



Administrative Data  
Research Network

An ESRC Data  
Investment

# FEASIBILITY CRITERIA

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*Assessing the feasibility of an ADRN project proposal*

**PUBLIC**

11 November 2014

Version: 01.01

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## Scope

This document outlines the set of criteria that will be adopted by the Approvals Panel to assess the feasibility of an ADRN research project proposal.

## Definition of Terms

See the ADRN Glossary (ADRN018) for definitions of the terms included in this procedure.

# 1. Background

The Approvals Panel (AP, henceforth “the Panel”) is responsible for reviewing each project proposal applying to access sensitive data through the ADRN. The Panel will assess the suitability of each project proposal on the basis of the following criteria:

- ▶ Ethical review
- ▶ Potential privacy impact
- ▶ Feasibility
- ▶ Scientific merit
- ▶ Potential public benefit

The Administrative Data Service (ADS) is responsible for providing the Panel with a preliminary assessment of the potential privacy implications and the feasibility issues in the form of a report (henceforth “the Report”). The Report will be part of the official documentation that ADS **submits** to the Panel for all project applications.

The Report is generally **produced** by ADS and ADRC(s) staff, depending on the nature of the research and on the kind of data required. However, to ensure an equal and fair treatment for all researchers, all the project applications - either internal or external - and the related documentation will have to be submitted to the Panel by the ADS, who in these circumstances acts on behalf of the whole Network.

The present document outlines the set of criteria and process that will be adopted by the ADRN and the Panel when assessing the feasibility of a project proposal. More specifically, it first defines the criteria and the workflow of the process (1), and then provides a template of the Report that will form the basis of the Report submitted by ADS to the Approvals Panel (2).

**Note** that when assessing the level of feasibility of a project, ADRN will consider applications where the requested data is not already available elsewhere *and* there is a demonstrable value in terms of research and public benefit in the use of individual unit level data. (See ADRN901 – Definition of an ADRN project)

Any assessment of feasibility presented to the Approval Panel should be considered indicative rather than definitive, as the assessment is made at a relatively early stage in the project preparation process. There may be instances where the process of undertaking detailed data negotiations demonstrates that projects, which have been approved, subsequently prove to be unfeasible. If the Panel feels that the evidence base for the feasibility report is insufficient the Panel may request further information.

## 2. Feasibility criteria

A project submitted to ADRN will be considered **feasible** if it sufficiently satisfies the following criteria:

### F1. There is a need for the ADRN service, i.e.

**F1.1** The data exist

**F1.2** There is no clear legal barrier to the proposed data sharing

**F1.3** There isn't a less disclosive source that can support the research project

**F1.4** There is no existing official statistical source or output that already provides the information required by the research question

*If any of these conditions are not satisfied ADRN will try to discuss with the lead researcher a set of possible alternative data sources that may support the research needs.*

### F2. ADRN can support your research, i.e.

**F2.1** The data can be provided and/or the linkage can be carried out in a way that supports the research question.

It may be useful to consider:

- ▶ Has the researcher provided enough information to allow negotiation with data providers to begin?
- ▶ Are there any fixed limitations on data access which will make the research unviable?
- ▶ Is there a clear legal barrier to the proposed data sharing?

**F2.2** The resources required by the project are available given the existing demand and capacity of the ADRCs (including whether a given dataset can be made available via a specific ADRC).

**F2.3** A preliminary assessment of the research team's relevant experience will be undertaken. This assessment, taken alongside information on the complexity of the project, and on the training opportunities provided by the ADRCs will be used to inform decisions on project feasibility.

*If these conditions are satisfactorily met then ADRN will explore the possible linkage and access opportunities available within the network. Otherwise, ADRN will review the research proposal with the lead researcher and signpost them to alternative services or data sources if appropriate.*

### F3. ADRN meets the researcher's requirements

**F3.1** The list of Administrative Data Research Centres (ADRCs) that could potentially be assigned to the project satisfies the research team requirements in terms of safe setting locations.

