

SUPPORTING STATEMENT – PART A
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES)
Standard Application Process Portal
OMB Control No. 3145-0271

A. Justification

The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (44 U.S.C. 3583) mandates that the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) establish a Standard Application Process (SAP) for requesting access to certain confidential data assets. While the adoption of the SAP is required for statistical agencies and units designated under the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018 (CIPSEA), it is recognized that other agencies and organizational units within the Executive Branch may benefit from the adoption of the SAP to accept applications for access to confidential data assets. The SAP is a process through which agencies, the Congressional Budget Office, State, local, and Tribal governments, researchers, and other individuals, as appropriate, may apply to access confidential data assets held by a federal statistical agency or unit for the purpose of developing evidence. With the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP) as advisors, the entities upon whom this requirement is levied have worked with the SAP Project Management Office (PMO) and with OMB to implement the SAP. The SAP Portal is a single web-based common application designed to collect information from individuals requesting access to confidential data assets from federal statistical agencies and units. This is a renewal of a prior information collection request approved under OMB control number 3145-0271.

Specifically, the recognized statistical agencies and units are required to implement a common application process which includes an application form, the criteria for determining whether to grant an applicant access to a confidential data asset, timeframes for prompt determinations, an appeals process for adverse determinations, and reporting requirements for full transparency of the process.

This submission requests approval to collect information from individuals as part of the Standard Application Process Portal. This request is from the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the National Science Foundation (NSF) and is submitted as a Common Form. The information collection request is on behalf of the following federal statistical agencies and units, which may use the Common Form:

- Bureau of Economic Analysis (Department of Commerce)
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (Department of Justice)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (Department of Labor)
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics (Department of Transportation)
- Census Bureau (Department of Commerce)

- Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (Department of Health and Human Services)
- Economic Research Service (Department of Agriculture)
- Energy Information Administration (Department of Energy)
- Microeconomic Surveys Unit (Federal Reserve Board)
- National Agricultural Statistics Service (Department of Agriculture)
- National Animal Health Monitoring System (Department of Agriculture)
- National Center for Education Statistics (Department of Education)
- National Center for Health Statistics (Department of Health and Human Services)
- National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (National Science Foundation)
- Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (Social Security Administration)
- Statistics of Income Division (Internal Revenue Service)

1. Necessity of the Information Collection

Statistical agencies and units support and encourage research activity using confidential data by providing individuals, federal agencies, and other institutions access to non-publicly available data files. Title III of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (hereafter, the Evidence Act) mandates that the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) establish an SAP to apply for access to certain confidential data assets accessed or acquired by statistical agencies or units.

The Evidence Act requires that each statistical agency or unit establish an identical application process. The Evidence Act further requires that federal statistical agencies establish common criteria for determining whether to approve an application for confidential data, timeframes for prompt determination, an appeals process for adverse determinations, and reporting requirements for full transparency of the process. In response to these requirements, on behalf of OMB, the statistical agencies and units operate a web-based portal (referred to as the SAP Portal) to provide the common application form to applicants. The objective of the SAP Portal is to broaden access to confidential data for the purposes of evidence building and to reduce the burden of applying for confidential data.

Access to confidential data encourages applicants to become familiar with statistical agencies and units' data products and collection methods. More importantly, access to confidential data enables research projects that would not be possible without complete individual-level information. These secondary uses of existing federal data assets increase the value of data that has been collected. For example, access to confidential data allows for both cross-survey longitudinal data linking not possible with aggregates as aggregate data cannot be linked at the individual level. These linkages leverage the value of preexisting data, and creative use of microdata can address important policy questions without the need for additional data collection.

Applying for access to confidential data requires the preparation and submission of a research proposal by an individual or team of applicants. The application submission, review, and determination process as well as application tracking, are managed through a web-based application system, the SAP Portal. This Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) supporting statement outlines the information about applicants and their proposed projects that are collected through the SAP Portal to evaluate proposals and applicant access suitability in accordance with the Evidence Act and the SAP Policy.

The SAP Policy

At the recommendation of the Inter-agency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP), the SAP Policy establishes the SAP to be implemented by statistical agencies and units and incorporates directives from the Evidence Act. The policy is intended to provide guidance as to the application and review processes using the SAP Portal, setting forth clear standards that enable statistical agencies and units to implement a common application form and a uniform review process. The methods of collection outlined below are in accordance with the SAP Policy. The SAP Policy was submitted to the public for comment in January, 2022 ([87 FR 2459](#)) and issued by OMB in December of 2022 as OMB Policy [M-23-04](#).

