MACS/WIHS COMBINED COHORT STUDY (MWCCS)
CONCEPT SHEET AND PUBLICATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Updated October 21, 2026

All investigators who wish to use data and/or specimens from the MACS/WIHS Combined Cohort Study (MWCCS) **MUST** agree to follow MWCCS policies and procedures.

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I. CONCEPT SHEET POLICIES

Submission of a concept sheet (CS) research plan is required for all proposed investigations involving analyses using existing non-public data sets, the collection of new data (questionnaires, clinical, and physical measures), and/or use or collection of laboratory specimens. Public data sets, including those submitted to NIH's BioData Catalyst, are not subject to this policy.

Concept sheets are reviewed by relevant working groups; however, all decisions regarding MWCCS concept sheets (CS) are ultimately under the purview of the MWCCS Executive Committee (EC). If an investigator disagrees with a decision regarding the CS, they can appeal for the concept sheet to be reviewed by the EC . Additionally, the EC can review and overrule the initial decision and has final authority regarding concept sheet decisions.

Specimens and data provided by the MWCCS are intended for the express purpose of performing EC-approved research. These specimens and data must not be provided to other investigators or used for additional projects without the explicit written consent of the MWCCS EC. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in the withdrawal of approval of the study concept sheet. Unauthorized use of data and/or specimens for work not specifically described in the aims of an approved concept sheet, or so described in a concept sheet that was approved but subsequently withdrawn (as described above), will be considered a breach of professional ethics and could result in such actions as withdrawal of abstracts or publications, as well as the prohibition of the future use of cohort data and specimens.

Use of Specimens: Leftover material cannot be returned to the MWCCS central repositories.

New data generation from externally funded grants: New data from MWCCS protocols or measurement of MWCCS biological specimens must be submitted to the Data Analysis and Sharing Center (DASC) once data generation/testing is complete. These data will not be released to other investigators until the original aims of the funded study are complete, and/or PI approval is given.

II. PROCEDURES FOR CONCEPT SHEET SUBMISSION

A. Concept Sheet Development

In the development of the concept sheet, investigator(s) should work with:

- Their site Principal Investigator (PI) if they are internal investigators (i.e., have some effort on a MWCCS grant)
- A MWCCS liaison if they are external investigators (not directly supported by the MWCCS grant). Liaisons are self-identified (or identified with the help of the LACC when needed) but the MWCCS recommends a PI of a MWCCS site or the DASC, or a Working Group (WG) chair. All external investigators should have a study liaison. The role of a study liaison is to ensure:
    - The investigator follows the MWCCS Publication Policy, especially policies concerning abstract and manuscript submission.
    - The investigator is aware of any cohort data/specimen limitations, i.e., what data and specimens are available, and will contribute as needed to study design.

- Persons with the appropriate scientific expertise and knowledge of the study design have provided input. If appropriate expertise in a certain area is found to be lacking, the liaison can consult the relevant WG chair to identify an investigator who may be able to provide the missing expertise.

NOTE: If you are an external investigator and do not have a MWCCS liaison, contact MWCCS@jhu.edu for assistance with identifying one.

Investigators should consider, and address, the following questions in their proposal:

1. What are the specific aims of this investigation?
2. Is there overlap with any existing concept sheets? Prior to submitting a concept sheet, investigators should check for overlap. If you are an external investigator, please consult with your MWCCS study liaison regarding overlap review.
3. What is the study design, measures to be used, number of participants, and analytic plan?
4. What data/specimens will be used or collected?
   - What sites and participants will be eligible, and at which visits/time periods?
   - If additional data or specimens are to be collected:
     - At what point in the study visit will the additional data collection take place?
     - What tests/analyses will be performed?
     - How will specimens be tested, and by whom?
     - Will the results be provided to participants?
     - How long will data/specimen collection take? Will a separate visit be needed?
     - What training or equipment/supplies will be needed to implement the protocol?
     - Will new IRB approval or IRB amendments be needed from other sites?

B. Pre-Submission Review

Investigator(s) must review the proposed research with either their site's PI (for internal investigators) or with a MWCCS liaison (for external investigators) before submitting the concept sheet for EC review.

Concept sheets that include additional data or specimen collection:

If the concept sheet includes collection of *new* data or specimens, investigator(s) must also:

- Review the proposed research with the Project Director (PD) from all sites that are being asked to participate.
- Contact the relevant sites through their site PD or MWCCS liaison and provide each site with: (1) the draft concept sheet, (2) any new forms or questionnaires proposed for administration, and (3) an associated budget (if applicable).

The PDs will review the concept sheet and provide the investigator(s) with feedback regarding the feasibility of the concept sheet, as well as an assessment of the potential site burden. PDs will work with the investigator(s) to develop a budget based on standardized rates for data collection, administrative/staff effort, and protocol implementation.

NOTE: *Budget negotiations must be completed before the concept sheet may be approved. Investigator(s) must contact the PD co-chairs (or relevant local site PDs) as early as possible in the concept sheet process to ensure that a budget is finalized before any grant submission deadlines.*

Once the site PI/PD/MWCCS liaison has reviewed the concept sheet and deemed it appropriate, the investigator(s) may submit the final version via the online Concept Sheet Submission Form. If the proposed research includes the collection of new data or specimens, the investigator(s) must also submit the data collection instrument as an attachment to the concept sheet.

III. PROCEDURES FOR CONCEPT SHEET REVIEW AND APPROVAL

A. Concept Sheet Review

The study investigator will receive an automated email following submission confirming that the concept sheet has been received. Once the concept sheet has been submitted, it will be reviewed by LACC staff for completeness. If the concept sheet is found to be incomplete, it will be returned to the investigator for further work before distribution for MWCCS review.

Once the concept sheet is found to be complete, it will be assigned a Concept Sheet number for tracking purposes. This number will be used in all ensuing communication throughout the life of the project. The concept sheet will then be assigned to the appropriate Working Group(s) for review based on the scientific topic(s) that the investigator indicates on the concept sheet submission form. An email about the concept sheet will be distributed to all members of the selected WGs.

