Developing our Ethics Plans

Principles and practices

An internal guide for our team

V.1.0 August 2022

This guide is for internal use by the Griffith Centre for Systems Innovation team, to help guide the design and delivery of **research and capability building projects** that involve community members, staff of our own or others' organisations, students, and/or cross-stakeholder groups. In line with our principle of sharing knowledge openly we offer this as a resource for others.

Why do we need our own Ethics plans?

The Griffith Centre for Systems Innovation sits within Griffith Business School, and is structured as an **Engagement Centre**, rather than a Research Centre or other more traditional academic department. Our approach is **participatory at the core**, and so our ethical processes are central to our work. Our work often intentionally blurs boundaries, and this can sometimes make standard guidelines difficult to interpret into a given context. For example, conventional publishing in academic literature is less of a focus for us than outputs generated through other channels.

Our research and capability building work is directed towards practical applications and demonstrations with the goal of contributing towards systems innovation in practice. This guide is designed to reflect and support this approach, and to make clear the relationship between this internal team process and formal Ethics requirements, as outlined in the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual.

In the event a formal Ethics Process is required (for example, where academic publishing is a goal), the GCSI Project / Course Convenor will develop, integrate and manage the parallel processes with their project team to ensure requirements are met. These two processes are complementary, as they are designed to cover different content and address different issues.

Which projects need an Ethics Plan?

Large initiatives will have one overarching Ethics Plan, that outlines the core ways of working for that Project. **Smaller** initiatives, and sometimes specific elements within a larger initiative, will have shorter plans appropriate to the scale and complexity. 'Large' and 'smaller' as used here relate to the complexity and/or range of potential ethical issues involved, rather than a quantitative-style sizing range. Where a specific Project sits on this spectrum will be a decision for the Project team, with input from the Engaged Research Lead as useful.

Note that none of these categorisations automatically determine whether formal GU Ethics Clearance may also be required or desirable; each Project needs to be considered separately, including those with no funding relationships involved.

How do we go about developing our interactive Ethics Plans?

GCSI Ethics Plans are developed **through discussion** within the relevant Project team, rather than by one team member alone. We take this approach because we believe discussion-based processes are foundational to ethical practice, and also contribute to building ethical 'muscle' across the team. By dedicating time to thinking through and teasing out considerations and nuances, from an early-stage but also across the life-cGCSIle of a Project, we believe our projects will be stronger and more fully reflect our intended objectives. We extend this approach to include our Partners, and where appropriate participants; and this is also foundational to our '**mutual-learning**' oriented approach.

In keeping with the experimental and emergent nature of our work, we treat Ethics Plans as '**living documents**' that will be reviewed on a periodic basis over the course of a Project and on an as-needed basis as learnings are generated. In practice, this means that the Ethics Plan are formally reviewed and updated at several stages, as outlined below. A key principle is to work proactively '**with eyes open**' to where there may be opportunities to improve how and what we do on an ongoing basis.

How to use this document

1 Project Convenor **schedules at least one formal 'team working bee'**, to work through the queries and considerations outlined for each relevant stage.

If you are starting the ethics process after stage one (for whatever reason), include discussion of the queries and considerations from the stages previous to your starting point. Schedule additional meetings as useful, to ensure full exploration and/or iterative engagement with the Principles and Practices.

2 Choose the section in this Guide and the associated **Template** that is relevant to the current project life-cGCSlle stage:

- 🟢 Green: 1) proposal concept + 2) proposal confirmation

- 🔵 Blue: 3) project kick-off + 4) project implementation

- 🟠 Orange: 5) project wrap-up

Set the Template up for your proposal/project, and save in the related folder.

3 As a Proposal/Project team, work through the prompt questions in the Guide and discuss what is relevant, what is not, why, and anything else that seems significant in this context.

Document team responses to the elements identified in the chosen Stage section using the Template document provided. Ensure the Plan document is stored in the **Project common files** with the project and stage in the file name.

Over the duration of the project, please add the updated Ethics Plan summary for each stage. Some may be very brief updates, others may be more substantial - if plans or other factors shift over the duration of the Project. **At the completion of a project, you will have one Ethics Plan document that has been populated for each of the five stages.**

Use the Template provided to document your Ethics Plan, including the iterations developed over the project life-cGCSlle.

Where formal GU Ethics Clearance is also in place for a Project, be sure to document how the two processes have been considered and integrated for each stage of development. Store the formal Ethics Clearance documentation in the same place.

