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A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN NUNAVUT'S LICENSING PROCESS



McMaster University



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UNIVERSITY

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Thank you

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About Research License Review

A variety of licenses and permits are required to conduct research in the Canadian Arctic (NRI 2021; Polidoro et al 2022). Research licenses are administered primarily by Territorial and Federal government agencies, but other regulatory approvals for research are issued by Indigenous organizations and Co-Management Institutions. These various agencies all employ methods to engage and consult with northern communities and other stakeholders during the process of reviewing and approving requests for research licenses (Polidoro et al 2024).

Research consultation ensures that communities are made aware of planned research and have an opportunity to raise questions, share concerns, and recommend to licensing authorities whether projects be approved or not. Licensing authorities gain important information through consultation to ensure that research does not harm the physical or social environment of research-impacted communities (Government of Nunavut 2011). However, concern has been raised that northern research licensing processes, including consultation measures, need to be changed to better support Indigenous self determination in research (Council of Canadian Academies (CCA) 2023; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) 2018; ITK & NRI 2007).

The consultation process administered by the NRI for research licensing under the Scientists Act involves local authorities, Designated Inuit organizations, co-management bodies, government agencies, and other groups (Figure 1). This project sought to learn more about how NRI's consultation process is experienced by Nunavut's community research stakeholders, and how consultation can be improved to make the process more effective and accountable for Nunavummiut.

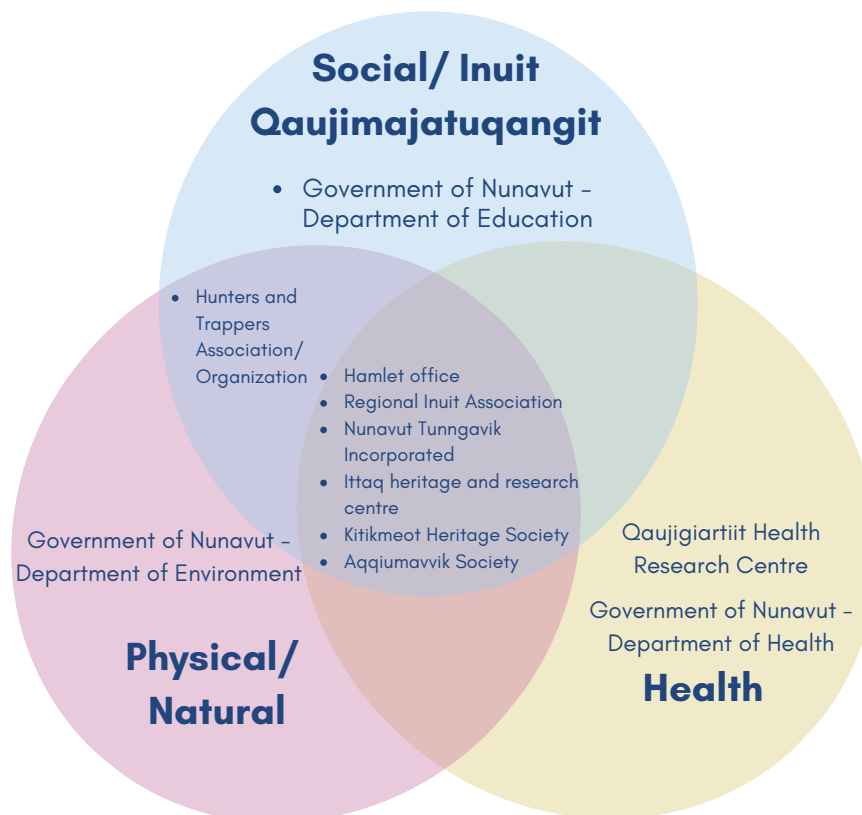


Figure 1: The stakeholders and rights holders in the research license review process.

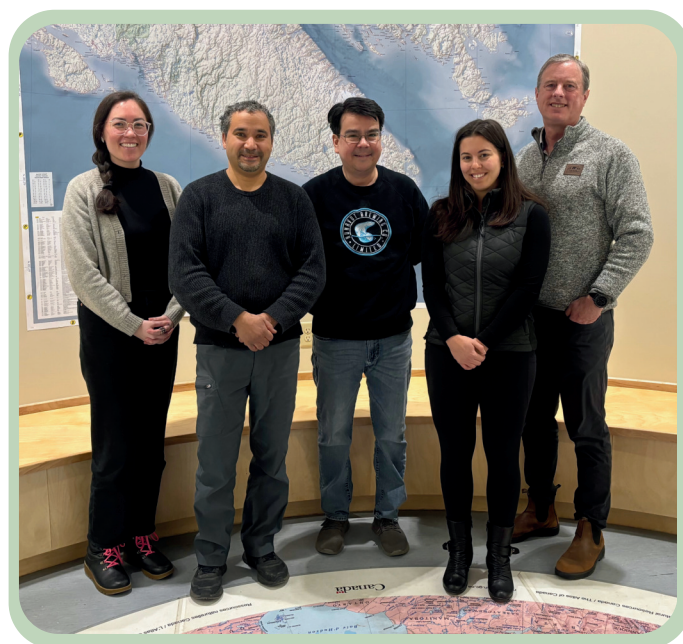
About the project

This project was co-developed with both northern and southern research partners who have worked together for over 15 years on various projects across Nunavut, including the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre (QHRC), Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), Nunavut Research Institute (NRI), Carleton University, and McMaster University.

The Nunavut Research Institute is a division of Nunavut Arctic College and is also responsible for licensing health, social, and physical/natural sciences research in or about Nunavut in accordance with Nunavut's Scientists Act. The NRI developed *Isirvik*, an online portal designed to manage and share information on licensed research projects. Through an investigation of research trends (Fig. 2), we found that over the period from 2004-2019, the NRI made 5299 requests to Nunavut Hamlets and 2642 requests to Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) to review and provide comments on research license applications. Local research intensity and the potential review burden experienced by Nunavut communities engaged in the NRI's licensing process needs to be better understood. The first step is to learn about experiences with the review process to gain an initial understanding of research license review and feedback on the current research licensing process administered by the NRI.



Figure 2: Research trends in Nunavut report.



Project partners (from left to right): Jade Owen (NRI), Jamal Shirley (NRI), Mosha Cote (NRI), Alexis Beltrano (McMaster University), Peter Pulsifer (Carleton University).

Survey Objectives

To better understand the RLR process in Nunavut, we developed a survey with four objectives in mind, to:

1. **Identify** the number of NRI research license review requests received annually by community organizations across Nunavut;
2. **Investigate** reviewer roles and responsibilities for different organizations that receive research license applications;
3. **Gather reviewer-identified recommendations** on ways to improve interactions with the NRI in the licensing review process; and,
4. **Explore** perspectives on the opportunities/challenges with the research licensing review process.

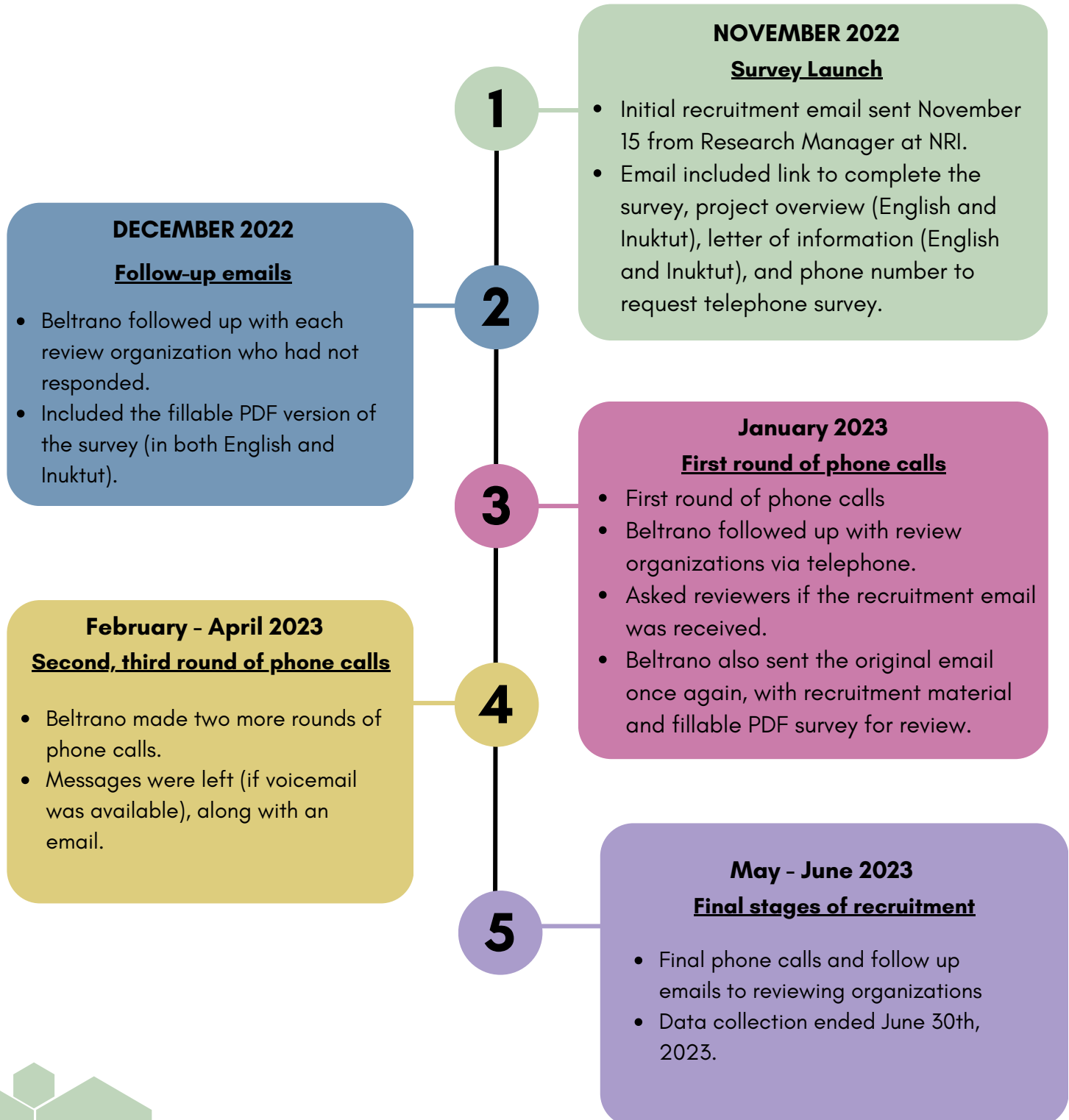
Our approach was guided by the Piliriqatigiinniq Partnership Model for research (QHRC, n.d), with all project partners contributing at all stages of this study.

