

# ETHICS APPROVAL PROCESSES IN THE PACIFIC

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## INTRODUCTION

In an effort to improve capacity within the sector to undertake effective and ethical development research, RDI Network has mapped the processes of obtaining ethics approval for research in developing countries across the Pacific. Meeting the relevant ethics approval requirements in-country is essential for the integrity of the conducting of and products resulting from research projects.

This document is designed to be used as a guidance by any researcher who intends to undertake research involving human participants (such as surveys or interviews) within any of the nine Pacific countries covered by this document. Organisations may also find this information useful, as it provides a starting point in which to begin seeking ethics approval for their own research.

The following pages outline step-by-step processes for obtaining ethics approval in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. When possible, links to relevant application forms have been provided, as well as websites and contact details for acquiring additional information.

The use of ethics review processes in-country by researchers based in Australia should complement the appropriate ethics approval requirements of Australian regulations and institutions.

## DISCLAIMER

While all efforts have been taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, it is recommended that researchers do their own fact checking at the time of application, as information can change quickly. The advice provided should be considered as unofficial and is to be used as guidance only.

As information within governments can change quickly, RDI Network recommends that researchers check with the contacts provided to ensure that these approval processes remain current at the time of application.

This information is accurate, to the best of RDI Network's knowledge, as of July 2017.

## THANK YOU

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- The Burnet Institute
- Jeremy Kohlitz (PhD Candidate at the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney).

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## COOK ISLANDS



## STEPS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL

- While there is no centralised agency, the National Research Committee, Office of the Prime Minister, issues research permits.
- Guidelines for conducting research in the Cook Islands can be found [here](#).
- Applications must be submitted to the committee at least three months prior to intended departure date. Approved applications will be able to pick up permit on arrival.
- A copy of the application form can be found [here](#).
- The completed application form, a letter of recommendation, current CV, and passport copy are to be sent to:

Chairperson, Foundation for National Research  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Rarotonga, Cook Islands  
Telephone: (682) 29 300  
Fax: (682) 20 856  
Email: [services@pmoffice.gov.ck](mailto:services@pmoffice.gov.ck)

If visiting the outer islands, a letter of support from the Island Secretary or Mayor from each of the islands visited must be included when submitting an application.

- For more information on this process, please contact the Research Secretariat of the Office of the Prime Minister: Ms Tina Samson, [tina.samson@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:tina.samson@cookislands.gov.ck) or Ms Elizabeth Wright, [elizabeth.wright@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:elizabeth.wright@cookislands.gov.ck).