Our principles

These guide our approach to working with partners and towards our goals

As you're discussing the question prompts and determining answers for your Ethics Plans, keep the following principles in mind to guide discussions.

- Our Team Memes (see next page).

- Our research and capability building activities are undertaken to support **positive transformations in the world**, to contribute to **mutual learning and social flourishing**, while recognising the complex intersection of the different domains of social life.

- We seek to **create benefit and value** with and for those we are working with, going **beyond a foundational principle of 'do no harm'**.

- Our approach is **grounded in respect** for those we work with, and we show this through an overarching **'mutual-learning' approach** that is integrated across our work.

- We believe that recognising positive impact requires ethical awareness of and reflexive engagement with the context and consequences of research, including **being attuned to possible unintended consequences**.

- We take a **relational approach** to our work, recognising that research with good impact should also impact positively on the researchers and the systems of research themselves.

We are pathfinders for a better world

We try, test, learn + tell.
We are strategic and spontaneous.
We are experimintal + agile.
We are explorers.

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY | GRIFFITH CENTRE FOR SYSTEMS INNOVATION

We make good happen

We're driven to create impact. We actively foster diverse participation and relational ways of being. We work without ego. We get stuff done and we get it done well.

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY | GRIFFITH CENTRE FOR SYSTEMS INNOVATION

We have sharp-eyed focus

We are deliberate and purposeful about what we do. We get to the point. We are outcomes based with a steely eye for what's important. We are lean, green and humble in our practices and financial management

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY | GRIFFITH CENTRE FOR SYSTEMS INNOVATION

We give a damn

We care about and for each other. We play to our strengths. We celebrate the personal and professional. We talk straight, with care, challenge eachother respectfully and are open to learning. We remember why we are doing this.

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We're radically flexible

We are radically flexible in everything except our accountability to deliver outcomes

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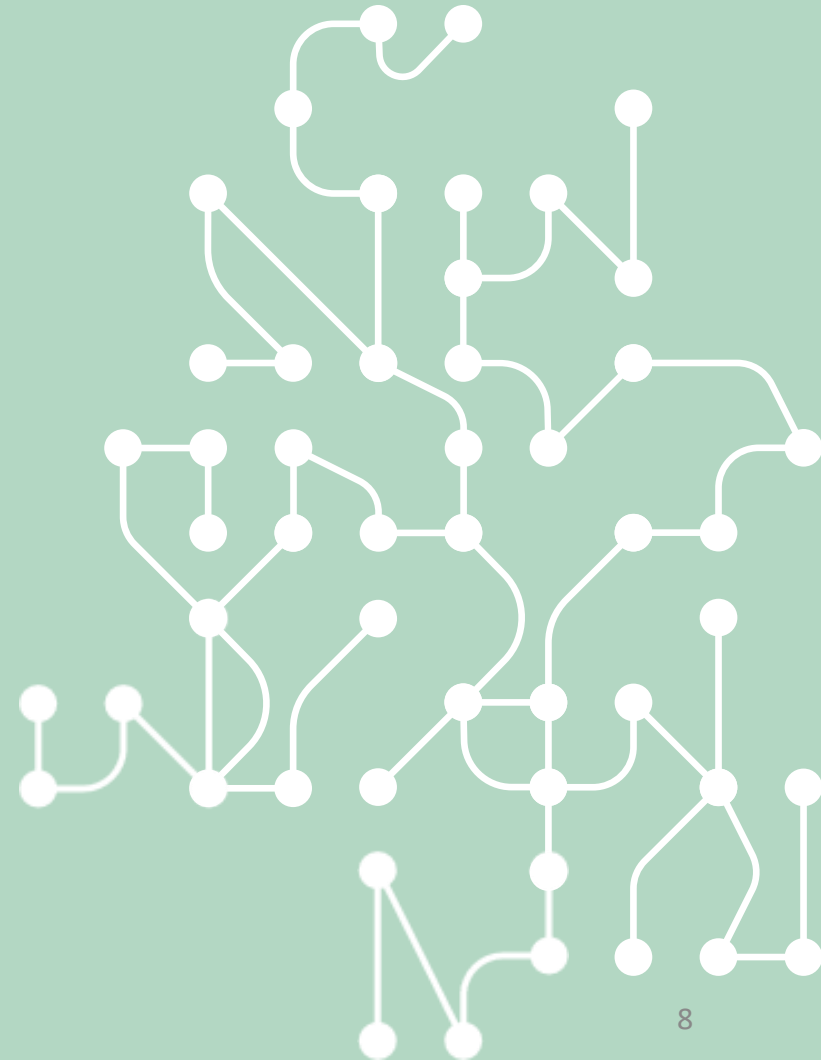
We're open and transparent

We work out loud. We share what we know and what we don't. We're clear with our requests and value frank feedback. We hold a safe space for questions and failure. We have no carpet to sweep things under.

