Overview of GA•AWARDS
Georgia’s Academic and Workforce Analysis and Research Data System

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Agenda

• GOSA Overview
• GA•AWARDS Background and Information
• External Researcher Request Process
• Questions and Feedback
GOSA Overview

The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) strives to increase student achievement and school completion across Georgia through meaningful, transparent, and objective analysis and communication of statewide data. It accomplishes this goal through:

• An education report card indicating the effectiveness of Georgia's P-20 education institutions;
• Research initiatives on education programs in Georgia and corresponding findings to inform policy, budget, and legislative efforts;
• Thorough analysis and straightforward communication of education data to stakeholders;
• Audits of academic programs;
• Innovative programs such as the Race to the Top Innovation Fund, Governor’s Honors Program, and the Governor’s Reading Mentor Program.
The Need for a P-20W Data Warehouse

• The Alliance of Education Agency Heads identified the need for cross-agency reporting to support school systems, universities and education leadership in analyzing data, informing policy, and making improvements.

• Through Race to the Top in 2010, Georgia received funding to $18 million over four years to build a P-20 longitudinal data system, which became known as GA•AWARDS.

• GOSA was selected to house GA•AWARDS.

• **GA•AWARDS Vision:** A data repository containing quality information that researchers want to utilize to analyze data, inform policy, and implement improvements for student success in education and workforce development in the State of Georgia.
GA•AWARDS Participating Entities

- Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)
- Georgia Department of Education (DOE)
- State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC)
- Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC)
- Professional Standards Commission (PSC)
- Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG)
- University System of Georgia (USG)
- Georgia Independent College Association (GICA)
- Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA)
  - College Board, ACT, and National Student Clearinghouse
- Georgia Department of Labor (DOL)
GA•AWARDS Governance

Data Governance Committee
(Alliance of Agency Heads)

Data Management Committee
(Leadership from Participating Agencies)

GA Awards Manager – Jackie Lundberg

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Support Staff =

- Research Group (Users of GA Awards – Report Drivers)
- Data Leads (Data owners)
- Business Intelligence Group (Report Support)
- Data Stewards (Manage data corrections)
GA•AWARDS Basics

Data for a purpose
• Each of the over 200 data elements are determined specifically in support of researcher-defined questions.
• The system currently holds seven years of data, 2007-2013, but we are currently processing 2014 data.

Standardized and Consistent Person Matching
• Persons are matched via defined rules and trust values consistently across sources and over time.
GA•AWARDS Basics (continued)

De-identified data
• All personally identifiable information (PII) is removed immediately after person matching and a unique ID is applied.

Defined user group
• Each participating organization has identified designated researchers to utilize the data.
External Research Request Process

• In summer 2014, GOSA convened a working group of the lead researcher from each participating entity to develop an external request process for de-identified, student-level data.
• The group has met monthly for the last six months to develop a process that meets the following criteria:
  ▪ Increase high-quality use of Georgia education data
  ▪ Maximize data security
  ▪ Protect privacy
  ▪ Maintain public trust
  ▪ Ensure appropriate use of education data accessed through process
  ▪ Minimize work burden for agency staff, where possible
State Strategic Goals

• Increase percentage of students reading at or above grade level by the completion of 3rd Grade – a strategic benchmark for lifelong learning
• Increase percentage of Georgians who hold a postsecondary credential
• Improve and expand science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education
• Increase teacher and school leader effectiveness
• Increase the percentage of high school graduates who are college and career ready
• Empower citizens with public school options and local flexibility for the purpose of improving student achievement
External Research Request Process (cont’d)

Eligibility
  • Access will be limited to authorized researchers at an institution within GICA, TCSG, or USG.
  • Data cannot be requested for use in dissertations or theses.