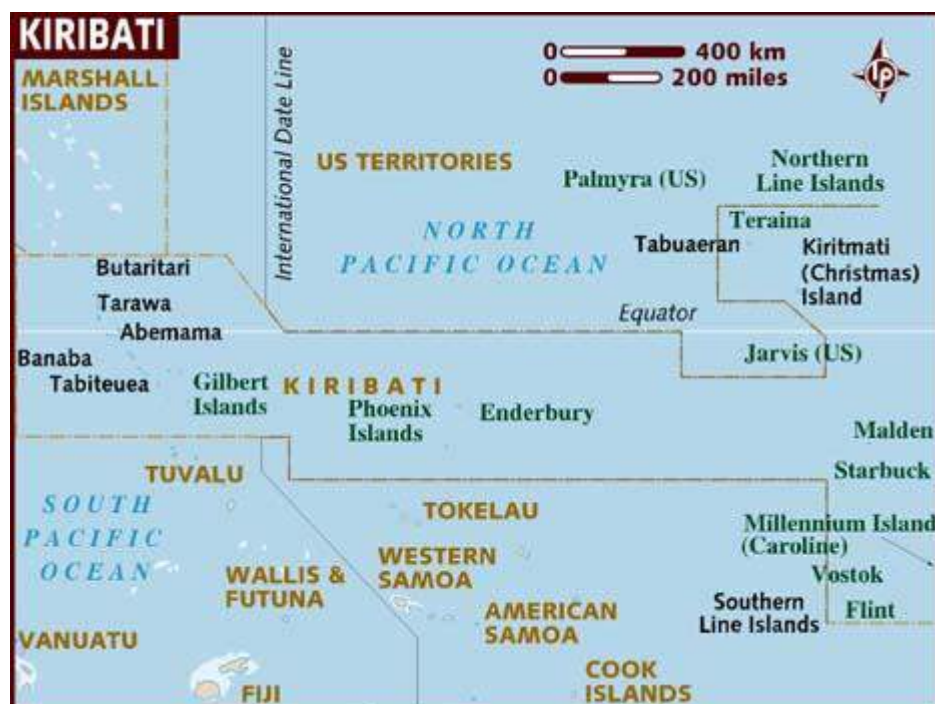
## FIJI



## STEPS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL

- ◆ There are two Ethics Review Committees who issue research permits: the College Health Research Ethics Review Committee at the Fiji National University's College of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Services; and the Fiji National Health Research Ethics Review Committee at the Ministry of Health.
- ◆ Applications are individually reviewed once received. Although processing times may vary, the standard turnaround is one-two weeks.
- ◆ As applications are processed online, researchers must create an account on the Fiji Health Research Portal: <http://www.health.gov.fj/fijihrp/index.php?journal=hrp&page=user&op=register>.
- ◆ To complete the application, the following documents must be uploaded into the portal:
  - Complete research proposal with abstract
  - Questionnaires/data collection form, consent form, and information sheet
  - Current CV
  - Overseas researchers need to provide proof of collaboration with a local institution and local co-investigator
- ◆ A permit from the Immigration Department is also required. More information regarding this visa process can be found at: <http://www.immigration.gov.fj/research-permit>.
- ◆ Within 12 months of completed research, one hard copy and one soft copy (along with all de-identified raw data used for final analysis) must be sent to the Ministry of Health.
- ◆ For more information on this process, please go to <http://health.gov.fj/fijihrp/> or contact Mrs Mere Delai, [mere.delai@govnet.gov.fj](mailto:mere.delai@govnet.gov.fj).

## KIRIBATI



## STEPS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL

- ◆ The Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs issues research permits for cultural/anthropological related research.
- ◆ Applications are individually reviewed once received. Although processing times may vary, the standard turnaround is one - two weeks.
- ◆ A copy of the application form can be found [here](#).
- ◆ The completed application form, one page research proposal, and current CV to be sent to:
 

Mr Tearinibeia Enoo-Teabo  
 Communications & Public Relations Officer  
 Office of Te Beretitenti  
 P.O. Box 75  
 Bairiki, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati  
 Telephone: (686) 21183  
 Mobile: (686) 73062382  
 Email: [tteabo@ob.gov.ki](mailto:tteabo@ob.gov.ki)
- ◆ Upon acceptance of the research permit, the researcher needs to advise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of their intention to visit and to obtain a visa. Contact details are: Tesse Lambourne, [tlambourne@mfa.gov.ki](mailto:tlambourne@mfa.gov.ki) or Ministry of Foreign Affairs Executive Assistant, [ea@mfa.gov.ki](mailto:ea@mfa.gov.ki).
- ◆ Within two months of the research being completed, two copies of the published material must be submitted to the Kiribati Cultural Centre and Museum. More information on this will be provided as part of the research approval process.
- ◆ For more information on this process, please email Mr Tearinibeia Enoo-Teabo, [tteabo@ob.gov.ki](mailto:tteabo@ob.gov.ki).

## MARSHALL ISLANDS



## STEPS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL

- ♦ The Historical Preservation Office issues research permits for anthropological related research.
- ♦ Committees are formed to assess applications as they are received. As such, it is recommended that applications are made well in advance of the intended start date. Processing times vary depending on how many applications are received, and how long it takes committee to form, but standard turnaround is two - four weeks.
- ♦ A copy of the application form can be found [here](#).
- ♦ The completed application form, research proposal, and a support letter from the researcher's university or institution is to be sent to:

Mr Wallace Peter  
 Secretary of Internal Affairs  
 Historic Preservation Office  
 P.O. Box 1454  
 Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960  
 Telephone: (692) 625-4476  
 Fax: (692) 625-4476  
 Email: [rmihpo@gmail.com](mailto:rmihpo@gmail.com)

- ♦ Upon completion of the research, two hard copies and one soft copy of final report/thesis (along with all data collected within the Marshall Islands) must be submitted to the HPO. The deadline in which this data needs to be submitted will be determined through the application process.
- ♦ For more information on this process, please email [rmihpo@gmail.com](mailto:rmihpo@gmail.com).