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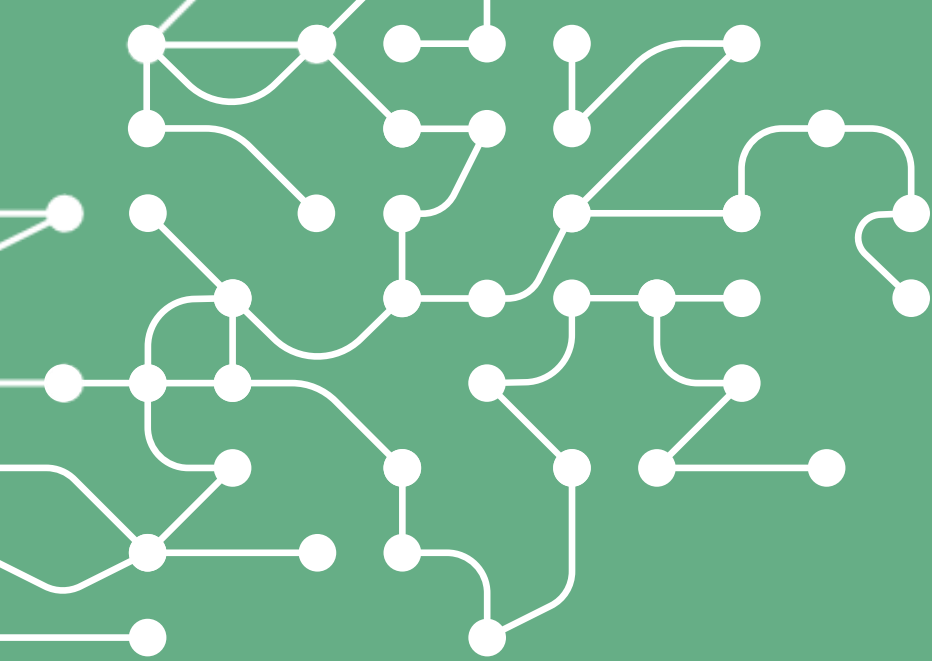
Stage one

Proposal CONCEPT stage

As a Proposal team, work through these prompt questions and discuss what is relevant, what is not, why, and anything else that seems significant in this context. Keep some brief notes on how and why you made any substantial decisions and ensure these are stored in the Project common files.

- What is the clear capability building or other reciprocal value generation purpose for this Project?

- Where and how could outputs related to our 'mutual learning' approach be generated, for broad sharing where appropriate; how can these be integrated into the proposed approach?

- How could we clearly and simply articulate whether participants could expect the processes and findings to lead to any specific changes within the given context, and if so in what way/s?

- What is our relationship with the Partner/s; do we have multi-faceted and/or overlapping roles that will need to be navigated?

Who needs to be aware of these?

- How and when will we invite Partner input to the Ethics Plan; what needs to be said about this in the proposal? Review the **GCSI standard Ethics Plan statement** (on next page), make any adjustments needed and include in the Proposal.

- What are our initial thoughts on ethics considerations and any possible issues - including assumptions about risk and vulnerabilities; any participant support that may be needed; and what 'safe and brave' spaces might look like for this Project?

- What skills, experience and mindsets would we need on the

Project team to ensure project quality and integrity; including any 'team shadowing' needs or opportunities?

- Are there any cultural or other specific peer-input or review processes needed or that would be desirable; for the Project as a whole or in relation to any specific activity? Who could we involve to bring this perspective? What stage do we need to begin discussion with them?

- Are there any potential Intellectual Property matters we should consider; including where these relate to cultural knowledge?

What is in your STAGE ONE Proposal Concept Ethics Plan?

As a minimum document responses to the following

❑ How the Project contributes to **delivering on the overall GCSI goal** of 'accelerating transitions to regenerative and distributive economies'

❑ The intended capability building or other **reciprocal value generation** outcomes for the Project

❑ Will an **Impact Map** / Theory of Change be developed for this Project? If so, at what stage? Does the Partner have its own ToC, for the organisation or for the Project specifically? If so, how will the team engage with this?

