iPHD Expedited Application Review Policy for Approved Peer-Reviewed Research

Statement of Purpose

This policy establishes an expedited review pathway for iPHD data applications previously approved through a formal peer-reviewed process. This policy applies to, but is not limited to, federally funded mechanisms within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality (AHRQ) (see Attachment 1).

Goals

The goals of this policy are to facilitate an expedited review of applications to enable more timely access to iPHD data and to meet the needs of rigorously reviewed and approved applications while maintaining the highest standard of scientific quality, data security, legal compliance, and alignment with purposes of the iPHD and its approved research priorities.

For previously peer-reviewed and approved applications, timely data access is critical to meet project timelines and fulfill deliverables. These projects have already undergone rigorous scientific review by subject matter and methodological experts, rendering iPHD research review redundant. Given current uncertainties in the research approval and funding environment, delays in accessing data can have substantial negative consequences.

This policy aims to:

- Increase the number of iPHD applications that have been approved and funded through competitive mechanisms, such as the NIH, by expediting data release;
- Expand funding sources to facilitate payment of iPHD data fees and enhance financial sustainability of the iPHD project;
- Incentivize established researchers to apply for and use iPHD data;
- Elevate iPHD reputation nationally;
- Increase operational efficiency and eliminate workflow redundancy in the iPHD;
- Promote New Jersey research institutions as leaders in social science research, as authorized by P.L.2015, c.193; codified at N.J.S.A. C.30:4D-65 to -72, to facilitate actionable population health research to help improve health outcomes for New Jersey residents, as well as promote New Jersey's research institutions as leaders in social science research.

Scope

This policy applies only to the iPHD Research Review Process. It does not waive or modify iPHD requirements or policies related to data governance, security, or alignment with the purpose of the iPHD or its approved research priorities.

Eligibility Criteria

iPHD applications are eligible for expedited review only when**:**

1) Rutgers CSHP confirms previous approval through a formal, substantial peer-reviewed mechanism equivalent to procedures for review of competitive federal grant proposals to the NIH, NSF, or AHRQ;

2) Rutgers CSHP confirms consistency with the scope of work approved in the approved peer-reviewed proposal;

3) Rutgers CSHP confirms and iPHD Governing Board approves technical feasibility under all current data linkage policies and practices as assessed by the iPHD team; and

4) iPHD Governing Board approves alignment with the purpose of the iPHD and its approved research priorities.

Applications that do not meet expedited review criteria will be directed to the standard RRC process.

Application Requirements and Submission Process

Applicants must submit all required documents by 5:00 PM EST on the first Friday of each month to be considered at the subsequent month's iPHD Governing Board meeting, including:

1. A completed iPHD Application and Data Request Form;
2. Research narrative, project description, or abstract from the approved peer-reviewed application;
3. Notice of award (NOA) from a formal, peer-reviewed mechanism;
4. For applications awarded by entities other than the NIH, NSF, or AHRQ, a statement demonstrating equivalency to federal peer-reviewed procedures.

Submitted applications will be considered and reviewed on a rolling basis.

Decision Authority

The Governing Board continues to retain full authority to approve, deny, or require that an application be submitted for full review by the Research Review Committee (RRC) should questions remain. Agencies contributing data to the iPHD may also require separate technical reviews by their subject matter experts when their data is being requested.

Requirements post iPHD Governing Board approval

Upon approval, applicants must adhere to the standard procedures to ensure compliance with data use and financial requirements. The following documents will be required prior to data transfer:

- Executed Data Use Agreement (DUA) including the Data Management Plan (DMP);
- Copies of all IRB documentation, including initial and continuing review (if applicable) approvals with FWA#;
- Data fee payment (if applicable).

Policy Implementation Timeline

This policy takes effect on March 1, 2026. Applications meeting the criteria may be submitted on a rolling basis beginning on this date.

Attachment 1

Comparative Peer Review Rigor: NIH, NSF, and AHRQ

All three agencies employ rigorous, multi-stage peer review processes with expert panels, written critiques, strict conflict controls, and highly competitive selection - ensuring only the highest-quality research receives federal funding.

Rigor Indicator	NIH	NSF	AHRQ
Review Panel Size	**20-30 experts**	**5-20 experts**	**22-26 experts**
Assigned Reviewers Per Application	3 (primary, secondary, discussant)	3-10 (min. 3 required)	3
Detailed Written Critiques Required	Yes - structured by criteria	Yes - strengths/weaknesses	Yes - structured format
Scoring System	1-9 scale + percentile ranking	Qualitative ratings (Excellent to Poor)	1-9 scale + percentiles
Core Review Criteria	3 criteria: Importance, Rigor & Feasibility, Expertise (2025)	2 criteria: Intellectual Merit + Broader Impacts	5 criteria: Significance, Investigator(s), Innovation, Approach, and Environment
Second-Level Review	**Yes - Advisory Council**	No formal council stage	**Yes - National Advisory Council**
Conflict of Interest Controls	Strict federal screening	Strict federal screening	Strict federal screening
Funding Success Rate	**~20%**	**~24-26%**	**28% overall**
Submission to Decision Timeline	7-10 months	~6 months	6-9 months