1. SINGLE SITE CONCEPT SHEETS

Single-site concept sheets that are not requesting any core study resources (e.g., specimens from central repository or centrally managed data) should be submitted for informational purposes only; they will be made available for EC and relevant WGs to view but will not undergo central review. Review should be done locally at the site as decided by site PIs.

If a single-site study requests centrally managed data and/or specimens, it will have to undergo central MWCCS Concept Sheet review (i.e., the same concept sheet review as a multi-site concept sheet). If there is a single site project collecting new data or specimens nested within a multi-site project not collecting new data or specimens - the single site and multi-site components should each be submitted as separate concept sheets given the different reviews needed. Any study requesting geocode or genomic data (even if single site) requires a Concept Sheet to be submitted for access to those separate data.

2. Multi-site Concept Sheets

All other concept sheets (i.e., 2 or more study sites and/or single site utilizing core study resources) will be assigned to the relevant Working Groups for review based upon a concept sheet's topics and/or scope.

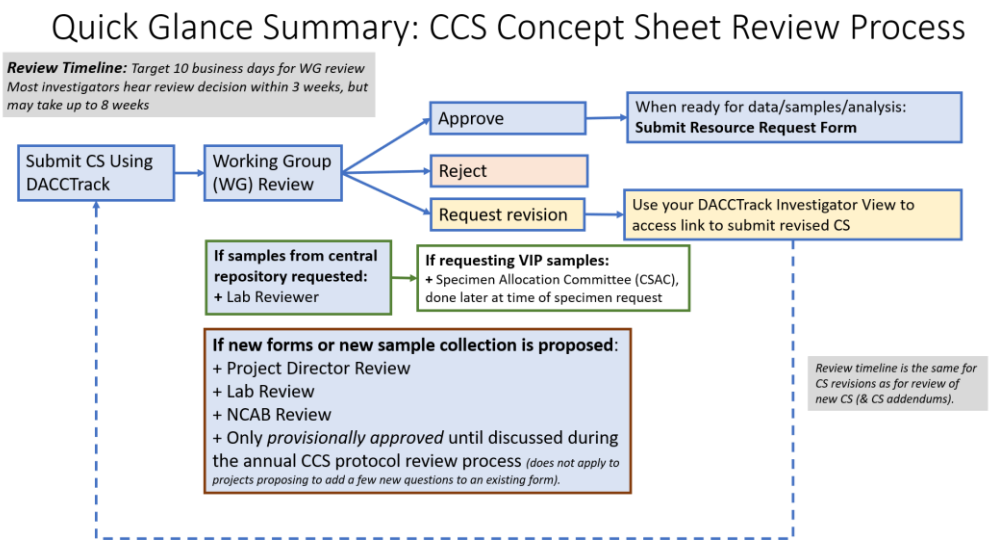
Overview of the MWCCS Concept Sheet Submission and Review:

1. Submit Concept Sheet (this includes the Research Plan + administrative questions in the submission form)
2. Reviewed for completeness, if complete, assigned a Concept Sheet number and sent for review
3. Reviewed by relevant Working Groups, with the goal of submitting their reviews within **10 business days**, but may take longer:
    - see list of current WGs here: https://statepi.jhsph.edu/mwccs/working-groups/
    - Note that Concept Sheets proposing to use census-linked datasets need to select "geocode/geography" in the submission form topics require additional review
    - Note that Concept Sheets proposing to use genomic data need to select "omics/microbiome" in the submission form topics require additional review
4. *If proposing to use specimens from the central repository or collect new specimens it also has current review by*
    - Lab Review (LR)
5. *If proposing new data and/or specimen collection also has current review by*
    - Project Director Review (PDR)
    - National Community Advisory Board Review (NCAB)
6. Executive Committee (EC)

Working Groups have a goal of **10 business days** to submit their reviews; however, reviews may take longer and investigators submitting CS should know that it may take up to 8 weeks for the initial review (and each time subsequent revisions are requested). Please make sure you use the current version of the research plan template (on our website in the "Submit a Concept Sheet" section) and complete *all* sections to prevent a revision request for missing information.

A Scientific Reviewer (SR) may be assigned to review for several reasons including:

- NA-ACCORD reviews (Working Group Chairs assigned as SR)
- Expert opinion review when an area is not covered by a Working Group
- WG unable to review in timely way so SR assigned to facilitate review



3. MULTI-SITE INVESTIGATIONS THAT PROPOSE NEW FORMS, SPECIMEN COLLECTION

If there are no concerns during the CS review process described above, the concept sheet will be *provisionally approved.*

In addition to the reviews outlined above, concept sheets that require new forms or procedures to be added to the MWCCS visit **require full EC discussion and approval during the annual MWCCS protocol review process**. This process consists of the review and discussion of protocol amendments and additions. There are two protocol review discussions per year (in January and June at regularly scheduled EC meetings), so investigators must plan accordingly and submit concept sheets and forms with adequate time for review and revision so that they do not miss the MWCCS protocol review deadline. It is recommended that investigators also present their provisionally approved concept to the NCAB prior to the EC discussion to ensure participant feedback is incorporated into the final new forms and/or procedures. Note: This does not apply to single-site concept sheets which should be reviewed by a local CAB.

Once a concept sheet and any related protocol/forms are approved by the EC, an implementation timeline can be developed. Given the length of the core MWCCS interview and the administrative activities required to implement a protocol at each site (e.g., IRB submission, contract approval, staff training), concept sheets usually cannot be implemented during the visit window immediately following approval.

4. MULTI-COHORT INVESTIGATIONS

Multi-cohort concept sheets will follow the same review process as multi-site Concept Sheets. Proposals submitted by NA-ACCORD have a different review process (see below).

NA-ACCORD INVESTIGATIONS

NA-ACCORD concept sheets are assigned to WG chairs from 1-2 relevant WGs for scientific review. These concept sheets are not sent to all WG members to review. The assigned WG

chairs review to “approve” or “disapprove” MWCCS participation in the NA-ACCORD study, with “default approval” if no objections are raised.

