

Guide to Preregistration in External Registries

The OES project process includes preregistering an analysis plan on our team’s own website, but for some projects we wish to go further and preregister the analysis plan — and often additional details about project background and study design — in an external registry such as the [AEA registry](#), the [OSF registry](#), or [ClinicalTrials.gov](#). There are various reasons for this, the most common being that it is required for later publication in a particular academic journal. This document describes our process for preregistering in an external registry.

Guiding Principles

Clearance Through Project Process Gates

All information about study design and analysis to be posted in an external registry must first have been vetted through the appropriate gates in our project process. In particular:

- Details about study design should not be registered externally until they have successfully cleared our [Design Review](#) gate, including review by two team members and confirmation from the Methods Lead that the gate has been cleared.
- Details about the planned analysis should not be registered externally until they have successfully cleared our [Analysis Plan Commitment](#) gate, including consensus with the reanalyst and confirmation from the Methods Lead that the gate has been cleared.

Clearance by OES Management, GSA, and Agency Partners

Like all project information that we release publicly, material to be posted in an external registry must be reviewed and cleared by the OES Director, the GSA Office of Strategic Communications, and our agency partners. This is more than an administrative requirement; it’s important for maintaining good collaborative relationships both within our home agency and with our agency partners.

Keep in mind that, although analysis plans are reviewed for external posting as a normal part of our project process, external preregistrations often require substantial additional information about project background and study design. **It is important to give the OES Director, GSA Comms, and the agency partner ample time to review this additional content.** We recommend starting this process as early as possible.

We also recommend going through reviews and clearance simultaneously with other similar project activities (for example, if a draft Analysis Plan is required as a project deliverable under an Interagency Agreement (IAA)). These reviews can be time consuming, and we very much hope to minimize the burden on all parties and speed the project through these requirements.

Clear the Analysis Plan Commitment Gate Prior to Launch

Unlike some preregistration protocols, our project process does not require that the Analysis Plan be locked down prior to launching the project. We require instead that the Project Design Document be finalized (via our Design Review gate) before launch, and the Analysis Plan can be finalized and posted later, as long as it is done prior to working with outcome data. This is to allow for cases in which crafting the Analysis Plan requires information that is unavailable at the time of project launch.

If a project is to be preregistered in an external registry, however, the Analysis Plan Commitment gate should also be cleared before project launch, so that details contained in the Analysis Plan, including primary outcome variables and planned statistical tests, are approved and can be included in the external preregistration. Often an external preregistration requires making additional details public prior to the project launch, either because the registry itself requires these details or because the journal that requires preregistration specifies that these details should be included.

Transferring Information to a Registry Form or Template

Some registries allow us to upload our own Project Design Document and/or Analysis Plan, but other registries require that information be transferred into a registry-specific form or template. When transferring information into a form or template, be mindful of adding any information that is not explicitly contained in our own Project Design Document and Analysis Plan. Any information not contained in our own documents has not been cleared through our Design Review and Analysis Plan Commitment gates and needs to be separately reviewed and approved by the OES Director, the Methods Lead, and the relevant Portfolio Lead. **When delivering documents for review and approval, please explicitly flag any material that does not come directly from the Project Design Document and Analysis Plan.**

Concrete Steps for Submitting to an External Registry

1. Generate and finalize all required content through the normal OES Project Process. Required content likely includes details about both the study design and the planned analysis, so generating and finalizing content likely means clearing both the Design Review gate and the Analysis Plan Commitment gate. Details about these gates can be found in the OES Project Process Guide, in the Quick Guides for these two gates, and in the templates for the Project Design Document and the Analysis Plan.
2. If necessary, transfer any required information to a registry form or template.
3. Provide any material to be posted in the external registry to the OES Director, the Methods Lead, the Strategy and Operations Lead, and the relevant Portfolio Lead. Coordinate with these folks on getting these materials reviewed and cleared by GSA Comms and by the agency partner — if

possible, in conjunction with other similar project activities such as reviewing an Analysis Plan or other deliverable under an IAA.¹ Allow two weeks for these reviews.

4. Once the OES management team, GSA Comms, and the agency partner have approved, the preregistration can be posted to the external registry.
5. Copy a link to the preregistration into the OES Project Tracker, in the column labeled “Preregistration in External Registry (link, or NA).”
6. At this point, the Analysis Plan should also be posted to the OES website (per our standard project process). (Please refer to [this guide](#) for uploading Analysis Plans on the website.) A sentence should be added to the text on the project webpage: “This project has also been preregistered in the [name of external registry] [here](#) [include link directly to the project preregistration, if possible].”

Appendix: Tips from Team Members on Specific Registries

OES team members: Please add lessons learned, tips, and OES examples in this section.

AEA Registry

The AEA RCT Registry can be found at www.socialscienceregistry.org. Registering an RCT means providing about [18 pieces of information](#), including outcomes of interest and a description of the experimental design. Note that a full analysis plan is not required as part of the registration but can be uploaded separately.

Examples of OES projects registered on the AEA Registry:

- Communicating Program Eligibility: A Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Field Experiment () ([here](#))
- Increasing immunization compliance among schools and daycare centers in D.C. () ([here](#))
- Increasing Take-up of the American Opportunity Tax Credit () ([here](#))
- Increasing Effectiveness of Family Planning Promoters in Mozambique through an SMS Intervention () ([here](#))
- Using Social Norms to Decrease Energy Use in Public Housing () ([here](#))
- Increasing Vaccine Uptake Through Performance Feedback: A Cluster Randomized Trial (1904) ([here](#))

OSF Registry

The OSF Registry can be found at osf.io. It is fairly flexible, providing users with various templates for study registrations and analysis plans, or allowing users to upload their own materials.

¹ This process can be tailored to suit the agency partner. Some agency partners prefer to engage on technical topics and might like to see an early version of the preregistration materials in order to comment or even contribute. Other agency partners might prefer to see a final or nearly final version and do a light review for any material that might be sensitive.



ClinicalTrials.gov

[ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) is hosted by NIH, and, as its name suggests, was designed principally for biomedical trials. That said, it has also been used by agencies across the Federal government to register RCTs in other scientific or policy domains.

Examples of OES projects registered on ClinicalTrials.gov:

- VA Atlanta electronic health record vaccination reminders (1803) ([here](#))