

**Kimberley Aboriginal Health Planning Forum (KAHPF)**  
**Research Sub-committee**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Is this an ethics committee?**

No, the KAHPF Research Sub-committee is not an ethics committee.

Projects need to be supported by the KAHPF Research Sub-committee before being reviewed by the Western Australian Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (WAAHEC). Researchers need to apply to WAAHEC and any other relevant Human Research Ethics Committee, and receive ethics approval, prior to commencing a project.

**What sorts of projects need approval from WAAHEC?**

Please refer to the WAAHEC website, <https://www.ahcwa.org.au/sector-support/waahec>, including the 'Requirements for Ethics' section.

As defined by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO):  
*Aboriginal health means not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total well-being of their Community. It is a whole of life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life.*

**Why do I need to go through the KAHPF Research Sub-committee process before WAAHEC?**

WAAHEC was established to promote and support quality research that will be reflective of the needs of the community. As part of achieving this, WAAHEC has partnerships with various research sub-committees and planning forums throughout Western Australia, and requires that proposed projects have been through regional processes before undergoing ethical review by WAAHEC.

Over many years, there has been a disproportionately high level of demand to conduct research in the Kimberley, which has a population of only around 35,000 people. Overall, this research has involved a high burden on communities and health services that are already very busy, and has not had enough benefit for the Kimberley. (For further information, please read [McLoughlin et al. 2014](#) and [Matsumoto et al. 2023](#).)

The KAHPF Research Sub-committee process helps to ensure that Kimberley Aboriginal people and health services have appropriate control over research that affects them. This means that the research that is done is more likely to succeed and be useful, to contribute to improving health outcomes for Kimberley Aboriginal people.

**What will the Research Sub-committee look for when it assesses projects?**

Proposed research projects are required to meet the following conditions:

- There is consultation with each individual organisation that is involved in the project (noting that Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services does not provide region-wide support). An outcome of this would be a detailed letter/s of support from the relevant organisation/s.

- If organisations do not have capacity to be involved in a proposed project, they will say no. If an organisation approached for involvement in research does not respond, this should be taken as declining involvement. KAHPF member organisations can be approached directly using the Research Engagement Request form that is on the KAHPF Research Sub-committee website.
- Aboriginal health research projects in the Kimberley require the meaningful and informed involvement of Kimberley Aboriginal people. It is expected that local Aboriginal people will be included as Investigators on projects.
- Any costs incurred by organisations in support of the research (e.g. clinic space, transport, human resources, participation in research) are budgeted for, and reimbursed to the organisation if required.
- Researchers commit to providing updates, research findings and practical implications to the involved organisations, communities, and individuals throughout the project. This could form part of the organisation's letter of support, or a written research agreement.
- Researchers commit to working with the involved organisations at the end of the project to help make use of the findings, including advocacy for funding or resources where relevant.

As part of assessing projects for cultural security, benefit and burden, the following requirements will also be considered:

- Methods that are appropriate for the Kimberley setting.
- Lack of duplication of current or previous research.
- Availability of sufficient resources.
- Useful outcomes for Kimberley Aboriginal people.
- Consistency with the Principles of KAHRA that have been endorsed by representatives of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and WA Country Health Service.

#### **Does the same process apply to all researchers?**

All projects have the same submission process for the KAHPF Research Sub-committee, and the same requirement from WAAHEC for evidence of support from the KAHPF Research Sub-committee. For independent projects by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, not all of the considerations listed above will be relevant.

#### **Can I submit an application to WAAHEC first, or at the same time as to the KAHPF Research Sub-committee? Can the process be made faster for my project?**

Researchers are encouraged to submit their application as soon as it is ready, and before submitting to WAAHEC. It is expected that proposed projects will have been assessed by regional stakeholders, and modified to meet local requirements if necessary, before undergoing ethical review by WAAHEC.

All KAHPF Research Sub-committee applications will be reviewed as expediently as possible in the context of competing demands for all involved in the process, noting that there is a high volume of research applications and finite human resources to manage these.

Where there is sufficient time and the application is of the required standard, the Research Sub-committee will notify researchers and WAAHEC about whether a project is supported by the Sub-committee before the corresponding WAAHEC submission deadline.

### **What organisations are represented on the Research Sub-committee?**

The KAHPF Research Sub-committee consists of up to 8 individuals who are Kimberley-based, employed by a KAHPF core member organisation, have interest and/or experience in research, and will include representation from the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services sector and WA Country Health Service. Other representatives from KAHPF member organisations will also be called upon to participate when a proposed research project is relevant to their expertise or organisation's area of focus.

### **What happens after I submit my application to the Research Sub-committee?**

You will receive a reply that your application has been received, and will be given a KAHPF Research Sub-committee project reference number. If the application meets KAHPF's conditions, it will be reviewed. You may be contacted by email or phone during this process. The application and summary of the review will then be sent to the KAHPF Research Sub-committee. The Research Sub-committee's decision to support or not support a proposed project is by consensus. On rare occasion, when consensus cannot be reached, the Research Sub-committee may request that the researchers present their proposed project at a KAHPF meeting.

### **What happens if my application is not supported?**

The Research Sub-committee may require clarification or modifications to a proposed project before it can provide support, or it may make a decision to not support a proposed project. If a project is not supported, reasons will be provided in writing. The researchers may re-apply.

### **What happens with the progress reports and final reports that are submitted to the Sub-committee?**

The Secretariat will distribute annual progress reports and final reports to KAHPF Research Sub-committee members, and any other relevant KAHPF sub-committees. The Research Sub-committee's reporting to KAHPF will utilise information provided in application forms, annual progress reports and final reports. The requirement for annual and final reports is intended to contribute to useful outcomes from research in the Kimberley.

### **What is the difference between the KAHPF Research Sub-committee and the Kimberley Aboriginal Health Research Alliance (KAHRA)?**

KAHRA brings together Kimberley health services, Aboriginal communities, and Kimberley-based health research organisations. The activities of KAHRA include community engagement, workforce training and development, supporting utilisation of health care data, and facilitating research translation. KAHPF organisations have health or health-related service delivery as their core business; KAHPF and its Research Sub-committee do not include research organisations.

The Research Sub-committee has its own Secretariat. From 2021, this role has been performed by KAHRA team members. From 2023, the KAHRA Team is responsible for chairing the KAHPF Research Sub-committee. In particular, the KAHRA Team administers the research review function of the KAHPF Research Sub-committee in collaboration with relevant KAHPF representatives.

**If you require further information, please contact the KAHPF Research Sub-committee Secretariat at [krsc@kamsc.org.au](mailto:krsc@kamsc.org.au).**