

# CERR Frequently Asked Questions

## Submission Process

### *Who needs to submit proposals for review by this committee?*

Anyone wishing to conduct research involving LAUSD resources (human, information, or otherwise). This includes, but is not limited to, students, academicians, research firms, non-profit or government agencies wishing to collect data for a purpose that is not part of regular district business. Those hired by LAUSD to research internal programs must also apply so that the committee can ensure that their research efforts abide by District legal and procedural requirements for research. Anyone in doubt about the nature of their specific case should submit an inquiry to the committee chair before submitting a proposal.

### *Should I submit my proposal under the standard CERR process or under action research?*

LAUSD employees or external researchers who aim to conduct research in the District to fulfill their EdD or master's program requirements should thoroughly review the LAUSD Research Guidelines webpage, and CERR approval process documents related to **action research**. After applicants have reviewed all necessary materials, they should submit their application via the "Action Research Submission" link.

All others who seek to conduct research in the District (including LAUSD employees and external researchers who are PhD candidates) should review the LAUSD Research Guidelines webpage and all documents related to the **standard** CERR approval process. Once applicants have reviewed all necessary documents, they should submit their application via the "Standard Research Submission" link, which is only available during the submission windows.

### *Based on when I submit my proposal, when can I begin collecting data?*

Submission Window	When can data collection start?
January	Late spring semester (e.g., April) or later
April	Summer session or later
July	Late fall semester (e.g., October) or later
October	Late winter (e.g., February) or later

### *How many proposals may I submit during one submission window?*

Each Principal Investigator may submit one proposal per submission window. The committee accepts proposals for one week per quarter in January, April, July, and October. See the above section on application periods for the current year to determine the next time you may submit.

***How long does the approval process take?***

Proposals that do not adhere to the format (e.g., are missing required documents) or address District legal or procedural requirements for research outlined in the CERR Approval Process package document will not be considered for review and will receive a rejection email within two weeks of the submission date. For all other proposals, the process generally takes about 30 working days from the date the submission window closes. You will be notified of the committee's decision within 30 working days of the date the submission window closes. If you do not hear from us in a timely manner, please feel free to contact CERR at 213-241-4100.

***I am on a tight schedule. To save time may I contact people in the district to solicit their participation in my research while the proposal is undergoing review?***

No. Applicants may not contact any district personnel, schools, students, or their families without having a formal letter of approval from this committee.

***Do I have to wait until my institutional review board (IRB) has completed its review before submitting my proposal to this committee?***

No. Although we rely heavily on the opinions of IRBs to ensure that researchers are adhering to human subjects' protection guidelines, we are willing to review proposals while they are under review by an IRB to save time. However, the IRB review must be completed, and a copy of the approval submitted to us before an approved study may move forward with data collection. (NOTE: some IRBs require an approval letter from us before they grant their own approval. It is perfectly legitimate to submit both at once, submit a copy of your application to us, and if approved, submit a CERR provisional approval letter from us to the IRB so they can complete their review.)

***What do you mean by "benefits to LAUSD"?***

LAUSD must prioritize its goals on student learning and achievement. All district business must be aligned with the LAUSD mission and vision. External researchers must demonstrate that their study contributes to achieving the district's goals and does not only fulfill goals that are external to the district.

## **LAUSD Employees**

***Is the process any different for me if I happen to be an LAUSD employee?***

No. You must go through the proposal process if you wish to conduct research for purposes that fall outside your normal job duties. In fact, because of the potentially conflicting roles played in such a scenario, the researcher should take great care to conduct all business related to the external project as someone external to the district to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest. For example, a principal of a school who is conducting research for an Ed.D. thesis should not solicit participation from teachers or students at that school, using his or her title as principal, as it may compromise the extent to which individuals feel they are volunteering to participate and could even create the image that he or she is using human

resources accessible to a principal for personal use. When questions arise as to whether a district employee is potentially crossing ethical lines, please consult the chair of this committee or the district's Ethics Office.

After submission, you may be asked to schedule a consultation call with the chair of the committee and your professor, advisor, or research chair to discuss your proposed study and revisions to move forward. There may be an alternate type of proposal that you will be asked to submit depending on the type and purpose of the proposed study.

*As a LAUSD employee, I have access to student data. Can I extract the data myself?*

No. District employees often need access to sensitive information to do their jobs, but this **does not** grant them permission to use that data for reasons other than the specific purposes for which they were granted access. Schools and school staff are not considered "owners" of data to determine the appropriateness of its release. Student information falls under the purview of the Executive Director of the Office of Data and Accountability and all data requests must be directed to this office. For further information, please refer to the **Information Protection Policy Bulletin 1077.1**. It may be accessed through the following link: [BUL-1077.1](#)

## Data Requests

*Is approval by CERR a guarantee I will be able to get access to schools and/or the data I need from LAUSD?*

No. Approval from this committee merely means that your proposal is methodologically sound and that it is likely to yield benefits to the district that outweigh burden to the district. It does not require schools or offices to allow you access to their resources, nor does it negate the rights of subjects to decline participation. It might be helpful to think of this approval process as the first phase in a multiphase process.