Per SAP Policy, the application process begins with an applicant identifying a confidential data asset for which a statistical agency or unit is accepting applications to access for the purpose of building evidence, and it ends with either the agency or unit's determination on whether to grant access. In the case of an adverse determination, the application process ends with the conclusion of an appeals process if the applicant elects to appeal the determination.

Method of Collection

The SAP Portal

The SAP Portal is an application interface connecting applicants seeking data with a catalog of metadata for data assets owned by the federal statistical agencies and units and a common application form to apply for those assets. The SAP Portal is not a new data repository or warehouse; confidential data assets will continue to be stored in secure data access facilities owned and hosted by the federal statistical agencies and units. The Portal provides a streamlined application process across agencies, reducing redundancies in the application process. This single SAP Portal improves the process for applicants, tracking and communicating the application process throughout its lifecycle. This reduces redundancies and burden on applicants that request access to data from multiple agencies. The SAP Portal automates key tasks to save resources and time and will bring agencies into compliance with the Evidence Act statutory requirements.

Data Discovery

Individuals begin the process of accessing restricted use data by identifying confidential data assets of interest through the SAP metadata catalog, maintained by federal statistical agencies

at www.researchdatagov.org. Potential applicants can search by agency, topic, or keyword to identify data of interest or relevance. Once they have identified data of interest, applicants can view metadata outlining the title, description or abstract, scope and coverage, and detailed methodology related to a specific data asset to determine its relevance to their research.

While statistical agencies and units endeavor to include information in the SAP metadata catalog on all confidential data assets for which they accept applications, it may not be feasible to include metadata for some data assets (e.g., potential special tabulations of administrative data). A statistical agency or unit may still accept an application through the SAP Portal even if all of the requested data assets or special tabulations are not listed in the SAP metadata catalog.

SAP Application – Research Team Questions

Individuals who have identified and wish to access confidential data assets are able to apply for access through the SAP Portal by selecting data assets from the catalog within the Portal. Applicants must create an account and follow all steps to complete the application. Applicants begin by entering their personal, contact, and institutional information, as well as the personal, contact, and institutional information of all individuals on their research team, including name, address, email address, telephone, professional affiliation, and citizenship. See Appendix A for a listing of the applicant information to be collected through the SAP Portal for all submitted applications. Information submitted within the application form is retained in the SAP Portal system database for each submitted application.

SAP Application – Research Proposal

Applicants proceed to provide summary information about their proposed project, including project title, duration, funding, timeline, and other details including the data asset(s) they are requesting and any proposed linkages to data not listed in the SAP metadata catalog, including non-federal data sources. Applicants may request data from more than one agency on a single application. Applicants then enter detailed information regarding their proposed project, including a project abstract, research question(s), project scope, research methodology, project products, and anticipated output. Applicants must demonstrate a need for confidential data, outlining why their research question cannot be answered using publicly available information. See Appendix B for a listing of the research proposal information collected in the SAP Portal for all submitted applications.

Submission for Review

Upon submission of their application, applicants receive a notification that their application has been received and is under review by the data owning agency or agencies (in the event where data assets are requested from multiple agencies). Agencies also receive a notification that an application is ready for review. At this point, applicants also are notified that application approval alone does not grant access to confidential data, and that, if approved, applicants must comply with the data-owning agency's security requirements outside of the SAP Portal, which may include a background check.

In accordance with the Evidence Act, the SAP Policy, and the direction of the ICSP, agencies approve or reject an application within a prompt timeframe. In some cases, agencies may determine that additional clarity, information, or modification is needed and request the applicant to “revise and resubmit” their application.

Criteria for Review

Providing an applicant access to confidential data is a multi-dimensional, risk management decision. Each agency reviewing the application must determine the risk involved in providing access to their data, both alone and in combination with other data. Critical criteria that warrant careful consideration within the application process are whether the applicant(s) can be placed in a trusted category to use the data in an appropriate manner; whether the data use is appropriate and consistent with current legal, policy, ethical, and other relevant restrictions; whether there are disclosure risks in the proposed use of the data; whether the data access setting can limit unauthorized use; and whether the statistical results or outputs are non-disclosive.

