

Approvals

Known factors that impact project approval timeframes



Shorter	Medium	Longer
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Data Linkage Unit

Quality of application	Plain language. Clear data flow and all datasets listed. Consistency across all areas of the application. Up to date variable lists sourced and filled out in full and correctly	Use of technical or vague language requiring clarification. Variable lists not attached to application	Insufficient information and details in the application Lack of consistency and accuracy within and/or between application and study documentation Changes to study design, requested datasets, time ranges, variables etc.
Capacity of DLU	DLU has the resources required to conduct linkage of existing projects	DLU is operating at capacity	DLU has high volume of linkage projects that is exceeding their capacity
Project complexity	Linkage of core data collections with simple cohort, data and variable specifications	Request for frequently linked data collection with simple data cohort, data and variable specifications	Case/control study or new data collections (outside of core data collections) that requires discussion with multiple custodian(s) and/or linkage team; request of restricted variables (such as Indigenous status, date of birth) or data from time period not yet linked

Data Custodians

Contracts in place for data release	Existing contract in place	Data collection has been linked previously, but no enduring contract exists	Data collection not been linked previously, and no contract is in place. Approvals are required from multiple Data Custodians.
Data Custodians capacity and competing priorities	Data Custodian has resources available to review applications	Data Custodian is close to capacity with non-data linkage related workload	Data Custodian workload is at capacity

Human Research Ethics Committee

Quality of application	Application contains all the required information and details about the research project so that the HREC can make an informed assessment	Well written application but some additional information required by HREC	Insufficient information and details in the application Lack of consistency and accuracy within and/or between study documentation
Project Complexity	Simple project design using well established methodology and routinely linked data collections No significant ethical issues	More complicated project design Some ethical issues	Project requires external experts for scientific review or review of security arrangements Project raises significant ethical issues
Frequency of HREC meetings	≤ monthly meetings	5-6 meetings per year	Five or less meeting a year. Long delays for projects that have been asked for additional information or clarification.
HREC capacity and competing priorities	Few other applications; HREC experienced with linkage projects	Members have limited experience with linkage projects; policy for approval time frame in place (i.e., strict 6-week limit from assignment to project approval)	HREC has high volume of projects, and projects may be held over to future meetings HREC members have no experience with linkage projects
Number of HRECs involved	Approval by one HREC required	Acceptance of single ethics review by multiple public health organisations through the NMA Scheme	Multiple HREC approvals required; Aboriginal Health Research Ethics Approval required