If a new MWCCS concept sheet is submitted that overlaps with an existing NA-ACCORD concept sheet:

- This does not prevent the MWCCS CS from proceeding and being approved. Participation in an NA-ACCORD topic does **not** prevent MWCCS investigation of those topics.
- Assigned reviewer(s) should note the overlapping topics in the comments section of their review, but addressing this potential overlap is not a required revision.

B. Concept Sheet Review Process and Timeline

Each concept sheet has an initial two-week (10 business day) goal for working group review, but review may take up to 8 weeks for initial review (and each time revisions are requested).

If all WGs approve the concept sheet, it is considered approved. In cases where the WG recommendations differ (i.e., one WG suggests revision while another WG suggests approval) the CS is considered as “revisions requested” and only the WG requesting revisions (not those that already approved) need to review the revised CS when submitted. If any WG rejects the CS it shall be considered as “rejected”.

Once a final decision is made, the LACC, on behalf of the EC Chairs, will send a letter of approval, revision requested, or rejection to the lead investigator and will include the working group review feedback as it was submitted by the working group. For concept sheets related to grant applications, if approved, a letter of support will be provided.

NOTE: *If a concept sheet is submitted as part of a grant application, it will receive a full scientific and administrative review by the MWCCS.*

*Investigator(s) who are submitting the concept sheet as part of a grant application may request a Letter of Support (LOS) from the EC through the concept sheet submission form, and the letter will **only** be provided when the concept sheet has received approval.*

MWCCS encourages submission of the concept sheet at least two months in advance of a grant deadline to allow for full scientific and administrative review.

C. Concept Sheet Revisions

In cases where a concept sheet has revisions requested, the investigator(s) will be provided a link to submit their revision through a pre-filled form. They should provide a summary of changes and highlight or track all changes in the concept sheet research plan document to offset them from the original language. Additionally, a point-by-point response to any comments/questions should be uploaded with the revised concept sheet research plan. The revised research plan should be uploaded using the revision/amendment submission form for that specific CS *in your unique Investigator View*.

If you need to request your unique Investigator View link, please click here and complete the Investigator View Look Up Form.

Any working group or scientific review (SR) requesting revisions will be asked to review the revised concept sheet. Even if previously approved by these groups, the revision is still reassigned to Project Director Review (for any revision that requests new data and/or specimen collection and/or new procedures), and Lab review.

Reviewers are given ten business days to review a revised concept sheet, however, reviews may take longer and investigators submitting CS should know that it may take up to 8 weeks for each review to be completed. Revised concept sheets will retain the same Concept Sheet number assigned upon submission.

D. Concept Sheet Overlap

If there is overlap with existing projects:

1. The WG(s) should indicate the overlap in its review and whether revision or rejection is warranted. WGs should not submit an approval if there is overlap found.
2. If overlap is identified and revision is requested, the LACC will connect the submitting CS investigator with the investigator(s) of the conflicted (previously approved) CS in question, to work out whether there is a path forward, e.g., removing an aim that overlaps, combining with an approach in the existing CS, or revising the new CS aim or approach.
3. If a path forward is identified and agreed to by the submitting CS investigator and the investigator(s) of the conflicted CS, email documentation of the agreement must be sent to the LACC. This documentation must include written agreement by the investigator(s) of the conflicted CS that the solution described is agreeable to them and that the overlap has been resolved.

E. Concept Sheet Rejection

If the Concept Sheet is rejected during review, the investigator can

- Submit a *new* Concept Sheet for review
    - The investigator should consider meeting with the chairs of the WG to understand the concerns and ways to revise or modify the proposal and incorporate these changes before submitting a new Concept Sheet.
- Decide not to pursue the research, or pursue it as a single site CS
- Appeal to the EC regarding the CS rejection
    - The Investigator can appeal the rejection to the MWCCS EC if the investigator feels the rejection is unreasonable. The LACC will gather this appeal with 1) material from each of the Working Groups denoting their reasons for the decision and 2) material from the lead investigator about reasons for the appeal.

The appeal will first be discussed by the SC and then brought to the EC for vote.

- Process for an EC Vote on an Investigator's Appeal of a Rejected CS:
  - The appeal is decided by majority vote, based on each voting party's independent review of written materials provided.
  - Each CRS, the DASC, and the LACC will have one vote. The co-funding Institutes will have two votes total, to be coordinated by NHLBI. NIH or any voting entity may choose to abstain from voting.
  - Votes must be cast as one of two options: "Reject CS" or "Approve CS"
  - All votes submitted by the deadline will count; Those not submitted by the deadline will not count.

F. Explanation of Reviewer Roles

1. Working Group (WG)

Working Group (WG) reviews will be completed concurrently. The LACC will send notification of a new concept sheet to all members of the appropriate WG(s). WG review can take place via email; concept sheets do not need to be discussed on a WG call. The WG chair (or designee) will compile WG member comments and submit a recommendation on behalf of the WG which will be forwarded to the investigator without editing. If a WG review is not submitted within two weeks (10 business days), the LACC can proceed based on the other reviews received (if only one WG is assigned, the LACC will wait for the review, or may assign a SR instead if the review is more than two weeks overdue).

The WG should review the concept sheet for:

- **Scientific merit**
  - Are there any grievous concerns about the science proposed?
  - WG reviews of concept sheets should not have the same rigor as a grant or manuscript review. Investigators are not required to make modifications for preferred approaches. WG CS review is to check for and identify any concerning issues/approaches that would require revision.
  - Other optional suggestions can be given under approved CS status as recommendations or suggestions but don't require revision.
- **Feasibility**
  - Are the data, samples, or participant type needed available in MWCCS?
- **Potential overlap with other approved, active MWCCS concept sheets**

  If overlap is identified, but revision may be a feasible path forward indicate "revision requested."

Working group members are expected to provide feedback in a professional, respectful, and constructive manner.

