



**ACT**  
Government

Justice and Community Safety

# APPLICATION GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL RESEARCHERS

(COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS)

ACT CORRECTIVE SERVICES

MAY 2023

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### PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES

These guidelines have been developed to assist external researchers from community organisations to complete the *ACTCS Research Application Form for External Researchers*.

### EXTERNAL RESEARCHERS

The term *external researcher* refers to individuals and organisations external to ACTCS who wish to access unpublished ACTCS data, facilities, staff, detainees, offenders or clients for research purposes.

External researchers also include researchers employed by community organisations who in the course of their duties have access to ACTCS facilities, staff, detainees, offenders, or clients (for example, employees of community organisations who facilitate programs at correctional centres).

### APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Please ensure that you carefully read this guide and that you answer all questions on the *ACTCS Research Application Form for External Researchers (Community Organisations)*. Information provided by you on the application form should be written in language appropriate to the lay reader.

Your application should include:

- > survey instruments
- > interview schedules or other data gathering instruments
- > participant information
- > participant consent form
- > any other relevant supporting documents.

Your completed application form and supporting documents should be emailed to

[ACTCS.Research@act.gov.au](mailto:ACTCS.Research@act.gov.au). Your application will then be assessed by the Commissioner, ACTCS and relevant ACTCS staff.

### NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME

You will be notified of the outcome of your application in writing.

### Formal approval

Successful applicants will receive a letter from the Commissioner stating:

- > what research activities have been approved
- > any requested research activities that have not been approved (if applicable)
- > any specific conditions on approval to conduct your research
- > the name and contact details of your ACTCS Area Contact.

Your ACTCS Area Contact is an ACTCS employee who has been nominated as your first point of contact for the data collection phase of your research. Depending on the nature of the research, they will assist with tasks such as organising the transfer of ACTCS data, facilitating access to ACTCS worksites, and distributing information about the research to ACTCS staff, detainees, offenders or clients.

Successful applicants will also receive an *Acknowledgement of Conditions on Approval to Conduct Research with ACT Corrective Services*, which outlines any specific conditions of approval on the research as well as the core conditions on approval to conduct research with ACTCS (outlined below).

## CONDITIONS ON APPROVAL

All approved ACTCS research is subject to the following core conditions, as well as any additional conditions specific to the approved research:

- (a) All members of the research team are required to sign an *Acknowledgement of Conditions on Approval to Conduct Research with ACT Corrective Services*.
- (b) Compliance with the *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* - <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018>.
- (c) Compliance with the principles of the *ACT Public Service Code of Conduct*.
- (d) All breaches compromising data security or confidentiality must be reported as soon as possible to the Research and Evaluation Officer (REO) via [ACTCS.Research@act.gov.au](mailto:ACTCS.Research@act.gov.au).
- (e) Any proposed changes to ACTCS-approved research should be submitted to the REO for consideration and approval by ACTCS prior to amending practice.
- (f) Changes to the research team should be reported to the REO.

## APPLICATION GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL RESEARCHERS (COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS)