Survey Design

- ✓ Use Qualtrics software
- ✓ Open and closed-ended questions
- ✓ Likert-scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) and multiple-choice questions
- ✓ 19 questions total
- ✓ Skip and display logic
- ✓ Section questions together (group details, RLR processes and protocols, communications with NRI, opportunities and challenges)



Survey Timeline



Who completed the survey?

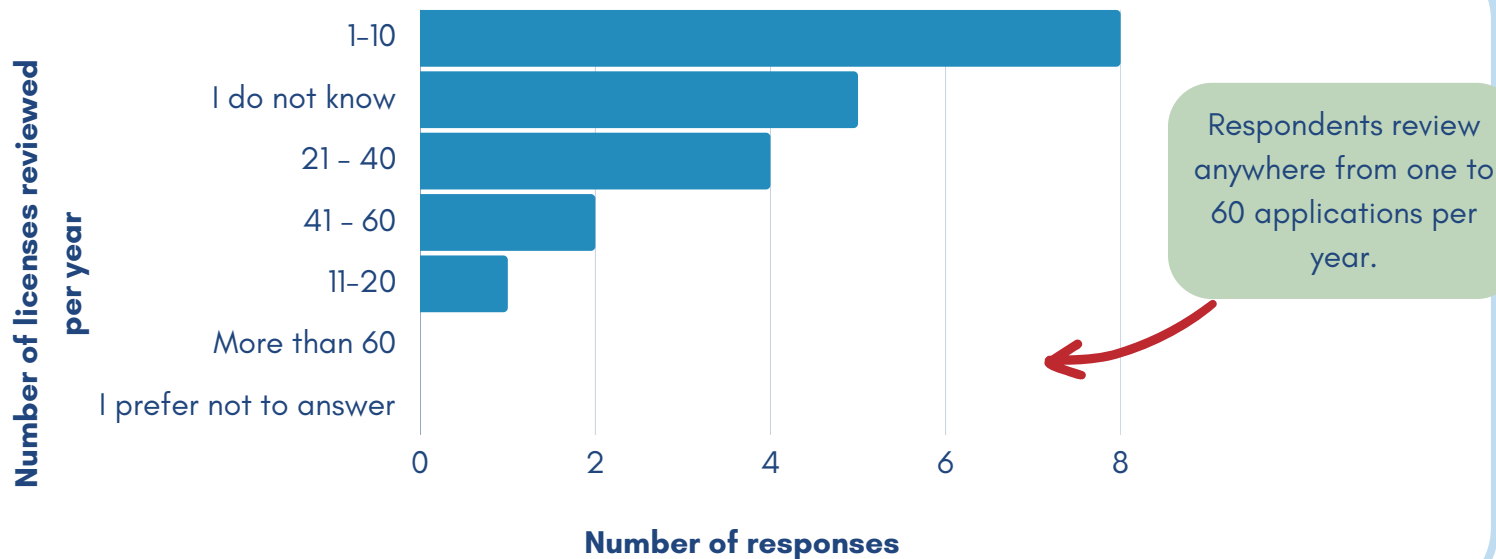
There were 60 research review organizations who were contacted to complete this survey. We received a 28% response rate (20 completed surveys from 17 different organizations).



Out of the 20 survey responses we received, the majority (60%, n=12) stated that one person completed the survey on behalf of the organization. The remaining 40% (n=8) respondents stated that others from their organization may respond as well. This was only the case for two organizations in which multiple responses were recorded.

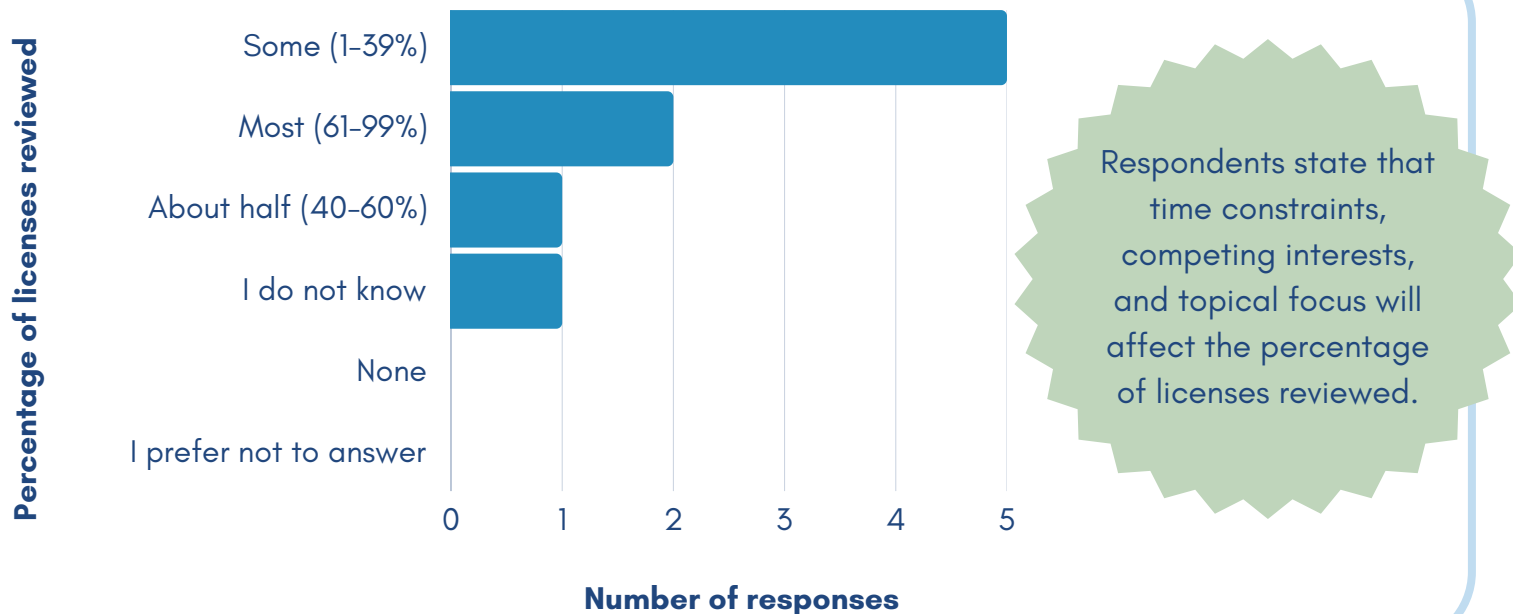
License Review Volume

(Based on all 20 survey respondents)