2. Scientific Reviewer (SR)

Scientific Reviewers (SR) may be assigned to review concept sheets for several reasons including:

- NA-ACCORD reviews (Working Group Chairs assigned as SR)
- Expert opinion review when an area is not covered by a Working Group
- WG unable to review in timely way so SR assigned to facilitate review

3. Additional Specialized Reviews for Select Concepts

There are several additional types of reviewers that are not working group reviews but are important parts of the review process for select concept sheets.

a. Lab Reviewer (LR)

A **Lab Reviewer (LR)** will be assigned to review a concept sheet if any new specimens will be collected from participants at 2 or more sites, or if specimens will be withdrawn from any MWCCS central repository. The mandate of the LR is a targeted review to ensure the appropriate assays and specimens are being used, and the proposed science justifies specimen use.

To protect the most valuable and irreplaceable specimens in the MWCCS, central repository requests for specimens from certain groups of MWCCS participants (see the full list of VIP specimens in the Specimen Requests section of the document) will receive additional review by the MWCCS **Specimen Allocation Committee (CSAC).** All *approved* concept sheets that request VIP specimens will undergo a final review by the CSAC once a resource request has been submitted. Once these samples have been approved by the CSAC, the samples will be requested from the repository and subsequently sent to the indicated lab.

b. Project Director Reviewer (PDR)

The **Project Director Reviewer (PDR)** will be assigned to review the feasibility and participant/site staff burden of the proposed research activities if they take place at two or more sites. Investigator(s) should carefully address each of these issues within the concept sheet. In addition, the PDR will review the costs associated with the proposed research. All sub-studies that require data and/or specimen collection will need to ensure adequate MWCCS site funding for activities proposed in the concept sheet (e.g., administrative/personnel effort, protocol administration, data management, participant reimbursement, etc.). LACC assigns the PDR on a rotating basis across the participating sites.

c. NCAB Reviewer (NCAB)

The **NCAB Reviewer (NCAB)** will be assigned to review the participant burden of the proposed research activities and the acceptability of questionnaires, sample collection, and/or other new procedures if at two or more sites. The NCAB review will also provide overall feedback on whether the NCAB supports or does not support the proposal.

d. Geocoding Reviewer (GeoR)

A **Geocoding Reviewer (GeoR**) will be assigned to review the feasibility of the proposed research activities if the concept sheet is requesting centrally managed contextual data from the MWCCS Geocoding Core.

G. Concept Sheet Amendments (small additions, deletions and/or modifications)

Investigators who wish to amend an already-approved concept sheet with minor changes should revise the original concept sheet research plan to highlight or track any proposed changes. The modified research plan (with all changes tracked or highlighted) should be uploaded using the revision/amendment submission form for that specific CS. Amendment reviewers are given the same amount of time as new concept sheet reviews (ten business days, however, could take up to 8 weeks). Amendments will retain the same Concept Sheet number assigned to the initial project.

Amendments should be limited to smaller changes and additions to a project, for example:

- Changes in the variables that will be explored (e.g. adding covariates for analysis)
- Changing cohorts requested (e.g. changing from only historic WIHS to historic MACS and WIHS, or if only historic data was requested and MWCCS data is being added)
- If new data collection was approved and the instrument has been modified, or there was new specimen collection approved and there is an additional specimen type being added

Note that very minor changes do not have to be submitted as an amendment. This includes:

- asking for a different variable within the type of data already listed in the approved concept sheet (for example if current smoking was listed in the approved Concept Sheet and related variable in the same exposure are needed like “years smoked” it does not require an amendment.)

If the approved CS is only using existing data (no new data collection or any specimen use) and is already approved as a multi-site CS, these small changes can be made administratively by emailing mwccs@jhu.edu:

- modifying the study sites to an already approved multi-site CS
- changing the exact visits included (e.g. requesting an additional visit of data)

Changes that include any of the following should **NOT** be submitted as an amendment, they should be submitted as a new initial CS:

- a new study aim
- changes in main exposure or main outcome
- collection of new data instrument, not in original proposal
- adding additional study sites (if it changes it from single site to multi-site proposal)
- changes being added are for a different type of data that may need different WG review or different coauthor expertise

If a CS amendment is submitted for this type of change, the LACC will email to indicate this cannot be processed as an amendment and a new CS should be submitted for the new portion.

H. Expiration and Deactivation of Concept Sheets

The lead investigator for each approved concept sheet must submit a **productivity update** annually, using the link in their Investigator View. If no productivity update is received after two email reminders, approval for the concept sheet will expire. If a completed productivity update indicates that no activity is occurring on the project, the project will be closed.

Concept sheets are conferred an eight-year lifespan upon approval. **All CS will be closed 8 years after their initial approval.** If work on a given CS is not completed within that time, a new CS containing current aims and analysis must be submitted, reviewed, and approved.

The EC maintains the right to periodically review and adjust the status of open concept sheets.

If you need to request your unique Investigator View link, please click here and complete the Investigator View Look Up Form.

I. Enrolling MWCCS participants in non-MWCCS studies/investigations

Researchers who plan to recruit participants from a MWCCS clinic into a study separate from MWCCS and who do not plan to use any MWCCS data or specimens do not need to submit a concept sheet but will need approval from the PIs of those sites to approach their participants. Researchers enrolling MWCCS participants into a separate study who will request any MWCCS data/covariates for participants they recruit do need to submit a concept sheet clearly stating what MWCCS data they will request.

IV. MWCCS CO-AUTHOR ASSIGNMENT

If a study is using data or specimens collected MWCCS-wide, co-authors will be identified from each site and the DASC after the concept sheet is approved. If a study is using data or specimens from only a subset of sites, co-authors will be identified and assigned from only those sites contributing data. Any concept sheet with two or more participating sites will have a DASC co-author assigned to it.

Upon approval of a concept sheet, a request will be made to MWCCS sites that are involved requesting the appointment of a co-author from their site. **Site PIs will have two weeks (10 business days) to recommend co-authors from their sites.** A reminder email will be sent to PIs who do not assign co-authors. If investigators from a site are named on the concept sheet when submitted, they will be automatically assigned as the representative from that site (i.e., additional co-authors will only be solicited for sites not already represented in the study team as submitted in the concept sheet).

The assigned co-authors should be listed on all abstracts and manuscripts that are submitted as part of the aims outlined in the concept sheet, and consulted as members of the writing team with opportunity to contribute/review abstracts and manuscripts resulting from the work.

