

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 (which lists MSI as a data collection location) 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 approval¹ is also needed.
- 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 Investigator.

Process

The first step for collecting data at MSI requires a discussion with the Research and Evaluation team to go over this document and so we can learn more about your research. When you are ready to proceed, we will ask for your IRB application and approval letter. We will check the application to make sure that MSI is listed as a data collection location and that the protocol in general meets our guidelines. We will review these materials within two works of receipt. Once the project is approved, we will schedule a training session for any researchers planning to collect data at MSI. We also request that the principal

¹ CPS RRB Web Site: <http://www.cps.edu/research/Pages/Research.aspx>

investigator attend at least one training session as well. These sessions are typically held monthly, but specific times can be scheduled for large groups. At this point, we can begin scheduling the data collection times (however, data collection cannot take place until all participants have been trained). We try to schedule collection times about 2-3 months in advance. There is a lot of demand for data collection times at MSI and we only allow one research group on the floor at a time.

Tips

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, 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 Natalie Harris, Evaluation & Research Coordinator, at (773) 753-7089 or Aaron Price, Director of Research & Evaluation, at (773) 947-3101 (texting works well outside of normal business hours). You can also e-mail natalie.harris@msichicago.org or aaron.price@msichicago.org.
- Attendance rates vary across the year, but in general MSI is busiest on days that Chicago Public Schools (CPS) are not in session. This includes weekends, summer months, holiday breaks, etc. Consult the CPS calendar for more information.

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 forms
 - 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?
 - Is the full IRB application and approval letter included?