

Policies and Guidelines for Submitting MERI Research Findings for 30-Day Review

All researchers approved to use State of Michigan administrative education data are required to submit study findings 30 days prior to public dissemination.¹

The 30-day review period is intended for Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI) partners to obtain clarification on findings, provide comments on how data are represented, and share findings with relevant units within the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP).

Prior to submitting research findings, please ensure that your research product satisfies the following screening checklist:

- The product includes the MERI disclosure statement.²
- Any reported findings suppress cells for populations smaller than 10.
- All listed authors, as well as other members of the research team who have interacted with MERI data, are approved study team members.³
- The data loan period for which the study is approved remains active, allowing for any potential revisions to the analysis subsequent to 30-day review.⁴
- The product covers findings related only to approved research questions, per your most recently approved application.

¹ Currently, State of Michigan administrative education data is distributed by the Michigan Education Data Center (MEDC); data files distributed to researchers have been termed “MERI Researcher Files”. All decisions regarding researcher access to data remain under the sole discretion of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP) and the Center for Education Performance and Information (CEPI).

² “This research result used data structured and maintained by the MERI-Michigan Education Data Center (MEDC). MEDC data is modified for analysis purposes using rules governed by MEDC and are not identical to those data collected and maintained by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Michigan’s Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI), or Michigan’s Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP). Results, information and opinions solely represent the analysis, information and opinions of the author(s) and are not endorsed by, or reflect the views or positions of, grantors, MDE, CEPI, MiLEAP or any employee thereof.”

³ All members of a research study team must be listed in the MERI application, including all co-authors, even if they are not working directly with MERI data. Study team members can be added through the application amendment process.

⁴ When requesting access to MERI data, your data loan period should encompass the full amount of time that you anticipate to receive, process, and analyze data, as well as the time needed for the 30-day review and subsequent publication and any revisions that might be requested by reviewers. Data must be destroyed at the end of the data loan period. Data loan extensions can be requested through the application amendment process. MERI allows researchers to publish findings after the project closes out, but it is not typical for researchers to have new, previously unreviewed findings submitted to MERI for 30-Day Review after a researcher’s data loan has ended.

Email the final version of the findings and research product that you hope to disseminate publicly to MERI@miedresearch.org. In the subject line of the email, please include the following text: “[PROJECT ID]: 30-Day Review [Initial/Update]”. In the body of the email, provide the following:

- A description of the product sent for review (e.g., journal article, preliminary findings, conference presentation, etc.)
- A description of the review status/stage (e.g., first review by State, paper that includes new findings, dissertation that has been reviewed by advisor/committee)
- An abstract or executive summary of the product, which will be posted (publicly) on the MERI website after publication
- A list of key findings or highlights from the product
- For updates and revisions only, a summary of the changes/updates and where they can be found in the product (note that we prefer to receive a track-changed document that calls out the changes/updates for easy review).

Please review all of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) prior to sending results through for 30-day review and publishing research findings

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What constitutes *public dissemination* of MERI research findings?

Research findings are made public when they are shared with any individuals not listed as approved study team members, outside of closed “learning environments” (described in #10 below), including sharing with:

- The media
- Funders
- Journal review staff
- Conferences, open/public seminars, or public-facing talk attendees
- Colleagues or collaborators
- Stakeholders (including educators, administrators, policy makers, advocates, etc.) who take an interest in your study findings

2. At what point should I submit my findings for a 30-day review?

When a project PI or member of the study team plans to disseminate findings from the research study **for the first time**, they should submit the findings at least 30 days prior to dissemination. This is also true for updated or follow-up findings (after adding in additional years of data or making changes to analytic models, for example). In other words, findings or results should not be published without having first gone through the 30-day review process. Please ensure that you are submitting a clean, formatted version that has been proofread.

3. Can I send preliminary findings?

In instances where researchers are working closely with program staff at MDE, MiLEAP, or CEPI, MERI encourages researchers to submit preliminary findings to partners at these state agencies prior to finalizing the findings. Especially in the case of intensive researcher partnerships with MDE and MiLEAP program offices, sharing preliminary findings often helps improve the research product and enables policy-makers/practitioners to take action on the findings.

This does not, however, take the place of sending finalized results through the official 30-day review process. Once your findings are final, please send them along to MERI as soon as you are able, at which time MERI will review your findings within 30 days.

4. When does the 30-day review period begin? What if I send my research findings through for review and don't hear anything back within 30 days?

MDE, MiLEAP, and CEPI have reserved the right to review findings 30-days prior to them going public. The 30-day review period begins on the first business day following receipt of the findings by MERI partners, based on the

timestamp on the email transmitting the findings for review. Submissions sent to the MERI inbox will be forwarded to the appropriate MERI partners within one business day of receipt. Every effort is made to complete the review within the 30-day period. If additional time is needed, MERI will communicate that request to the researcher. If the departments do not provide feedback within the allotted time, the researcher may disseminate the findings sent for 30-day review.

5. Will MERI require updates to my research or prevent me from publicly disseminating the findings?

The comments, feedback, and questions sent to researchers by MDE, MiLEAP, and CEPI are meant to enhance the relevance and validity of findings. Therefore, researchers should aim to review the feedback provided by MERI partners thoughtfully and thoroughly and, to the extent possible, incorporate the feedback. In the case that something is found to be factually inaccurate, MERI partners may require an update from the researcher. For the vast majority of studies, however, this is not an issue. Feedback from the MERI partners is aimed at helping the researchers to accurately frame the policies and context surrounding their research findings.