- (g) Inclusion of a new research team member requires approval from ACTCS where the new member will require access to ACTCS data, facilities, staff, detainees, offenders or clients; or where they will have access to data collected from ACTCS staff, detainees, offenders or clients.
- (h) Researchers who require access to correctional centres must:
- complete Security Awareness Training
  - undergo iris scanning
  - comply with all reasonable directions given to them by Corrections Officers
  - comply with any conditions required by the Deputy Commissioner Custodial Operations
  - understand that final approval regarding timing and logistics for access to correctional centres is at the discretion of the General Manager of the correctional centre.
- (i) Researchers who require access to Community Operations workplaces must:
- comply with any conditions required by the Assistant Commissioner Community Operations
  - understand that final approval regarding timing and logistics is at the discretion of the Assistant Commissioner Community Operations.
- (j) Researchers must advise their ACTCS Area Contact (or their manager) prior to leaving any ACTCS site if any participants exhibit signs of distress or discomfort.
- (k) Researchers must provide an *ACTCS Data Collection/Fieldwork Completion Report* to the REO no later than 10 working days after data collection is completed.
- (l) Researchers must provide an *ACTCS Data Analysis Completion Report* no later than 10 working days after data analysis is completed.
- (m) Researchers must provide any reports, papers, or other outputs arising from this research, for consideration by the Commissioner, at least 30 days prior to any release or publication (via [ACTCS.Research@act.gov.au](mailto:ACTCS.Research@act.gov.au)).
- (n) Researchers must acknowledge ACTCS contribution in all publications arising from the research.
- (o) Researchers must include the following disclaimer in all publications arising from the research:
- “The opinions, comments and/or analysis expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of ACT Corrective Services and cannot be taken in any way as expressions of ACT Government policy.”*
- (p) Researchers should understand that where ACTCS believes conditions have not been complied with, the Commissioner may:

- suspend approval of the research until the Commissioner is satisfied that the researcher/s will conduct the research in accordance with the ACTCS conditions on the research
- notify the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) who gave approval to the researcher/s to conduct the research, or their employer
- withdraw approval for the research
- in extreme cases, take further action pursuant to s322 of the *Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act 2005*.

(q) Any secondary use of data obtained or collected from ACTCS requires separate approval from the Commissioner. This includes but is not limited to situations where:

- the primary data collection occurred as part of the provision of a service to detainees or offenders under ACTCS supervision
- the researcher/s wish to re-use primary data collected as part of a previously approved external research project or collected for research commissioned by ACTCS.

## COMMENCING RESEARCH

Approved research must not commence until ACTCS has confirmed receipt of the *Acknowledgement of Conditions on Approval to Conduct Research with ACT Corrective Services*, signed by all members of the research team. This should be forwarded to [ACTCS.Research@act.gov.au](mailto:ACTCS.Research@act.gov.au).

## GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING APPLICATION FORM

### Part 1: Researchers

Complete information must be provided by all researchers who will be working on your research project. If there are more than three researchers involved, please include information regarding additional researchers at the end of your application.

Researchers should also ensure that they declare any conflicts of interest (if applicable) and how issues arising from conflicts of interest will be addressed. Failure to do so may result in approval to conduct research being denied or revoked.

Researchers who as part of their work role have access to ACTCS facilities, detainees, offenders or clients should also consider Chapter 4.3 of the [\*NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research\*](#), which provides guidance for ethical conduct of research involving people in unequal or dependent relationships.

### Part 2: Research project

Please complete all questions in this section in the format required. Your answers should be self-explanatory and self-contained and written in plain language.

#### Funding

All sources of funding for your research should be disclosed on the application form.

#### Ethical conduct

Please explain how you will conduct your research ethically and consistent with the [\*NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research\*](#). Researchers are encouraged to read the *National Statement* which is available here: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018>, and researchers should pay particular attention to pages 9 – 11.

#### Research design

Your proposed research design, method and data analysis should be described in enough detail so that the research proposal can be assessed in terms of scientific validity and in accordance with accepted principles of research appropriate to your discipline.

#### Potential value of the proposed research

ACTCS encourages research proposals that have the potential to contribute to improved correctional practice. Researchers should demonstrate how the proposed research will make a significant contribution to the safe and humane rehabilitation, containment or supervision of offenders, and to the objectives/achievement of correctional best practice.

### Alignment with ACTCS strategic priorities

Preference will also be given to projects that support research areas aligned with ACTCS strategic priorities, namely:

- > supporting the ACT Government's commitment to reduce recidivism by 25% by 2025
- > the provision of sustainable opportunities for offenders to lead law abiding and productive lives in the community through rehabilitation and reintegration.

### Part 3: Requirements from ACT Corrective Services

Please provide full details of your research requirements and explain why they are essential to your research. Please note that while a range of possible requirements are listed in this section, researchers should be mindful that ACTCS will consider the potential research burden on organisational resources, staff, detainees, offenders and clients when considering your request. Please justify why these requirements are essential for your research.