❑ What is the current **sense of the scale** (e.g. size, duration, complexity / number of 'moving parts', vulnerability of Participants, complexity of Partner relations) of this activity, in relation to ethics needs? What will be particularly important to consider and monitor in this context?

❑ Have you identified any actual or potential **cultural sensitivities, including any IP related matters**? If so, are you suggesting to include a cultural adviser and/or peer-reviewer in the team? How will you secure this perspective?

❑ What **consent processes** will be used? Please describe, including why you think they are appropriate for the Participant type/s and nature of activities (e.g. rolling or audio consent could be appropriate) – in particular, consider if you will be interviewing, audio or video recording, or taking photos as part of any activities. There are templates available in our **GCSI ethics SharePoint folder**.

❑ Will there be a need to be attentive to the creation of **'safe and brave space' practices** to ensure Participants can effectively contribute to this Project? What ideas do you have for how this might be achieved? How will you secure agreement (and where

relevant, involvement) from the Partner/s for these practices?

❑ How and when will you **seek input** to the Ethics Plan from the Partner/s and/or Participants?

❑ Have you added our **Ethics Statement** to your proposal? *At the Griffith Centre for Systems Innovation we take a collaborative approach to ensuring our Ethical Practices are transparent, inclusive and considerate of the diverse contexts related to the work we do. If this proposal is accepted, we will initiate our ethics process discussions with you to ensure we are creating a safe and brave environment through which to create positive impact.*

Stage two

Proposal CONFIRMATION stage

As a Proposal team, work through these prompt questions and discuss what is relevant, what is not, why, and anything else that seems significant in this context. Keep some brief notes on how and why you made any substantial decisions and ensure these are stored in the Project common files.

- Who are the Participants for this Project? Who do you plan to involve in the Project (Participants)? What needs to be considered to foster a positive experience for them? What will their role/s be, and how should this be factored into the Project (e.g. should you be building in co-designer honorarium payments)? How will you engage them, and at what stage of the Project?

- What type and volume of data is likely to be collected, from who and in what form? Is sensitive information likely to be shared by participants through their involvement?

- What confidentiality and/or

privacy issues need to be considered, to inform how data will be managed on the Project?

- What potential uses of data and findings should we be making explicit to Partners and/or Participants from the outset; including any academic publication interests and/or teaching resource possibilities?

- Where will the data be stored and who will have access to it, throughout the different phases of the Project?

- Is there a possibility that the Project Team and/or Partners would be interested in

publishing in academic literature?

- Will formal GU Ethics Clearance be required for this Project? (refer to the Manual linked in the introduction section). If so, how and when will this be undertaken?

- If formal GU Ethics clearance is required, including to accommodate any potential academic publishing interests - what is the appropriate ethics statement that will be included in this proposal to ensure the two processes are integrated?

What is in your STAGE TWO Proposal Confirmation Ethics Plan?

As a minimum document responses to the following

❑ **Who are the Participants** for the project, and what role/s will they be asked to engage in? How will you foster a positive experience for them?

❑ **How will data from this Project be used**? Are formal data use protocols likely to be needed, and if so how would you agree these with Partners? How will you store data that needs to be secured?

❑ How will expectations around **informal information sharing** (including around sensitive issues) between Partners, Participants and the GCSI team be communicated to those involved?

❑ What processes will be available to Participants and Partners if they wish to **raise any queries, concerns or grievances** about perceived or actual breaches to the agreed Ethics Plan (by our team members or others involved in the Project)?

❑ **Will GU Ethics Clearance be sought**? If so, for what purpose (e.g. academic publishing intentions, vulnerable Participants etc), and how will you integrate that process with this one? If not, why do you consider not needed?

❑ **Is there anything not covered**, that came up as an

important consideration as you thought through the ethics implications for this Project? Please describe.

❑ **Save a copy** of the final (accepted) version of the Proposal in the folder containing your Ethics Plans.

