



Health, disability and compensation research guidelines

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Contents

Researcher guidelines	3
1. Purpose	3
2. Background	3
3. Who these guidelines are for	3
4. Roles and Responsibilities	3
5. Research Team Requirements	5
5.1 Project management	5
5.2 Consumer engagement	7
5.3 Research translation	7
5.4 Ethics and confidentiality	7
5.5 Intellectual Property	8
5.6 Research outputs - project deliverables	8
5.7 Additional research outputs	9
5.8 Publication policy	9
5.9 Termination	9
6. Changes to these guidelines	9
7. TAC Health, Disability and Compensation Team Key Contacts	9



Researcher guidelines

1. PURPOSE

These guidelines outline the obligations for researchers who receive funding through the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) Health, Disability and Compensation Research Branch (subsequently referred to as the Research Branch).

This document provides a summary of researchers obligations. For full details refer to your Deed of Standing Offer, Official Order and approved Project Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

The TAC invests in quality health, disability and compensation research that provides evidence-based insights that are practically applied to meet the TAC's strategic objectives.

We invest in research that meets the 6 overarching principles of the TAC research program. These are:

1. Invest in independent research that provides world class insights,
2. Leverage existing research,
3. Have a clear value and translation statement,
4. Be applied in nature,
5. Deliver findings when they are needed, and
6. Have a clear accountability for translation.

This guide summarises the key processes for meeting these research principles.

3. WHO THESE GUIDELINES ARE FOR

These guidelines are for all researchers working on projects funded through the Research Branch at the TAC.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following stakeholders are involved in the effective management of a TAC research project.

Research team - the research team is comprised of external researchers and is engaged by the TAC to undertake a specific research project and deliver their findings to the TAC.

TAC Health, Disability and Compensation Research Branch – This Branch develops research tasking statements in conjunction with the business, commissions research projects and engages external researchers to undertake research projects. The Research Branch monitors progress and works with research teams to ensure project timelines remain on track and that research is targeted and delivered to meet TAC needs. The Research Branch has a key focus on translation and evaluation activities, ensuring that research is translated into business activities and outcomes.

Other TAC representatives include the following - a nominated Business Sponsor, Business Owner and a TAC Research Project Manager. They will provide assistance to the research team as outlined in the project plan and will assist with the implementation and translation of findings into practice and/or policy.



TABLE 1: KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TAC RESEARCH STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Stakeholder	Role	Responsibilities
Research team	Chief investigator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensures research undertaken in line with academic requirements (e.g. ethics) and rigorous scientific methodology.• Delivers project in line with the approved project plan.• Ensures timely delivery of quality project outputs (i.e. research reports, presentations).
	Project manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manages project budget and resources to ensure project milestones are met.• Provides administrative reports to TAC outlining project progress.• Coordinates project meetings and presentations in collaboration with the TAC.
TAC	Business sponsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for overall project endorsement and responsibility.
	Business owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for project conduct and governance (in combination with the TAC Research Project Manager).• Provides resources as agreed in the project plan.• Active, ongoing involvement in the project planning and implementation.• Maximises dissemination and use of research findings within the organization and to key stakeholders.• Chairs relevant Research Project Meetings.
	Research project manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key point of contact within the TAC in relation to the project.• Assists researchers with project related enquiries.• Active, ongoing involvement in the project planning and implementation.• First point of call for the TAC if any amendments to the project are requested by researchers.



5. RESEARCH TEAM REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Project management

5.1.1 Project management standards

All TAC research projects must be managed in line with best practice management standards, as outlined below;

A Project Manager must be appointed for all projects. This person is responsible for ensuring that the project is carried out according to the agreed project plan. The Project Manager is also responsible for:

- Providing project reports, as specified in the reporting schedule outlined in the project plan.
- Managing project issues and risks, such as staffing and project scope changes, and any other issue(s) with potential to substantially impact project delivery. The TAC's Research Project Manager should be notified of any potential issues and risks as early as possible.
- Notifying the TAC Research Project Manager of intention to publish or publicly present any material related to a TAC-funded project.
- Updating the TAC on financial expenditure as required.

The TAC uses the SmartyGrants administration software to manage research projects. Both the Chief Investigator and the Project Manager will receive a SmartyGrants login, user guide and appropriate training.

5.1.2 Project management reports

Reporting periods and schedules of individual projects vary according to research activity and project timelines. Reporting schedules will be outlined in agreed project plans. The TAC may seek additional project updates outside of the agreed schedule as required. Where feasible, this will be requested via correspondence with the TAC Research Project Manager.

Research reports submitted to the TAC should include a comprehensive reference list using the Vancouver referencing style

The TAC website has guidelines and templates to assist researchers to completing the following:

- Project Plan
- TAC Final Report
- TAC Final Budget

These templates can be found at:

<http://www.tac.vic.gov.au/about-the-tac/our-organisation/research/research/information-for-researchers>

The Project Manager is responsible for ensuring reports are delivered to the TAC on time according to the agreed reporting schedule. The TAC will acknowledge receipt and follow up queries as necessary.