### Access to ACTCS data / statistical information

If you require access to ACTCS data, please complete all questions in this section carefully and thoroughly.

When considering requests for data, ACTCS will consider:

- > agency resources required to extract data and the availability of data
- > capacity of the researcher, and their organisation, to protect the security of ACTCS data
- > capacity of the researcher to manage disclosure risks and protect the confidentiality of individuals.

You will also be asked to provide specific information about how you plan to securely transfer, store, protect and dispose of ACTCS data at *Part 4: Data security and protecting confidentiality of research participants*.

Please also note that all secondary use of data (that is, any use not specifically stated on your application form) will require separate ACTCS approval.



### Access to ACTCS worksites, staff, detainees, offenders or clients

The Commissioner and individual location managers will consider the effect of any research on service operations, including:

- > any risks associated with the research
- > if the research methodology is suitable for a custodial / correctional environment
- > consideration of potential ethical issues that might arise when conducting research with a detainee/offender population
- > consideration of potential risks that might arise when conducting research with a detainee/offender population
- > consideration of the potential need for participant counselling or support after participation in the research
- > amount of in-kind assistance required from ACTCS (e.g. recruiting participants)
- > legal considerations.

### Free and informed consent

Should your research require the participation of detainees or offenders then you should take into consideration how you will ensure that potential research participants give free and informed consent.

While it is common practice for researchers to provide written information to potential research participants, researchers should also be mindful of their obligation to provide verbal information to research participants that clearly informs them about the purpose of the research, how their information may be collected and used, a reassurance that there will be no negative consequences if they refuse to participate in the research, and that they can cease their participation in the research at any time without providing a reason. Your procedure for doing this should be explained in your application.

When providing written information to potential research participants, researchers should be mindful that many detainees and offenders may have limited reading and comprehension skills. Researchers are encouraged to ensure written information is suitable for people with limited literacy and, if possible, should consider providing *Easy English* versions of participant information and consent forms.

Participant information – both verbal and written – should align with the following guidelines:

- > a plain language explanation so that the participant understands the purpose of the project and the procedures to be followed
- > a description of any discomfort and / or risk to the participant
- > an indication of how much time will be needed
- > confirmation that the participant is free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time
- > confirmation that there will be no penalty or prejudice of any kind for not participating in the project
- > confirmation that if there are any questions the participant does not wish to answer they do not have to
- > the participant should be informed that the researcher may be obliged to inform appropriate authorities if the participant discloses any offence for which they have not previously been apprehended, prosecuted or convicted
- > an offer to answer any questions the participant has concerning the research, how their information will be used, and details of how to contact the primary researcher.

### Part 4: Data security and protecting confidentiality of research participants

If you are requesting access to data held by ACTCS, please provide a detailed response to questions (a) to (e).

If you are requesting the participation of ACTCS staff, detainees, offenders or clients, please provide a detailed response to question (f).

Please note that all research requests will be carefully scrutinised to ensure that the security of data (including disclosure risks), and the privacy and confidentiality of research participants is protected.

### Part 5: Risk management

Researchers should demonstrate that they have considered all possible risks of the research to ACT Corrective Services, ACTCS staff, detainees, offenders and clients, the researchers, as well as any potential risks to the ACT community. Researchers should then demonstrate that they have planned for and have the capacity to prevent and/or minimise these risks.

Particular attention will be paid to how well researchers who seek access to ACTCS detainees, offenders and clients can identify and address potential risks to these vulnerable groups.

## Part 6: Research outputs

ACTCS supports the publication of approved research work undertaken with ACTCS.

However, ACTCS requires researchers to provide a final draft of any research outputs (e.g. reports, journal articles, conference presentations etc) for consideration by the Commissioner at least 30 days prior to any public release.

***Please ensure all researchers sign the final page of the application form.***



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