Standard Application Process (SAP)
How long does it take to review an application?

Interagency Council on Statistical Policy
Leaders of the United States Federal Statistical System

Standard Application Process

Application Types

The SAP is guided by policy memo M-23-04, issued by the Office of Management and Budget in December of 2022. This policy provides standard review timeframes that agencies must abide by when reviewing applications for restricted-use data. There are three application types, each with their own review timeframe.

▶ **Single-Agency Application: 12-week time limit**

  ■ *This is an application for data from one agency that has only one agency authorizer. This means that only one agency needs to review and approve your application. An example is the [National Census of Ferry Operators](#), where only one agency, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, is listed as the authorizer.*

▶ **Multi-Agency Application: 24-week time limit**
  There are two types of applications that fall into this category:

  ■ *An application for a dataset that has multiple authorizers within the SAP. An example is the [Longitudinal Business Database](#). This dataset has two authorizing agencies: the Census Bureau and the IRS Statistics of Income Division.*

  ■ *An application for datasets from multiple source agencies, where the source agency is the agency providing the data. An example would be an application that includes the [Annual Survey of U.S. Direct Investment Abroad](#) (source agency: Bureau of Economic Analysis) and the [Foreign Trade Data – Import dataset](#) (provided by the Census Bureau).*

▶ **Application with Non-SAP Participating Agency Authorizers: No time limit**

  ■ *This is an application for data with authorizers outside the SAP. An example would be the [State – SNAP and TANF – South Carolina](#) dataset, which has a state agency as an authorizer.*

Sources vs. Authorizers

These two terms are key to understanding how long an agency may take to review your application.

▶ **The Source** is the agency responsible for making the data available to researchers. This is where the data are located and securely stored.

▶ **The Authorizer** is the agency or organization that needs to approve your application. If a dataset lists multiple authorizers, you should allow time for multi-agency review (up to 24 weeks). If a dataset lists an authorizer that is not one of the SAP participating agencies, then this application is exempt from review timeframes.

If you have questions about your application, data or expected timeline for an application, contact the source agency, [contact the source agency.](#)

What to Expect

Agencies attempt to review applications as expeditiously as possible and frequently render a decision before the end of the timeframe. For applications with no time limit, agencies work with the authorizer to render a decision as quickly as possible.

Occasionally, an agency may require an extension. In those rare cases, the agency will contact you to keep you apprised of the application progress.

How To: Determine If an Agency Has More Than One Authorizer

On ResearchDataGov.org:

1. **Search for Datasets:** You can find datasets on ResearchDataGov.org by:

- *Selecting an agency from the list*
- *Choosing a topic*
- *Typing a keyword in the search bar*

2. **Pick a Dataset:** Once you get the search results, select the dataset you're interested in.

3. **Check for Authorizing Agencies:** Look for the "Authorizer(s)" section on the dataset's "Metadata: Identification Summary" page.

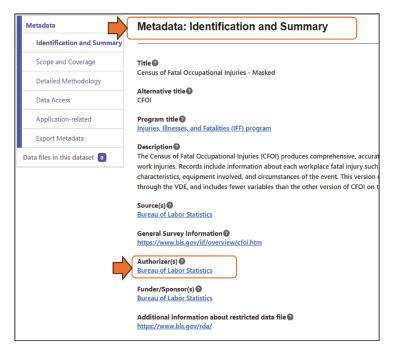4. **Find the Approving Agencies:** This section lists all the agencies and organizations that need to approve applications before you can access the data. As shown in Figure 1, this section lists all the agencies and organizations that need to approve applications before you can access the data.

Figure 1: An image of the Metadata: Identification and Summary page

Visit https://ncses.nsf.gov/about/standard-application-process to learn more about the SAP and support our efforts for the future of evidence building.