

# Request for Proposals



Health Research  
Council of  
New Zealand  
Te Kaunihera Rangahau Hauora o Aotearoa

January 2019



Health Research  
Council of  
New Zealand



BREAST  
CANCER  
CURE™



Breast Cancer  
Foundation NZ

## 2019 Breast Cancer Research in New Zealand

*A joint initiative funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand, Breast Cancer Cure and Breast Cancer Foundation NZ.*

### Overview

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC), Breast Cancer Cure (BCC) and Breast Cancer Foundation NZ (BCFNZ) ('the funding partners') formed a partnership in 2013 to support high quality and innovative research into breast cancer in New Zealand, to improve quality of life and ultimately ensure survival from the disease.

This initiative is managed through the HRC's Partnership Programme, through which the HRC forms strategic partnerships with funders and stakeholders.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) supports innovative research in breast cancer and emerging researchers in this area through the provision of **project** and **fellowship** grants.

For **projects**, the funding available per proposal is up to a maximum of **\$250,000** over **2 years** (fully-costed, exclusive of GST).

For **fellowships**, the funding available per proposal is up to a maximum of **\$250,000** (exclusive of GST) for salary, salary associated costs and research expenses. A maximum of \$30,000 (exclusive of GST) per year of research expenses may be included. The duration of each fellowship is up to **2 years**.

Funded projects and fellowships must commence within 3 months of outcome notification.

The proposed research must be within the scope of this initiative as specified in this RFP and must realistically be able to be completed within 2 years.

Please note that the project and fellowship grants for this RFP intend to support different research. As such, applicants should avoid submitting both a project and fellowship application for the same proposed research.

## Application procedure

All forms and guidelines are available via HRC Gateway, the HRC's online application system (<https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz/>). The process below is outlined in more detail in the **2019 BC Research RFP Project Application Guidelines and 2019 BC Research RFP Fellowship Application Guidelines**. These guidelines provide full details on the application process for project and fellowship applications, respectively, to this RFP.

### STEP 1: REGISTRATION

Applicants are required to submit a Registration via HRC Gateway by **1:00pm, 27 February 2019**. This web-based form signals the intent of the applicant to submit a full application.

Once submitted, the Registration is forwarded (via HRC Gateway) to the applicant's host Research Office. The Research Office will need to approve the Registration and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices, the Registration will be forwarded directly (via HRC Gateway) to the HRC.

Please note that first named investigators and all other named investigators must have an HRC Gateway account (with an updated profile), to be able to be included in an application.

### STEP 2: FULL APPLICATION

Applicants are then required to complete a full application. Full applications should be submitted via HRC Gateway by **1:00pm, 13 March 2019**.

**Project** applications should use the **2019 BC Research RFP Project Application Form, 2019 BC Research RFP Project Budget Form, and New Zealand Standard CV template**.

**Fellowship** applications should use the **2019 BC Research RFP Fellowship Application Form, 2019 BC Research RFP Fellowship Budget Form, and New Zealand Standard CV template**.

Once submitted, the full application is forwarded (via HRC Gateway) to the applicant's host Research Office. The Research Office will need to approve the full application and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices, the application will be forwarded directly (via HRC Gateway) to the HRC.

A complete PDF of the full application is created by HRC Gateway after the deadline for submission, at which time it can be printed, and two hard copies sent to the HRC to arrive by **5:00pm, 15 March 2019**.

Applicants must meet the three deadlines indicated above for their proposal to be eligible.

### ASSESSMENT

#### Step 1: Peer review

The scientific integrity of full applications will be assessed through an external peer review process which is managed by the HRC. This involves comprehensive peer review of all applications which will be undertaken by independent national and international experts.

## Step 2: Applicant rebuttal

Applicants are given an opportunity to view the peer review reports for their application and provide a rebuttal to the comments made. This is not an opportunity to rewrite major sections of a proposal, but rather the opportunity to respond to specific reviewer comments, to answer questions raised by the reviewer, or to clarify an issue so that your proposal may be viewed as equitably as possible by the Assessing Committee.