5.1.3 Project amendments

The TAC allows for project plans to be amended in exceptional circumstances. To amend a project, the Project Manager must undertake the following process:

1. Contact the Research Project Manager as soon as practicable to discuss the arising issue(s) and potential impact(s) to the project. The following should be addressed:
 - Current project status
 - Identified risk or issue
 - Details of proposed project amendment(s)
 - Rationale for requested amendment(s)
 - Impact on project timelines and budget and proposed mitigation strategy if appropriate
 - Any additional relevant information to support the request.
2. Following discussion, the TAC will provide the researcher with viable options to proceed. This may include provision of



TAC support to meet original timelines or approval of project amendment options.

3. If an amendment is deemed by the TAC to be required, the TAC will assist the research team to develop a formal project deed of variation.
4. The form will then be submitted to the TAC governance processes. The final approver will vary according to the nature of the project amendment required.

This process can take up to several months to complete. Therefore it is essential that the TAC Research Project Manager is informed as early as practicable of any potential issue(s) that may impact on project delivery as per the agreed project plan.

5.1.4 Secondary research types

The types of secondary research which may be requested include the following:

Evidence review

Evidence reviews involve a search, screen and synthesis of the published scientific literature.

All evidence reviews should follow the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, and include quality assessment of the methodological strength of the evidence. Evidence review reports require a PRISMA flow chart that outlines the literature review process.

A systematic evidence review involves a comprehensive and detailed search to retrieve all studies published on a given topic within a specified date period. This is used when the evidence base is limited, or when it is important to gain a comprehensive understanding of an entire body of evidence.

To ensure the search captures all relevant studies, a carefully developed search strategy is applied to multiple electronic databases containing peer-reviewed scientific literature. Detailed inclusion and exclusion criteria should be defined and used to guide the search and screen process.

A rapid evidence review involves a targeted search of the scientific evidence - often to retrieve the most recent studies published on a given topic. This is used when the evidence base is broad or when a comprehensive understanding of a body of evidence is not required. A rapid review may be limited to a search for recent systematic reviews, termed a meta-review. An approach when the evidence base is quite large is to retrieve a select number of recent relevant studies across key topic areas, cohorts or conditions.

In contrast to systematic reviews, rapid reviews often involve searching a more limited set of databases using a simpler search strategy.

Rapid reviews are generally completed within a short time frame of 6-8 weeks.

Environmental scan

Environmental scans involve a search for current and emerging practices and trends on a given topic across national and international industry and business sectors.

This research activity involves two key stages. The first stage involves a desktop scan of publicly available information on business, government and/or other industry sources (essentially grey literature), usually in the form of an electronic Google search. The second stage includes semi-structured interviews with key informants of ~ 10 organisations identified as world leading and/or being of significant interest to the TAC. An interview schedule should be developed by the Research Branch in close collaboration with the business sponsor and, if appropriate, the external appointed research team. With consent, key informant interviews should be audio recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis. Qualitative thematic analysis should guide the analysis and synthesis of interview data to answer key research questions.

Following interviews, the key informants should be provided a verbatim copy of their interview data for verification and, if requested or desired, elaboration. Additional consent may be required to report findings related to sensitive industry or organisational issues internally or externally to the TAC.



To increase confidence in the reliability of findings, it is recommended that a second researcher contribute to data analysis and synthesis.

Horizon scan

A horizon scan involves a systematic scan of the academic and grey literature to identify new and emerging developments in health technologies, thinking or practice likely to have a significant impact on the TAC.

TAC can request a 1 off horizon scan or an ongoing program extending over a defined number of years.

5.1.5 Project completion

Within 3 months of scheduled project completion, the TAC will send a reminder email to the Chief Investigator and Project Manager for submission of a final report. The Chief Investigator is required to submit the final and budget reports, for acquittal by the TAC. Any unspent funds must be returned to the TAC. The following templates must be completed and submitted:

- TAC Final Report
- TAC Final Budget

These templates can be found at:
<http://www.tac.vic.gov.au/about-the-tac/our-organisation/research/research/information-for-researchers>

5.2 Consumer engagement

The TAC is committed to engaging consumers, in particular TAC clients, in the research process. This ensures the clients voice and lived experience informs strategic planning and decision making that impacts TAC clients and scheme outcomes. If applicable, the Research Team must outline the following in the project plan:

- Involvement of consumers across the different research stages, where appropriate,
- Approaches adopted to involve, collaborate and consult with consumers, with the TAC's assistance if required, and

- Contribution, utilisation and value of consumer insights to the research.

5.3 Research translation

Research Translation is a key focus area for the TAC. Researchers are required to actively disseminate, translate and lead impact research activities to support TAC strategic planning and decision making, and achieve practice change in the relevant health or disability service sector.

The Research Team must apply the following principles in the design and conduct of research to maximise the potential for translation:

- **Co-design:** involve and connect relevant stakeholders (i.e. researchers, consumers, funding bodies) who can add value,
- **Calibration:** continuously evaluate the research potential for translation, and
- **Capacity building:** present research at forums and workshops, publish, and deliver products (e.g. summaries, guides, manuals, and training programs) to impact and change practice

In most instances the TAC will develop a plain language summary to accompany each research report. The lead researchers may be asked to review this plain language summary during development.