Lead investigators are required to notify the DASC when an abstract is submitted to a conference/meeting, and to also notify the DASC as to whether or not that abstract was accepted for presentation. Likewise, it is required to notify the DASC of submission, and acceptance, of manuscripts for publication.

NOTE: *When a journal has a limit on the number of allowed co-authors, the lead author can email co-authors to let them know that there are author limits in a journal of interest and* ***ask*** *if anyone volunteers to be removed from the paper. If there are no volunteers, then the lead author must find another journal to submit to.*

V. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

A. Conflict of Interest by Investigator Submitting Concept Sheet

Investigators are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest on the concept sheet submission form.

NOTE: Investigators are responsible for identifying financial interests that may create conflicts of interest or give the appearance of conflicts of interest. An investigator may hold a conflict of interest if they have **significant** financial or property interest in the outcomes of the MWCCS research concept sheet. This could include:

- Investigators involved with developing or marketing a product or treatment that will be studied.
- Investigators involved with developing or marketing a competing product or treatment.

B. Conflict of Interest in Concept Sheet Review

In the MWCCS, we aim to reduce bias and conflicts of interest when it comes to scientific review of concept sheets (CS). If for any reason a reviewer feels they have a conflict with a particular CS that would bias their evaluation, they should recuse themselves from any discussion or review of the CS.

An investigator or reviewer (including WG chairs and PIs) **cannot** be involved in the review and cannot submit the review for any CS where they are designated as a lead or additional investigator. Investigators that are a liaison for a Concept Sheet **can** still submit a review for that CS as long as they are not also an investigator on the CS (since our WG chairs are often asked to serve as liaisons to answer questions and facilitate feasibility and communication about research in that area for external investigators).

VI. MWCCS DATA SHARING AND DATA AGREEMENTS

A. MWCCS policy for NIH data Sharing and Management Plans

1. A MWCCS Data Sharing and Management Template is available on our website under the Investigators tab.
2. MWCCS utilizes a plan for controlled release data management and sharing. In summary, all data (including any new data collected–or generated– as part of an ancillary grant) must be shared per the consortium-established data sharing policy. Concept sheets submitted to the MWCCS will include appropriate details as to how proposing investigators will be responsible for either: 1) depositing their analytic dataset directly to the Data Analysis and Sharing Center (DASC) for controlled release (this dataset will need to be shared with the DASC at or before the time of manuscript submission to the Executive Committee), or 2) providing secure, long-term storage for their analytic dataset and submitting a data access plan to the DASC that details how data will be shared for approved research concepts.

B. MWCCS Data Agreements

1. Master Data Use Agreement (mDUA)

The MWCCS Executive Committee has executed a master Data Use Agreement (mDUA) governing the sharing of data amongst all MWCCS Clinical Research Sites (CRS) and the DASC. All grant supported investigators and external investigators affiliated with a CRS institution are covered by this agreement.

2. Data Use Agreement (DUA) for third parties

The 3rd Party DUA is used for investigators at external institutions. This agreement will need to be executed by anyone requesting data who is not already covered by the master DUA.

3. Master Material Transfer Agreement (mMTA)

The MWCCS Executive Committee has executed a master Material Transfer Agreement (mMTA) governing the sharing of specimens amongst all MWCCS Clinical Research Sites (CRS) and the DASC. All investigators affiliated with a CRS institution are covered by this agreement.

4. Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) for third parties

The 3rd Party MTA for investigators will need to be executed by external investigators and anyone requesting specimens who is not already covered by the master MTA.

5. Genomics Data User Certification Agreement

All investigators who are requesting DNA from the MWCCS DNA Repositories, requesting GWAS data, or are proposing any genetics analysis, are required to submit a signed Genomics Data User Certification Agreement.

Additionally, all investigators who are requesting data from the MWCCS Geocoding Core will be required to have a signed Data Use Agreement (DUA) with UNC in place before the transfer of contextual data.

Investigators may not initiate any research activities until the requisite documents are received by the managing institution.

VII. REQUESTS FOR DATA, SPECIMENS AND ANALYTIC SUPPORT

Once a project is approved, requests for data, specimens, and/or analytic support should be made to the DASC as outlined below. If the lead investigator is requesting that the analysis be performed by the DASC they should communicate with the DASC directly – and early – so that their project can be considered when the DASC, in collaboration with the LACC, prioritizes analytical resources.

A. Data Requests

Data requests are fulfilled both by the DASC and by site data managers. All CRS have the full MWCCS dataset, which is distributed annually via the site Data Managers. Data requests not filled at the local level should be submitted to the DASC using the MWCCS Resource Request Form. Variable names can be obtained from the MWCCS codebooks and the master variable list. Codebooks are distributed with data freezes to the Data Managers at each site and are also located on the *MWCCS Admin Website*. Information on data availability is also available via the Data Availability Dashboard., which can be accessed directly from the public website.

B. Specimen Requests

All specimen requests should be submitted using the MWCCS Resource Request Form.

1. Selection of Specimens

If an investigator has already determined the appropriate ID/visits to a request for an approved project, an Excel spreadsheet of IDs, visits, and visit dates should be attached to the Resource Request Form. If the investigator has not yet determined appropriate ID/visits, the DASC will work with the investigator to select appropriate ID/visits based on the selection criteria in the approved concept sheet. Investigators can email the DASC at MWCCS@jhu.edu to ask about specimen availability during concept sheet development if needed.

2. MWCCS Specimen Allocation Committee Review (CSAC)

The MWCCS Specimen Allocation Committee (CSAC) is charged by the EC to assist in the allocation of high-value repository specimens, i.e., those specimens contributed by MWCCS participants who experienced significant or unique outcomes pertinent to our overall research aims or associated NIH-funded grants. The CSAC reviews all requests for the release of such high-value samples and determines whether the restricted samples should be released to the

requesting investigator. When appropriate, the CSAC may be asked to review concept sheets that request the use of high-value samples.

