

# Does Your Project Require an Application to the WCU IRB office?

## IRB Decision Tree #1

**Will a member of your research team observe, interact with, or intervene with individuals to gather information that will be used for research? Examples:**

- Surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, interviews
- Games, experiments in physical or in electronic environments
- Physical or biomedical procedures – imaging, scanning, or blood collection
- Diet, nutrition studies, taste test
- Studies examining effectiveness of educational tools or curricula
- Use of instruments or devices, including phones, to collect data or monitor behavior
- Passive observation of public behavior (in physical or online environments)
- Studies examining individuals' responses to manipulation of their physical or online environment
- Another activity that involves observation of, or interaction with, individuals to gather information for research

**YES**

Is the information being collected about individuals?

**NO**

The focus is only on products, processes, policies, organizations e.g. interviewing transportation officials about parking policies

**NO**  
Research will only use existing data

**Refer to IRB Decision Tree #2 on Secondary Data**

**YES**

The focus is on people or their opinions, perceptions, choices, decisions, regarding themselves or how policies or organization affect them or their environment

**Not human subjects research. No IRB review is required.**

**YES**

Is this a **class project**?

**YES**

Is the sole intent of this project to meet course requirements with no intention to use or share the results beyond the classroom?

**NO**

The project may lead to the use of results outside the course (publication, presentation)

**NO**

Is the project an **oral history, ethnographic, or journalistic piece**?

**YES**

Does the project involve stories that may draw broad conclusions about the population, cultures, norms?

**NO**

Is this a **quality assurance/improvement study**?  
I.e. designed to assess, improve, or develop programs or services for an organization?

**YES**

**NO**

Will outcomes be generalized for other organization, program or service?

**YES**

Published material will be limited to documenting events, situations, policies, institutions, or systems without the intent to form hypotheses or generalize findings

**Not human subjects research. No IRB review is required.**

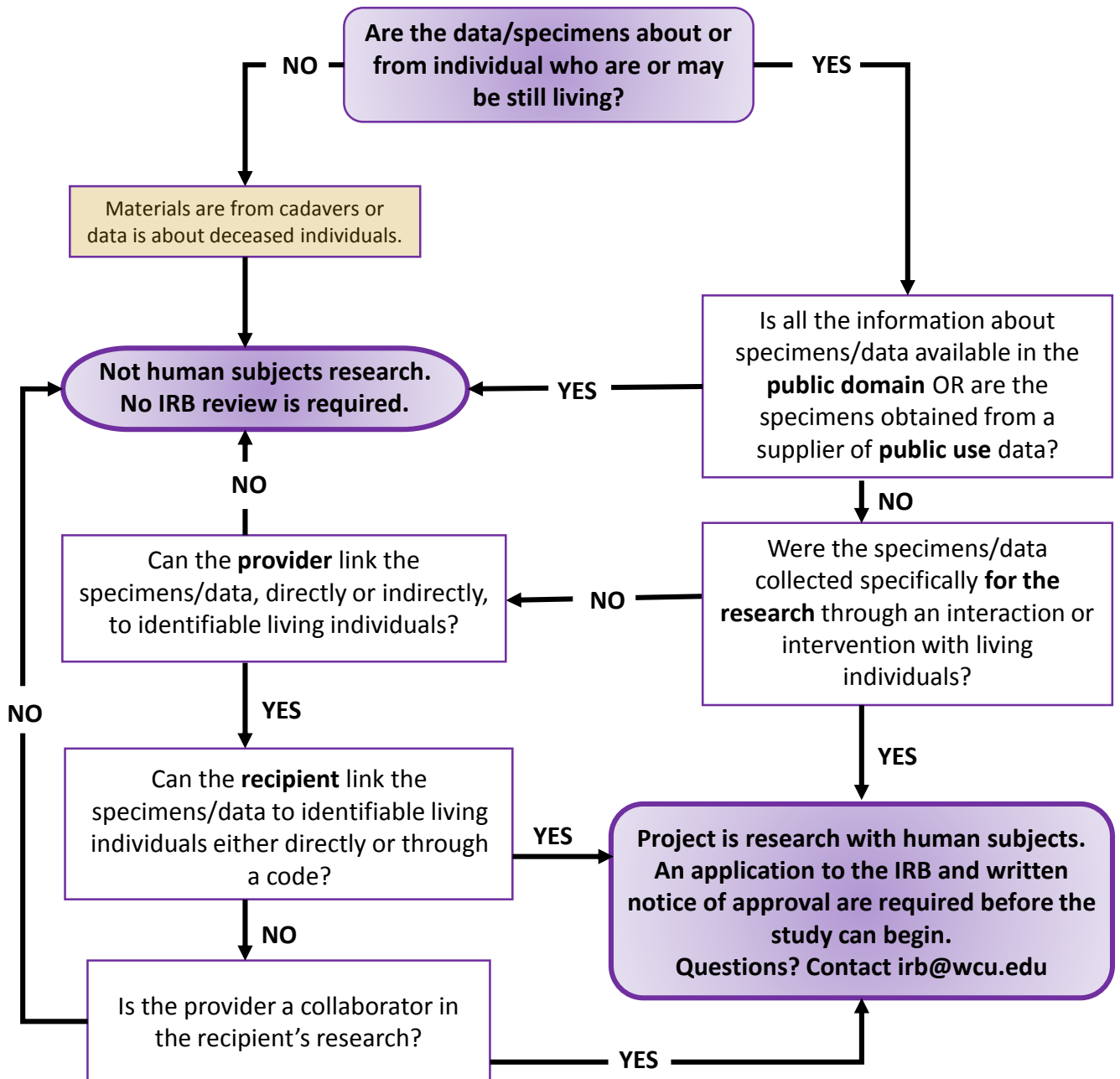
Outcomes will be specific to the organization, programs, or services

**Project is research with human subjects.**

**An application to the IRB and written notice of approval are required before the study can begin.**

Questions? Contact [irb@wcu.edu](mailto:irb@wcu.edu)

Does Your Research Involving Existing Data, Documents, or Biological Specimens Require Review by the WCU IRB Office?  
Decision Tree #2



This tool has been adapted with permission from Cornell University.

**Reference:**

“Research Involving Private Information or Biological Specimens Flowchart”, National Institute of Health (NIH), January 2006, <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/hs/PrivateInfoOrBioSpecimensDecisionChart.pdf>