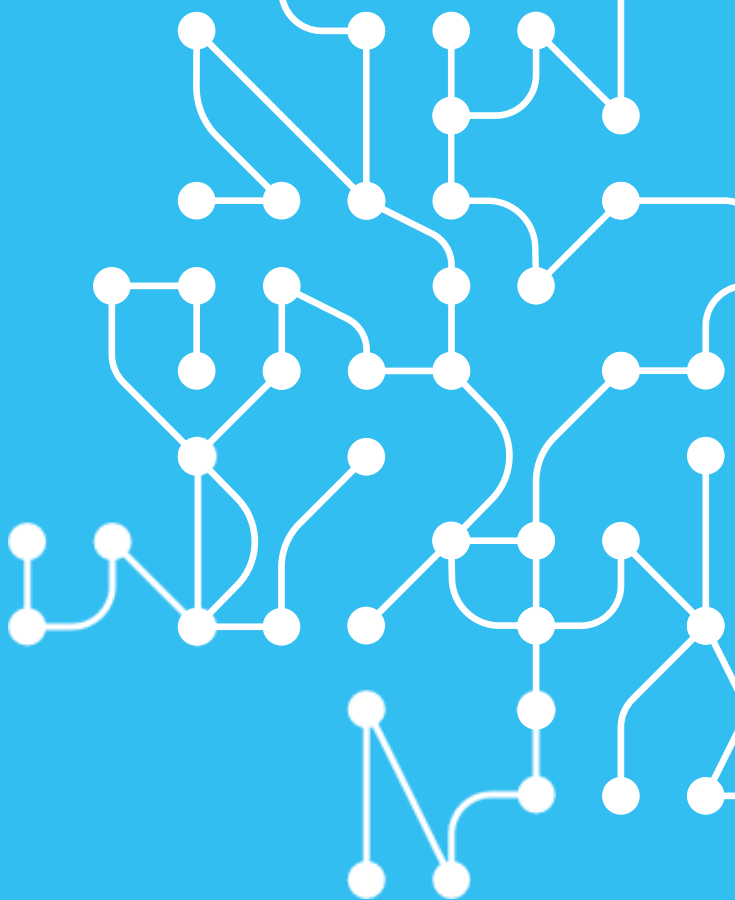# Stage three

Project KICK-OFF stage

As a Project team, work through these prompt questions and discuss what is relevant, what is not, why. Keep some brief notes on how and why you made any substantial decisions and ensure these are stored in the Project common files.

- What revisions, refinements etc of the proposal stage considerations (stages one and two) are needed to support quality implementation?

- What consent processes will be used? How will we engage Partners in keeping the Ethics Plan up-to-date – clarify how, when, and with what focus?

- How will we introduce and maintain 'safe and brave spaces' where challenging conversations can be fostered and supported, as appropriate to the context of the specific Project?

- Who will do what - assign specific roles and responsibilities to each team member, including 'sign-off' processes?

What is in your STAGE THREE Project Kick-Off Ethics Plan?

As a minimum document responses to the following

☐ **How and when are you seeking input** to the Ethics Plan from the Partner/s and/or Participants? What in particular are you seeking their perspectives on?

☐ **Anything that has changed** since Proposal development, and what changes have been made to the Ethics Plan as a result.

☐ Any formal **data use and/or storage protocols** agreed with Partners.

☐ Review and adjust as needed the templates for **interview consent** and for **photo consent,** if these activities are included in your Project design. Develop any additional consent documentation that will be needed. Save copies of all consent-related documents in the Project files.

☐ **Update on any associated GU Ethics Clearance** process, and its relationship to the GCSI Ethics Plan.

☐ **Role responsibilities for Ethics Plan monitoring**, updating and documentation over the duration of the Project.

Stage four

Ongoing IMPLEMENTATION stage

As a Project team, work through these prompt questions and discuss what is relevant, what is not, why. Keep some brief notes on how and why you made any substantial decisions and ensure these are stored in the Project common files.

- How will we ensure this Ethics Plan is used as a 'living document', including to guide decision-making around any emergent issues that may arise? Who is responsible for this?

- What is the project management 'rhythm', appropriate to the scale and complexity of this Project – e.g. regular team meetings, any 'team shadow' relationships, Partner relationship monitoring and management, approaches to support 'early flag raising' on any issues raising concern across the team?

- How will you monitor whether Partners and Participants are feeling able to contribute in ways that are both safe and brave?

What is in your STAGE FOUR Ongoing Implementation Ethics Plan?

As a minimum document responses to the following

- ❑ **Anything that has changed** since Project Kick-off, and what changes have been made to the Ethics Plan as a result.

- ❑ How and when are you **keeping Partner/s and/or Participants involved in the processes** and practices outlined in the Ethics Plan? What input have they provided so far that influenced your approach, and how have you integrated this into the Project design?

- ❑ **Outline** - to date:
    - what reciprocal value, including mutual learning, for the Partner/s and participants is being generated
    - how the Project is tracking as a contributor to GCSI overarching goal
    - how the Project is contributing to GCSI team capability building

- ❑ **Any associated GU Ethics Clearance** process, and its relationship to the GCSI Ethics Plan.

