

Connect Module 1: Creating a Connection Manually (Part 1)

This tutorial will demonstrate how to manually create a CEDS Connection using the CEDS Connect tool. A Connection is a way of showing which CEDS data elements might be necessary for answering a particular data question. For users who have aligned their data systems to CEDS, the Connect tool further allows them to see which elements, in their own systems, would be needed to answer any data question in the Connect tool.

In this tutorial, we will explain how to create a Connection directly in the online tool. You have the option to create the Connection manually or by using an Excel upload. In this tutorial, we will create the Connection manually. To learn how to create the Connection with an Excel upload, see *Connect Module 2 – Creating a Connection using the Excel Template*.

Create a Connection Manually

A CEDS Connection consists of several parts: data elements necessary for the question, indicator, or metric being derived; analysis recommendations; and additional information that can be used to explain reporting processes, business rules, or other facets of the Connection.

To build a Connection, you must have a CEDS user account and be logged in to the CEDS Website. You can still access the CEDS tools without an account, but building a Connection requires that you have one. For more information on how to create a CEDS user account, view the tutorial *Getting Started with the CEDS Tools*.

To begin, log into the CEDS website and select *Tools>Connect* from the green menu bar at the top of the screen. You are now on the Connect Main Menu page. Under the “Build” column, click *CREATE a Connection* and then *Create Connection Manually* to start building a Connection directly in the tool.

The first thing to note is the countdown clock at the top of this page. The clock begins at twenty minutes; when the twenty minutes have elapsed, the system will prompt you, asking if you would like to remain logged in.

To begin building your Connection, complete the *Connection Title/Question* field to name the Connection. The Connection Title might be a question from a particular data collection or a policy question. It might also be an indicator or metric used in reporting. The *Author* should be the name of the user, agency, or program creating the Connection. This field is automatically populated with your name. You can change the author’s name, if necessary. In the *Source* field, enter the name of the agency or institution for which the Connection is being created. If, for example, you are creating the Connection to show how a particular state reports data, you would enter the SEA’s name in the field. Finally, use the *Description of Connection* field to provide a brief summary or explanation of what this Connection is for. This is the space where you can describe what the particular data question is collecting or additional details about the context of the Connection. This should not be an exact replication of the Title/Question; rather it should provide additional information for users to understand the purpose of the Connection.

Next, use the *Categorization* section to classify this Connection. By assigning a category to the Connection, users will be able to find it more easily when you choose to share it. First, click “Add Descriptors.” A popup box appears with a list of possible categories. You can either expand categories to view the descriptors within or you can search for descriptors by typing in the search box.

Expanding a category displays all descriptors within the category. You can then click on a descriptor to see more information about that descriptor including its definition and any related terms. Note that the system defaults to selecting the descriptor, so if you find you are not interested in it, you need to deselect before closing it. From this screen, you can also select any related terms for your Connection or you can click on the related term to see its definition and any terms related to it. The definition of a related term appears upon mouse-over. When you have selected all terms, click SELECT to return to the list of descriptors. Select Close when you are finished. All descriptors that you selected are now listed on the Connection.

You may assign as many descriptors to a Connection as you like.

Be sure to save your work frequently by selecting the *Save* button at either the top or bottom of the screen. Clicking *Save* will take you to the *Manage Connection* page; to return to building the Connection, click *Modify Connection*.

This completes Part 1 of Connect Module 1: Creating a Connection Manually. To finish building the Connection, view Part 2.