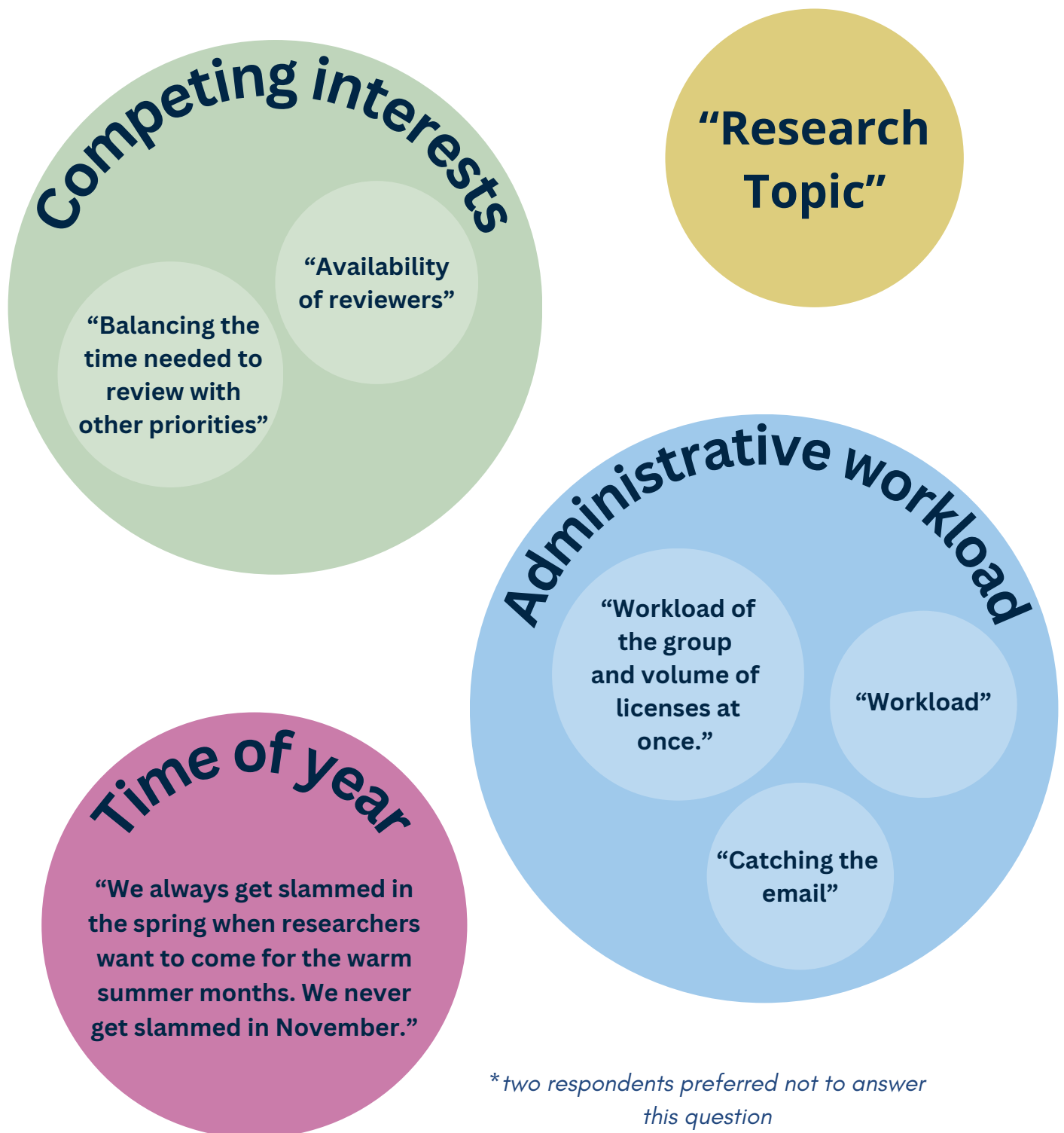
Percentage of licenses reviewed

(Based on 9 respondents who do not review all applications received by NRI)



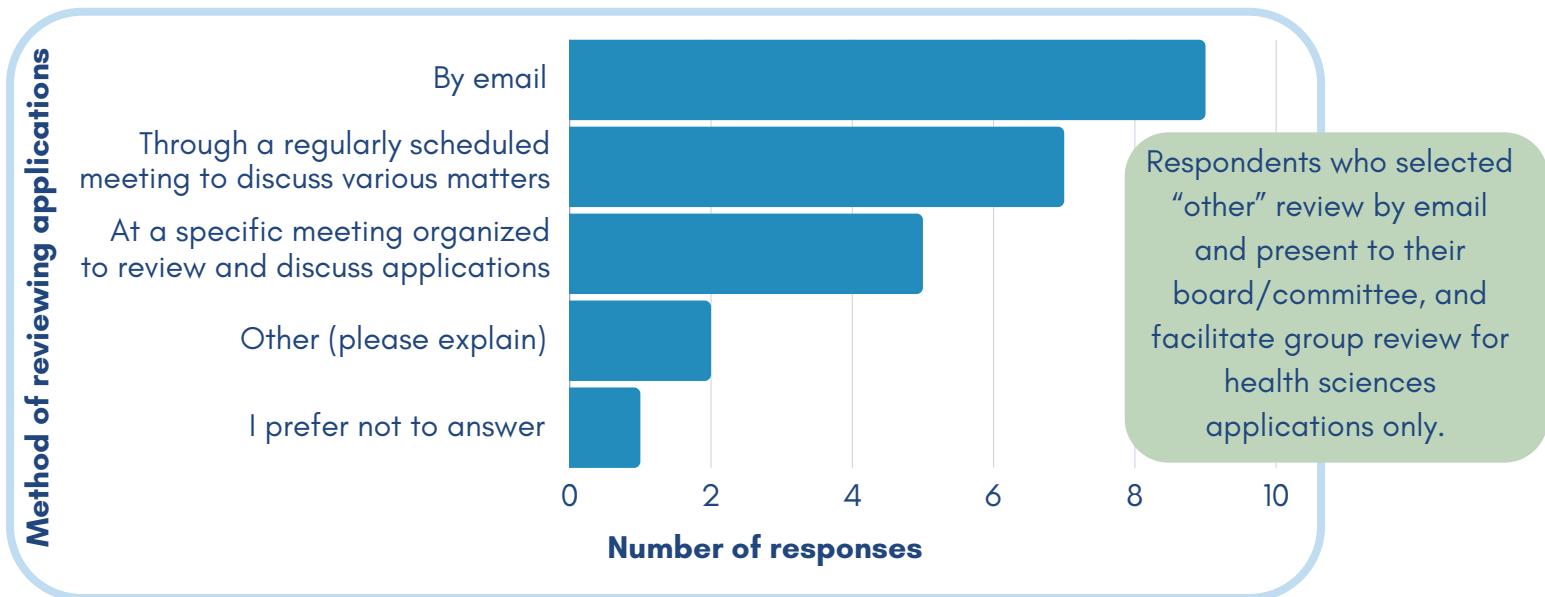
Factors affecting license review

(Based on 9* respondents who do not review all applications received by NRI)



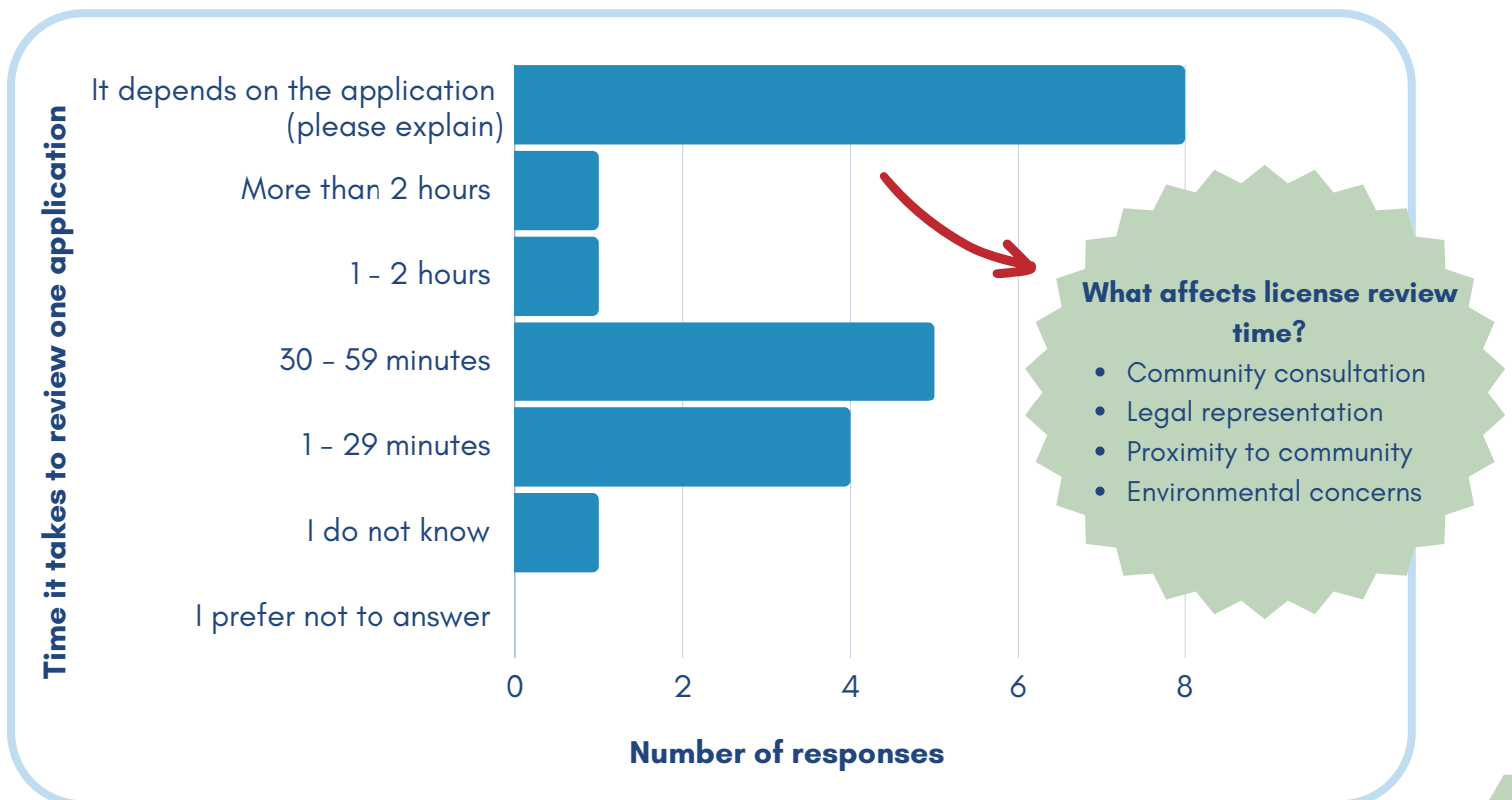
License Review Process

(Based on all 20 respondents, totals to not equal 100% because more than one option could be selected)



