

# Request for Proposals



December 2018



## 2019 HRC-NSFC Biomedical Research Fund

### Overview

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) have established a funding initiative to support the development of collaborative research relationships between the two countries.

A total funding pool of \$1,000,000 (exclusive of GST) is available for allocation. There are two separate funding opportunities available to apply for.

**Stream one – Project:** funding partners invite applications for funding of up to \$600,000 (fully-costed, exclusive of GST) and duration of up to three years for a research project.

**Stream two – Emerging Researcher First Grant:** emerging researchers are invited to apply for funding to facilitate collaborative research relationships with Chinese colleagues. Up to \$100,000 is available for a duration of up to two years for emerging researchers (there are four available).

NSFC and HRC are jointly responsible for the funding decisions. HRC funding will support the successful New Zealand project teams, and NSFC's funding will support the Chinese project teams in the same collaboration. This RFP applies only to the New Zealand application process; Chinese researchers must consult with NSFC regarding their own separate application requirements and process.

It is anticipated that funding for one 3-year project and four 2-year emerging researcher collaborations will be available for a 1 July 2019 start date. The HRC's strong focus on peer review and contestability will ensure successful applicants deliver the highest quality research outcomes.

### Background

This initiative aims to establish new and/or strengthen existing collaborations in biomedical sciences between Chinese and New Zealand researchers from universities and research institutions, foster breakthroughs in biomedical research that will advance the global development of science and technology, and promote mobility and career development of researchers within joint projects.

Under the overarching framework of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy, the objectives of this initiative is to:

- Focus on complementary subject areas of cancer biology, metabolic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, brain health and respiratory diseases.
- Leverage international research and infrastructure capabilities in areas posing significant health-based challenges to New Zealand and our international partners; and
- Profile New Zealand health science and innovation and our ability to contribute to global health challenges.

## **Stream one: Project requirements**

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This grant will create opportunities for New Zealand scientists to identify and exploit opportunities through collaborations with Chinese researchers. Applicants to the scheme will conduct health research using existing collaborations and identify opportunities to improve health outcomes and healthcare delivery. Investment will focus on building knowledge and technologies to prevent, diagnose, and manage the priority areas.

While the research will build on relationships developed over time, the proposed project must be a new one. Proposals must involve a genuine collaboration with at least one Chinese research team. The proposed collaboration should be additional to the research organisations current activities and requires joint input of both the New Zealand and the Chinese team to be successful. Successful proposals will present a vision for long-term, sustainable international collaborations.

Five health priorities have been identified and research projects may focus on any **one** of the five:

- Cancer biology
- Metabolic diseases
- Anti-Microbial Resistance
- Brain Health
- Respiratory Diseases

Research projects may consider one of the following approaches but are not limited to:

- Development of novel methods for data collection, characterisation and analysis;
- Development of novel or personalized approaches to prevention, diagnosis and management;
- Understanding the basis and pathophysiological mechanisms contributing to the health priority issue;
- Reducing the impact of common risk factors;
- Traditional medicines in treatment.

It is anticipated that research collaborators will demonstrate the potential benefit to New Zealand from the proposed international partnership. This may, in part, be through access to research infrastructure, such as datasets, equipment and technologies, intellectual property and expertise, but is also expected to be through specific, measurable, time-bound outcomes that will benefit New Zealand.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research proposal needs to provide information on:

- The appropriateness, soundness and rigour of the study methodology and design, while allowing for solutions to be developed in a flexible manner.
- How the proposed research builds on existing relationships and strengthens existing collaborations. It is anticipated that by building on existing relationships, New Zealand scientists will be best placed to access international expertise, markets, global knowledge and research facilities.
- Distinct supplementary research activities, such as how collaboration will enhance each side's technological advantages and complement each other and a clear division of work. This will enable New Zealand scientists to better align with their Chinese collaborators and merge the collaboration into a more significant and integrated work programme.
- A clear process for deploying research outcomes (taking into consideration that any actual deployment/commercialisation would be outside the term of the research contract). Activities that could support future efforts to derive economic benefit(s) and be conducted within the research timeframe may include workshops, science exchange and key networking activities.
- How activities contribute to the long-term aim of generating health and economic benefit to New Zealand.

Research grant funding will only be used to support the costs associated with New Zealand-based researchers employed by a New Zealand host institution.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

For a proposal to be assessed under this HRC funding round, it must meet the eligibility criteria set out below. Proposals that the HRC determines do not meet these criteria will be declined for funding on eligibility grounds.

