Do I need to obtain ethics approval?

Depending on what the project and its evaluation involves you may be required to gain ethics approval through your local Human Research Ethics Committee. If you think you may want to publish your findings in a peer-reviewed journal you will probably need ethics approval and this can only be applied for and granted before you begin your project. It is recommended that you consult with the Executive Officer of your local Human Research Ethics Committee when you have drafted your initial project plan. For projects involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people you may also need approval from the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council Ethics Committee.

Regardless of whether your project requires ethical review, it should be conducted in line with ethical principles. Applicants who require ethics approval should ensure they have allocated appropriate time within their project plans to gain required approvals prior to commencing the project. If additional time is required in order gain ethics approval please speak to the Cancer Institute NSW grants team.

Useful references include:

1. National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018), https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018

2. Ethical Considerations in Quality Assurance and Evaluation Activities, National Health and Medical Research Council, March 2014,

   https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/ethical-considerations-quality-assurance-and-evaluation-activities

   This document is of particular importance as it provides information on specific triggers that are an indication that ethical review is required:

   - Where the activity potentially infringes the privacy or professional reputation of participants, providers or organisations.
   - Secondary use of data - using data or analysis from QA or evaluation activities for another purpose.
   - Gathering information about the participant beyond that which is collected routinely. Information may include biospecimens or additional investigations.
   - Testing of non-standard (innovative) protocols or equipment.
   - Comparison of cohorts.
   - Randomisation or the use of control groups or placebos.
   - Targeted analysis of data involving minority/vulnerable groups whose data is to be separated out of that data collected or analysed as part of the main QA/evaluation activity.

Where one or more of the triggers above apply, the guidance provided in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018) should be followed.

3. Contact details for NSW Health Human Research Ethics Committees, https://www.medicalresearch.nsw.gov.au/ethics-governance-contacts/

4. Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council Ethics Committee, http://www.ahmrc.org.au/ethics.html