Restricted specimens include those from:

- *Baseline visits for new enrollees*
- *HIV seroconverters*
- *Deaths*
- *HAART initiators:* participants who initiated HAART
- *Long-term non-progressors (LTNP):* participants who keep a CD4 T-cell count >500 while not on ART for at least 5 years
- *Elite non-progressors:* participants who maintain an HIV viral load <= 80 copies/mL while not on ART for at least 1.5 years
- *Rapid progressors:* <3 years between seroconverting and first AIDS diagnosis
- *Fast progressors:* 3-5 years between seroconverting and first AIDS diagnosis
- *Incident cancers*
- *Incident MI and stroke*
- *Incident hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection*
- *Spontaneous HCV clearance*
- *HCV treatment*
- *Incident hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection*
- *Resolution of HBV infection with treatment*
- *COVID-19 hospitalizations*
- *Last vial for any participant at any visit*

Review by the CSAC occurs **after** the concept sheet has been approved and ID/visits have been identified for a particular request. Investigators may elect to drop restricted ID/visits and proceed without these samples. Alternatively, investigators may ask for a CSAC review of their request to use these high-value specimens. The CSAC will determine whether the scientific value of the concept sheet merits inclusion of the restricted specimens in the request. The DASC will facilitate this process by tracking requests in a database and sending an email notification, including the following information:

- Investigator name, the title of concept sheet, Concept Sheet number, and links to the concept sheet and reviews
- A summary of the request: selection criteria, specimen type, aliquot number and total volume needed for testing, tests to be performed, expected ID/visits, expected number of samples
- Summary of restricted ID/visits: if alternate ID/visits are possible, summary of reasons for requesting the restricted ID/visits as they relate to the aims/hypotheses of the concept sheet, number of specimens currently available and how the request

would deplete the ID/visits available

- Other extenuating circumstances known by the DASC coordinator
- For requests including last vials, there is additional information required for investigators to provide to the CSAC relating to how their research aligns with the MWCCS aims and justifying use of these last vials. The DASC coordinator will work with the investigator to provide the form template and will include the completed form in the CSAC review submission.

Once they have received the notification, CSAC members have **seven business days** to respond as to whether or not they approve the use of restricted samples, or if they approve release of some but not all of the requested samples. The DASC will communicate the final decision of the CSAC to the requesting investigator. If the CSAC does not approve the use of restricted specimens, the requesting investigator can appeal to the EC.

C. Analytic Requests

If the lead investigator is requesting that the analysis be performed by the DASC, they should indicate that request during concept sheet submission.

All projects requesting analytic support will undergo an additional methodology review (MR) to assure the study design and analytic plan are feasible and appropriate for the study question. This review will be done within seven business days of submission of the analytic specifications via the **Resource Request Form**. Investigators will be notified whether or not the DASC can provide the requested support, and will be asked to provide the DASC with any additional details needed. The lack of analytical assistance does not preclude DASC co-authors assignments as per the co-author policies below.

VIII. PUBLICATION POLICIES

A. Publication Policy

All abstracts and manuscripts resulting from approved concept sheets MUST be approved by all co-authors and submitted to the MWCCS EC before submission for presentation, publication, or preprint that results from research funded by NIH. Failure to comply with this policy may lead to such actions as withdrawal of abstracts/publications or prohibited future use of cohort data and specimens.

MWCCS strongly encourages the use of non-stigmatizing language in all MWCCS-related documentation, communications, and publications. Please review all Concept Sheets and resulting abstracts, manuscripts, and presentations to ensure you are using non-stigmatizing language.

B. Credit, authorship, and writing committees

The following categories specify how credit and authorship are apportioned for most MWCCS projects. The lead investigator listed on the concept sheet should include any investigators and analysts (MWCCS or external) that make substantial contributions to the

project. The MWCCS adheres to criteria for authorship promulgated by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Special requests regarding authorship (e.g., number of assigned authors) are discussed and voted upon by the MWCCS EC.

1. **SINGLE-SITE INVESTIGATIONS**

   This section outlines publication policies for investigations using data collected from one site only and funded through that site's MWCCS collaborative agreement or external sources (e.g., R01, unobligated funds, etc.). These data may be collected as part of a pilot study, the core MWCCS protocol, a local sub-study, or be generated from local specimens collected during MWCCS or additional visits. In general, these investigations should be rare; investigators are encouraged to utilize the entire MWCCS cohort for most projects.

   Publications resulting from investigations involving one site will include co-authors at the discretion of the lead investigator from the local site. Other site co-authors will not be assigned. Manuscripts should be approved by the site Principal Investigator before submission. These manuscripts do not require MWCCS EC review but will be tracked for reporting purposes.

2. **MULTI-SITE INVESTIGATIONS**

   A multi-site investigation is one wherein analyses utilize data from at least two MWCCS clinical sites. For these investigations, site representation will be solicited by the DASC only from the sites contributing data, specimens, and/or analytic support. *Each site contributing data, specimens, and/or analytic support, and the DASC, will have the opportunity to name one co-author.*

3. **CORE INVESTIGATIONS**

   A core investigation is one using data generated as part of the principal MWCCS collaborative. These data may be part of the core MWCCS protocol, a sub-study, or generated from specimens collected as part of MWCCS visits.

   Core investigations require that each of the MWCCS sites (including the DASC, even if the analysis is conducted elsewhere) be offered co-author representation in recognition of the substantial amount of operational work performed by each site for cohort recruitment, retention, data collection, and data management.

   The lead investigator of a core investigation does not necessarily need to be supported by the MWCCS (i.e., can be an "external" investigator). However, the MWCCS reserves the right to assign a new lead author to a project if an external investigator does not wish to write up the study results, but agrees that a publication is worthwhile.

   While the DASC performs the analyses for many core investigations, data analyses may be conducted elsewhere for both core and external projects. In these cases, the lead investigator should arrange for the DASC to receive data sets and programs that relate to the tables and figures in the manuscript upon publication.

NOTE: *If a site's sole contribution to a project will be the provision of data, then the site will be allowed to name only one co-author. Additional co-authors from a site may be added at the discretion of the*

lead author and should be based on individual contribution to the project.

