

Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI) Research Application Virtual Consultation Session

Education Policy Initiative



LEARNING OBJECTIVES



Understand the MERI application process



Know required documents before submission



Characteristics of high-quality application



Understand data security and publication responsibilities



Tips of quick approval



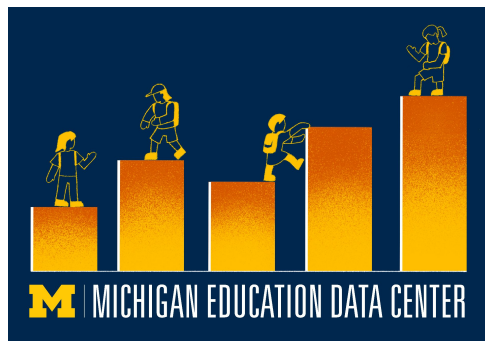
Learn supportive resources

WHAT IS MERI?

- MERI is a partnership between the State of Michigan (SOM), University of Michigan (U-M), and Michigan State University (MSU) that includes a **ground-breaking data-sharing agreement** and is recognized as a **model for state-level education research partnerships**.
- A core role that U-M plays in MERI is running the **Michigan Education Data Center (MEDC)**.
- All research applications are reviewed by a MERI review team. However, SOM agencies makes final approval decisions.



DISTINCTIVE PARTNERSHIP



University of Michigan

MEDC facilitates application processes, disseminates data to approved researchers, matches to external records



State Agency Partners

Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) & Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI)



Michigan State University

Acts as a strategic partner to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), conducting quick turn around analysis

