

AL1600 - Project Ethics Policy

1.0 PURPOSE

All projects ***involving people and their private information*** require ethics review using the ARECCI process to:

- ensure an ethical lens has been applied throughout the phases of project development.
- ensure a systematic approach to reviewing ethical risk to project participants and the organization.
- establish accountabilities for managing ethical risk associated with projects within the risk tolerance of the project team and the organization.
- continually improve the quality of health service delivery in IH by supporting the ethical development of projects.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

ARECCI	An acronym created by Alberta Innovates-Health Solutions which stands for “ A pRoject E thics C ommunity C onsensus I nitiative”. It is sometimes used interchangeably with the term “Project Ethics”.
ARECCI Decision Support Tools	Two online ethics decision-support tools have been developed by Alberta Innovates-Health Solutions to assist leaders and organizations in their projects. They are the ARECCI Guidelines for Quality Improvement and Evaluation Projects and the ARECCI Ethics Screening Tool. These decision-support guides are a resource to assist integration of appropriate ethics considerations in projects to protect people and their information, whether the project is evaluation, quality improvement (QI), quality assurance (QA), or research.
ARECCI Ethics Guidelines for Quality Improvement and Evaluation	On-line ethics decision-support tool which helps integrate ethical considerations into projects from planning to reporting. Typically referred to as ‘the Guidelines’.
ARECCI Ethics Screening Tool	On-line ethics decision-support tool which helps sort projects into their most likely category (research or non-research), determines the category of risk and appropriate level of review. Typically referred to as ‘the Screening Tool’.

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Administrative Policy Manual
Code: AL Legal/Ethical

Evaluation	Systematic collection and analysis of information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.
Information	Information or data is personal or non-personally identifiable information being used to inform the project, used for analysis of the project. Any personal information held or obtained by the Health Authority either through the delivery of service or specifically requested of the participant. Any health information and health-related information, including personal information and non-personally identifiable information.
Organization's Recognized Review	Systematic review by a duly constituted committee independent of the project team and recognized by the organization.
Quality Improvement (QI)	Quality improvement (QI) consists of systematic and continuous actions that lead to measurable improvement in health care services and the health status of targeted patient groups.
Participants	The term participants includes patients, clients, residents, subjects, respondents, employees, contract staff, students, physicians, or volunteers within a research, QI or Evaluation Project.
Project	A collaborative enterprise, involving research or design, which is carefully planned to achieve a particular aim. A project typically has a beginning and an end. For assistance in determining projects that would be applicable for Project Ethics, see Appendix B.
Project Ethics	The application of ethics considerations across a range of knowledge-generating investigations, including QI, Evaluation, and Research Projects to protect and respect people and/or their Information.
Research	An undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation.
Risk	The effect of uncertainty on objectives.
Second Opinion Review (SOR)	Ethical review by a trained individual who has no vested interest in the Project.

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3.0 POLICY

This policy is to ensure that Project Ethics is applied to all Projects, involving people and their Information undertaken by IH staff, students, external consultants or physicians in the course of their employment, contractual, or student obligations. (For assistance in determining projects that would be applicable for Project Ethics, see Appendix B)

Using the framework will ensure that Projects are developed ethically and in alignment with IH values and goals.

- 3.1 In order to protect and respect people and their Information the ARECCI Decision Support Tools will be applied. These tools assist in determining the primary purpose of a Project (research, QI or evaluation), ethical considerations and level of ethical risk that the Project may put upon the Participants and the organization. Using these tools provides a standardized framework to ensure a consistent approach to Project Ethics in IH.
- 3.2 All projects, will be reviewed through the appropriately determined review process based on primary purpose (research or non-research (ie: QI or evaluation)) and identified level of risk. The decision to proceed with a project is the responsibility of the project team and sponsor.
- 3.3 A Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) may be required for your Project. Review policy [AR0400 Privacy and Management of Confidential Information](#) to determine applicability.

4.0 PROCEDURES

To ensure a consistent approach to Project Ethics, the on-line ARECCI Decision Support tools will be used. The completion of these tools is best led by someone who completed the ARECCI Project Ethics Level 1 Course. If there isn't an ARECCI trained person working on the project, contact projectethics@interiorhealth.ca for support.

- 4.1 The best practice approach is to complete the Guidelines www.aihealthsolutions.ca/arecci/guidelines during the development of the QI or Evaluation Project. However, if the Project is underway, the guidelines can be completed and updated at any stage of the Project.
- 4.2 Use the Screening Tool www.aihealthsolutions.ca/arecci/screening to determine primary purpose and level of Risk. A flow chart of this process can be found in Appendix A.
 - 4.2.1 If the primary purpose of the Project is Research, proceed according to [3.13 Research and Research Ethics](#) of the Interior Health Authority Board Manual.
 - 4.2.2 If primary purpose of the Project is non-research (ie: QI or Evaluation) initiate a review based on category of Risk. The review is done to ensure that the ethical considerations identified are sufficiently addressed and that the level of Risk is acceptable to the organization.

