

Request for Proposals

February 2019

2019 WorkSafe-HRC Research RFP – ‘Effective interventions for reducing work-related psychosocial risk in small and medium-sized enterprises’

A joint initiative funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand and WorkSafe New Zealand.

Overview

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) and WorkSafe New Zealand (WorkSafe) have formed a funding initiative to support high-quality research and advance the strategic objectives of both organisations.

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), the HRC and WorkSafe (‘the funding partners’) are seeking to fund research in the following areas:

- **Literature review** (such as a systematic review or meta-analysis) that will identify effective interventions for reducing work-related psychosocial risk for the most prevalent psychosocial health problems (stress, anxiety and depression).
- **Project** that will implement and evaluate innovative interventions for reducing work-related psychosocial risk for the most prevalent psychosocial health problems in a number of small and medium-sized enterprises.

A total funding pool of \$1.6 million (exclusive of GST) is available for allocation. The maximum value of a literature review is **\$400,000** (fully costed, exclusive of GST) over a maximum duration of **two years**. The maximum value of a project is **\$1,200,000** (fully costed, exclusive of GST) over a maximum duration of **three years**.

Applicants will need to outline how their proposal addresses the RFP and provide a clear justification for the proposed research along with a description of the team’s ability to deliver the specific components of the research. Applicants will also need to provide a fully costed budget.

It is anticipated that the contracted projects will begin as soon as practicable, with funding available for an immediate start following notification of outcomes in August 2019.

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 the prescribed maximum timeframes (two years for a literature review and three years for a project).

1. 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 WorkSafe-HRC Research RFP Application Guidelines**. These guidelines provide full details on the application process for applications to this RFP.

Step 1: Registration

Applicants are required to submit a Registration via HRC Gateway by **1:00pm, 12 March 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 application 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, 9 April 2019**.

Applications should use the **2019 WorkSafe-HRC Research RFP Application Form**, **2019 WorkSafe-HRC Research RFP 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 the 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, 11 April 2019**.

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

2. Assessment Procedure

The process below is outlined in more detail in the *Partnership Programme Peer Review Guidelines for the 2019 WorkSafe-HRC Research RFP*. These guidelines provide full details on the assessment process for applications to this RFP.

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 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 applications (full application, peer review reports and applicant rebuttal) using criteria outlined in the *Partnership Programme Peer Review Guidelines for the 2019 WorkSafe-HRC Research RFP*. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these criteria.

Depending on the number of full applications and the level of available funding, a triage process may be utilised to determine which applications will be discussed in full at the Assessing Committee meeting. This process would involve committee members scoring applications in advance of the meeting using the assessment criteria to yield a ranked list. The lowest-ranked applications based on the pre-scores would then be triaged and not discussed at the meeting.

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

Key actions and dates for this initiative:

Action	Date
Registration due (via HRC Gateway)	1pm, 12 March 2019
Full application due (via HRC Gateway)	1pm, 9 April 2019
Full application (hard copies) due	5pm, 11 April 2019
External peer review	April/May 2019
Applicant rebuttal opens	8am, 11 June 2019
Applicant rebuttal due	1pm, 18 June 2019
Applicants notified of outcome	August 2019

3. Background

Work-related psychosocial risks concern the design and management of work and its social and organisational contexts which have the potential to cause psychological or physical harm.¹ Definitions of psychosocial risks are broad, largely because all of the social and organisational aspects of work can be hazardous to workers' health. The area is complex primarily because not all workers experience these aspects in the same way; workers' needs and competencies, perceptions and experiences mediate the nature of the health outcome.

Problems such as work-related stress, harassment, bullying and workplace violence are significant occupational health and safety issues and have received increasing attention by researchers in Western Europe and North America. The research record reveals that work-related stress is associated with heart disease, depression and musculoskeletal disorders, and there is reliable evidence that high job demand, low control and effort-reward imbalance are risk factors for mental and physical health problems.²

At an international level, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Office (ILO) have developed guidance on psychosocial risks, work-related stress and psychological harassment.³ In Europe, the range of responses to addressing psychosocial risks encompass regulatory standards, legal regulations and voluntary standards. However, the impact of these is not well understood and there is acknowledgement that there is a gap between policy and practice, and that this is an outcome of a lack of clarity in frameworks and guidance on how to manage psychosocial risks and work-related stress.

¹ Leka, S., Jain, A., Widerszal-Bazyl M., et al. (2011) Developing a standard for psychosocial risk management: PAS 1010. *Safety Science* 49:1047-1057.

² Melchior, M., Caspi, A., Milne, B.J., Danese, A. et al. (2008) Work stress precipitates depression and anxiety in young working women and men. *Psychological Medicine* 37(8):1119-1129.

Rosengren, A., Hawken, S., Ounpuu, S., et al. (2004) Association of psychosocial risk factors and risk of acute myocardial infarction in 11,119 cases and 13,648 controls in 52 countries (the INTERHEART study): case control study. *The Lancet* 364(9438):953-962.