Prioritization
  • Requests must involve data from more than one participating entity to be eligible.
  • Requests that align with GA•AWARDS Research Questions or the state strategic goals will receive priority.
External Research Request Process (cont’d)

High-Level Overview of Data Available

• Pre-K participation and number of months attended
• K-12 and postsecondary student characteristics
  ▪ Demographics and classifications
  ▪ Course-taking (enrollment, course information, grades)
  ▪ HOPE eligibility and award
  ▪ Diplomas, certifications, and degrees
  ▪ Applicable state assessments (CRCT, EOCT, GHSWT)
  ▪ Applicable national assessments (SAT, ACT, AP)
• K-12 educators
  ▪ Demographics
  ▪ Credentials and assessments
  ▪ Length of service
• Unemployment data (industry type, quarterly wages)
External Research Request Process (cont’d)
External Research Request Process (cont’d)

Application Components

- Lead researcher contact information and curriculum vitae
- IRB approval evidence
- Project description, research question(s), purpose, and intended audience
- Alignment with GA•AWARDS research questions and/or state strategic goals
- Project timeline
- Methodology description
- Variables requested with justification for each variable
- Information on other individuals who will access data
- Confidentiality and Data Use Agreement
- Certificate of Data Destruction
External Research Request Process (cont’d)
External Research Request Process (cont’d)

Feasibility Review Rubric

To be completed by GOSA staff

- Existence of data element(s)
- Analysis required to extract the data
- Problems with the existing data
- Data availability
- Processing time
Substantive Review Rubric

To be completed by the designated researcher from each entity with data involved in the request

- Alignment with state strategic goals and/or GA•AWARDS research questions
- Evidence of understanding of requested data elements
- Clarity of research question(s)
- Appropriateness of study design to answer research question(s)
- Research and writing competency (CV for all involved researchers)
- Overall Contribution to Research
External Research Request Process (cont’d)
Executive Researcher Meetings

- Executive Researcher Committee will meet quarterly
- Requests will be scored independently and then discussed at quarterly meetings.
- Each request will have one of three outcomes:
  - Approve
    - Researchers at all entities with data involved in the request must approve the request for it to proceed.
  - Revise
    - Applicant will have the opportunity to revise the application and return for review at the next Executive Researcher meeting.
  - Deny
    - Applicant must submit a new application for any future consideration.
External Research Request Process (cont’d)

If approved, the following steps occur:

• Data Usage Agreement execution
• Prioritization of request fulfillment based upon GOSA staff workload and other pending requests
• GOSA communication with approved applicant of the schedule to data access
• Data transfer via secure FTP site
• Researchers must provide 30-day notification of any publication or journal submission involving data
• Data must be destroyed or returned to GOSA once study is completed
External Research Request Process (cont’d)

Timeline

- December 2014-Entities complete data validation for 2014 data load
- January 2015-GOSA completes revised data dictionary
- February 2015-GOSA pilots external request process with a researcher
- Spring/Summer 2015-GOSA opens application process on its website

*Please note that the external research request process is still under development and therefore will have adjustments prior to completion.*
Questions and Feedback

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http://gosa.georgia.gov
GA•AWARDS – Technical Security Measures

Physical Security

- Data is hosted at the University System of Georgia (USG) Tier 3 Data Center (dual electric feeds, USB and natural gas generator auxiliary power, fire suppression, local and remote backup storage).
- Physical access is restricted to authorized USG persons per Tier 3 Data Center Standards (named person authorization, access card and door code, no local terminal access).
GA•AWARDS – Technical Security Measures

Digital Data Security

- Data are encrypted in transit.
- PII is encrypted at rest via Oracle Table and Column space encryption.
- Data are only accepted from known and authenticated IP addresses with associated credential (agency user name and password).
- Database is de-identified before use.
- The PII is only maintained in the person matching environment with very limited access by persons identified by participating agencies and who have signed FERPA data use statements.
Data Steward Access

- The PII is accessible by Participating Agency Data Stewards to review and resolve person matching where there is a near match between two records from different agencies.
- Data Stewards must be recommended by their agency CIO/Data Management Committee (DMC) Member and approved by the entire DMC.
- Data Stewards must attend training for the use of the tool and properties of the person matching process and sign a FERPA data use policy statement.
GA•AWARDS – Policy Security Measures

Research

• There is a multi-agency Data Sharing Agreement that defines general sharing of data and a Use Agreement that defines specific use of the data within GA•AWARDS.

• Data may only be utilized at the aggregate level for external data use and may be utilized at the student level only with permission from all agencies whose data are involved.

• Researchers must be recommended by their agency CIO/Data Management Committee (DMC) Member and approved by the entire DMC.