The Evidence Act requires standardized criteria for statistical agencies and units to determine whether to grant an applicant access to a confidential data asset. The SAP Policy outlines the criteria for evaluating a project proposal and applicant(s), and the SAP Portal standardizes the approach by which agencies and units determine whether to grant an applicant access to a confidential data asset. For applications, agencies have three options for determination: approve, reject, and revise and resubmit. “Revise and resubmit” provides the applicant with an opportunity to amend the application with additional information necessary for the agency to make a determination.

See Appendix C for a listing of the criteria for review and disposition of applications.

Appeals Process

In the event of an adverse determination, the applicant is provided justification through the SAP Portal detailing the determination. The SAP Portal provides the applicant with the option to submit an appeal for reconsideration by the data-owning agency or agencies.

Applicants and members of the public can also file an appeal for noncompliance with SAP Policy. Noncompliance with the SAP Policy refers to a failure to implement the SAP as specified in the SAP Policy. Issues of noncompliance may include, but are not limited to, failure to use the common application form when required, failure to adhere to the timeframes and extension process, or failure to provide progress tracking and communications as required. OMB shall work with the statistical agency or unit to achieve compliance in the event that OMB determines there has been noncompliance with this policy.

Access to Confidential Data

In the event of a positive determination, the applicant is notified that their proposal has been accepted. The positive or adverse determination, including the possibility of an appeal, concludes the SAP Portal process. In the instance of a positive determination, the data-owning agency (or agencies) contacts the applicant to provide instructions on the agency's security requirements that must be completed to gain access to the confidential data. The completion and submission of the agency's security requirements will take place outside of the SAP Portal and are therefore not included in the estimate of burden below.

Authorization

This collection is authorized by the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (44 U.S.C. 3583).

2. Needs and Uses

The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) seeks to maximize the usefulness of information created, collected, maintained, used, shared, and disseminated by or for the federal government while also ensuring the greatest possible public benefit from such information. The SAP Portal provides applicants with a streamlined approach to requesting access to confidential data for evidence-building purposes, which represents a core alignment with the PRA.

Data collected, accessed, or acquired by statistical agencies and units is vital for developing evidence for conditions, characteristics, and behaviors of the public and on the operations and outcomes of public programs and policies. Access to confidential data on businesses, households, and individuals from federal statistical agencies and units enables agencies, the Congressional Budget Office, State, local, and Tribal governments, researchers, and other individuals to contribute evidence-based information to research and policy questions on economic and social issues that can promote national, regional, and local efficiencies and drive innovation that can fuel the economy. This evidence can benefit the stakeholders in the programs, the broader public, as well as policymakers and program managers at the local, State, Tribal, and National levels.

Portal applicants include, but are not limited to, data analysts, researchers, and innovators in U.S. Government organizations (Federal, State, local, and Tribal), analysts at nonprofit organizations, and faculty or students at U.S. universities. The use of confidential data typically results in papers presented at conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals, working paper series, monographs, and technical reports. The nation-at-large benefits from the additions to knowledge resulting from the use of confidential data assets. Results inform sound decision making and public policy and can assist agencies in carrying out their missions.

Approved applicants using confidential data also can provide insights on how statistical agencies and units may improve the quality of the data collected or acquired; identify shortcomings of current data collection programs and data processing methods; document new

data needs; and develop methods to address survey nonresponse or improve statistical weights.

3. Use of Information Technology

The SAP Portal is a web-based system that collects, manages, and disseminates information using web application tools and data management processes that attempt to minimize the burden on the applicant and the reviewers of the submitted application. All applicants interact with the system through a web-based interface. Within the capabilities of the SAP Portal system, constant efforts are employed to investigate ways of simplifying data entry by the collection of application information via the SAP Portal and management of the submitted applications by application reviewers.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

The SAP Portal provides a single application Portal for users of confidential data, replacing the numerous agency-specific processes and Portals previously supported across federal statistical agencies and units. The SAP Portal leads to a major reduction in public burden and a significant gain in efficiency. It also represents a unique achievement in the federal statistical system in that it is the first system to collect, process, and track information across many separate agencies and units. The application is specifically developed to accommodate the needs and business processes associated with the statistical agencies and units. The system is sufficiently comprehensive and scalable that statistical agencies and units' executive staff have approved its use to track all applications requesting confidential data access.