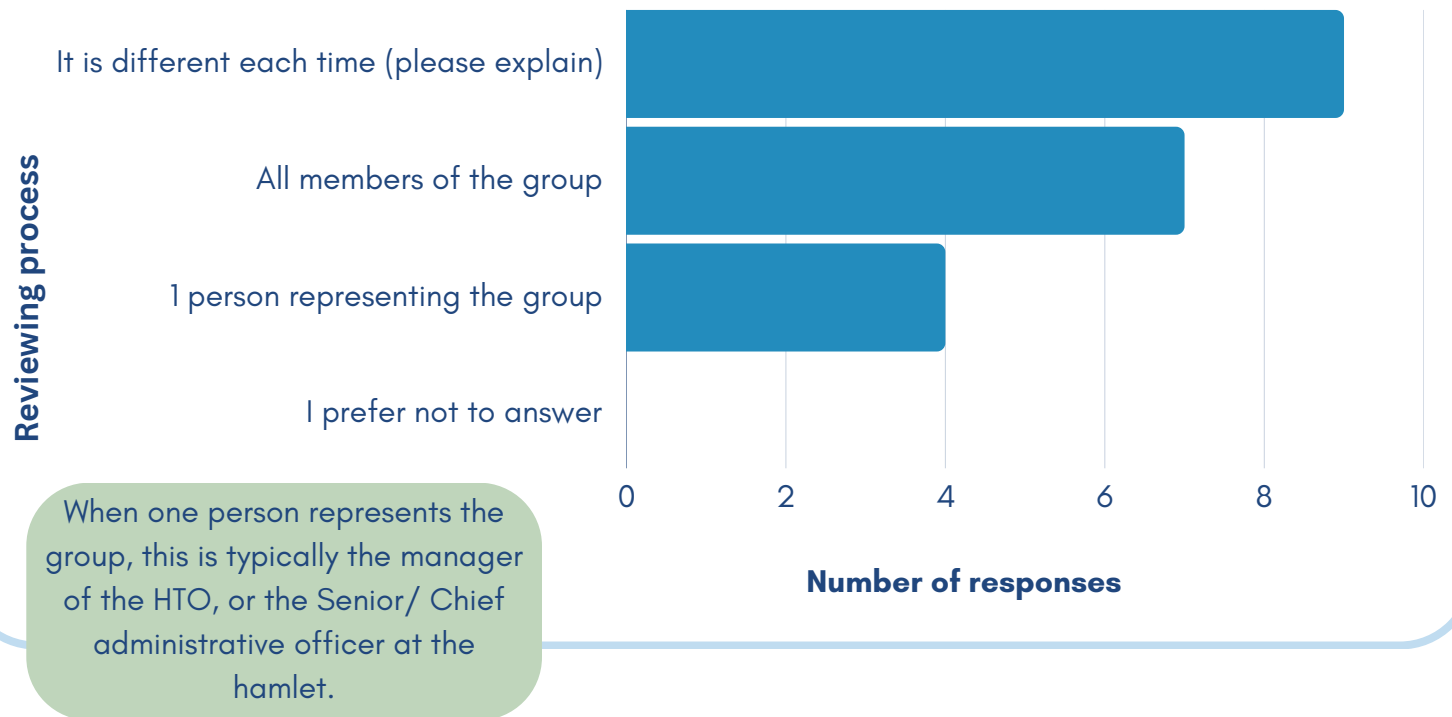
License Review Time

Based on all 20 respondents



Who reviews research license applications?

(Based on all 20 respondents)



Why is it different each time?

(Based on the 9 respondents who selected this option)



The capacity of the group may vary at the time of receiving the application.

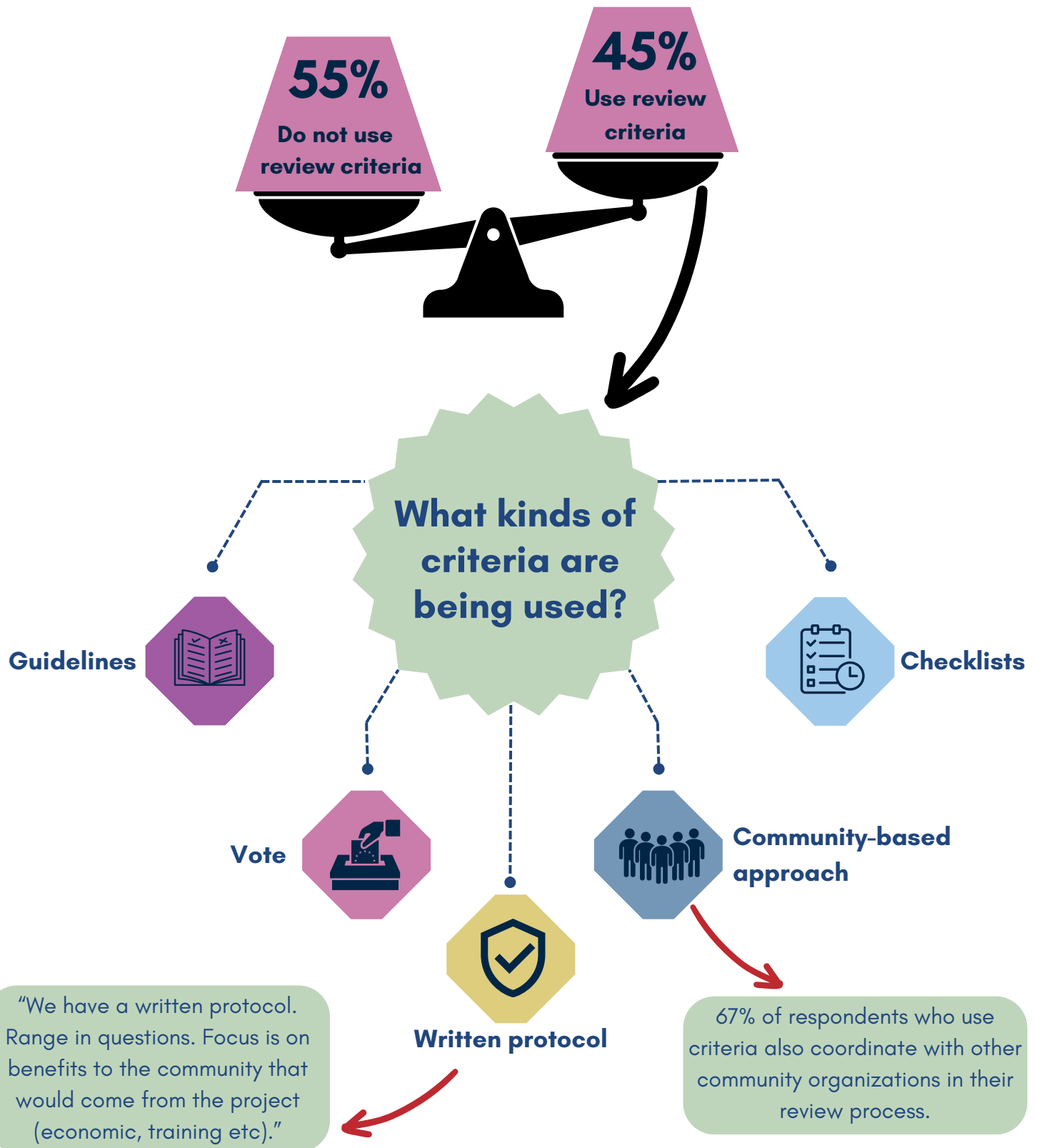


The research topic may not align with all areas of expertise, limiting the people involved.



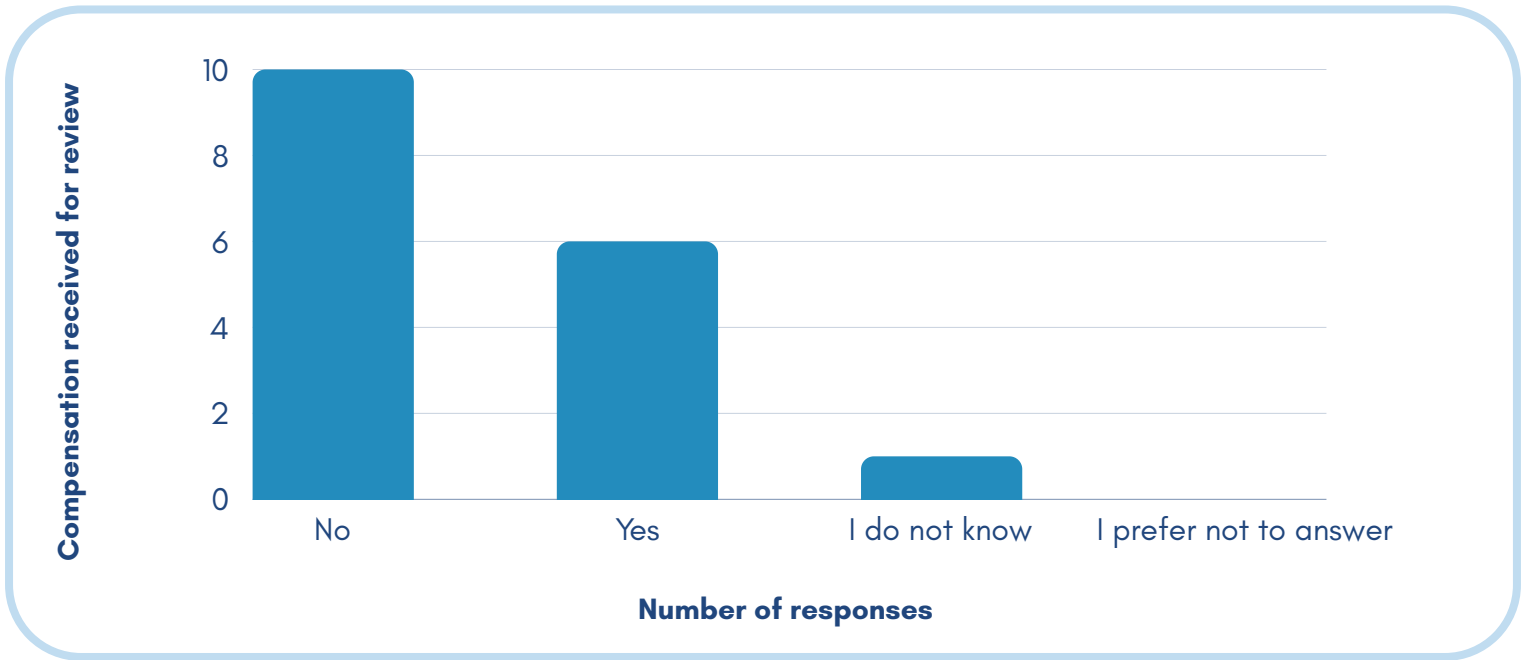
The application may be reviewed by secondary reviewers in the case of a conflict of interest.