## Step 3: Assessing Committee

An independent Assessing Committee will then assess all applications (full application, peer review reports and applicant rebuttal) using criteria outlined in the ***Peer Review Guidelines for 2019 Breast Cancer Research in NZ RFP***. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these criteria.

The Assessing Committee will make recommendations for funding, to be considered and approved by the HRC, BCC and BCFNZ. Applicants will be informed of final funding decisions in **September 2019**.

## Key actions and dates for this initiative

| Action                                 | Date                         |
|--|------------------------------|
| Registration due (via HRC Gateway)     | <b>1pm, 27 February 2019</b> |
| Full application due (via HRC Gateway) | <b>1pm, 13 March 2019</b>    |
| Full application (hard-copies) due     | <b>5pm, 15 March 2019</b>    |
| External peer review                   | <b>April 2019</b>            |
| Applicant rebuttal opens               | <b>8am, 22 May 2019</b>      |
| Applicant rebuttal due                 | <b>1pm, 29 May 2019</b>      |
| Applicants notified of outcome         | <b>September 2019</b>        |

## Background

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of breast cancer in the world – over 600 New Zealand women lose their lives to breast cancer each year, and one in nine women in New Zealand will develop breast cancer during their lifetime. The incidence of breast cancer increases as women age and is highest in women aged in their 60s. While women over 50 are most at risk, around 11% of breast cancers occur in women between the age of 25 and 44.<sup>1</sup> Māori and Pacific women are at a greater risk of dying of breast cancer, with Māori women 40% more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer and 60% more likely to die from the disease when compared to non-Māori women.<sup>1</sup> Māori and Pasifika women also tend to be of a younger age at diagnosis (in their mid 50s), compared with other ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup>

BCC is a not-for-profit charitable trust established solely to support research into finding a “cure” for breast cancer by making the disease one that women can endure and survive. Over the past 15 years, BCC has funded over \$10M of breast cancer research in New Zealand and many cancers gain from the base molecular and genetic work funded.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health. 2014. *Cancer: New registrations and deaths 2011*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

<sup>2</sup> Tin Tin et al, Ethnic disparities in breast cancer survival in New Zealand: which factors contribute? *BMC Cancer*, 18, 58. <http://doi.org/10.1186/s12885-017-3797-0>

BCFNZ is a not-for-profit charitable trust and is New Zealand's largest non-government funder of breast cancer research, education/awareness and support services. BCFNZ actively pursues projects that will help achieve its mission of preventing New Zealand women developing and dying of breast cancer.

The HRC, BCC and BCFNZ have identified the need to support more innovative research into breast cancer and emerging researchers in this area to enable New Zealand to develop solutions to this significant health issue.

The key objectives of this RFP are to:

- Fund innovative research that will improve quality of life and ultimately ensure survival in breast cancer
- Promote and engender a culture of scientific excellence, relevance and innovation in breast cancer research
- Ensure meaningful multidisciplinary engagement and partnership, and support collaboration between teams that can contribute to the goals of this funding initiative
- Identify, attract and develop the best people to conduct high quality breast cancer research

## Research Requirements

### RFP SCOPE

Applications submitted to this RFP must be within one or more of the following specific areas:

- Prevention/treatment
  - identify mutational or multigene therapeutic targets
  - identify new molecular targets or improve lead compound testing to advance drug development
  - develop vaccines to eliminate breast cancer or achieve long term remission
  - investigate other therapeutic approaches to reduce the development of advanced breast cancer or achieve long term remission
- Detection/prognostics
  - identify high risk populations (eg. rural Māori women and urban Pasifika women suffering deprivation) using “big data” from electronic medical records or algorithms to improve selective screening
  - refine genetic and genomic testing of liquid biopsies to improve detection of early and advanced breast cancer, or to provide better predictive or prognostic information for the guidance of therapy
- Precision medicine
  - use patient and tumour genetics to identify and/or develop targeted treatments and immunotherapies
  - identify new cancer targets or epitopes based on mutational spectra, immunotherapeutic cancer profiling, absorbant T cell transfer, checkpoint therapeutics or tumour immunotherapies

