Cornell FSRDC Policies and Procedures

Using the Cornell FSRDC

The Cornell FSRDC is a secure facility and access is restricted to those researchers with approved projects and who have received designation of Special Sworn Status by the U.S. Census Bureau. Graduate students are eligible to work in the Cornell FSRDC on projects with faculty sponsorship. In addition, non-U.S. citizens are eligible provided that cumulative residency in the United States is at least three years out of the last five years prior to application.

Syracuse University faculty, students and researchers have access to the Cornell FSRDC through a consortium agreement between SU and the New York Research Data Center (NYRDC), headquartered at Baruch College. The Cornell FSRDC is a branch of the NYRDC and the closest location for SU affiliates. Because of the consortium agreement, there is no cost for use of the facility, except for those additional fees assessed by the NCHS and BLS for their data products.

The Cornell FSRDC operates under Title 13 and Title 26 of the U.S. Code security protocol; thus, researchers wishing to use the facility must develop a project proposal, receive approval for the project, and undergo security clearance. Researchers cleared to use the facility have access to secure terminals that enable access to restricted data. Because of the nature of available data, researchers who violate security and disclosure protocol are subject to loss of privileges, as well as civil and criminal penalties.

All data intended for use in published works or public presentations must undergo disclosure review before presentation to the public.

Proposal Process

Prospective researchers interested in applying to use the non-public Census, NCHS, AHRQ, BEA, and BLS datasets for statistical purposes are encouraged to first discuss their ideas with Colleen Heflin (cmheflin@syr.edu), the Syracuse University contact. Those with a developed research idea should then consult with the Cornell FSRDC Administrator at Nichole.e.szembrot@census.gov (607.255.8603) before starting the proposal development process. The Cornell FSRDC Administrator will help researchers prepare and submit materials for review, and can assist researchers in determining data availability and in preparing high-quality proposals. The proposal review process is lengthy and rigorous. It is not uncommon for the proposal process to take at least 4-6 months for NCHS projects, and 2-9 months for Census projects, and sometimes longer if the project requires multi-agency review. Receiving Special Sworn Status also takes 3-4 months.

For projects using Census economic, demographic, or mixed data, the steps, in order, include:

- Contact the Cornell FSRDC administrator about your project to make sure it is a good fit for the RDCs
- Read through the FSRDC proposal instructions
- Submit to the Cornell FSRDC Administrator a 2-3 page project summary of your project that includes: (1) your main research idea/question, (2) RDC datasets you want to use, (3) any
external non-RDC datasets you want to use, (4) your methodology, and (5) statistical output you want to take out of RDC.

- Work with RDC Administrator in developing your proposal using the template outlined in the FSRDC proposal instructions, bearing in mind that Census projects must: (i) **Provide benefit to Census Bureau programs**; (ii) Demonstrate scientific merit; (iii) Require non-public data; (iv) Be feasible given the data; and (v) Pose no risk of disclosure.

- When the RDC Administrator determines the proposal to be ready, they will submit your final proposal for Census review. The final proposal consists of three separate documents: abstract of the proposal, project description (full proposal), and statement of benefits to the Census Bureau.

- Once approved by the US Census Bureau, there may be additional agency reviews, depending on the specific datasets the researcher requests.

- Once approved, you will work with the RDC Administrator to obtain Special Sworn Status (SSS). To receive special sworn status, the applicant must pass a background check and swear to protect respondent confidentiality for life. This process establishes the researcher as a temporary uncompensated contractor of the U.S. Census Bureau.

**For projects using NCHS, AHRQ, BLS, or BEA data, the steps include:**

- Contact the RDC Administrator to let them know you are developing a NCHS/AHRQ/BLS/BEA data project.

- Follow the agency’s proposal instructions.
  
  - [directions for NCHS data projects](#)
  
  - [directions for AHRQ projects](#)
  
  - [directions for BLS data projects](#)
  
  - [directions for BEA data projects](#)

- Once approved by NCHS/AHRQ/BLS/BEA, contact the RDC Administrator, forwarding the approved proposal and the notification that it was approved.

- Once approved, you will work with the RDC Administrator to obtain Special Sworn Status (SSS). To receive special sworn status, the applicant must pass a background check and swear to protect respondent confidentiality for life. This process establishes the researcher as a temporary uncompensated contractor of the U.S. Census Bureau.

- Let your NCHS/AHRQ/BLS/BEA contact know when you receive SSS.
Useful Resources for Security Protocols

**Census Bureau Data Protection Policy**
This site explains the federal laws that ensure privacy of data and also explains principles of operation at Research Data Centers.