4. MULTI-COHORT COLLABORATIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Proposed studies that involve pooled data from the MWCCS and other cohorts should include authors from each of the partner organizations involved. It is recognized that multi-cohort collaborations can result in an unwieldy number of co-authors. Hence, in general, a subset of MWCCS representatives (1 to 2) will be assigned to multi-cohort collaborations, in addition to the project investigators. The DASC will contact the MWCCS WG chair with expertise in the area of investigation for help in selecting a MWCCS co-author(s) for these projects.

C. Procedures for review and approval of MWCCS publications

5. MANUSCRIPT REVIEW BY CO-AUTHORS

Co-author(s) must be allowed to participate in the writing and/or review process of manuscripts promptly. Co-authors should be given at least two weeks (10 business days) to review a manuscript and provide revisions/suggestions.

6. CO-AUTHOR NON-RESPONSE

If, after the two-week review period has concluded, the lead investigator has not heard back from a co-author, they should adhere to the following process:

1. Send a reminder email to the co-author. The co-author should be given three business days to provide revisions/suggestions.
2. If the co-author does not respond within three business days, send a second reminder email to the co-author. The co-author should be given an additional three business days to provide revisions/suggestions. *This email should include the reminder that co-authors who do not respond to a second reminder email for manuscript feedback are removed from authorship (see below).*

If the lead investigator does not hear back from a co-author after sending two reminder emails, the expectation is that the lead author will remove the non-responsive co-author(s) from the manuscript and **email mwccs@jhu.edu and copy the non-responsive co-author to notify of this authorship change.**

It is also the responsibility of co-authors to sign journal copyright forms promptly (within seven business days) once the manuscript is submitted. If a co-author does not sign the copyright form promptly, the lead investigator can exclude that co-author from the current and subsequent manuscripts related to the approved concept sheet.

7. CO-AUTHOR APPROVAL OF MANUSCRIPTS

Co-author review and approval (10 business days): **Approval of all co-authors is required** before submitting a manuscript to the EC or to a journal (barring co-author non-response

as covered above). Co-author edits and suggestions should be considered and incorporated where appropriate and a revised manuscript circulated to co-authors.

Study lead is responsible for documenting the approval from all co-authors (via email or other written records) and keeping this approval for reference if needed.

If a co-author disagrees with the main findings or methods of a manuscript or finds the data or analysis misleading, he/she must attempt to resolve these issues with the writing group/co-authors before the manuscript is submitted to the EC. If a co-author still finds fault with the version submitted to the EC, he or she should address these concerns with the lead investigator. If one or more of the co-authors still disagree with the lead author regarding analyses in the paper, he or she may wish to be removed as a co-author. This should be done before submission for EC review. If the co-author does not want to be removed from the paper, and if the disagreement over the main findings or methods of a manuscript cannot be resolved, the manuscript should be submitted to the EC with a description of the issues/disagreement by each party involved and the manuscript will have a formal review by the EC to determine how to proceed.

8. SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPT TO THE EC AFTER CO-AUTHOR APPROVAL

Posting and EC Review (7 business days): Once the manuscript is approved by all co-authors, the lead investigator should submit it electronically to the EC using the **Manuscript Submission Form.** Manuscripts must be submitted (with co-author approval) at least **7 business days** prior to submission to the journal or if being submitted for preprint. **This allows for one business day to process and six business days for EC review. You will receive an automated email following submission confirming that your manuscript submission has been received.** Manuscripts submitted without assigned co-author inclusion/approval or without the appropriate MWCCS acknowledgment will be returned to the lead author for correction before the manuscript is circulated to the EC.

The submitted manuscript will be accessible, and the DASC will notify EC members via email about submitted papers; however, there will be no centralized EC review of manuscripts. The lead investigator will receive an email once their manuscript has been processed for review with a date they may submit their manuscript to the journal. If there are EC concerns about the manuscript, the DASC will communicate them to the lead investigator within the seven business day review window. The lead investigator will receive an email on the day EC review ends alerting them to move forward with submission to the journal.

9. CHANGES TO CO-AUTHORS

If a PI wants to make a change to the assigned co-author for a given concept sheet or paper, they should email mwccs@jhu.edu (after speaking to the currently assigned co-author) who will notify the study lead about the change.

If the lead investigator wants to request a co-author change (for example, because an assigned co-author has moved or no longer has time to be involved, or if a new

investigator has joined the site and is now more involved in the research) they should either discuss directly with the PI of that site or email mwccs@jhu.edu to coordinate with the site PI about the possible change.

Any changes to an assigned co-author should be made before the manuscript is submitted to the EC, so the new co-author has the opportunity to contribute.

10. ABSTRACT & PRESENTATION REVIEW

Final abstracts and presentations must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Abstracts must be associated with an EC-approved concept sheet.
- Co-authors included on the abstract should be the same as those assigned for the EC-approved concept sheet.

Note*: When a conference has a limit on the number of allowed co-authors (e.g., CROI) the CS lead author can remove some co-authors as needed, with the suggestion that the first removed co-authors are site PIs (since they are more senior members). If you are still over the co-author limit, consult with your liaison (if external to study) or site PI (if internal to study) to determine which additional co-authors to remove to reach the allowed number for the conference. Lead author must email authors to let them know that there were limits on the co-authors so some authors were removed (specify which) and that all assigned co-authors will be included in the manuscript.*

MWCCS recommends circulating your abstract draft to co-authors **at least 10 business days prior to conference deadline** to allow sufficient time for any needed rounds of coauthor editing prior to finalizing and approving the abstract.

- *Co-author review: Co-author comments should be requested early and incorporated. Remember to check your Investigator View to see the correct list of assigned co-authors and include all co-authors on the abstract authorship list and review process.*
- *Co-author approval (3 business days):* At a minimum, all co-authors must be given **at least three business days** to review and approve the final version of the abstract before submission to the EC for review.
    - Abstracts submitted to co-authors without this three-day review period may not be submitted unless co-authors agree in writing to the shortened review period and that they approve the version to be submitted.
    - If a co-author does not respond within the three business day review period, the submitting investigator can assume approval and proceed with submission to the DASC. If a co-author wishes to be removed from the abstract, the submitting investigator should indicate this upon submission to the DASC.