- investigate the utility of concurrent combination therapy and immunotherapy (e.g., checkpoint inhibitors, tumour immunotherapies, novel antibodies) in the individualization of radiation treatments
- improve the precision of existing therapeutics or develop alternatives for non-responders
- investigate the utility of genomic testing to inform chemotherapy and radiation dosing and imaging
- Clinical trials
  - investigate the utility of imaging, prognostics, genomic precision oncology, immune therapies and targeted and combination therapies in treatment escalation or de-escalation
  - improve imaging pathway for breast cancer detection and early evaluation of treatment efficacy
  - develop or improve breast cancer trial infrastructure
- Translational research involving the integration of knowledge in molecular biology, genomics, immunomics, immune infiltration of tumours and the tumor microenvironment to improve breast cancer prevention/treatment/detection/prognostics
- Transformative research - advance ideas, methodologies, tools or technologies which are highly transformative, innovative, exploratory or unconventional while being viable and have potential for major impact and revolutionary change in knowledge or health outcomes in breast cancer

This RFP particularly welcomes applications which:

- address inequality in breast cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and mortality
- involve strong and meaningful clinical collaboration
- foster the development of emerging researchers and clinician-scientists
- propose transformative research

This RFP specifically excludes:

- Replicative/“me-too” research
- Research solely on the pathophysiology of breast cancer (although research which utilises and develops this knowledge may be supported through this RFP)
- The commercial development of new technologies, devices or diagnostics (although research which may contribute to commercial development at a later stage may be supported through this RFP)

Please note that the project and fellowship grants for this RFP intend to support different research. As such, applicants should avoid submitting both a project and fellowship application for the same proposed research.

## Proposal/project requirements

### CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Research proposals must demonstrate the following:

- The proposed research represents high quality science, and is innovative, scoped appropriately, and relevant to the objectives and scope of this RFP
- The proposed research is clearly achievable within the specified timeframe. The likelihood that the proposed research will be successfully completed within the stated timeframe will be specifically assessed. Please also carefully consider the start date included in the application, as applicants will be held to what was stated. Applicants should take into account the timeframe for obtaining ethical approval (if appropriate) and should ensure that this does not delay the start of the research
- The budget is appropriate for the proposed research
- Applicants have research experience relevant to the proposed project, a strong academic record, and the skills to work effectively with a range of stakeholders
- Strong and appropriate cross-sectoral and cross-institutional collaboration and the translation and exchange of knowledge. The research team should also work within an appropriate governance structure
- Development of New Zealand's workforce and capacity to undertake breast cancer research
- Research progress and findings will be disseminated nationally via tailored approaches to a broad range of audiences to maximise the utility of the research. Dissemination should also include publication in international, peer-reviewed journals
- Where relevant, health equity issues and the specific health needs of Māori and Pacific peoples are addressed, and appropriate engagement has been undertaken

### BUDGET

For **projects**, the funding per proposal is up to a maximum of **\$250,000** over **two years** (fully-costed, exclusive of GST). This funding comprises 50 per cent contribution from government funds and 50 per cent contribution from non-government organisations. Applicants should note that overhead costs can only be claimed for the portion of the funds derived from government funds (i.e. no overhead costs can be claimed for the portion of the funds provided by non-government organisations).

For **fellowships**, the maximum available per fellowship is **\$250,000** (GST exclusive) over a maximum of **two years**.

- The value of the salary component of these fellowships is based on the recipient's qualifications and research experience with regards to salary levels set by the host institution. This usually equates with the academic salary scale of LG1-LG4 for applicants who hold an MBChB, PhD or equivalent degree. Salary scales vary from institution to institution. Please contact your host institution for the appropriate salary scale.
- The levels of salary associated costs are set by the host institution. These vary from institution to institution, please contact your host institution for more information.
- A maximum of \$30,000 (exclusive of GST) per year is available for research expenses associated with the proposed research
- There are no overhead costs associated with this fellowship. This fellowship is intended to facilitate the establishment of the Fellow's research programme. The HRC expects that overhead costs of the research undertaken by fellowship recipients will be met by the host institution. Applicants should confirm that such resources are in place to ensure the successful completion of their award

- Each recipient agrees to the % FTE contribution stated in the application and that funding to any recipient from all sources will not exceed 100% FTE

## PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Actual deliverables will be confirmed with a selected provider; however, deliverables must include the following elements:

- meaningful and detailed six-monthly reports on the progress of the requirements of the research contract and resulting outputs. The research provider will complete these reports via the HRC's online reporting portal. For **fellowships**, disclosure of all of the Fellow's time commitments (Breast Cancer Research in NZ fellowship, other funders, teaching, clinical duties) will also be required
- **a final deliverable report with a clear, meaningful and detailed technical summary of the methodology, results, key findings and recommendations of the completed research project**
- **a 12-month post-contract report providing information on how the research has progressed or is being further developed**

The research provider may also be required to provide verbal presentations to the funding partners on research progress and/or findings.

