

Data Users and the Commonwealth Arrangements

Data users (researchers), are those who propose a project and are involved in accessing and investigating the integrated dataset, at the unit record level, for research. The arrangements for data integration, involving Commonwealth data, for statistical and research purposes (the Commonwealth arrangements), provide data users with a clear framework in which to do this.

This Information Sheet provides a summary of the roles and responsibilities of data users within the Commonwealth arrangements.

Initiating a data integration project

To initiate a data integration project involving Commonwealth data for statistical or research purposes (a project), data users should prepare a project proposal for consideration by the data custodian(s) (see Information Sheet 4). The project proposal can be developed in consultation with the data custodian(s) and/or, where appropriate, an integrating authority (the agency that manages, and is ultimately accountable for, the sound conduct of the project, see Information Sheet 5).

A project proposal template is available in [a Guide for Data Integration Projects Involving Commonwealth Data for Statistical and Research Purposes](#).

When proposing a project, it is important to take into account the public benefit (e.g. social, economic and/or environmental benefit) that can be derived. A project should only occur where the public good outweighs the privacy imposition and risks to confidentiality. Under the Commonwealth arrangements, data users may work with the nominated integrating authority and the data custodian(s) to finalise the details of the project.

Access to integrated data - preserving privacy and confidentiality

To ensure the risks of potential disclosure of identifiable information are minimised, the integrating authority has responsibility to provide data users with secure access to the integrated dataset, for example, via an on-site or remote access data laboratory.

Data user roles within the Commonwealth arrangements

- Role 1 • Develop research proposals that produce significant overall public benefit**
- Role 2 • Collaborate with the integrating authority and data custodian(s) to get projects approved**
- Role 3 • Enter into agreements with integrating authorities to ensure the safe management and use of datasets**
- Role 4 • Access integrated datasets through secure arrangements in order to conduct analysis for statistical and research purposes**
- Role 5 • Liaise with data custodians on the valid uses of integrated datasets**

To access the integrated dataset, the data user will enter into an agreement with the integrating authority. This agreement will set out the requirements for accessing the integrated dataset and producing outputs. The conditions and nature of access may vary from project to project, according to the requirements of data custodians.

Generally, the integrating authority will provide the data user with access to integrated data once it has been de-identified and/or confidentialised, in line with the requirements of data custodians.

High Level Principle Six - Preserving Privacy and Confidentiality recommends that data users only be given access to identified or potentially identifiable data where: legislation allows; it is necessary to achieve the approved purpose of the projects; and the data custodians agree.

A checklist for data users

This is a list of considerations for data users who are planning to undertake a data integration project involving Commonwealth data for statistical or research purposes.

Project proposal

- ✓ Is your project in [scope of the Commonwealth arrangements](#) for data integration and does it offer public benefit that will outweigh the imposition to privacy.
- ✓ Have you consulted with [data custodians](#) to clarify details for the project (particularly in relation to the data items required for the project)?
- ✓ Do you have sufficient funding to meet any fee for service or cost recovery charges?
- ✓ Have you prepared and submitted a [project proposal](#) for in principle approval by data custodians, including all relevant details (e.g. listing of responsible officers and researchers, summary project description and objectives, expected outputs, data access arrangements, the required datasets and data items and possible time frames)?

Final approval

- ✓ Do you understand your obligations regarding the protection of [confidentiality](#) and privacy and the consequences if there is a misuse of data or a breach of privacy?
 - ✓ Have you entered into a [data access agreement with the integrating authority](#) to set out the conditions and arrangements for accessing the integrated data for research and analysis, including any special conditions required by the data custodian for this project?
 - ✓ Have all researchers who will access the data signed confidentiality undertakings required by the integrating authority or the data custodian?
- ✓ Have you obtained [Ethics Committee](#) approval for the project (if required)?

Project delivery

- ✓ Have all researchers completed any required training?
- ✓ Has the integrated data been received from the integrating authority and verified for completeness?
- ✓ Have you given the data custodians the opportunity to review the research results prior to publication, (if required)?
- ✓ Have you destroyed or returned the integrated data to the integrating authority following publication of the project findings, in accordance with the agreement?
- ✓ Do you have any documented feedback to provide to the integrating authority (e.g. procedural or data quality issues)?