For an archival data request, once you have received CERR approval, it will be necessary to submit a Data Use Agreement (DUA). If approved and signed by the Director of Data Privacy, Analysis, and Reporting Branch, you will be given the link to make the specific data request.

## Revision Resubmissions

*If my proposal is not accepted, will I be told the reasons why?*

Yes. Our committee is interested in supporting high-quality research that could potentially benefit LAUSD. When proposals are not accepted, in many cases, we will provide an itemized list of recommended changes and invite the researcher to resubmit the proposal within 10 working days or during the next submission window, depending on the extent of revisions requested. Proposals are only rejected without the invitation to resubmit if the reviewers determine that, even with changes, the work is not likely to yield benefits to the district.

### *What are the reasons why a proposal would be rejected?*

There are four general reasons why a proposal would be rejected: 1) lack of adherence to the proposal format (e.g., missing required documents), 2) lack of relevance, 3) lack of quality, or 4) intense burden on district resources.

1. CERR deems studies to lack adherence to the proposal format if researchers fail to submit all required documents at the time of submission. Required documents include: literature review and references, a one-page summary of the study and its anticipated relevance to District practice, all instruments for data collection (e.g., surveys, interview or observation protocols), consent and assent forms, CERR statement of agreement, a letter from graduate student's sponsor (if applicable), and IRB documentation (for more information regarding IRB documentation, see the section above "Do I have to wait until my institutional review board has completed its review before submitting my proposal to this committee?"). CERR also deems studies to lack adherence to the proposal format if researchers do not proactively address District legal and procedural requirements for research. These requirements are detailed in the CERR Approval Process document on the CERR website.
2. CERR deems studies to lack relevance if the variables are not directly related to the mission of LAUSD. For example, a researcher interested in the political affiliations of public-school teachers might find LAUSD to be a convenient laboratory for his work but could probably not argue that the findings would be of use to the district. Thus, use of LAUSD teachers as a resource is not justified.
3. CERR deems studies to lack quality if an adequate level of scientific rigor is not demonstrated. Our office is comprised of professional researchers who observe professional standards for their work. The work of external researchers must be held to the same standards as used for our own work. If some elements are missing or unclear in the proposal, the researcher will normally be invited to resubmit with changes. In some cases, reviewers may deem that a minimum level of technical proficiency was not demonstrated (e.g., basic terms are used incorrectly, or the quality of writing is below professional standards), in which case the proposal would be rejected.
4. Proposals might also be rejected if reviewers determine that the study would place a greater strain on resources than the district could accommodate. This would be particularly relevant during times when the district's resources have been limited by budget cuts or other means.

### *How do I resubmit my proposal once I have made changes?*

CERR asks that researchers submit minor revisions through email. Researchers will be asked to email a revised version of your original proposal as a Word document, along with any requested materials. Researchers should highlight all revisions to facilitate review. If our committee requests that you make major revisions to your study, then you will be asked to resubmit your revised proposal through the online system during the next submission window.

## Approvals

### *How long is CERR approval valid?*

Should your study be approved by our committee, a representative of CERR will send you a formal letter of approval signed by our committee chair. This approval is valid for three years following the date of the approval letter. You are responsible for ensuring an IRB approval is current and that CERR has a copy on file.

To maintain a good standing with CERR, each year you will be asked to submit an annual update. As part of the annual update, you will be asked to provide information regarding any changes to the research design or scope. If there are minor changes to the design or scope, you will be asked to describe those changes and email any new instruments or consent forms based on the amendments to the proposal. If there are no changes to the study, then researchers will be asked to provide an update on implementation (including a list of schools in which your research is taking place) and the reason for the extension request. If there are major changes to the research design or scope, then you will be asked to submit a new proposal during the next submission window.

### *What if I am proposing a study that takes longer than three years?*

You may propose a study that exceeds the three-year approval timeframe. However, remember that CERR prioritizes and approves research projects that are timely and relevant to District decision-making. Regardless of how long your study takes to complete, you will be asked to submit an annual update. This update should contain a request for an extension should the study need to continue beyond three years. If there are no changes to the study, then researchers will be asked to provide an update on implementation (including a list of schools in which your research is taking place) and the reason for the extension request. If there are major changes to the research design or scope, then you will be asked to submit a new proposal during the next submission window.

### *Why am I being asked for a list of participating schools?*

We ask that you share with us the names of the schools participating in your research project once you have finished recruitment. This information is for our internal use only and will help us ensure schools are not being asked to participate in multiple studies at one time. To protect the confidentiality of your participants, we will not share the names of schools or your participants with any other department or divisions.

### *What do I do when I have completed my study?*

CERR requires researchers to reach out with any status updates, extension requests, or changes to your study. Upon completion of your research project, CERR expects researchers to proactively share final products (e.g., journal articles/papers, infographics, presentations), as reflected in the CERR Statement of Agreement. We are currently building our catalogue of LAUSD research and are systematizing a process to share the results of these projects with program staff to inform decision making and practice across the District.