**F3.2** The lead researcher - on behalf of the whole research team - agrees with the expected safe setting access conditions.

**F3.3** The expected length of the data application process can be accommodated within the planned project duration.

**F3.4** The research team involved in the project proposal agrees with the training requirements and calendar.

**F3.5** Overall the research team commits to abiding by all ADRN requirements and policies.

**F3.6** It is likely that the resources to undertake the project will be in place for an adequate period to allow for sufficient time for data negotiation, training and access (NB: *An ADRN project may take in excess of 12 months to develop and for access to data to be negotiated. It will be important that, wherever possible, the ADRN can be satisfied that the research team will be in place, and able to carry out their work, even if there is a significant time gap between application and researchers gaining access to data*).

### 3. ADRN Feasibility Report Template (v00.07)

*(to be completed by ADRN staff)*

Title	project title
Application received on	date
Application submitted to the Approvals Panel on	date
Completed by	person (organisation)

The Administrative Data Research Network has undertaken a review of the feasibility of the research project proposal no. *project application number*. *On the basis of the information available on the date*, the Administrative Data Research Network makes the following comments regarding the feasibility of this project:

*Overview commentary of the feasibility of the project and summary of the main concerns/areas where work will be required (if relevant)*

## PART 1. NEED FOR THE ADRN SERVICE

### F1.1 Administrative data sources requested and linkage details

*name, data owner (geographical coverage): time period  
linkage identifiers and key variables*

### F1.2 Alternative data sources, related existing Official Statistics or relevant outputs

Space to justify any concern regarding alternative data access possibilities  
*Alternative data source: name, data owner (geographical coverage): time period – type of access/disclosure level  
Type of statistics: information provided, author, source, frequency of publication, how it relates to the research question*

Is there is a need for the ADRN service?	
Is there any legal pathway to access the data?	YES/NO
Is there a demonstrable benefit from the use of individual level de-identified administrative data?	YES/NO
Can the linkage be done in a way to support the project proposal?	YES/NO
Is there a less disclosive/sensitive data source or information that can alternatively support the research question?	YES/NO

## PART 2. ADRN SUPPORT TO THE PROJECT

### F2.1 Data provision and linkage appropriateness

*Description of the process  
Methodological information, as for instance:  
▷ Which variables and level of detail are needed  
▷ Which personal and sensitive variables are required for the analysis  
▷ Which variables would be possible to access from the linked dataset  
TTP options*

### F2.2 Resources required

*Assessment of the complexity of the research project with respect of the capacity and availability of the Administrative Data Research Centres*

### F2.3 Preliminary research team skills review

*Audit of the analytical and quantitative skills of the research team involved in the project proposal*

Can ADRN adequately support the research proposal?	
Is there sufficient evidence that the data can be provided and the linkage be carried out in support of the research question?	YES/NO
Would the project be feasible in terms of resources available within the ADRN?	YES/NO
Would the research team involved be able to successfully accomplish the research project proposed, taking into consideration the capacity building and the training opportunities available in the ADRN?	YES/NO

## **PART 3. ADRN CAPACITY & RESEARCHER NEEDS**

### **F3.1 ADRC options and available access conditions**

*ADRC's possible choices and safe setting locations*  
*Expected Safe settings access conditions and restrictions*  
*Researchers preferences*

### **F3.2 Other ADRN requirements and policies**

*Availability and concerns of the research team to fulfil the ADRN requirements and policies*  
*Estimated length of the data access process*  
*Training conditions and calendar*  
*User Agreement and Breaches Policy*

<b>Can ADRN meet the project proposal &amp; researcher's requirements?</b>	
Is the research team aware of the possible data access scenarios and willing to preliminarily agree to the ADRN' set of conditions?	YES/NO
Can the expected length of the data application process be accommodated within the planned project duration?	YES/NO
Are there any concerns regarding the skills and resources associated to the project (e.g. training requirements, funding coverage)?	YES/NO