- The proposal must be made by a New Zealand-based research organisation or a New Zealand-based legal entity representing a New Zealand-based research organisation.
- The First Named Investigator must be employed by a New Zealand-based research organisation, or a New Zealand-based legal entity representing a New Zealand-based research organisation.
- The applicants must have identified suitable research collaborators from a leading research organisation(s) based in China.
- The proposal must be uploaded on time via the HRC Gateway Portal and meet the administrative requirements of HRC.
- Applicants must have submitted a registration on HRC Gateway.

Applicants should also be familiar with the [HRC Rules](#) when applying.

## BUDGET

The funding requested from the HRC may be up to a maximum of \$600,000 (exclusive of GST). The duration of the project may be up to 3 years.

It is anticipated that a decision on funding will be made in mid-2019 and funding will be available for a 1 July 2019 start date. Applicants will need to give consideration to this when outlining research timelines. The anticipated outcome date is tentative as delays to the outcome announcement may be unavoidable.

Where applications are of equal scientific merit, the assessing committee may also consider the

relative 'value for money' of the applications.

#### RESEARCH TEAM

The research team will require demonstrated expertise in undertaking health research. New Zealand applicants should have Chinese research partners eligible for the matching NSFC funding. Only research proposals with confirmed submission of the counterpart application to NSFC will be considered.

Research teams will collectively require the skills appropriate to undertake the research proposed and this should be clearly outlined in the application.

#### PROJECT DELIVERABLES

A final report including comment, and providing evidence, of:

- the value of the project in building existing relationships and strengthening existing collaborations
- the value of the project in leading to economic and health outcomes e.g. commercialisation

In addition to research deliverables, regular progress reports will also be required for the project, via HRC Gateway. These reports detail progress of the project and highlight any risks to its progress. Once a funding decision has been confirmed, the HRC will confirm the reporting dates in the relevant research contract.

#### **Application procedure**

All forms and guidelines are available via the HRC website ([www.hrc.govt.nz](http://www.hrc.govt.nz)) and HRC gateway.

#### **Full application**

Applicants must complete a full application using the **JV219P NZ-NSFC** and submit via HRC Gateway by **1pm, 26 February 2019**. A hard copy of the full application must then be submitted to the HRC by **5pm, 5 March 2019**.

Please refer to the ***Full Application Guidelines for HRC-NSFC*** for details of these processes. These guidelines provide information on what is required of applicants in each section of the application form.

Full applications will be screened against the eligibility screening criteria (outlined on page 3). Applications which do not meet the criteria will not proceed to full assessment. Applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria will be informed prior to peer review commencing.

Applicants will have the opportunity to submit a rebuttal in response to the reviewer comments. The Assessing Committee for this initiative will review the full applications, peer review reports and applicant rebuttal and will make funding recommendations to the HRC who will then make a final funding decision together with NSFC.

## **Stream two: Emerging Researcher First Grant requirements**

These grants provide research funds to support emerging researchers who are seeking to establish independent careers whilst simultaneously developing collaborative linkages with China based collaborators. This arrangement will extend opportunities for New Zealand's scientists to engage with researchers and facilities in China in areas of key concern for New Zealand. It will particularly focus on ensuring New Zealand's future leaders are connected to leaders, and future leaders, in China, and to grow successful, sustainable research collaborations.

The aim of this funding opportunity is to develop the next generation of researchers and support the building of strong international collaborative relationships so in the future researchers funded through this grant will be in a stronger position to apply for further funding initiatives.

An emerging researcher is: "Someone who is at the beginning of their research career in health with a clear development path and is working in a strongly supportive research environment".

For the collaborative component of this opportunity it is expected that the researcher will develop a collaboration, with this fund enabling travel and research expenses. It is expected the host institution in China will be supportive of the collaboration and facilitate the exchange by agreeing to host the researcher. Due diligence will be carried out by the HRC and NSFC to ensure the appropriateness of the China-based research institute.

The proposed collaboration should be additional to the researcher's current activities, and whilst the opportunity must be new, it may be based on relationships that have already been developed. Successful applications will present a vision for how the enabling grant may be used to develop longer-term, sustainable international collaborations.

