



1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Building 6 • Charleston, WV 25305
wvde.us

Dr. Bo Feng and Christine Risch
Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER)
Marshall University

April 30, 2019

Dear Center for Business and Economic Research:

I would like to begin by expressing our appreciation at the West Virginia Department of Education for the in-depth third-party review of our methodology conducted by your team related to the qualitative analysis of stakeholder responses received through the WV Voice Education Forums. The level of verification that your team performed was thorough and impressive.

We found that using the computer-assisted thematic analysis was helpful to the groups of readers as they were synthesizing findings for the final report. While we expected that the computer-based classifications would be a useful starting point to help those reading through the respondents' comments, we were notably impressed with the overall accuracy of the process. Given that the use of the algorithm was a "value-add" to our process of manually reading through responses, we are encouraged that your audit found that the approach was meaningful and contributed to the validity evidence of the findings.

In response to your recommendation surrounding the theme of *Funding Opportunities*, we have decided to convene a separate group of readers (along with others involved in synthesizing findings) for that policy area to confirm that they would reach the same conclusions as the other group without the use of the output from the computer-assisted process. Though we don't suspect that there was any adverse impact in the interpretation, we have implemented the move in due diligence and as a precautionary measure.

Again, I would like to express our appreciation for your time in discussing the project with us and for all the time spent auditing our methodology. We welcome future collaborations and research projects with the Center for Business and Economic Research and other researchers at Marshall University as we continue to provide the best supports and services to students, educators, schools, and districts throughout West Virginia.

Appreciatively,

Andy Whisman, Ph.D.
Director
Office of Data Analysis and Research
West Virginia Department of Education