Stansfeld, S., Candy, B. (2006) Psychosocial work environment and mental health – a meta-analytic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Work and Environmental Health* 32 (6) 443-462.

³ World Health Organization (WHO) (2003a) Work organization and stress. Protecting workers' health series: no.3. World Health Organization, Geneva.

World Health Organization (WHO) (2003b) Raising awareness to psychological harassment at work. Protecting workers' health series: no.4 World Health Organization, Geneva.

World Health Organization (WHO) (2007) Raising Awareness of stress at work in developing countries: a modern hazard in a traditional working environment: advice to employers and worker representatives. Protecting workers' health series: no.6. World Health Organization, Geneva.

World Health Organization (WHO) (2008) PRIMA-EF: Guidance on the European framework for psychosocial risk management: a resource for employers and worker representatives. Protecting workers' health series: no.9. World Health Organization, Geneva.

International Labour Office (ILO) (1986) Psychosocial factors at work: recognition and control. Report of the Joint International Labour Office and World Health Organization on Occupational Health. Ninth Session, Geneva, 18-24 September 1984. Occupational Safety and Health Series No.56. International Labour Office, Geneva.

International Labour Office (ILO) (2006) Violence at work. Third Edition, International Labour Office, Geneva.

International Labour Office (ILO) (2010) Recommendation concerning the list of occupational diseases and the recording and notification of occupational accidents and diseases ILO recommendation R194 revised annex, 2010. Geneva.

Despite widespread acknowledgement that psychosocial risk is an important health issue for workers, the focus in many workplaces remains on physical hazards and risks, suggesting that the rhetoric has not led to action and that this is primarily because, for many managers, addressing psychosocial risk is difficult when compared to other health and safety issues. Other reasons provided are that there is a lack of awareness, it is a sensitive issue and there is a lack of training in this area.⁴

Work-Related Psychosocial Health in New Zealand

WorkSafe has included psychosocial health (which includes mental health) as a high priority in their Health and Safety at Work Strategy 2018-2028⁵. The Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) requires businesses to ensure the safety of workers and their mental as well as physical health, and to manage risks arising from exposure to hazards at work (including behaviours) which may cause harm. The term 'psychosocial' is not used in the HSWA, but is implied through the inclusion of behaviour as a potential hazard and risk to worker health.

The research record on work-related psychosocial health in New Zealand is small and uneven. There is a lack of context specific evidence that is central to successful intervention design and implementation, and prevention, of poor work-related psychosocial health outcomes.

WorkSafe is in the process of establishing a baseline for psychosocial exposure through a worker exposure survey and the inclusion of a psychosocial measure, which will also allow the organisation to understand the prevalence in New Zealand and to compare prevalence with like-kind jurisdictions. The results of this survey will be available in March 2019.

In addition to the exposure survey, there are a number of surveys that have collected data on psychosocial risk. WorkSafe's Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviour Survey, since 2014, has collected data on psychosocial risk across four sectors – manufacturing, construction, agriculture and forestry. The findings show about 1 in 5 employers and workers believe that mental health conditions, including stress, anxiety and depression were a long-term risk to workers in their sector. Other surveys such as the Wellness in the Workplace Survey, the NZ Police Workforce Survey and the NZ Law Society Survey all report increases in worker stress and anxiety in a range of workplace settings.

⁴ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) (2010) European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks: managing safety and health at work. European Risk Observatory Report. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Luxembourg.

⁵ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/employment-and-skills/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-strategy/> (Accessed on 1 February 2019).

4. RFP Objectives

The goal of this RFP is to establish a reliable evidence base for effective interventions aimed at reducing work-related psychosocial risk and improving psychosocial health outcomes.

The key objectives of this RFP are:

- To provide evidence of effective interventions that have been implemented in the OECD for reducing work-related psychosocial risk for the most prevalent psychosocial health problems (stress, anxiety and depression). This includes a review of process and outcome evaluations of these interventions with particular attention to context specific implementation issues to inform WorkSafe on what modifications might need to be made in the New Zealand context.
- To implement and evaluate the effectiveness of innovative interventions designed to reduce and prevent the most prevalent psychosocial health outcomes in the most at-risk sectors amongst small and medium-sized enterprises. This includes identifying how the evaluation findings might be applied in other workplace settings.
- To ensure meaningful multidisciplinary engagement and partnership: supporting collaboration between teams and stakeholders and driving the creation of pathways for effective knowledge transfer.
- To identify, attract and develop the best people to conduct high-quality research that meets the scope of the initiative.

5. Scope

Applications submitted to this RFP must be within the following scope:

The focus of this RFP is on effective interventions for reducing work-related psychosocial risk for the most prevalent psychosocial health problems (stress, anxiety and depression). As the focus is on harm reduction, wellness or public health interventions are not within scope of this RFP.

The research will need to consider the work environment as a whole, including work design, work processes, controls and decision-making, not just at an individual worker level.

The research will need to involve a number of workplaces in the most at-risk sectors amongst small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs are the largest employers in New Zealand and also the group with the least available evidence and resourcing to effect change in this area.