BEFORE STARTING, PLEASE REVIEW

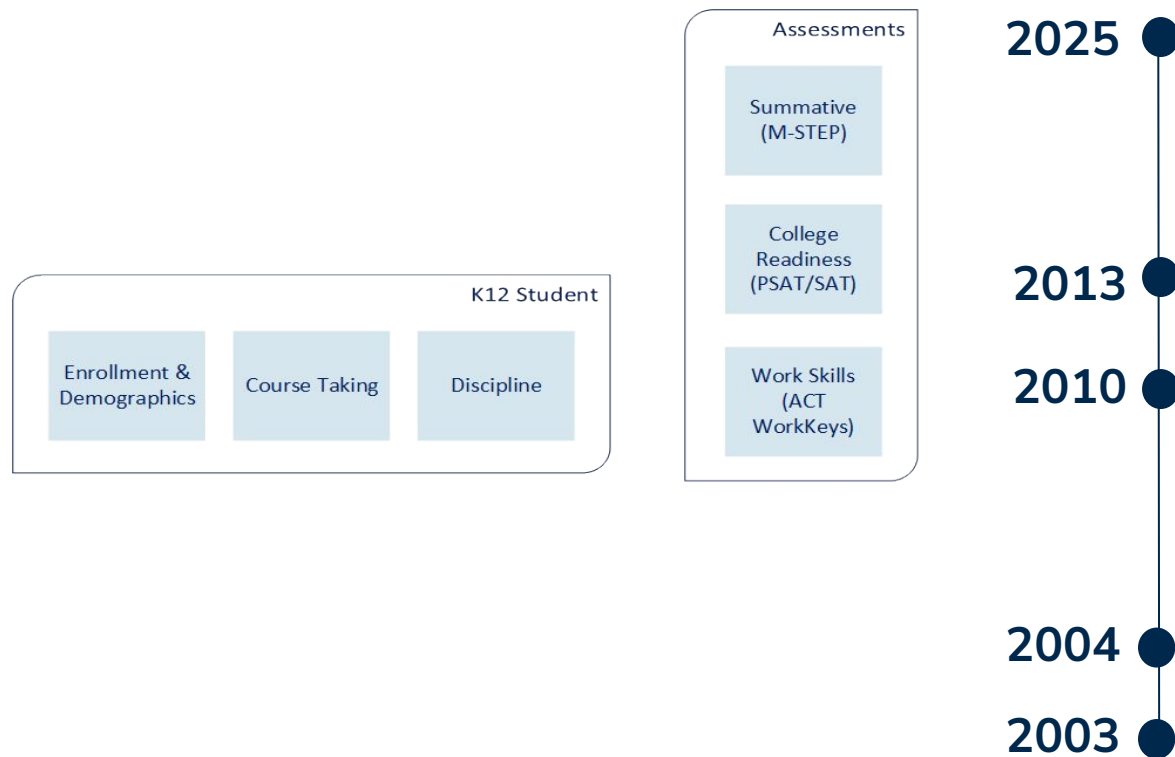
All on the MEDC website



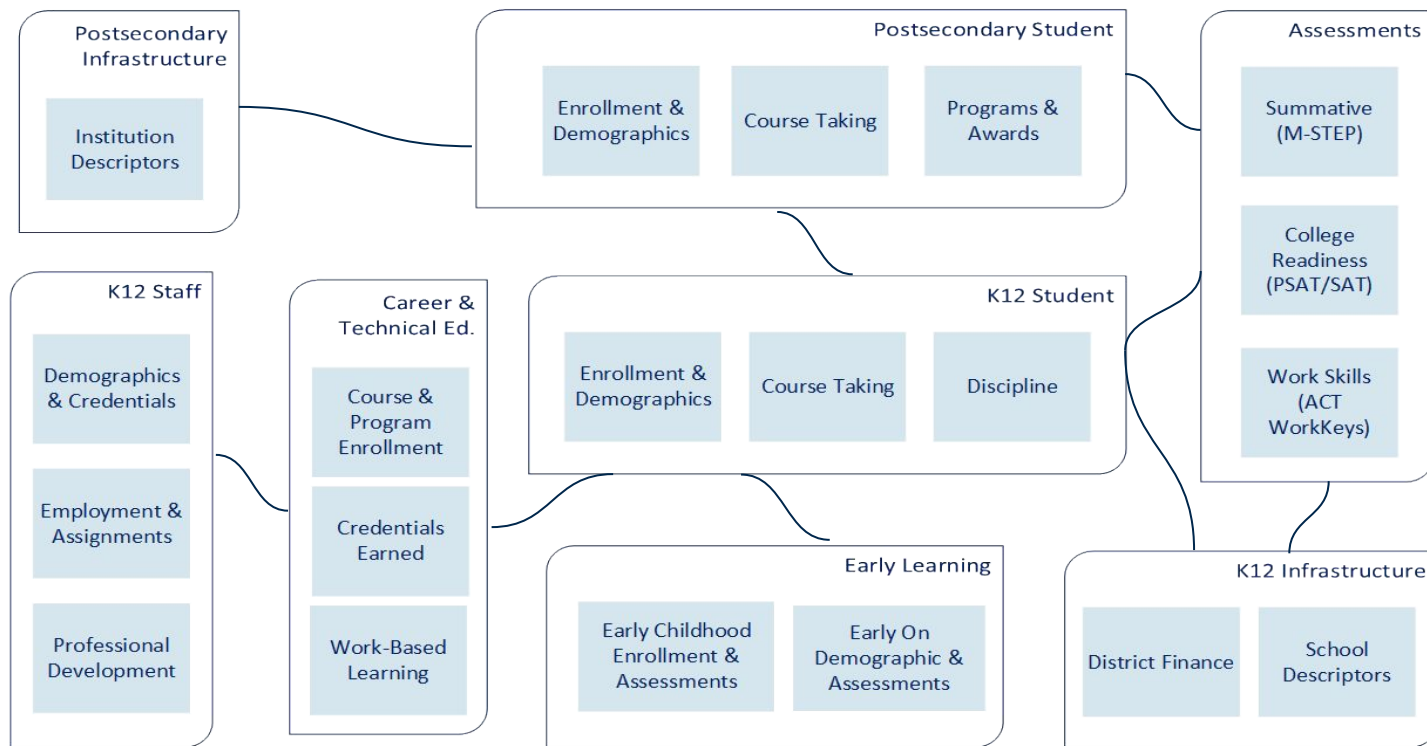
- Application webpage
- Application guide
- FERPA Instruction
- Codebook