Research proposals should seek to investigate one of the five priority areas:

- Cancer biology
- Metabolic diseases
- Anti-Microbial Resistance
- Brain Health
- Respiratory Diseases

The applicant will undertake overall responsibility for the work to be completed. These contracts do not include salary for recipients, who will require salary support from elsewhere. Other academics, professional supervisors or senior researchers may be included as Named Investigators on a time-only basis. Applicants should detail the extent to which this grant will support them as independent researchers and how it will enable a step change in their career. The applicants need to describe how the grant will support the development of a new research programme. Note that the award can be seen as 'seeding' funding for the applicant's future research.

Assessment will consider the Suitability of the Applicant, Rationale for Research, Design and Methods, and Research Impact. Applicants are encouraged to read the guidelines for detailed information about how applications will be assessed by the external reviewers and assessing committee.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

Applicants are eligible if they:

- have not previously held a competitive research grant as a first Named Investigator for research expenses of  $\geq$ \$105,000 from any source at the time of assessment (including institutional or internal funding). Scholarship and fellowship stipends are not included, provided the expenses component of such awards does not exceed the \$105,000 expenses threshold. Applicants are required to provide the amount of research expenses of their previous awards in this application.
- no more than 6 years from attaining a most recent postgraduate degree, but this period could be greater for parental leave, caring responsibilities, career breaks, ill health or other justified reasons. Eligibility will be counted from the date of conferment. HRC may request evidence of this date to confirm eligibility, if required.
- are not studying for a PhD degree.
- justify how they fit the definition of emerging researcher as defined above. The HRC reserves the right to accept the assessment of the assessing committee.

There is a clear distinction between eligibility, defined above, and suitability. Applicants are required to clearly state their suitability in Section 2B: Applicant. The committee's assessment that an applicant is not suitable because, for example, that applicant is already established in an independent research pathway, will be accepted by the HRC Council as final.

Applicants should also be familiar with the [HRC Rules](#) when applying.

## BUDGET

The funding requested from the HRC may be up to a maximum of \$100,000 (exclusive of GST). The duration of the project may be up to 2 years.

It is anticipated that a decision on funding will be made in mid-2019 and funding will be available for a 1 July 2019 start date. Applicants will need to give consideration to this when outlining research timelines. The anticipated outcome date is tentative as delays to the outcome announcement may be unavoidable.

Where applications are of equal scientific merit, the assessing committee may also consider the relative 'value for money' of the applications.

## PROJECT DELIVERABLES

It is anticipated that deliverables for this initiative will include meaningful and detailed six-monthly progress reports; an HRC end of contract report, and a final deliverable report detailing the results of the complete programme of work and the details of the on-going collaboration.

### **Application procedure**

All forms and guidelines are available via the HRC website ([www.hrc.govt.nz](http://www.hrc.govt.nz)) and HRC gateway.

Applicants must complete a full application using the **JV219E NZ-NSFC** and submit via HRC Gateway by **1pm, 26 February 2019**. A hard copy of the full application must then be submitted to the HRC by **5pm, 5 March 2019**.

Please refer to the **Full Application Guidelines for HRC-NSFC** for details of these processes. These guidelines provide information on what is required of applicants in each section of the application form.

