaced pages with 1-inch margins and text no smaller than 11-point Times New Roman.

Researchers are encouraged to review the data dictionary presented on the [NJSDS website](#). The page limit does not apply to the reference list or the researcher's curriculum vita. All proposals should cover the following topics:

- Introduction explicitly describing which priority area the research will cover
- Research question and purpose
- Brief literature review
- Preliminary list of data elements required
- Proposed method and statistical approaches, where applicable
- References (not included in the page limit)
- Curriculum vitae or résumé (not included in the page limit)
- Qualification statement (if applicable - 1-page maximum beyond the page limit)

Per NJSDS policy, all research questions must include data sources across two or more agencies to be eligible as a research project in the data system. If you are seeking data from a single agency, please reach out to them directly:

- New Jersey Department of Education: research@doe.nj.gov
- New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development: WRA-Research@dol.nj.gov
- New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority: Research@hesaa.org
- New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education: research@oshe.nj.gov

Evaluation Criteria and Timeline

Research projects will be pre-screened to meet the following criteria before undergoing a more in-depth review. The pre-screening criteria include:

- **Priority Research Area** - The research plan adequately addresses one of the priority areas listed in the NJSDS research agenda. The research proposed is consistent with existing state and federal privacy/confidentiality laws.
- **Multiple Agency Data Use** - The researcher proposed data elements belonging to two or more agencies.
- **Agency Approval** - Agencies grant permission to use their data consistent with the purposes outlined in this application and have verified the legal authority under the law to conduct the project.

After applications pass this initial screening, the application will be scored based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Points
Literature Review/Context – The researcher provides documented evidence that work is not duplicative of other projects or they provide justification on how this project will contribute to state or national literature.	15
Research Design - The researcher clearly provides a research question, outlines a method consistent with the research question, and provides a justification for the method used to answer the research question. Note that descriptive studies and/or dashboards will be looked upon favorably as studies using statistical models. This section should also include a purpose statement regarding why you are conducting this research, and detailing any statistical methods if applicable.	45
Feasibility - The researcher's method is feasible and the data elements they propose are available for use and are appropriate for the proposed study.	40
	100

Cost Recovery

Per policy, NJSDS operates under a cost recovery model and has developed a reasonable fee schedule for services provided. The required fee may be waived for current students, state agency staff, and staff of local education authorities, workforce development boards, and public colleges and universities subject to approval of a fee exemption request. Staff from participating state agencies are not subject to the fee structure.

For more information about the cost recovery model, please view the [Cost Recovery Policy](#).

Submission Form

Click [here](#) to access the aggregate data request application form.

Click [here](#) to access the de-identified individual level application form.