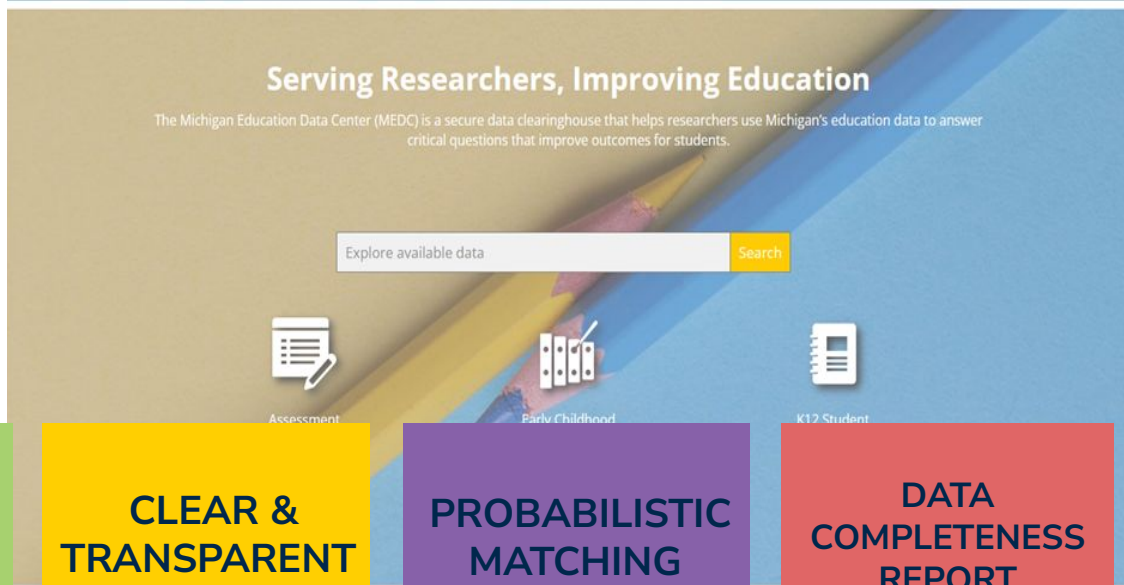
MICHIGAN'S P-20 EDUCATION DATA



MICHIGAN'S P-20 EDUCATION DATA



KEY FEATURES



RICH LINKED DATA

Pre-K through
Postsecondary

SEARCHABLE WEBSITE

Rich
Metadata

CLEAR & TRANSPARENT

Application
Process

PROBABILISTIC MATCHING

Unique
Crosswalks

DATA COMPLETENESS REPORT

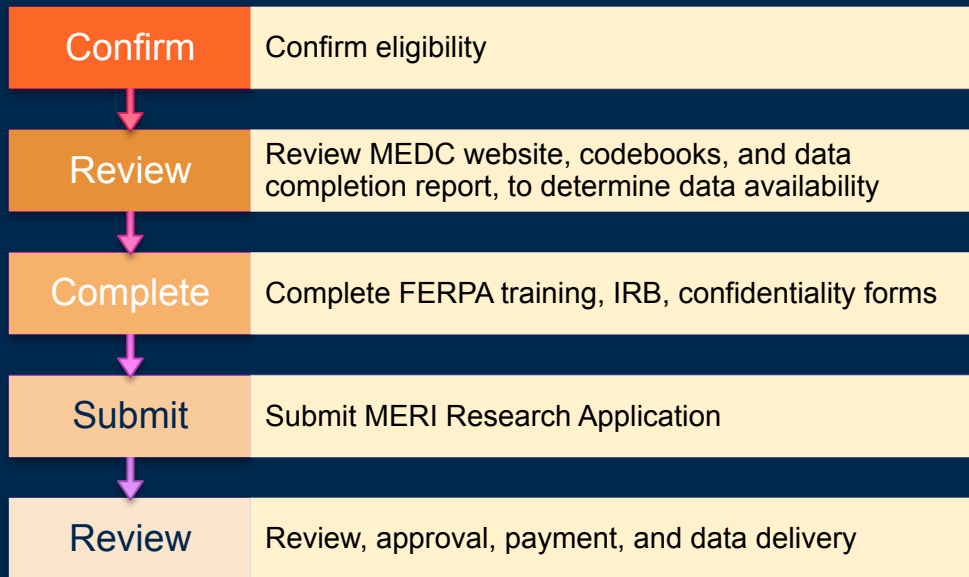
Available data
by academic
year

NEW DATA DEVELOPMENTS

- Early On (early childhood) data
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) data
- Crosswalk between students that eventually become teachers
- Sibling identifiers



APPLICATION PROCESS



APPLICATION SECTIONS

Student Homelessness, Benefit Stability, and Education Outcomes

ID: 3441159930

APPLICATION

ACTIVITY

Your tasks



PI and Study Information

Last edited: Apr 16 2025 10:51 AM (EDT) | Nicole Wagner



Team Member Information

Last edited: Apr 16 2025 02:44 PM (EDT) | Nicole Wagner



FERPA

Last edited: Apr 8 2025 03:13 PM (EDT)



Study Details

Last edited: Apr 16 2025 10:23 AM (EDT) | Nicole Wagner



Analysis and Dissemination

Last edited: Apr 16 2025 10:24 AM (EDT) | Nicole Wagner



Data Request

Completed on: Apr 1 2025 01:35 PM (EDT) | Kyle Kwaiser (removed)



External Data Sources

Last edited: Apr 16 2025 10:53 AM (EDT) | Nicole Wagner



PI Signature Page



Upload any additional documents (optional)



REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Approved IRB letter

FERPA certificates (all team members, within 12 months)

Confidentiality & Security forms (all team members)

Letters of support (if merging external data)

IT contact for data security plan



Confidentiality and Security Acknowledgment Form

All persons who seek access to confidential data supplied by MERI on behalf of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) or Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) must sign this form. Your signature acknowledges that you have read and understand the policies below.