- *Posting and EC Review (3 business days):* Abstracts must be submitted to the DASC (with co-author approval) for EC review using the **Abstract Submission Form** at least **three business days** prior to the scientific meeting/conference submission deadline. **This allows for one business day to process, one business day for EC review, and one business day to address any potential issues or updates.** Abstracts will be available in DACCTrack and MWCCS EC members will be notified of their availability via email. DASC will communicate any EC concerns to the lead author by email.
    - Example: If the conference deadline is on a Thursday, the abstract must be submitted to the DASC before 4:00 pm ET on Monday. Abstract submission deadlines are below:

CONFERENCE	EC SUBMISSION DEADLINE (BEFORE 4:00 pm ET)
Monday	Wednesday before the conference submission deadline
Tuesday	Thursday before the conference submission deadline
Wednesday	Friday before the conference submission deadline
Thursday	Monday before the conference submission deadline
Friday	Tuesday before the conference submission deadline

- The lead author will receive an automated email specifying the date that they can move forward with submitting the abstract to the conference. The lead author will receive an email alerting them to move forward with submission to the conference after the three business day period has ended.

If the following special circumstances apply, then the abstract should be submitted to the DASC at least **one business day** before conference submission. **Approval of the co-authors is still required before submission.** The EC does not formally review these abstracts, but EC members will be notified of their posting via email:

If the abstract is

- a **single-site study**
- a **multi-cohort study** (e.g. NA ACCORD)
- abstracts and presentations for **internal groups** (e.g., cohort or other group meeting where abstracts are not made public externally)
- an **invited presentation** of work

If the guidelines above are not met, the following policy will take effect:

- If an abstract is submitted to the DASC without co-author approval, the abstract will be returned to the lead investigator for circulation to all co-authors for review and approval.
- If three business days are not provided to co-authors to review and approve the abstract before the abstract is submitted to the DASC for EC review, the abstract

will not be circulated to the EC for review and it cannot be submitted to the scientific meeting/conference.

- If an abstract is submitted to the DASC with co-author approval, but three business days are not provided for processing (to ensure all required co-authors are included) and EC review, the abstract will not be circulated to the EC for review and it cannot be submitted to the scientific meeting/conference.
- If an abstract is submitted to a conference without co-author and/or EC review, the lead author may be asked to withdraw the abstract.

If the abstract is being submitted to a conference that limits the number of abstracts that can be submitted from any one cohort, the following abstract submission policy will take effect:

- All abstracts must be submitted to co-authors for review and approval three business days before submission to the DASC for EC review.
- All co-author approved abstracts must be submitted to the DASC for EC review **at least eight business days** before the abstract submission deadline.
- Abstracts that are submitted without eight full business days remaining before the abstract submission deadline will not be approved for submission.
- After all compliant abstracts have been received, if there are more abstracts than allowed from one cohort for the conference, the abstracts will be distributed to the SC and they will be asked to apply a forced ranking system to rank the top six (or the number set by the conference) abstracts.
- Investigators from the top abstracts will be notified that they can submit to the conference. All others will be informed that their abstract was not approved for submission.
- All other abstract submission guidelines apply.

D. Journal Submission

Please remember that presentations, manuscript submissions, or preprint submissions that do not have prior approval are inconsistent with the spirit of collaborative research. Disregarding this policy may result in future denial of access to MWCCS data and cessation of collaborative support.

Publications and presentations shall comply with the rules and procedures of the disclosure outlined in the Privacy Act. The confidential or proprietary information shall not be disclosed without the prior written consent of the individual or institution. Privacy Act compliance and documentation of written disclosure consents are the responsibility of each institution involved in the paper/presentation.

When a manuscript is accepted for publication, lead authors are responsible for submitting the final reference (citation) for the published article. This can be submitted either (1) via email to mwccs@jhu.edu (please reference which CS the paper is related to and provide the Concept Sheet number) or (2) via the Productivity Update Form link in your Investigator View.

E. NIH Public Access Policy

NIH requires all MWCCS investigators participating in this study, which is funded by NIH, to make their peer-reviewed or author accepted manuscripts (AAMs) available to other researchers and the public at the National Library of Medicine's (NLM) PubMed Central (PMC) by the date of the manuscript's publication. NIH expects investigators to submit an electronic copy of the author's accepted manuscript (AAM) immediately to PubMed Central upon acceptance for publication. A PubMed Central reference number (PMCID) is required to demonstrate policy compliance. Failure to provide evidence of compliance with the policy in an application, proposal or report is a violation of the terms and conditions of the NIH award. To submit an applicable paper to PubMed Central (PMC) in compliance with the NIH Public Access Policy, please visit the NIHMS system website.

F. Acknowledgements

All investigators must acknowledge that MWCCS specimens and data are the property of MWCCS. Investigators are responsible for reviewing and agreeing to the MWCCS Publication Policies, ensuring that the samples and data are used in the manner outlined in the concept sheet, and disseminating results to assigned MWCCS collaborators/co-authors promptly.

All MWCCS manuscripts must acknowledge that the data were collected through the MACS/WIHS Combined Cohort Study (MWCCS). They must also credit participating institutions (MWCCS clinical sites, the DASC, LACC, and the supporting NIH agencies) and grant numbers. The most current and suggested format for MWCCS acknowledgments can be found on our website at www.mwccs.org.

Please add the following paragraph to the acknowledgments when publishing a cancer-related manuscript:

We would like to acknowledge the National Program of Cancer Registries of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the funds that helped support the collection and availability of the cancer registry data and thank the following state cancer registries for their help: AL, CA, FL, GA, IL, MD, MS, NY, NC, OH, PA, and VA. The authors assume full responsibility for analyses and interpretations of these data.

Suggested data availability statement if requested by the journal:

Access to individual-level data from the MACS/WIHS Combined Cohort Study Data (MWCCS) may be obtained upon review and approval of a MWCCS concept sheet. Links and instructions for online concept sheet submission are on the study website (http://mwccs.org/).