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The category of Risk is based on the numerical value determined after completing the Screening Tool. The categories of Risk are as follows:

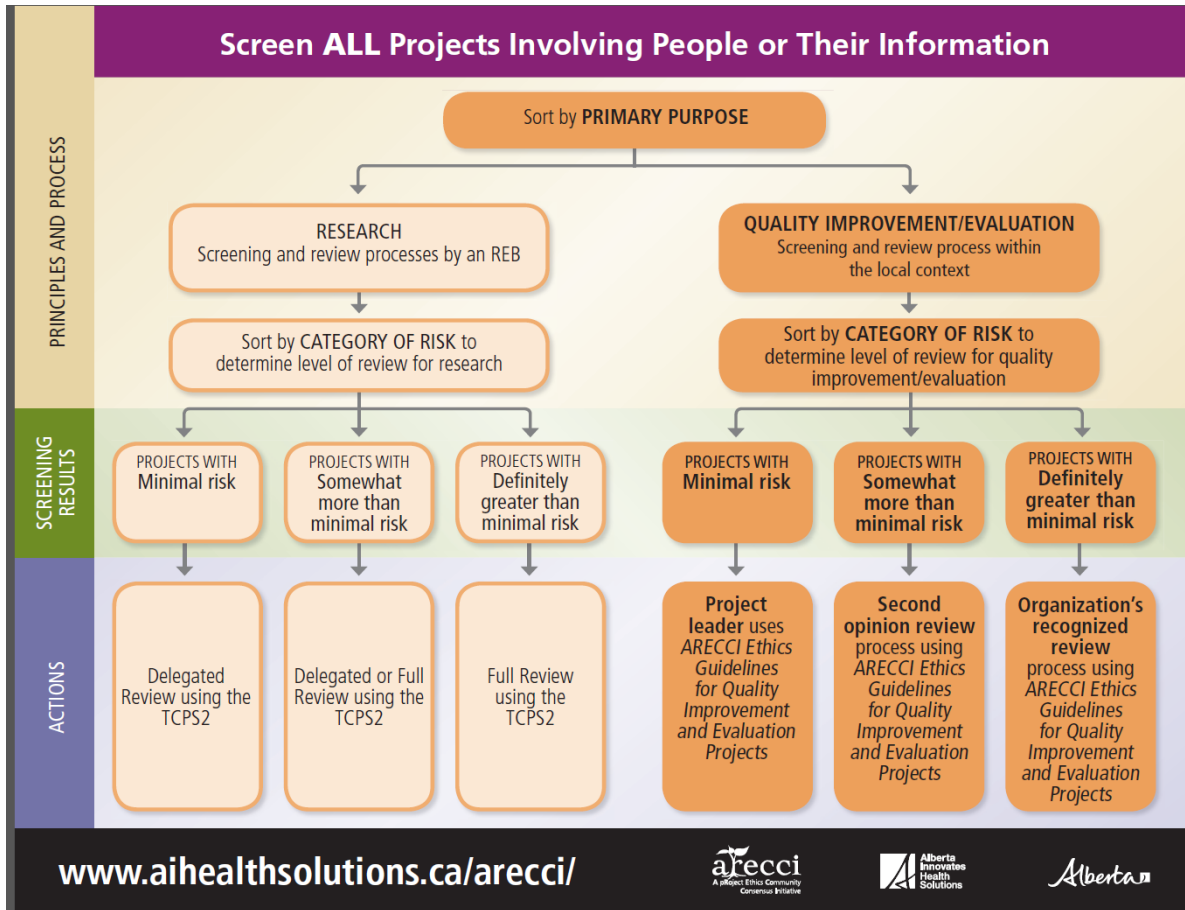
- If the Project has **minimal risk** then the Project lead uses the completed Guidelines to ensure the ethical considerations identified are sufficiently addressed or level of Risk is acceptable.
- If the Project has **somewhat more than minimal risk**, then the Project will require a Second Opinion Review (SOR). The SOR will be conducted by a trained individual who has no vested interest in the Project.
- If the Project has **definitely greater than minimal risk** then it will require the highest level of review. IH's Organization's Recognized Review will be a review by 2 trained Second Opinion Reviewers, one of which must have expertise in the project type (QI or Evaluation), and a content expert who will collaborate to prepare a report for signoff by the VP of the appropriate portfolio, or their designate, prior to the Project moving ahead.
- If an SOR or Organization's Recognized Review is required, contact projectethics@interiorhealth.ca for assistance.