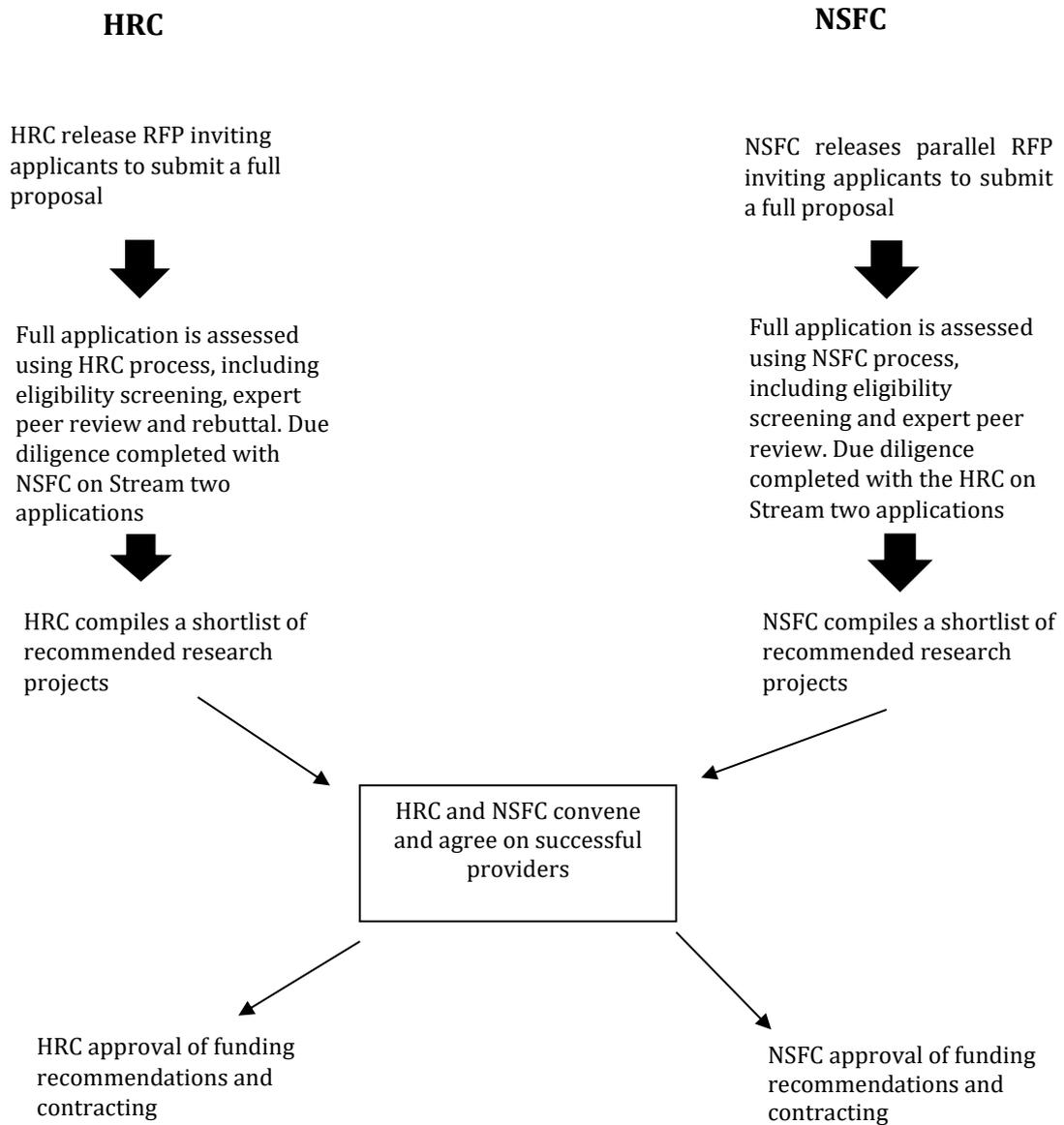
Applicants will have the opportunity to submit a rebuttal in response to the reviewer comments.

The Assessing Committee for this initiative will review the eligibility, full applications, peer review reports and applicant rebuttal and will make funding recommendations to the HRC who will then make a final funding decision together with NSFC.

**Key actions and dates for project and emerging researcher applications**

<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b><i>Key action</i></b>
<b>Due: 1pm, 12 February 2019</b>	Applicants must register on HRC Gateway to proceed
<b>Due: 1pm, 26 February 2019</b>	Submission of Full Application to HRC Gateway
<b>March- April</b>	Eligibility screening and peer review undertaken by HRC
<b>Opens: 8am, 26 April, 2019</b>	Applicant rebuttal begins
<b>Due: 1pm, 3 May, 2019</b>	Applicants submit rebuttal to peer review reports
<b>June 2019</b>	Applicants advised of the outcome of the Request for Proposals

**Diagram 1: Application and assessment process for HRC NSFC Biomedical Research Fund**



## General notes

### 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.

### DECISION ADVICE

No legal obligations will arise between the HRC and applicants for this RFP until such time as the HRC enters into a contract with the successful applicant/s.

### MAILING ADDRESS

The application should be sent to the HRCs office as shown below:

### ENQUIRIES

*Mailing Address:*

Health Research Council of New Zealand  
PO Box 5541, Wellesley Street  
AUCKLAND Attn: *Fiona Kenning*

*Physical/Courier Address:*

Health Research Council of New Zealand  
Level 3, 110 Stanley Street AUCKLAND  
*Attn: Fiona Kenning*

All enquiries related to this Request for Proposals should be directed to:

Fiona Kenning

Research Investment Manager, International

Phone: 09 303 5208

Email: [fkenning@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:fkenning@hrc.govt.nz)