All reports will be reviewed by all funding partners and they may request amendment of the reports prior to their acceptance, so that these reports are of a reasonable standard and contain all the information required by the funding partners. The funding partners also reserve the right to suspend or terminate the contract should progress be unsatisfactory.

Any projects or fellowships which are delayed beyond the original term will have additional reporting dates as stated on the amended contract.

## Additional requirements for fellowships

### ELIGIBILITY

- Applicants should be New Zealand citizens or hold New Zealand residency at the time of application
- Applicants must hold a PhD, MBChB or an equivalent degree. Applicants must have been awarded a PhD, MBChB or an equivalent degree prior to the application date. Applicants must have held a PhD, MBChB or an equivalent degree for no more than eight years on the application date.
- Exceptions for time spent outside the research environment will be considered (e.g. time taken for maternity or paternity leave, or illness). The applicant's track record is assessed relative to opportunity

### CONDITIONS OF TENURE

The host institution of a successful applicant will need to agree to the terms of the research contract. The research contract for a Breast Cancer Research in NZ fellowship is based on the standard HRC research contract template, with the following special conditions:

- For part-time fellowships, a minimum of 0.5FTE for the two-year term of the fellowship for the First Named Investigator is preferred, however, a smaller FTE

commitment may be considered if well justified and appropriate for the proposed research.

- Fellows may undertake limited clinical and teaching duties relevant to their research to a maximum of 400 hours in a calendar year. They may accept remuneration for such duties. Except in relation to approved limited clinical and teaching duties, Fellows may not receive remuneration for other work without the permission of the HRC
- Fellows may hold other forms of awards in conjunction with a fellowship, with permission of the HRC
- Fellows may enter examinations for higher qualifications during tenure of their fellowship, with permission of the HRC
- Fellowship awards will be administered through the host institution. Fellows are employees of the host institution and the general conditions of the appointment are those of that institution

## General Notes

### DECISION ADVICE

No legal obligations will arise between the funding partners and applicants for this Request for Proposals until such time as the HRC enters into a contract with the successful applicant.

### PRIVACY PROVISIONS

In the event that an application is successful, the HRC reserves the right to release applicants' names, details of the host institution/company, contact details (work phone or email), contract title and funding awarded for public interest purposes and to meet the statutory requirements of the Health Research Council of New Zealand Act 1990.

### HRC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

This RFP is a component of the HRC's Partnership Programme, through which the HRC forms strategic partnerships with funders and stakeholders to target resources towards developing the evidence-base in key areas of need and strengthen the links between policy and practice. This collaborative approach to research ensures that stakeholders obtain the answers to pressing questions, but split the cost with multiple interested parties. The HRC's processes ensure that the track record of the research team, the scientific merit and the design and methods of the proposal will deliver the highest quality of evidence. Only limited funds are available to launch these co-operative research initiatives and the opportunities are strictly prioritised.

### MAILING ADDRESS

Printed hard copies of applications should be sent to the Health Research Council's office as shown below:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Mailing Address:</i><br>Health Research Council of New Zealand<br>PO Box 5541, Wellesley Street<br>AUCKLAND<br><i>Attn: Isabella Cheung</i> | <i>Physical/Courier Address:</i><br>Health Research Council of New Zealand<br>Level 3, 110 Stanley Street<br>AUCKLAND<br><i>Attn: Isabella Cheung</i> |
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## ENQUIRIES

All enquiries related to this Request for Proposals should be directed to Isabella Cheung, Research Investment Manager, Research Partnerships (09 280 3860 or [icheung@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:icheung@hrc.govt.nz)).