5.0 REFERENCES

1. [ARECCI: A Project Ethics Community Consensus Initiatives](#)
2. ARECCI Project Ethics Reference Guide, Alberta Innovates-Health Solutions, August 2013
3. [AR0400 Privacy and Management of Confidential Information](#)
4. Interior Health Authority Board Manual: [3.13 Research and Research Ethics](#)

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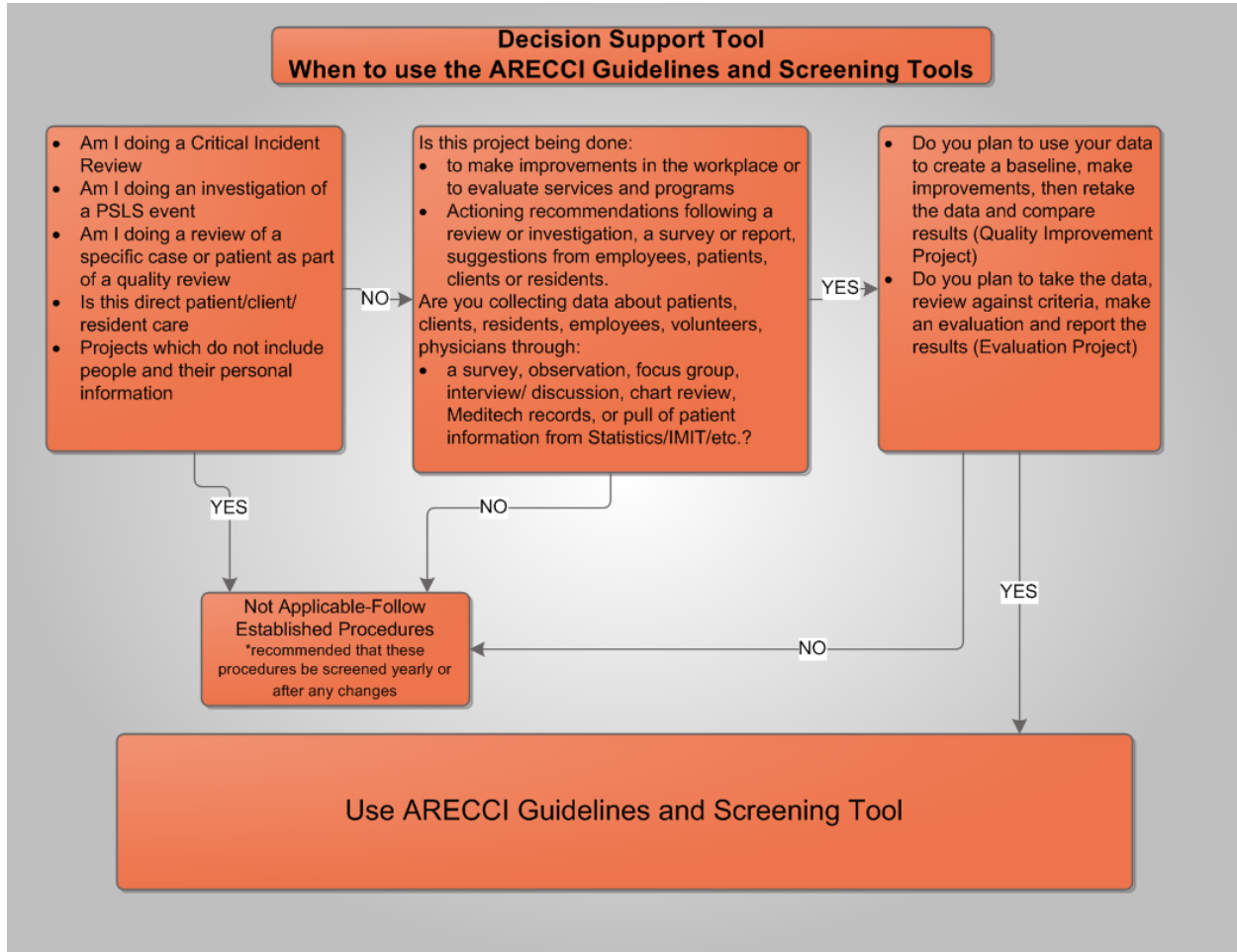
APPENDIX A - ARECCI Process Flow Chart



Source: Alberta Innovates – Health Solutions

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APPENDIX B – Decision Support Tool



This tool is to be used as a guideline and is not exhaustive of all Projects which this policy may apply to.

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