Review Criteria



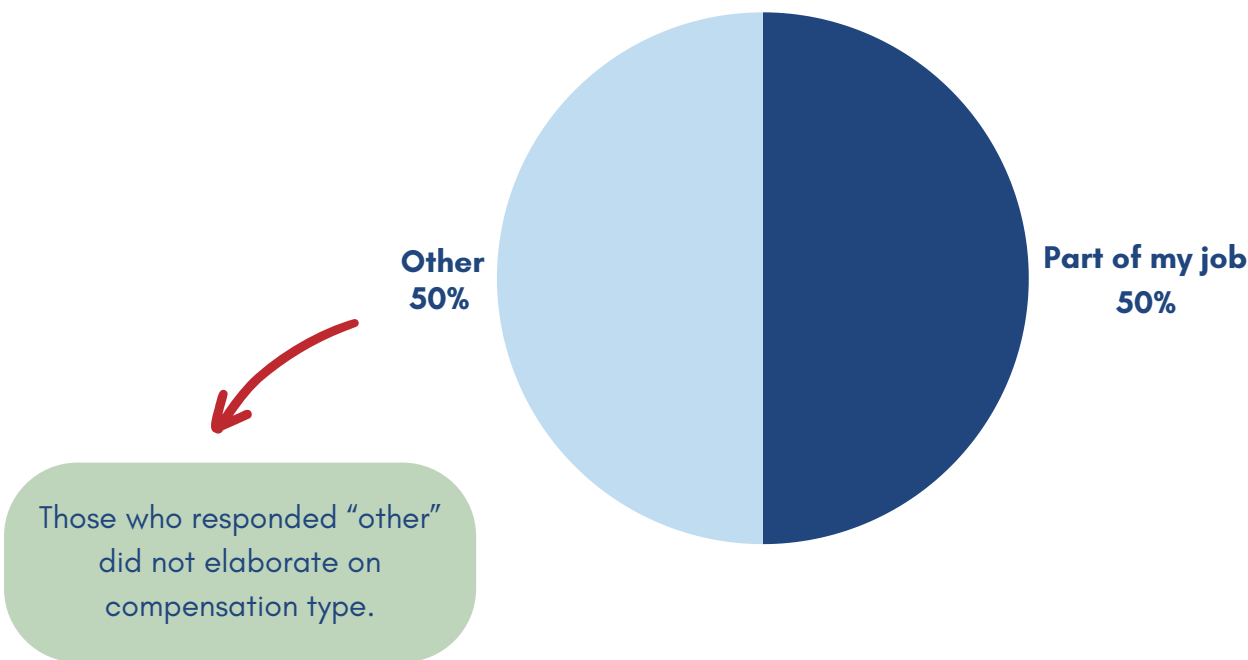
Compensation received for reviewing applications

(Based on 17 respondents)

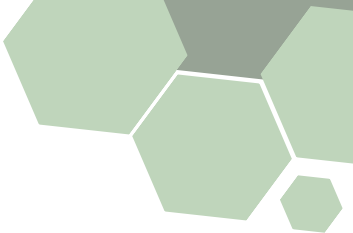


How is compensation received?

(Based on the 6 respondents who receive compensation)