5.4 Ethics and confidentiality

The TAC requires all projects to adhere to appropriate confidentiality and ethical standards. The Chief Investigator must:

- Obtain and adhere to all relevant ethics approvals (or exemptions) and guidelines which relate to the project, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and the Supplier Code of Conduct. A copy of the Ethics Approval documentation must be supplied to the TAC for record keeping prior to research commencement.
- Ensure all members of the project team complete a Confidentiality Deed and



forward all completed deeds to the TAC prior to project commencement.

The Confidentiality Deed Poll can be found at <http://www.tac.vic.gov.au/about-the-tac/our-organisation/research/research/information-for-researchers>

- If using TAC claims data ensure that strict security protocols are maintained and that data is destroyed or returned to the TAC on completion of the research project.

Additionally, the secrecy provisions relating to government data and the Acts that govern the TAC (the *Transport Accident Act 1986*) must be adhered to by the TAC and all involved in a TAC research project.

TAC research activities are assigned a rating of low, medium or high rating system, according to level of potential ethical/privacy risk:

- **Low:** primary research activity involving analysis of deidentified aggregate data or secondary activity involving evidence review. Environmental scans may be considered of low priority, even though identifiable data collected from key informants. Interviews focused on usual business models/practices and do not involve collection of private information and most times, non-sensitive material.
- **Medium:** primary research activity involving analysis of identifiable or re-identifiable aggregate data.
- **High:** primary research activity involving collection and analysis of individual identified data, such as through survey or interview methods and topics may be sensitive or distressing or involve minors.

Researchers should give due consideration to the ethical implications of their research and address these within the Project Plan.

5.5 Intellectual Property

Intellectual Property (IP) includes research or products of research that may have some

commercial value (formalised through patents, copyright, trademarks and designs).

Background IP (or existing material) remains the property of the organisation that brings it into the research project. Therefore, the Chief Investigator needs to ensure that any background IP used is reported accurately to the TAC, both in the approved project plan and Project Management Reports.

The Chief Investigator must also report any new IP that is created through the project, as the project progresses. Generally, new IP created through a TAC research project will be owned by the research organisation engaged to undertake the research unless discussed, agreed and stated upfront prior to the signing of the project plan document. Ownership and use of IP created or used in a TAC project will be governed by the Deed of Standing Offer between the TAC and the research organisation.

5.5 Research outputs - project deliverables

TAC research project outcomes can be delivered in various forms. The Research team and the TAC Research Project Manager will agree on the format of delivery of project outputs, as specified in the research project plan. Recognised output categories include:

- Research reports
- Research summaries
- Plain language statements
- Information graphics
- Implementation Guides
- Presentation Slide decks
- Forums and workshops presentations
- Posters.

TAC project plans will, in most instances, specify that a final report be delivered to the TAC that clearly outlines the findings and implications of the research project. This report should be written in a clear and comprehensible way that can be easily understood and utilised by the TAC, and potentially other key stakeholders. All research outputs must acknowledge the funding partners.

Research reports and summaries must undergo Peer Review to validate the quality of the scientific



approach and analysis. A declaration signed by the Peer Reviewer must be submitted to the TAC with these outputs.

Contact your TAC Research Project Manager for specific guidance and approval on the use of the TAC logo and other branding requirements.

5.6 Additional research outputs

Research teams are not precluded from developing additional outputs from TAC research projects. Researchers must prioritise preparation and delivery of key output deliverables specified in the agreed project plan.

Written consent from the TAC Research Project Manager must be obtained prior to issuing any media release or publishing any work about the TAC in connection with the research contract or contract material.

5.7 Publication policy

Researchers are required to consult and ensure adherence to the TAC publication policy prior to the submission of any publication arising from TAC funded research. This includes academic or non-academic products of research such as articles submitted for consideration by a peer-reviewed research journal, books and book chapters, conference presentations, papers included in conference proceedings, and technical reports.

This publication policy is available on the TAC website at:
<http://www.tac.vic.gov.au/about-the-tac/our-organisation/research/research/information-for-researchers>

5.8 Termination

The TAC Research Funding Agreement allows for termination of a research project at any time (under certain circumstances) by written notice to the Chief Investigator. For further details regarding termination please refer to the Deed of Standing offer.

6. CHANGES TO THESE GUIDELINES

Researcher guidelines and associated templates are available online on the TAC Health, Disability and Compensation Research website at

<http://www.tac.vic.gov.au/about-the-tac/our-organisation/research/research/information-for-researchers>

The TAC may update the guidelines and templates from time to time as required. Periodically TAC will notify researchers of changes to these guidelines or associated templates.

Researchers should regularly check the website for updated versions of all templates and ensure they are using the most current versions.

7. TAC HEALTH, DISABILITY AND COMPENSATION TEAM KEY CONTACTS

For all project queries contact the TAC Research Program Manager specified in your approved project plan.

If you cannot reach your key contact please contact the research branch on research@tac.vic.gov.au and an appropriate person will be in contact.