Name: _____ ☐ Investigator/Evaluator
Affiliation: _____ ☐ Data Manager/Coordinator

Project Name: _____ Contract/ID #: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

1. Policy for data storage
 - a. The location of **all** copies of the data must be carefully tracked.
 - b. The data must be stored where **only** Authorized Researchers may access the data.
 - c. Data files **must** remain secure throughout the duration of data storage. All data in storage and in transit must adhere to a minimum of 128-bit encryption.
2. Policy for data usage
 - a. Data may be accessed **only** by Authorized Researchers.
 - b. Data may **only** be used for the purposes of answering the approved research questions, hypotheses or evaluation/audit activities.
 - c. Data analyses **will** respect the privacy and confidentiality of students, teachers, classrooms, schools, districts, intermediate school districts, colleges/universities and the State of Michigan (hereafter referred to as "concerned parties").
 - d. Public discussions, presentations and reports **may not** include information that would make it possible to identify a concerned party, unless permission has been granted in writing to do so.
 - e. Internal discussions, presentations and reports **will** protect the privacy and confidentiality of all concerned parties if there is a possibility the document may become publicly available.
 - f. Documents identifying concerned parties **must** be marked "confidential—internal use only."
 - g. Authorized Researchers **will** always comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provisions applicable to them (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/sep/ferpa/index.html>).
3. Policy for data disposal and reporting of results
 - a. The data **must** be destroyed in accordance with the date designated for destruction.
 - b. A data destruction certificate **will** be sent to MDE and CEPI by the destruction date.
 - c. To extend the data loan, MDE and CEPI **must** be contacted, in writing, to approve.
 - d. Preliminary or final results **will** be submitted to MDE and CEPI at least 30 days prior to public release.

Signature _____

Date _____

FERPA EXCEPTIONS

In order to receive student-level data, researchers must utilize the data for, or on behalf of, an educational agency for the purpose of:

- **Studies** that either:
 - Develop, validate, or administer predictive tests;
 - Administer student aid programs; or
 - Improve instruction
- **Audit or evaluation** of Federal or State supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those program.

Note: Staff data do not require meeting a FERPA exception.



ALIGN WITH THE PRIORITIES OF THE STATE

Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan

Michigan's Research Priorities

- Early Childhood
- Literacy & Numeracy
- Whole Child Development & Student Well-Being
- Educator Workforce & Professional Capacity
- College, Career & Postsecondary Success



ALIGN WITH THE PRIORITIES OF THE STATE

Michigan's Research Priorities: [Office of Higher Education](#)

- Financial Aid Design
- Outreach, Access, and Re-engagement
- Academic Pathways and Credential Design
- Pedagogy, Advising, and the Student Experience
- Basic Needs and Student Wellbeing



ALIGN WITH THE PRIORITIES OF THE STATE

Michigan's Research Priorities: Office of Higher Education

- Institutional Coordination, Student Mobility, and Credit Portability
- Career Alignment, Exposure, and Navigation
- Workforce Alignment, Graduate Retention, and Regional Economic Impact
- Institutional Responsiveness in an Evolving World
- Measuring Progress and Defining Credential Value



HIGH-QUALITY APPLICATION (1)

- Complete the application with all required documents
- Clearly justify the appropriate FERPA exception
- Provide a realistic project timeline
 - Include the 30-Day Review
- Clearly describe the proposed study
 - Study abstract/summary
 - Study purpose and objectives
 - Research questions
 - Analysis plan
 - Expected benefits to Michigan students
 - Dissemination plan



HIGH-QUALITY APPLICATION (2)

- Justify the need for confidential student-level data
- Justify every requested variable and school year
- Align requested data and analyses with each research question
- Develop a FERPA-compliant data security plan
 - Secure storage
 - Restricted access
 - Encryption
 - Data destruction
- Write clearly for reviewers from diverse backgrounds



DATA SECURITY EXPECTATIONS



- Store data on secure institutional servers (not cloud/local devices)
- Encryption, password protection, secure remote access (VPN)
- Access limited to approved team members only
- Data stored in the U.S
- Plan for destruction after project completion



AFTER APPROVAL

- Data are on loan
- Use only for approved purposes
- Submit an application amendment BEFORE deviating from your approved plan
- Submit IRB updates when required
- Suppress cells smaller than 10
- Submit all products for 30-day MERI review before public dissemination

TIPS TO HELP KEEP YOUR RESEARCH APPLICATION MOVING

- Your application should be 100% complete
- Strong FERPA justification
- Clear analysis plan
- Sufficient variable justification
- Strong data security measures
- Respond promptly to inquiries from MEDC



RESOURCES & SUPPORT



Data Team:

medc-data-support@umich.edu



MERI Inbox:

meri@miedresearch.org



Appendix

APPLICATION AMENDMENTS

Use amendment process for team changes, new research questions, additional years/data, or extending project timeline

Bundle multiple changes into one request when possible

