

Research Licensing Guidance for Researchers

The Aurora Research Institute (ARI) administers research licenses in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Research licensing is a process that is required by territorial law to ensure that research conducted in the NWT is done ethically and in consultation with community stakeholders. The licensing process also provides an important monitoring function, as all licenses are stored in a public database that is maintained by ARI. All research in the NWT must be licensed.

Research licenses are issued by the Aurora Research Institute.
For more information or to apply visit nwtresearch.com



Research Licensing and Community Partners

Community partners are critical for ensuring the research is culturally appropriate, accurate, and respectful – you are an important resource to the research team. As part of a research team, you can support the research license application by ensuring it is plain language and informed by local perspectives. As the community partner, you can facilitate consultations between the researcher and local organizations and stakeholders – this can even make the research licensing process go faster, if the researcher speaks with the organizations and individuals that approve research licenses in the region. It is not recommended that community partners conduct consultations on behalf of the researcher, as it is important that the researcher who is responsible for the project consults with the relevant local contacts.

When a research license application is submitted, it is circulated to a group of pre-identified community stakeholders who review the details of the study. These reviewers are representatives from local and Indigenous governments and experts in critical areas of research (eg. health, lands, Indigenous knowledge) who can ask questions, raise concerns with researchers, and who provide input on studies that are proposed in their region.

Why is research licensing important?

Good research requires consultation with the people and communities impacted by or involved in your area of study. Research with Indigenous Peoples requires consultation, whether you are conducting research on Indigenous lands, collecting data in communities where the majority of residents are Indigenous, or planning to draw conclusions about Indigenous populations or experiences.¹ The licensing process helps to facilitate this consultation by requiring research to be reviewed by local stakeholders before it can proceed. The responsibility for carrying out consultation remains with each research applicant.

The research licensing process also ensures that research conducted in the NWT is monitored and documented in an online database; this allows community members, decision-makers, and other researchers to easily see what research has been conducted and by whom, so they can seek out further information if needed. This improves accessibility of research findings for NWT residents, supports evidence-based decision making, and fosters communication networks among researchers and organizations working in similar areas of interest.

How do I apply for a research license?

The lead researcher is responsible for getting all necessary licenses and approvals before starting on research. Participants cannot be recruited and data cannot be collected until the license is in place – the project timeline should include time for research license review and for community organizations to be able to provide feedback during the review process. Occasionally, researchers from other provinces or countries are not aware of the research licensing requirement. To avoid confusion and delay, be sure to inform research partners of the legal requirement to license all research in the NWT.

¹ Please see the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, Chapter 9 for more information on the ethics protocols required for research with Indigenous Peoples.

Research license applications are submitted to the Scientific Services Office of the Aurora Research Institute (ARI) via an online system called POLAR (Portal for Online License Applications for Research). The application process requires a plain language summary of the research, copies of any data collection tools you plan to use, consent forms, research ethics protocol, and an active approval from a research ethics board. Depending on the type of research you are conducting and/or the community you are working in, there may be additional approvals required before a license can be issued (please see [title of other regulations document] for more information.)

How is a research license reviewed?

Once a complete application has been received, ARI will circulate it to stakeholders for review. This process can take several weeks, so be sure to plan in advance and budget time for the license review process. You may be asked to respond to questions or concerns from community members, organizations, and/or other researchers. A best practice recommended by ARI is to proactively consult with local stakeholders far in advance of submitting a research license – consulting with community while developing your study allows you to get locally relevant input, double check your assumptions, ensure your information is accurate, and improve the chances that reviewers will approve your license quickly, since they are already familiar with it.

One of the biggest strengths of the licensing review process, is in the feedback submitted by NWT community review organizations after applications are reviewed. After applications are submitted by researchers, ARI distributes the

Resources

About research licensing (AR):

<https://nwtresearch.com/licensing>

Communicating about research (ARI):

<https://nwtresearch.com/licensing/communicating-research>

Working together: A guide for researchers (ARI):

<https://nwtresearch.com/licensing/communicating-research/working-together-guide-researchers>

Conducting research in Canada's North (Polar Knowledge Canada):

<https://www.canada.ca/en/polar-knowledge/online-portal-for-researchers.html>

Guide to the NWT research process (Hotiì ts'eeda)

<https://nwtspor.ca/nwt-research/nwt-research-process>

application to community organizations to review details of the study to ensure it is in the best interests of the people of the NWT to allow the research to proceed. During the review period, representatives from local and Indigenous governments and experts in critical areas of research may ask questions, raise concerns with researchers, and can provide input on studies to proceed in their region. The research applicants are then expected to address the questions or concerns to the best of their ability.

Once I have my license, what happens next?

A research project can only begin after a research license is in place – this includes recruitment of participants and data collection (eg. Interviews, surveys, focus groups). Detailed instructions on reporting requirements will be provided along with the licence document package. These reporting requirements include, providing an annual plain language summary of activities (of approximately 200 words) and providing a copy of your final report once complete and a copy of a published report if it is accepted by a peer reviewed journal.