



Checklist for Justifying Data Collection Activities

Manage and coordinate data-related activities to focus available resources where they are most needed, and in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. Additionally, processes must be put into place for deciding which data collection and reporting initiatives to pursue. Before data collection begins, agencies need not only to define the collection, but also to identify and justify collection activities, to ensure that the data are necessary, not redundant, and will be collected in a manner that allows effective use and interoperability.

Agencies can use the following checklist to determine whether a data collection is justified:

- ✓ Document the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary, including any legal or administrative requirements.
- ✓ Indicate as specifically as possible how, by whom, and for what purpose the data will be used.
- ✓ Determine whether available data can be used to meet an emerging information need before initiating a new collection.
- ✓ Identify required data collection activities, as well as the accuracy and specificity necessary to achieve collection objectives.
- ✓ Analyze the costs and benefits of the proposed data collection to the producer and provider and, where appropriate, the costs of alternative strategies.
- ✓ Review the terminology and data definitions to be used in the data collection to ensure that they conform to accepted use. Use common terms and definition whenever possible to ensure that the data produced will be comparable to data produced by education agencies and organizations at the federal, state, district, and school levels.
- ✓ Document data providers' concerns and data requestors' responses to those concerns.

For more best practices and additional checklists on data collection and reporting, see the *Forum Guide to Strategies for Education Data Collection and Reporting (SEDCAR)* (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2021013.asp).