It is expected that a focus on how equity for Māori and Pacific people is achieved is integral within the scope of this RFP.

6. Funding Streams and Value

This RFP provides two separate funding opportunities: **literature review** and **project grants**.

Literature Review

Proposals are invited for literature reviews (such as systematic reviews or meta-analyses) that will identify effective interventions for reducing work-related psychosocial risk for the most prevalent psychosocial health problems (stress, anxiety and depression).

Funding of up to \$400,000 (excluding GST) is available for the literature review funding stream. The maximum value of a literature review is **\$400,000** (fully costed, exclusive of GST) over a maximum duration of **two years**.

Project

Proposals are invited for projects that will implement and evaluate innovative interventions for reducing work-related psychosocial risk for the most prevalent psychosocial health problems in a number of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Funding of up to \$1,200,000 (excluding GST) is available for the project funding stream. The maximum value of a project is **\$1,200,000** (fully costed, exclusive of GST) over a maximum duration of **three years**.

7. Proposal Requirements

Characteristics of Research Proposals

Clear and coherently written applications are essential in allowing the Assessing Committee to effectively read and assess applications submitted to this RFP.

Applicants will need to outline how their proposal addresses the scope of the RFP and provide a clear justification for the proposed approach along with a description of the research team's ability to deliver the specific components of the research. Applicants will also need to provide a fully costed budget.

Research proposals must demonstrate the following:

- The proposed research represents high-quality science, and is innovative, scoped appropriately, and relevant to the objectives of this RFP.
- How the research activity is linked to reducing work-related psychosocial risk and improving psychosocial health outcomes for workers in New Zealand.
- Consideration of health equity issues and the specific health needs of Māori and Pacific people within the context of the research topic, and the recognition of different cultural perspectives on health and safety.
- Applicants have research experience relevant to the proposed project, a strong academic record, and the capacity and skills to work effectively with a range of stakeholders and key participants at the different stages of the research. It is expected that applicants will make active use of stakeholder networks to engage a wide range of parties in discussions from research formation to dissemination. The research team should also work within an appropriate governance structure.

- Strong and appropriate cross-sectoral and cross-institutional collaboration in the composition of the research team. This will include the involvement of researchers with extensive environmental and occupational health experience and/or organisational psychology expertise and/or collaborating with the government sector, industry, academia and other research providers, for example.
- The potential for knowledge transfer and the processes or steps in place that demonstrate what the research team will do to maximise the uptake of research findings by WorkSafe or other organisations. This includes how the research team might engage key stakeholders such as trade unions and industry forums in the implementation of any change that may be recommended in response to the research findings.
- Research findings will be disseminated nationally via tailored approaches to a broad range of relevant audiences in order to maximise the utility of the research. Dissemination should also include publication in international, peer-reviewed journals.
- The proposed research is clearly achievable within the specified timeframe. The funding partners see the delivery of this research contributing to a wider programme of work. Therefore time is of the essence. A detailed project management plan for all stages of the research should be included. 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.

8. Project Deliverables

It is anticipated that researchers will work closely with WorkSafe and key stakeholders and participants to understand, design, deliver and evaluate effective interventions that can work in the New Zealand small and medium-sized business environment.

Deliverables will be confirmed with the selected providers; however, deliverables must include the following elements:

- A **final report** detailing results, key findings and recommendations of the complete programme of research. The report will also be required to include an outline of any planned implementation activities, including the processes or steps that will support uptake of the research findings.
- **Tailored products** for a range of audiences, for example:
 - Key findings and summaries for WorkSafe (policy, inspectorate and programme teams); MBIE (policy team and labour inspectorate); Accident Compensation Corporation (insights and design teams).
 - Summaries, fact sheets and case studies that are incorporated into accessible guidance materials for small and medium-sized businesses.
 - Educational resources that focus on specific groups of workers and their employers.
- **Verbal presentations** to the funding partners and key stakeholders on research progress and/or findings.

The WorkSafe Research and Evaluation team has a number of current projects, some of which would be useful for the successful research providers to be aware of. It is expected the successful research providers will liaise with the Research and Evaluation team so that maximum knowledge gains can be realised.

In addition to research deliverables, **six-monthly progress reports** will also be required. These reports detail progress of the research and highlight any risks to its progress. The research providers will complete and submit their progress reports via the HRC's online reporting system.

An **HRC end of contract report** is also required upon completion of the research activity.

9. 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.

Mailing Address

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

<i>Mailing Address:</i> Health Research Council of New Zealand PO Box 5541, Wellesley Street AUCKLAND <i>Attn: Scott Aitken</i>	<i>Physical/Courier Address:</i> Health Research Council of New Zealand Level 3, 110 Stanley Street AUCKLAND <i>Attn: Scott Aitken</i>
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Enquiries

All enquiries related to this Request for Proposals should be directed to Scott Aitken, Research Investment Manager, Research Partnerships (09 282 4135 or saitken@hrc.govt.nz).