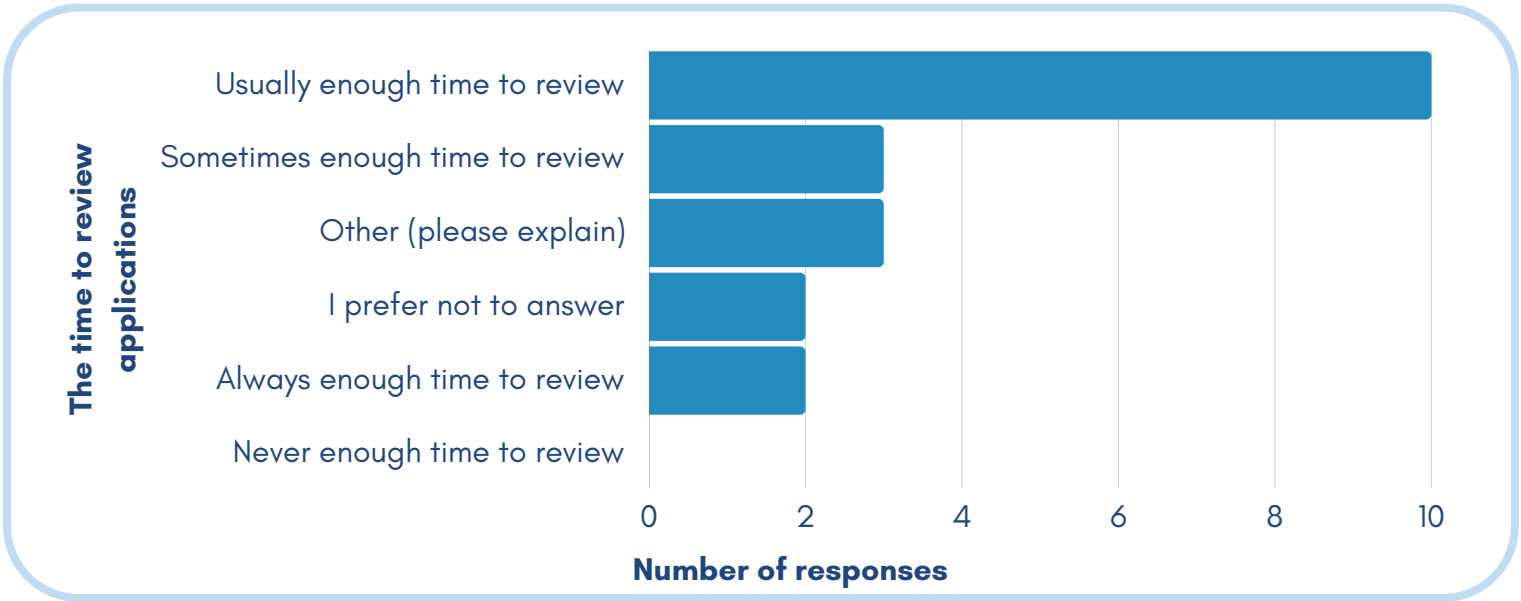


Gathering and disseminating feedback



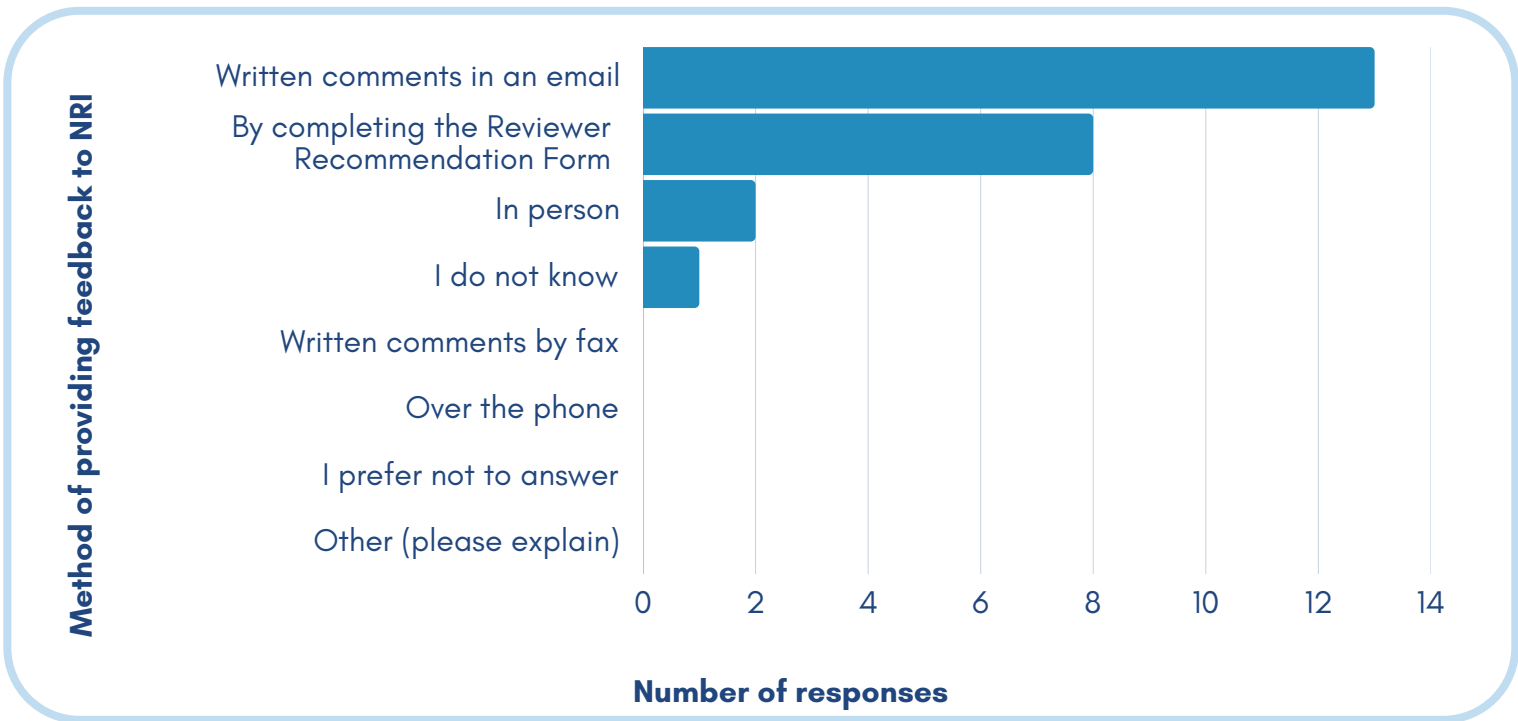
Time to review and provide feedback

(Based on all 20 survey respondents)

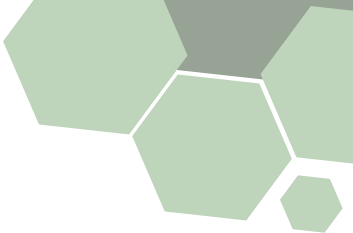


How is that feedback shared?

(Based on all 20 survey respondents)

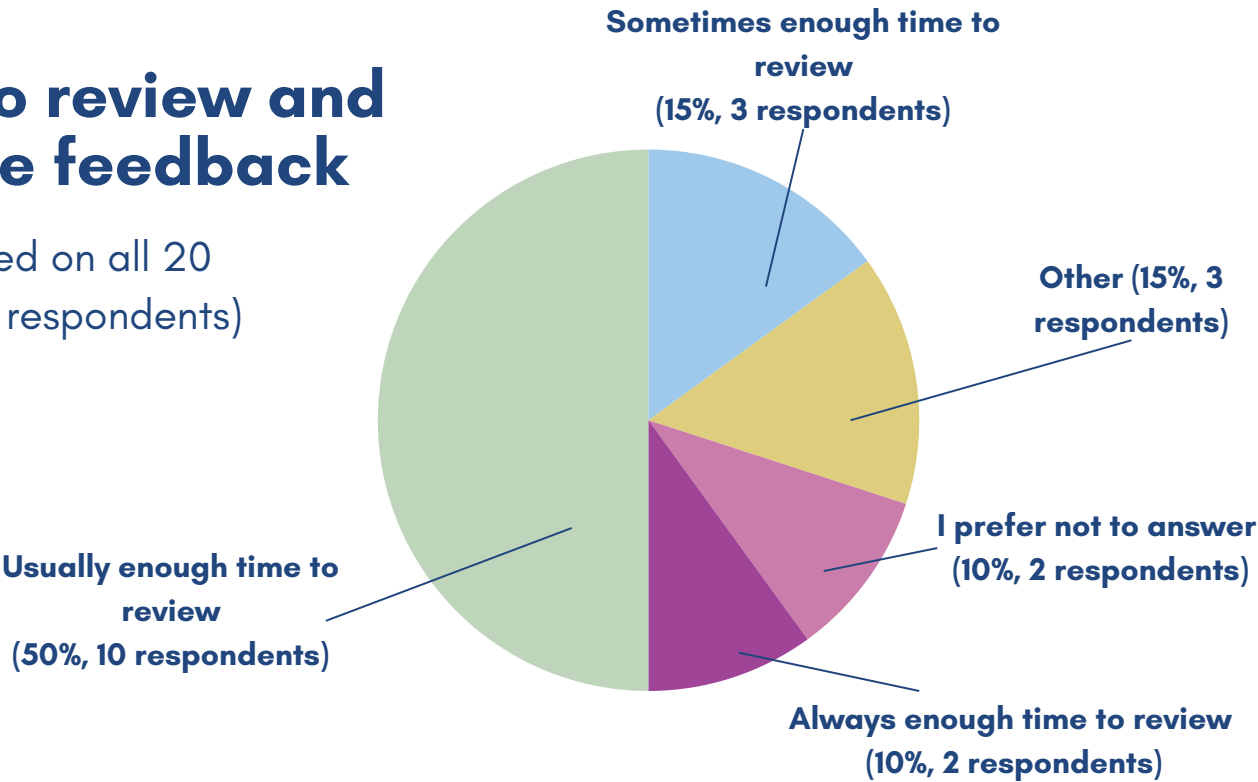


Gathering and disseminating feedback



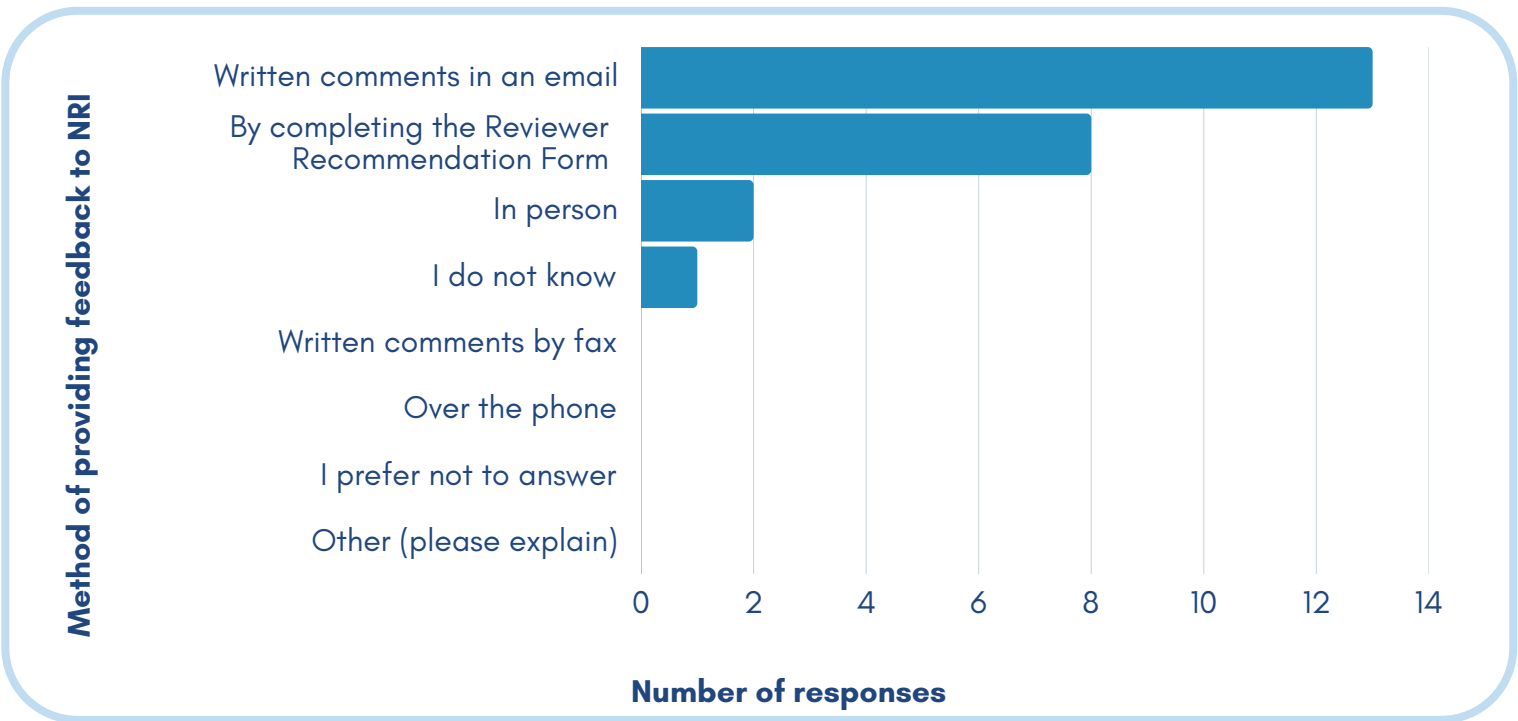
Time to review and provide feedback

(Based on all 20 survey respondents)