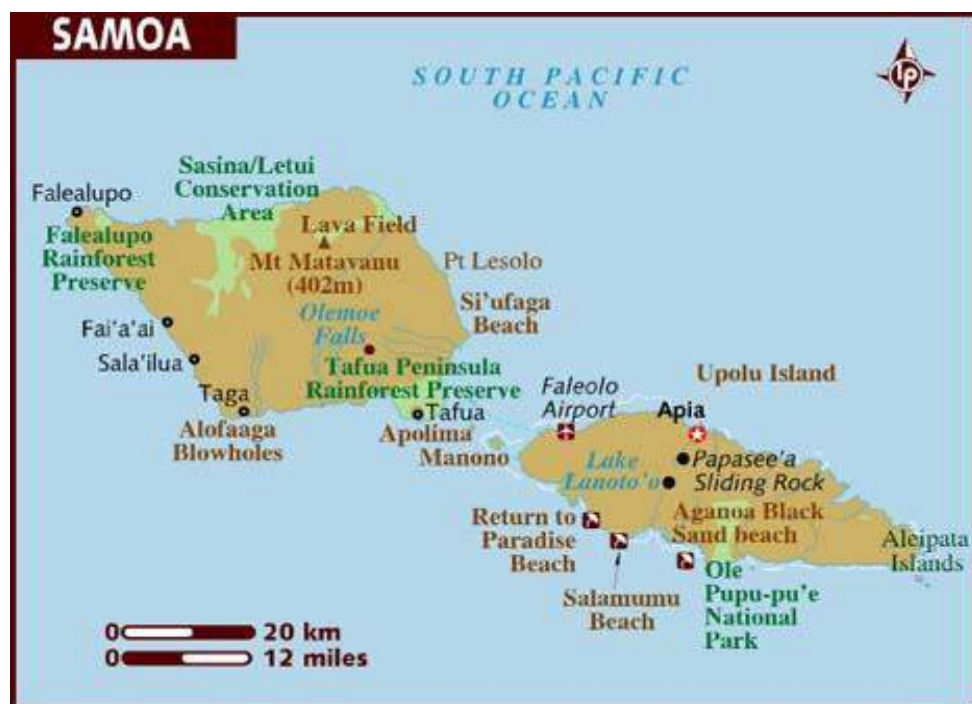
## PAPUA NEW GUINEA



## STEPS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL

- ♦ Approval from both the Institute of Medical Research Institutional Review Board, and the Medical Research Advisory Committee is required for all research involving human participants.
- ♦ Guidelines for conducting research in Papua New Guinea can be found at: [http://www.pngimr.org.pg/irb/protocol\\_approvs.htm](http://www.pngimr.org.pg/irb/protocol_approvs.htm).
- ♦ Applications are only reviewed on a bi-monthly basis when the Committee meets. As such, turnaround times vary depending on when the application is submitted. A schedule of Committee meetings and application deadlines can be found at: <https://pngimr.org.pg/irb/meetings.htm>.
- ♦ A consent form template can be found [here](#).
- ♦ The Institute of Medical Research Institutional Review Board Pro Forma can be found [here](#).
- ♦ To complete the application, the following documents must be emailed to [imrirb@pngimr.org.pg](mailto:imrirb@pngimr.org.pg):
  - Current CVs for all researchers
  - Research proposal
  - Study objectives
  - Study design
  - Potential risks and known potential benefits
  - Consent form
  - Institute of Medical Research Institutional Review Board Pro Forma
 Further information can be found at: [https://pngimr.org.pg/irb/protocol\\_content\\_list.htm](https://pngimr.org.pg/irb/protocol_content_list.htm).
- ♦ As the Institute of Medical Research Institutional Review Board will automatically forward the Medical Research Advisory Committee, no further additional paperwork needs to be submitted unless requested.
- ♦ For more information on this process, please email [info@pngimr.org.pg](mailto:info@pngimr.org.pg).

