External Investigator Guide to Doing Research at the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago

As part of the Museum’s mission to “inspire the inventive genius in everyone…”, the Museum welcomes external investigators who wish to conduct research related to Museum programs or spaces. However, in order to protect the interests of our Guests we have adopted a set of guidelines and procedures to ensure a positive experience for everyone.

Guidelines and Requirements

All research has to adhere to the following:

- Human subjects research must be prior approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). An approval letter and the full application must be submitted to the Museum. If the research involves children or staff of Chicago Public Schools visiting as part of a school activity, then CPS RRB approval is also needed. The Museum can submit a provisional letter of support to the researcher if required by their IRB. But final approval requires their own IRB approval.
- All researchers with direct contact with Guests or data collected about Guests must have current CITI or NIH certification.
- All researchers directly interacting with Guests must participate in an external research orientation session (covers issues such as what to do in a fire drill, how to call for assistance, etc.).
- Reflecting the fact that this is an informal learning environment, consent forms must be short, simple and direct. We request that they be no more than a page in length, devoid of dense, legal jargon and include logos from MSI and the researching institution. MSI has a library of consent form templates available for researchers which comply with both MSI and Federal consent form guidelines. If MSI guidelines conflict with the institution’s own guidelines, then MSI should be contacted in advance to negotiate a solution.
- Food or drink cannot be offered to Guests at any time.
- All signage must be approved by Museum in advance.
- Any report of results that includes enough information to identify the Museum as a partner must be approved by the Museum before publication.
- For any publication associated with the project, the Museum must have prior approval over how the Museum and any activities within the Museum are described.
- A final report or summary of findings must be shared with the Museum within a year of the end of the project. The External Investigator must be available to present the results in person or via teleconference, if requested. The Museum will not share any findings with external parties without prior approval from the External Researcher.

In general, Museum environments are different than many traditional social research environments. Please plan your data collection process to be as interesting, inviting and quick as possible. And, above all, be respectful of Guests and their time. Some suggestions:

- Prepare something for parents and siblings to do during the data collection process. This may include an easy-to-read handout describing your research and background, science magazines,

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1 CPS RRB Web Site: http://www.cps.edu/research/Pages/Research.aspx
games, science-themed coloring or sticker books, or just have someone available to talk to parents.

- Parents greatly appreciate a place to sit. We have found that alone is a powerful recruitment incentive.
- At any time, the Evaluation & Research Team can be contacted with questions or requests. During business hours, call Aaron Price, Manager of Evaluation & Research, at (773) 947-3101 or Bryn Pernot, Evaluation & Research Coordinator, at (773) 753-6212. Outside of business hours, e-mail msiresearch@msichicago.org.

**Pre-Submission Checklist**

The following is a list of some of the areas that are more commonly referred back to the researcher for changes or clarification.

- **Consent form**
  - Does it include all of the federally defined elements of consent\(^2\)?
  - Is it written in easily understandable language and not excessively verbose?
  - Are both parents and children provided a consent and assent forms, respectively?
- **Recruitment and Incentives**
  - Is food included in the recruitment? (Food is not allowed on the Museum floor.)
  - Are the recruitment times and location consistent with the recruitment goals? (For example, are school-aged children being recruited during school hours?)
  - Is signage professionally produced (proper grammar and spelling, identification of sponsoring institution, clear design and layout, etc.)
- **Research Staff**
  - Are all research staff who will be on site identified and do they have up-to-date CITI or NIH human subjects research certifications?
- **Research Materials**
  - Are all instruments and consent forms that will be used in the study included?

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\(^2\) [http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.116](http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.116)