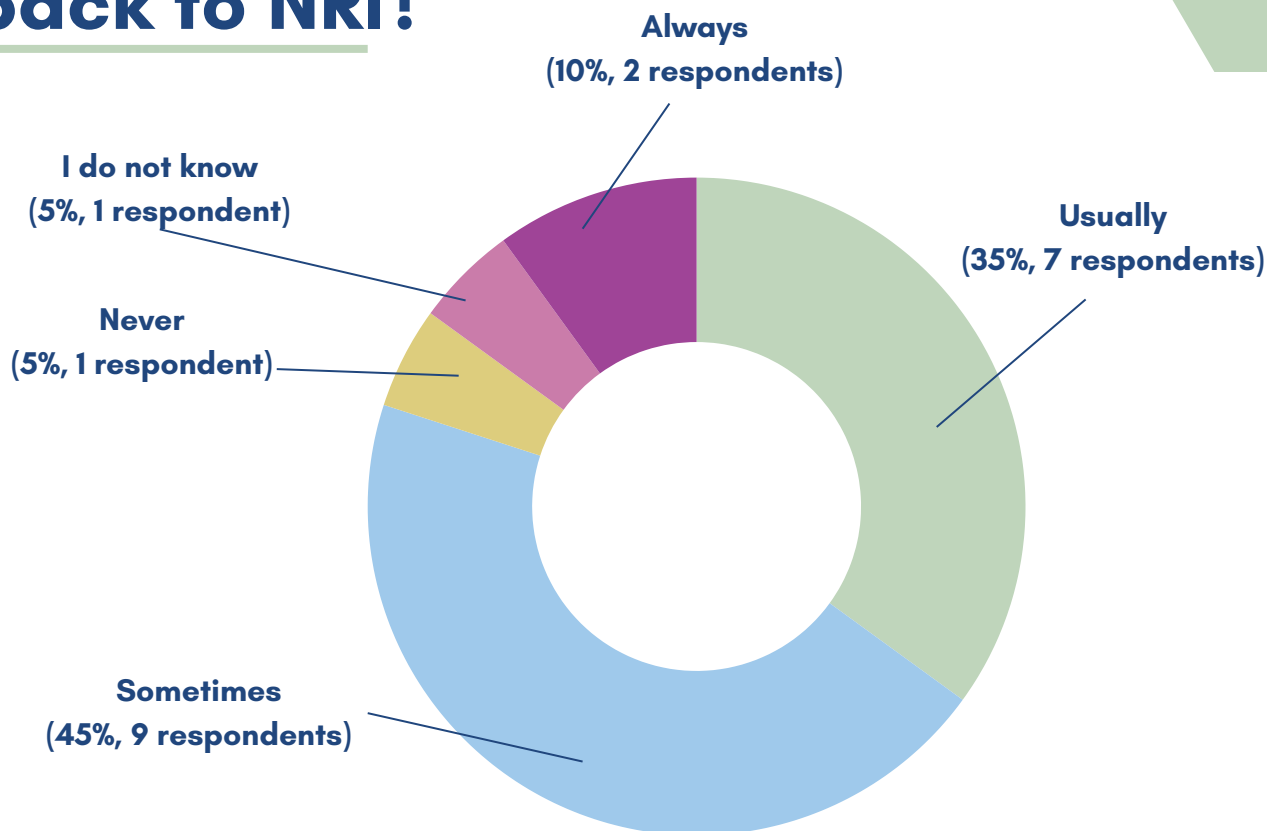


How is that feedback shared?

(Based on all 20 survey respondents)

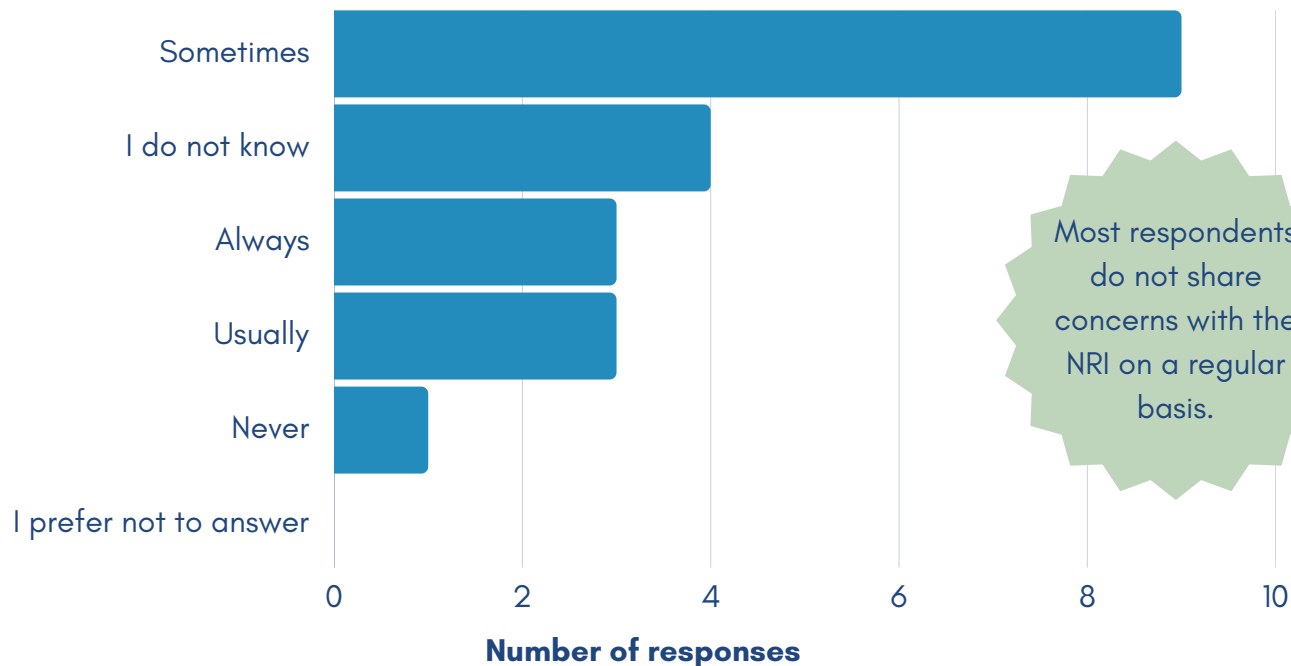


How often do reviewers send feedback to NRI?



Sharing concerns with the NRI

Frequency of concerns with licenses shared with NRI



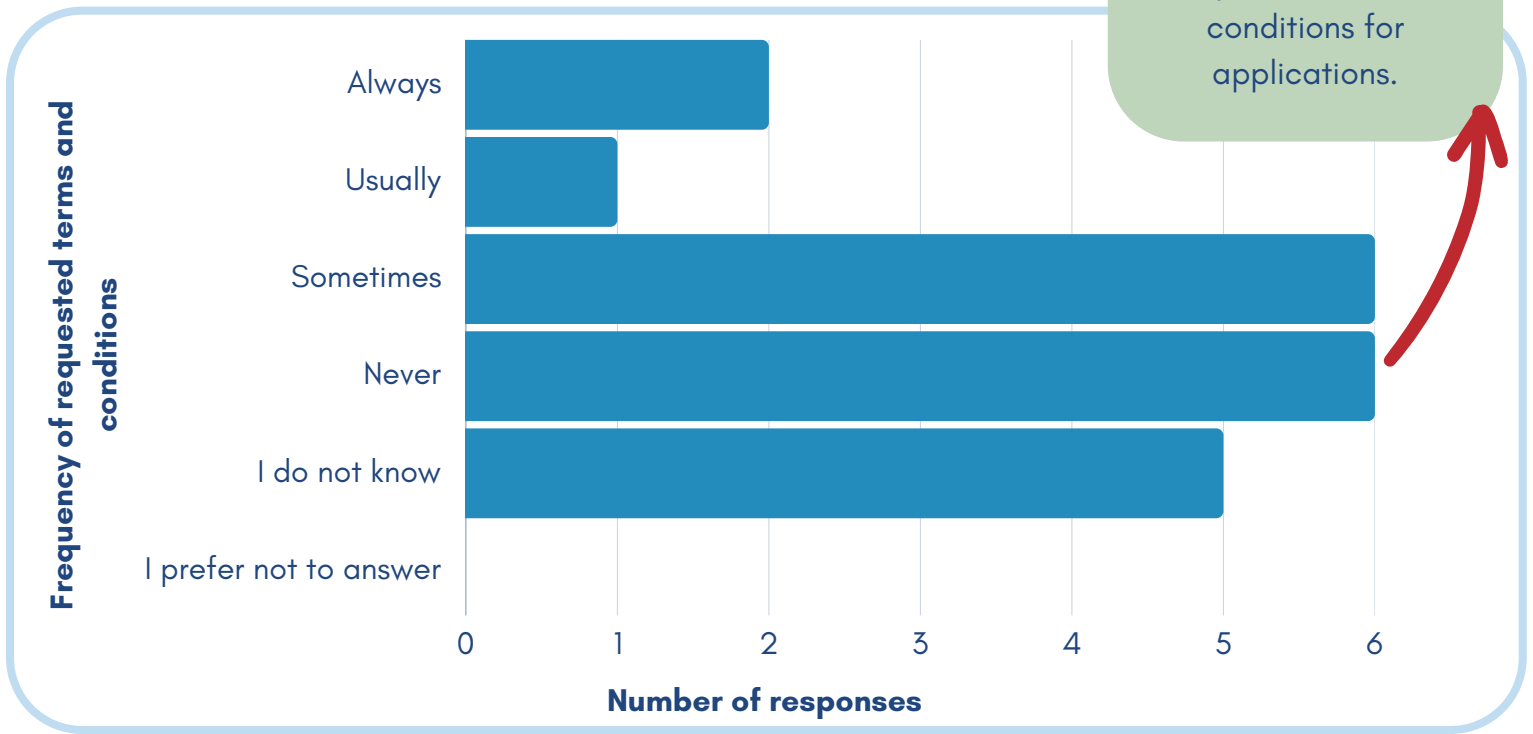
Most respondents do not share concerns with the NRI on a regular basis.

“Duplication of community-led research or projects.”

[illegible]

"Researchers have not done enough community consultation."

Requesting terms and conditions



What are some of those terms and conditions?