## SAMOA



## STEPS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL

- ♦ There is no centralised agency in Samoa. All ministries have their own ethics research committee, procedures, and policies. To undertake research with human participants, it is recommended that researchers seek approval through the Samoa Health Research Committee of the Ministry of Health.
- ♦ Applications are individually reviewed once received. Processing times may vary, and are dependent on research content and the number of ministries involved. However, the standard turnaround is between two weeks and three months.
- ♦ To apply, a letter requesting to conduct research in Samoa, research proposal, and ethics approval from the researcher's university or institution should be sent to:

Mr Leausa T Dr. Take Naseri  
 Chairman of the Health Research Committee and Director of Health  
 Motootua, Ifiifi Street  
 Apia  
 Telephone: (685) 68 100  
 Fax: (685) 21 440  
 Email: [ceo@health.gov.ws](mailto:ceo@health.gov.ws)

- ♦ Overseas researchers need to apply for a Temporary Resident Permit for Academic or Scientific Research prior to travelling to Samoa. More information regarding the visa application process can be found at: [www.samoaimmigration.gov.ws](http://www.samoaimmigration.gov.ws).
- ♦ For more information on this process, please contact the Ministry of Health Executive Assistance Office: [ExecutiveAssistant@health.gov.ws](mailto:ExecutiveAssistant@health.gov.ws) or the Health Research Secretariat: Ms Quandolita Reid-Enari, [QuandolitaE@health.gov.ws](mailto:QuandolitaE@health.gov.ws) or Ms Merina Ieremia, [Merinal@health.gov.ws](mailto:Merinal@health.gov.ws).