5. Impact on Small Entities

Small businesses or their representatives may choose to participate in this voluntary collection of information. The burden of this collection does not represent a significant barrier to participation from small businesses and is not large enough to pose significant costs to respondents, including small businesses. As noted in the previous section, the SAP Portal is designed to reduce burden on the public. As a result, the SAP Portal results in an efficiency gain for small businesses or their representatives requesting access to confidential data assets.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection

The ability to apply for confidential data for evidence-building purposes via a single access point is made possible through this information collection effort. The SAP Portal is efficient and less costly than other means of allowing agencies, the Congressional Budget Office, State, local, and Tribal governments, researchers, and other individuals to apply for access to confidential data. All data collection within the SAP Portal is conducted voluntarily and according to applicants' schedules. Given that the SAP Portal requires and accepts only one application per proposed research project, a less frequent collection of information is not possible.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances.

8. Consultations Outside the Agency

On June 16, 2025, the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the National Science Foundation on behalf of the statistical agencies and units published a notice in the Federal Register (90 FR 25380) inviting the public and other federal agencies to comment on plans to submit this request. NCSES did not receive any comments.

Additionally, NCSES, as the project management office (PMO) for the SAP Portal, holds regular meetings with statistical agencies and units about the functionality of the SAP Portal and routinely solicits and accepts suggestions from stakeholders on ways to streamline or otherwise improve the system's operability, including public webinars and listening sessions designed to both educate users about the SAP and hear from data users about their experiences with the SAP process and suggestions for enhancements.

9. Paying Respondents

No payments or gifts are given to holders of user accounts in the system.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

User account holders are advised of the SAP's privacy statement on the privacy policy webpage of the SAP Portal. A link to the privacy statement appears on the log-in page for returning users and on the registration page where new users create their user account. Data collected by the SAP Portal is treated as confidential, with the exception of project title, researcher names, and project abstract for approved applications; these are included in public reports on the SAP Portal. All personal identifiers are protected under the Privacy Act of 1974 and statistical agencies and units' confidentiality privacy and practices.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

No sensitive questions are asked within the SAP Portal application form.

12. Estimate of Hour Burden

The amount of time to complete an application within the SAP Portal will vary depending on the number of individuals on the application, the topic of the proposal, and the data asset(s) being requested. To request access to NCSES data assets, it is estimated that the average time to complete and submit an application within the SAP Portal is 60 minutes. This estimate includes

the time needed to complete the SAP Portal application fields (applicant information and research proposal); it does not include an estimate of the time needed to develop a research proposal itself. The research proposal is developed outside of the SAP Portal and may be written for multiple audiences (e.g., to solicit funding); therefore, it is not included in the estimate of burden for the SAP Portal.

The expected number of applications submitted to NCSES in a given year may vary. Overall, NCSES estimates it may receive 20 application submissions within the SAP Portal per year. NCSES estimates that the total burden for the SAP Portal over the course of the three-year OMB clearance will be about 60 hours and, as a result, an average annual burden of 20 hours.

BURDEN HOURS

Category of Response	No. of Applications	Participation Time	Burden
Applications	60	60 minutes	60 hours
Totals			60 hours

The total cost to SAP Portal applicants for the 60 total burden hours is estimated to be \$2,311.20. This estimate is based on an estimated median annual salary of \$ 80,132 per applicant.¹ Assuming a 40-hour workweek and a 52-week salary, this annual salary translates to an hourly salary of \$38.52. Over the three-year OMB clearance period, the average annual cost to the public for submitting application information through the SAP Portal is estimated to be \$770.40.

13. Estimate of Cost Burden

Not applicable. The SAP Portal does not impose any fees, charges, or costs to individuals submitting applications.

14. Cost to Federal Government

We estimate the average annual cost to the Federal Government for the SAP Portal development, maintenance, and use at approximately \$1,521,758 per year for Fiscal Years 2026, 2027, and 2028. These figures are based on required contractual resources necessary to maintain the system given the expected annual number of submitted applications.

¹Applicant salary estimates were based on annual median salary estimates for employed college graduates using data from the 2024 Current Population Survey.

15. Reason for Change in Burden

There is no change to the burden.

16. Project Schedule

The information provided by applicants to the SAP Portal is received on an ongoing basis and is not subject to any schedule. Users provide information voluntarily and at their discretion when creating user accounts and when submitting applications. The system is accessible on a 24/7 basis as a web-based application, except for periods of scheduled maintenance or unexpected interruptions of service.

17. Request to Not Display Expiration Date

The expiration date of OMB approval will be displayed on the information collection screens within the SAP Portal.

18. Exceptions to the Certification

There are no exceptions.

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

Because the use of the SAP is voluntary, this information collection will not employ statistical methods.