- ❑ **Any updates needed to role responsibilities** for Ethics Plan monitoring, updating and documentation over the duration of the Project.

- ❑ **Plan for next update** to the Ethics Plan, during the Ongoing Implementation period (if a long-running Project).

Stage five

Project WRAP-UP stage
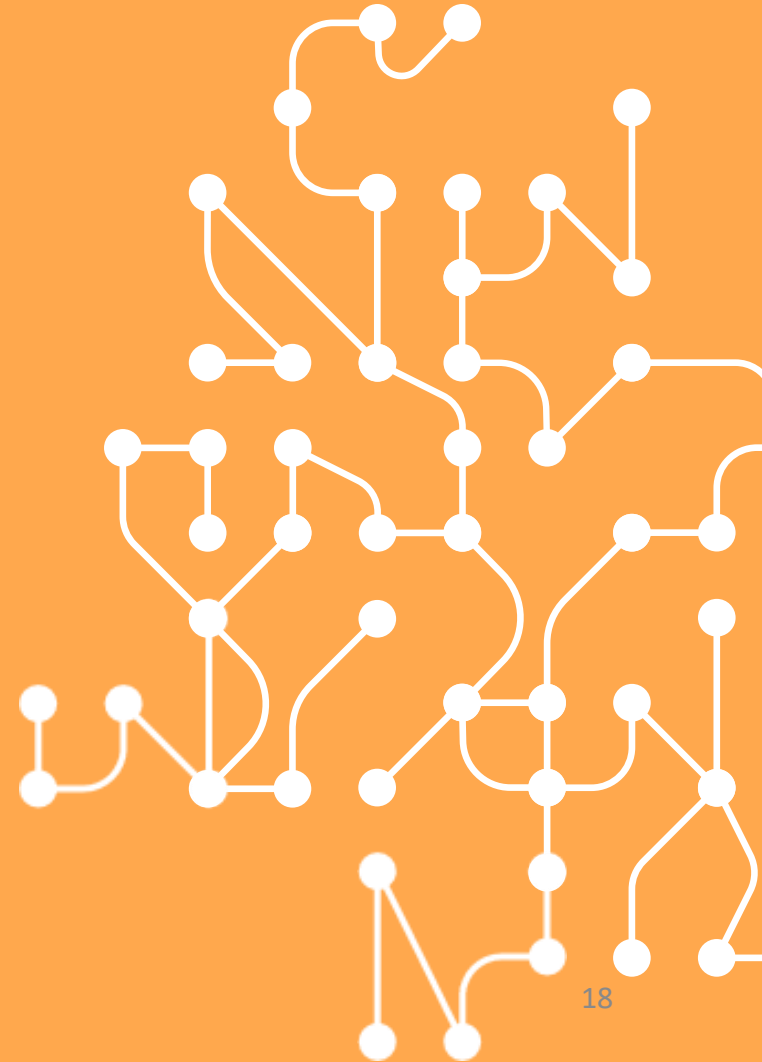
As a Project team, work through these prompt questions and discuss what is relevant, what is not, why, and keep some brief notes on how and why you made decisions.

- Have we appropriately and adequately reported back on findings and how they may be used, and thanked all participants?

- Have we agreed with Partners and/or Participants who may have access to data once the Project is formally closed, in what form, and how access will be managed?

- Have we securely archived data and 'cleaned' our systems for any residual documentation?

- What have we learnt through delivery of this Project that we can feed back into our practices and processes, to support our intended dynamic learning systems approach to our work (needs workshopping with team)?

- Are there any 'mutual learning' output/s we could develop to share with participants, Partners and, where appropriate and agreed, more broadly – beyond the formal Project outputs?

What is in your STAGE FIVE Project Wrap Up Ethics Plan?

As a minimum document responses to the following

❑ How findings, Project outputs, and any broader 'mutual learning' opportunities have been **communicated to Partner/s and Participants**.

❑ **Document any interest** Partner/s or Participants may have expressed to have access to data generated; and the arrangements made around this.

❑ **Closure statement** on any associated GU Ethics Clearance process, and its relationship to the GCSI Ethics Plan.

❑ Confirmation of the **Project clean-up process**; including system locations of active files and archives.

❑ **Summary of learning generated and the plan for how this will be integrated into GCSI** approaches, processes and systems; including around the overall goal, reciprocal value generation, and team capability building.

Thank you for the care you put into this