6. What if I believe my study findings will be made public in multiple venues?

If you believe that your study findings will be made public in multiple venues, please include as much detail regarding the venues as possible in your initial 30-day review submission. **If, after your initial submission, you find out about additional venues where your findings may be made public, please notify MERI@miedresearch.org.**

7. What if my findings are picked up by various media outlets?

As soon as you are aware that a media outlet plans to include findings from your research, please notify MERI by email (including your study ID and an explanation in the body of the email).

In some cases, MERI and/or state agencies will publicize mentions of your research in the media to ensure that these critical findings are widely known and understood.

8. What if minor updates to my research findings are made? Am I required to go through a full 30-day review?

New findings always require review, even if related to prior work. If minor updates are made to your research findings of the initial review submission, send updated results to MERI via a **notification email**, clearly identifying and highlighting changes and providing an explanation of the minor revisions (refer to page 1 of this document for further details on highlighting changes to previously reviewed materials). If the updates to your findings lead to a meaningful change in the interpretation of the results, you must submit your findings for a new 30-day review following the requirements on page 1.

Examples of minor changes could include changes such as the way that results are displayed in a research product (table vs. bar chart, etc.), minor changes to the written explanation of the results, minor changes to the sample or specification that do not change results, and the like. Examples of meaningful changes include major updates to the underlying sample (e.g. additional years) or if the results change significantly. Other examples of meaningful change include updates to the policy or programmatic context of research results or the conclusions drawn by the research team. If researchers are uncertain as to whether a change is minor or meaningful, please contact MERI by email (MERI@miedresearch.org).

Finally, if research findings were reviewed by MERI more than a 12 months prior to publication, but are later being published in a professional journal (1+ years after MERI review) or likely to be picked up by public media outlets, researchers must send a **notification email** to MERI (including study ID number and where the results are likely to be made public).

9. My research is funded by a federal agency that insists on viewing results prior to any other dissemination. How can I comply with my federal agreement, as well as my MERI research agreement with the State of Michigan?

In cases like this, researchers may submit findings to MERI for 30-day review simultaneously with sharing them with federal sponsors. When submitting to MERI, please include details about the format and specific materials shared with federal sponsors. When sharing the findings with federal sponsors, ensure that all products are marked “confidential,” include all elements found in the screening checklist, and provide instructions to partners not to share broadly in any open or public forum. If presentations only contain data and no explanatory bullet points/slides/paragraphs, please include with your MERI submission a summary of findings.

All such federal funder requirements should be shared with MERI at the time of application.

10. What if I would like to vet initial findings in a learning setting? With my academic advisor, dissertation committee, or in a closed internal academic seminar?

Drafts of manuscripts or papers must be submitted to MERI 30 days in advance of the public release date. However, if you have a draft of your findings that you would like to share in a closed learning setting with collaborators internal to your home institution or advisors, you may do so prior to 30 day review under certain limited circumstances.

Student work: In the case of student papers and/or dissertations, any manuscript you plan to defend publicly should be submitted 30 days in advance of the public defense. Draft papers and dissertations should be submitted for 30-day review only **after** your advisor has reviewed and approved the manuscript. It is important to note that draft papers and dissertations must adhere to all cell suppression rules (details on page 1) and should not allow for the re-identification of any individuals in the sample population.

If updates or revisions of draft manuscripts are requested by a student's committee after the paper has been submitted for 30-day review, updated manuscripts can be sent along in the form of a notification email.

Other preliminary work: In the case of papers and/or presentations by both student and non-student researchers, preliminary findings may only be shared in closed internal learning environments prior to 30-day review (e.g., with colleagues or peers at your own institution). In these cases, researchers must clearly communicate to all participants (in the interview review) that findings (a) are preliminary and have yet to be vetted with State agencies, and (b) may not be shared outside of the closed seminar/learning environment, captured electronically, or shared on social media.

We suggest including the following language in any paper or presentation reviewed under such circumstances:

"This presentation/paper contains preliminary results and aggregate data from MERI. These results have not yet been vetted by State agencies. It is being shared in this educational setting in order to solicit feedback for improvement. Results may not be shared outside of this setting, captured electronically, or shared on social media."

11. What happens after findings are approved through the review process?

- Reviewed and approved findings can be disseminated without additional review if the findings remain unchanged. For findings that are presented in formats alternate to what was initially approved (i.e. briefs, conference presentations, etc.), researchers must provide a copy of the updated product to MERI prior to dissemination for record-keeping purposes.
- Disseminated findings must remain consistent with those reviewed and approved by the MERI partners and with the approved research scope, research questions, and analytic plan.
- Any new, revised, or updated findings require a new 30-day review.
- Non-compliance is a violation and may result in:
 - Termination of a current study and loss of MERI data access
 - Ineligibility to receive state administrative data in the future

12. Are researchers required to share final products with MERI?

Yes. Researchers must provide final published products (i.e., journal articles, briefs, conference presentations, etc.) to MERI. Please submit the final published products to MERI as they are completed. MERI publishes final research products, such as peer reviewed journal articles, working papers, policy briefs, defended dissertations, and final reports on its website. Our goal is to disseminate the research findings to stakeholders and the public, both within and outside of Michigan.

13. If a project has closed, do I still need to submit a product for 30-day review and send the final products to MERI?

Yes. Any updates to products developed using MERI data, even after the official close of a MERI project, must follow the protocols described above.