Requiring written letters or other demonstrations of support from community



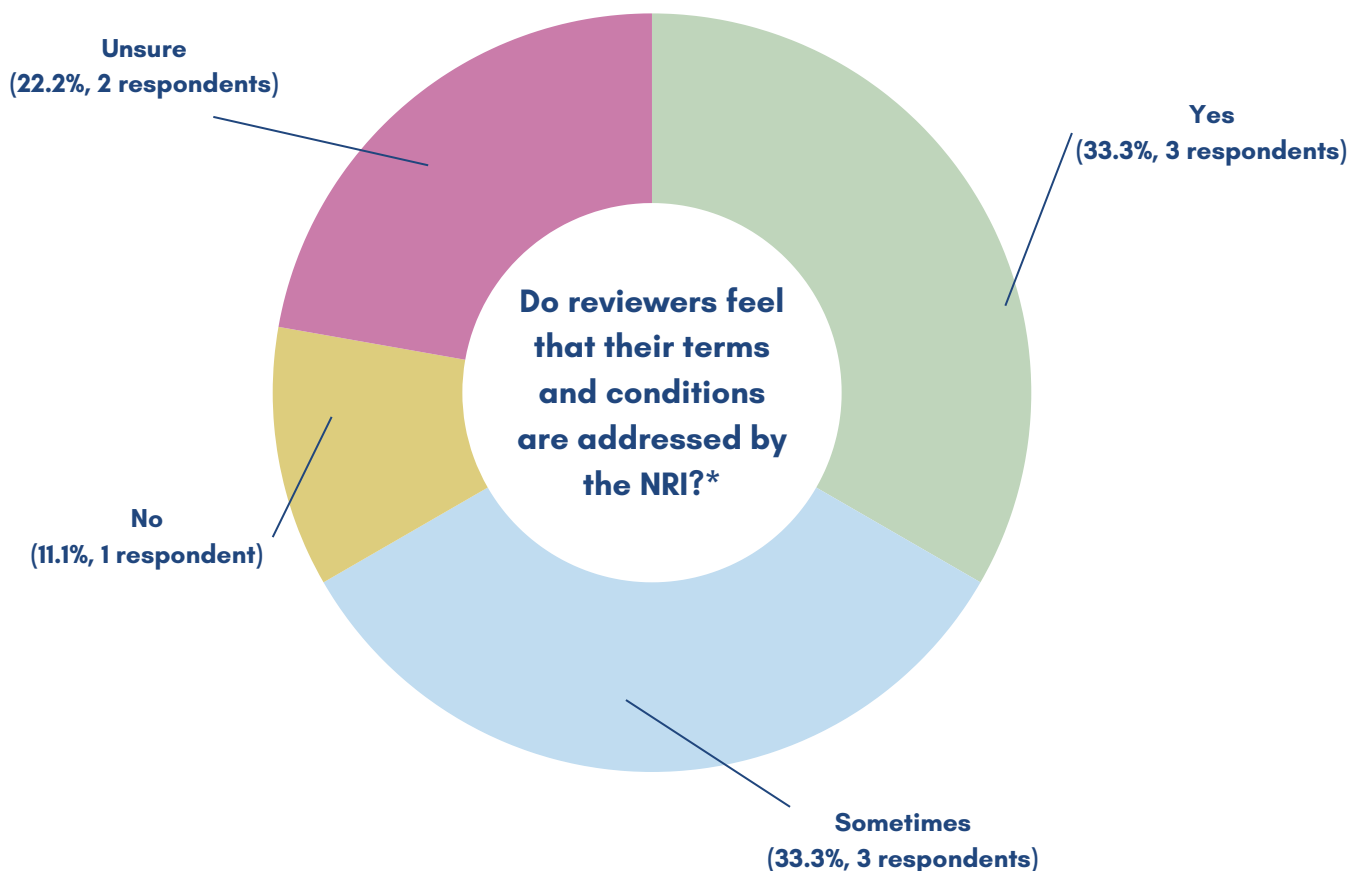
Ensuring the research demonstrates local input that benefits the community



The inclusion of more detailed plans

Does NRI address terms and conditions?

Organizations engaged in NRI's license review process are invited to provide requests for license terms and conditions. These recommendations inform the terms and conditions NRI includes in issued licenses. Therefore, **it is important to confirm if reviewers feel their terms and conditions are addressed.**



**based on 9 responses*

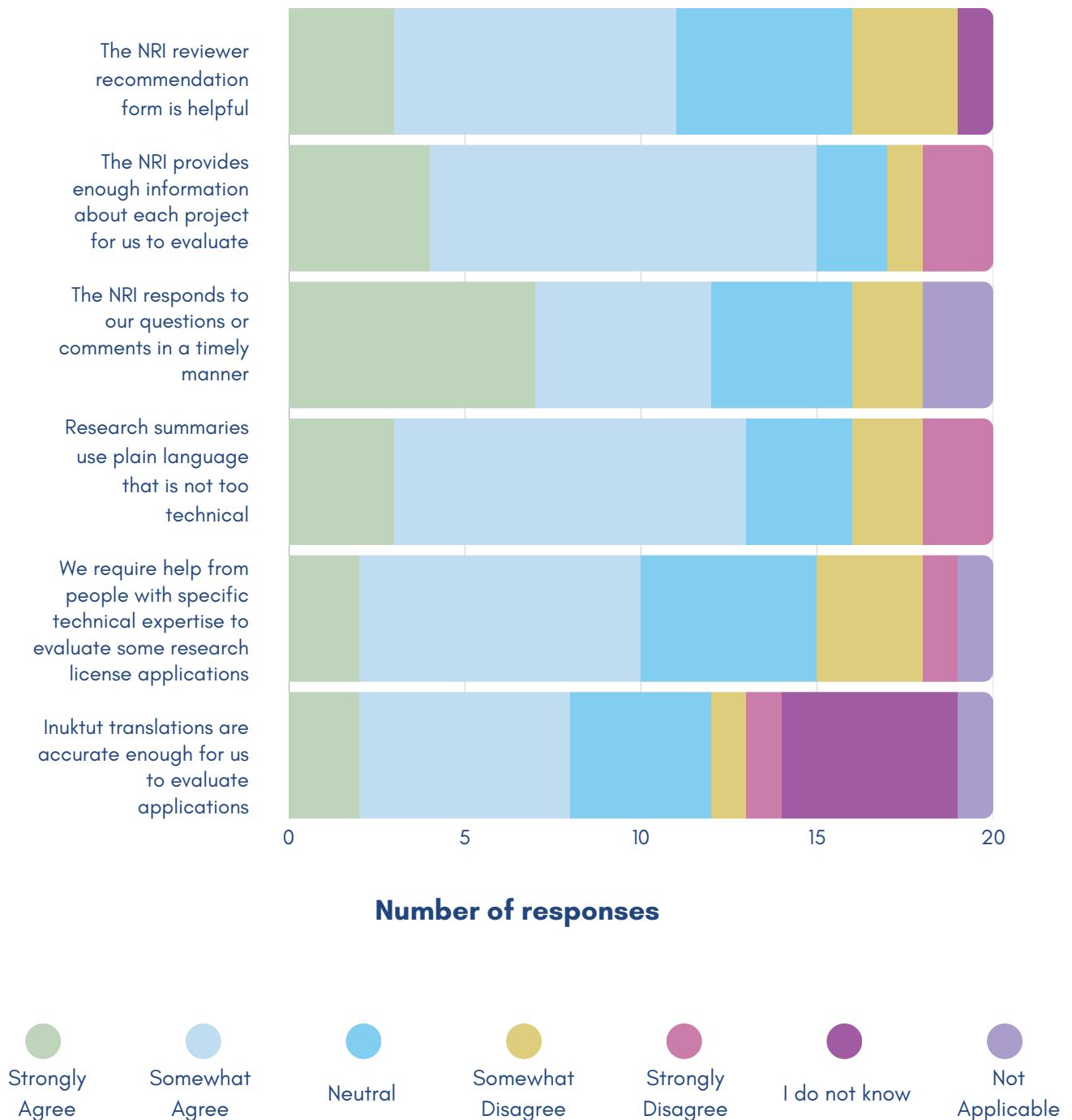
Reports received from NRI

Another concern regarding research practice in Nunavut is the reporting of results back to communities (Polidoro et al 2024). Annual reports are expected to be completed by the researcher at the end of each research year (NRI 2021).



Level of agreement with research licensing practices

(Based on all 20 survey respondents)



Key Messages



Research license review requests range from 1-60 applications per year. The amount of applications that get reviewed depend on time of year, local capacity, and subject area. Some applications take longer to review if community consultation is required.

1



Reviewer roles and responsibilities vary by organization. Most organizations complete the review by email, or as part of a group meeting. Additionally, reviews are mostly completed by one individual representing the group.

2



Opportunities and challenges associated with research license review include the need for compensation, increased community consultation, plain language in applications, and clearly communicating the benefits of the project to the community.

3



Recommendations to improve interactions with the NRI include increasing community-based reporting and follow-up between researchers, NRI, and community members.

4

Resources

Council of Canadian Academies. (2023). Northern Research Leadership and Equity. Retrieved from <https://cca-reports.ca/reports/the-future-of-arctic-and-northern-research-in-canada/>

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ISIRVIK: RESEARCH PORTAL

<https://isirvik.ca/>



ABOUT THIS PROJECT

<https://straightupnorth.ca/making-research-work-for-nunavummiut/>

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Photo: Alexis Beltrano

Results of a survey on community experiences with the NRI research license review process

September 2024