

CollabCoder: Data Security & Infrastructure Overview

For inclusion in IRB applications and data management plans

What Is CollabCoder?

CollabCoder is a web-based qualitative data analysis tool that allows research teams to collaboratively code textual data in real time. The application supports document upload, codebook management, passage tagging, and optional AI-assisted tag suggestions. It is hosted at app.collabcoder.ai.

Infrastructure & Data Storage

Component	Provider	Details
Application hosting	Google Firebase Hosting	Static web application served over HTTPS
Database	Google Cloud Firestore	NoSQL document database; data stored in Google Cloud US data centers
Authentication	Google Firebase Authentication	Google Sign-In (OAuth 2.0) or email/password; credentials managed by Firebase, not stored by CollabCoder
Server functions	Google Cloud Functions	Serverless compute for backend operations
AI tag suggestions (optional)	Anthropic Claude API	Text passages sent to Anthropic for analysis only when a user explicitly requests suggestions

Encryption

In transit: All data transmitted between the user's browser and CollabCoder servers is encrypted using TLS 1.2 or higher (HTTPS). This applies to document uploads, coding activity, and all API calls.

At rest: Data stored in Google Cloud Firestore is encrypted at rest using AES-256 encryption, managed by Google Cloud's default encryption infrastructure. Encryption keys are managed by Google and rotated automatically.

Access Controls

- Users authenticate via Google Sign-In (OAuth 2.0) or email/password. All credentials are managed by Google Firebase Authentication, not stored directly by CollabCoder.
- Project data is accessible only to the project owner and collaborators explicitly invited by email address.
- Firestore security rules enforce per-user and per-project access at the database level, preventing unauthorized reads or writes.
- CollabCoder administrators do not access research data in the normal course of operations.

AI-Assisted Tag Suggestions: Data Handling

CollabCoder offers optional AI-assisted tag suggestions powered by Anthropic's Claude API. This feature is entirely opt-in and operates as follows:

- AI suggestions are generated **only when a user clicks the "Suggest Tags" button** for a specific passage. No data is sent to Anthropic automatically or in the background.
- When invoked, only the selected text passage and the project's codebook (tag names and descriptions) are sent to the Anthropic API. No participant names, project metadata, or other documents are transmitted.
- Per Anthropic's data policy, API inputs and outputs are **not used to train Anthropic's models**. Data is retained by Anthropic for up to 30 days for trust and safety purposes, then deleted.
- Researchers who prefer not to use AI features can simply not invoke the suggestion feature. There is no requirement to use it, and it can be avoided entirely without affecting any other functionality.

Data Backup & Deletion

Backups: Firestore data is backed up daily using automated Google Cloud export operations. Backups are stored in a Google Cloud Storage bucket with the same encryption and access controls as the primary database.

Data deletion: Users can delete individual documents or entire projects from within the application at any time. Researchers who wish to have all data associated with their account permanently removed can contact hello@collabcoder.ai to request full account deletion.

FERPA Considerations

CollabCoder is not a student information system and does not collect, store, or process student education records as defined under FERPA. If researchers are coding data that originated from educational records, they should ensure that any data uploaded to CollabCoder has been appropriately de-identified in accordance with their IRB protocol before upload.

Questions about data security or infrastructure? Contact the CollabCoder team at hello@collabcoder.ai. We are available to speak directly with IRB reviewers or institutional compliance officers upon request.