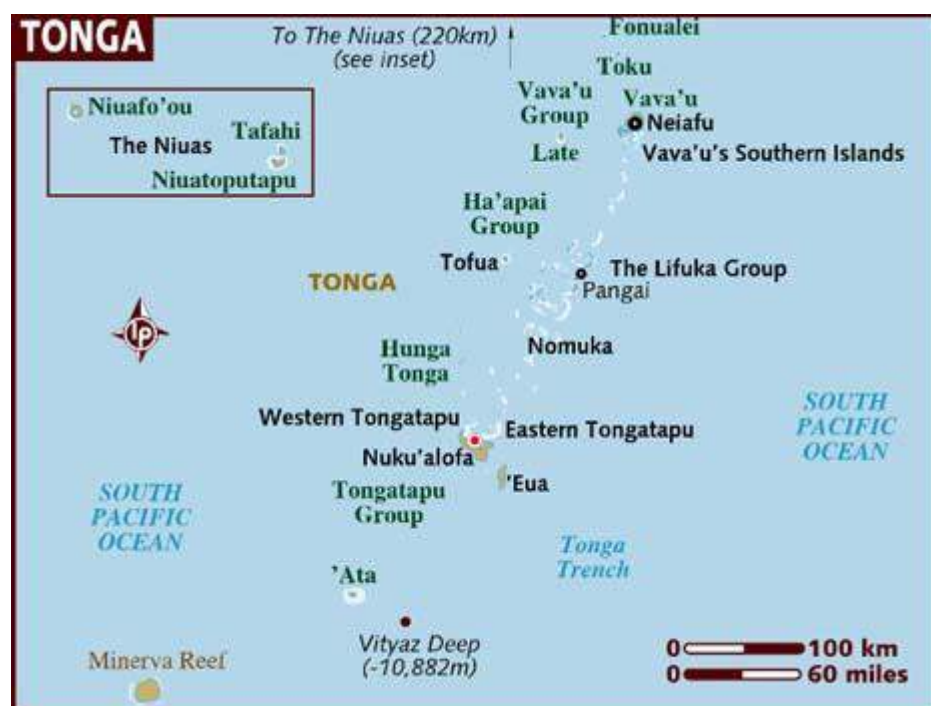
## SOLOMON ISLANDS



## STEPS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL

- ♦ The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development issues all research permits.
- ♦ Applications are only reviewed once a quarter, when the Research Committee meets. As such, turnaround times vary depending on when application is submitted. It is recommended that applications are submitted well in advance to allow for this.
- ♦ Prior to starting the application, it is highly recommended that the researcher ensures that they meet the application criteria, which can be found at: <http://www.mehrd.gov.sb/>.
- ♦ Depending on the nature of the intended research, researchers may be required to obtain a separate provincial research permit in addition to the national research permit. As such, it is recommended that researchers contact the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development via email prior to submitting their application. Please send inquiries to: [research@mehrd.gov.sb](mailto:research@mehrd.gov.sb).
- ♦ Once research requirements have been confirmed, a copy of the application form can be found at: <http://www.mehrd.gov.sb/101-uncategorised/206-research>.
- ♦ To complete application, the following documents must be emailed to [research@mehrd.gov.sb](mailto:research@mehrd.gov.sb):
  - Completed application form
  - Ethics approval from home university or organisation
  - Full research proposal
  - 1-2 page proposal summary, which should include: researcher contact details, title, objectives, methods (including study site), period of study, population or study, and significance/ expected contribution of the study for research subjects
  - Current CV
- ♦ Researches must also obtain a Travel Visa to enter and reside in the Solomon Islands whilst they conduct their research. Application forms and further information about this process can be found at: [http://www.commerce.gov.sb/Divisions/Immigration/Residing\\_in\\_SI.htm](http://www.commerce.gov.sb/Divisions/Immigration/Residing_in_SI.htm).
- ♦ For more information on this process, please email Ms Martha Taisara, [mtaisara@mehrd.gov.sb](mailto:mtaisara@mehrd.gov.sb) or [eps@mehrd.gov.sb](mailto:eps@mehrd.gov.sb).

## TONGA



## STEPS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL

- ◆ The National Health Ethics and Research Committee issues ethics approval for all research.
- ◆ Applications are usually reviewed quarterly or bi-monthly, however these meetings are flexible. The standard turnaround time is two - three months.
- ◆ A copy of the application form can be found [here](#).
- ◆ To complete the application, the following documents must be emailed to the Health Research Officer at [sfkupu@health.gov.to](mailto:sfkupu@health.gov.to) or [sioapekupu@gmail.com](mailto:sioapekupu@gmail.com):
  - Completed application form
  - Informed consent forms
  - Information sheets
  - Interview questionnaires/schedules
  - Ethics approval from the researcher's university or organisation
- ◆ For more information on this process, please email [sfkupu@health.gov.to](mailto:sfkupu@health.gov.to) or [sioapekupu@gmail.com](mailto:sioapekupu@gmail.com) or visit <http://www.health.gov.to/drupal/?q=node/13>.

## VANUATU



## STEPS IN RESEARCH APPROVAL

- ♦ The Vanuatu National Cultural Council issues research permits for cultural related research.
- ♦ Processing times vary dependent on how application is submitted; i.e. in person or via post. Standard turnaround is two - four weeks. Continuous follow up is strongly recommended for timely processing.
- ♦ Prior to starting the application, it is highly recommended that the researcher reads the Vanuatu Cultural Research Policy, which can be found [here](#).
- ♦ A copy of the application form can be found [here](#).
- ♦ The completed application form and letter of endorsement from the affiliated university or organisation guaranteeing that researcher will comply with policy conditions, is to be sent to:

Vanuatu National Cultural Council- Vanuatu Cultural Centre  
 P.O. Box 184  
 Port-Vila Vanuatu  
 Telephone: 22129  
 Email: [vks@vanuatuculture.org](mailto:vks@vanuatuculture.org)

If the researcher is not affiliated with a recognised university or organisation, a refundable Vatu \$40,000.00 fee is to be paid to ensure compliance.

- ♦ Overseas researchers need to apply for a special category visa. A checklist of the required documents can be found [here](#). More information regarding the visa application process can be found at: <http://immigration.gov.au/index.php/application-forms/>.
- ♦ For more information on this process, please email [vks@vanuatuculture.org](mailto:vks@vanuatuculture.org).

