

# Request for Proposals

July 2020



## 2020 National Breast Cancer Register

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) and Breast Cancer Foundation NZ (BCFNZ) (the funding partners) formed a partnership in 2016 to fund research that leverages BCFNZ's investment in the Breast Cancer Foundation National Register (the Register). The Register supports a broad range of research, including identifying breast cancer trends, assessing new and existing treatments, and addressing inequities in care.

The **2020 National Breast Cancer Register Request for Proposals (RFP)** is managed through the HRC's Partnership Programme. Through this RFP, the funding partners are seeking research proposals that use data from the Register to deliver the highest quality evidence and improvements to delivery of care that will lead to better outcomes for breast cancer patients in New Zealand.

This RFP for research using data from the Register describes the research objectives and priority areas identified by the funding partners. Applicants will need to outline how their proposal addresses the RFP; provide a clear justification for the proposed approach; describe the project team's ability to deliver the specific components of the study; and provide a fully costed budget. Proposals that focus on equity of access to treatment and improved health outcomes for communities disproportionately affected by breast cancer in New Zealand, particularly Māori and Pacific peoples are of interest to the funding partners.

The total budget for this RFP is \$400,000 (exclusive of GST). The funding partners invite applications for funding of up to \$200,000 (exclusive of GST) for each project and a duration of up to 24 months.

It is anticipated that contracted projects will begin as soon as practicable, with funding available for an immediate start (from March 2021). Proposals should be completed within a 24-month timeframe with results available at the end of the study.



## 1. Background

One in nine women in New Zealand will develop breast cancer during their lifetime and breast cancer accounts for more than 650 deaths each year. Māori women are almost 50 per cent more likely to die from cancer than non-Māori women and all New Zealand women have a higher death rate from breast cancer when compared to other countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States.

The incidence of breast cancer increases as women age. While women over 50 are most at risk, around 11 per cent of breast cancers occur in women between the ages 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 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer and 60 per cent more likely to die from the disease when compared to non-Māori women.<sup>1</sup>

BCFNZ is a not-for-profit charitable trust that aims to reduce the number of New Zealanders developing and dying of breast cancer and to improve the quality of life of those with the disease. BCFNZ raises awareness of the lifesaving benefits of early detection, provides grants for research into better treatments and funds specific initiatives to support women with the disease.

Since 2000, BCFNZ has provided funding for the development and ongoing management of the Register. The Register enables a greater understanding of the nature of breast cancer and its treatment in New Zealand women. It records detailed information about diagnosis, treatment and outcomes of patients with breast cancer in New Zealand. The Register provides information to assist researchers and clinicians to find ways to further improve delivery of care for better outcomes from the disease in New Zealand.

The Register is a critical tool for managing this significant health issue for women. It is closely aligned and integrates with the [New Zealand Cancer Action Plan 2019-2029](#), which upholds and supports the collection of data for ongoing monitoring, measurement and improvements in the whole breast cancer pathway. Currently, the Register holds a database of more than 33,000 patients who have been diagnosed with breast cancer between 2000 and 2019. By the end of 2020, it is anticipated that the Register will expand its coverage from five regions (70 per cent of patients) to all 16 regions (100 per cent of patients) in New Zealand.

## 2. RFP Objectives

**The key objectives of this RFP are to:**

1. Fund research that will use data from the Register, with the aim of further improving delivery of care for better outcomes from the disease in New Zealand.
2. Promote and engender a culture of scientific excellence, relevance, innovation and technological advancement in the use of breast cancer registers for breast cancer research.
3. Encourage meaningful multidisciplinary and cross-institutional engagement and partnership, including engagement with other researchers and organisations whose research and interests may overlap with breast cancer research.

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

4. Identify, attract and develop the best people to conduct high-quality research that encompasses the scope of this RFP.

### **3. Research Priority Areas**

Applications submitted to the **2020 National Breast Cancer Register RFP** will need to use data from the Register and contribute to one or more of the following areas of research:

- Inform improvements in diagnosis and treatment.
- Create regional and national benchmarks.
- Evaluate local patterns of incidence, recurrence, care and outcomes and enable comparison with those nationally and internationally.
- Provide links between clinical outcome and genomic profiles to identify more effective predictive and prognostic tests, and to stratify patients more effectively for targeted therapies.
- Provide data that will assist health care providers and planners.
- Direct and facilitate further research.
- Evaluate national care pathways and enable comparison with those internationally.
- Reduce inequity in disease treatment and outcomes for Māori and Pacific women in New Zealand.

### **4. Funding**

A total funding pool of \$400,000 (exclusive of GST) is available for allocation. The funding partners invite applications for funding of up to \$200,000 (fully costed, exclusive of GST) and duration of up to 24 months.

Funding will be available for an immediate start for the project (from March 2021). Please carefully consider the start date, as applicants will be held to what they have proposed. Applicants should also consider the timeframe for obtaining ethical approval (if appropriate) and should ensure that this does not delay the start of the research project.

This funding comprises 50 per cent contribution from government funds (i.e. HRC) and 50 per cent contribution from a non-government organisation (i.e. BCFNZ). Overhead costs can only be claimed for the share of the total funding pool that is derived from government funds (i.e. no overhead costs can be claimed for the share of the funds provided by non-government organisations). Note that the **2020 National Breast Cancer Register RFP Budget Form** for this initiative has been configured to automatically provide the correct total research costs once the appropriate overhead rate for the host institution has been entered in the spreadsheet.

If competing proposals are equal in terms of their scientific value, the funding partners will consider best value for money offered by each proposal.

## 5. Proposal Requirements

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 project team's ability to deliver the specific components of the study. Applicants will also need to provide a fully costed budget.

### Proposals must demonstrate the following:

- **Relevance to the RFP:** High-quality science, appropriately scoped and relevant to the objectives of this RFP.
- **Project team:** Strong and appropriate cross-sectoral and cross-institutional collaboration in the composition of the project team. Applications must be from teams with a range of skills and experience, including experience in undertaking health research, a strong academic record and a diverse range of skills that enables them to effectively work with research stakeholders. The research team should have a proven track record and demonstrated experience of undertaking breast cancer research, as well as knowledge of the delivery of care for women with breast cancer in New Zealand.
- **Stakeholders:** The research team's capacity and skills to work effectively with a range of stakeholders and key participants at different stages of the study.
- **Capacity building:** Efforts to build capacity to undertake research in this area and contribute to workforce development as applicable.
- **Health equity:** The consideration of health equity issues and the specific health needs of Māori and Pacific peoples within the context of the research topic.
- **Outcomes:** Potential to deliver a positive outcome for women with breast cancer in New Zealand and to change practice or allocation of healthcare resources.
- **Project management:** An outline of the project management and organisational support available to the project, with appropriate project management FTE included in the budget as applicable.
- **Data management:** Clear processes for data management and safety monitoring, including the use of an independent data safety monitoring committee (if required).
- **Timeframe:** The proposed study is clearly achievable within the specified timeframe. The funding partners see the delivery of this research contributing to a wider programme of work. A detailed project management plan for all stages of the project should be included with clear and unambiguous milestones and associated timeframes for achieving the desired outcomes. The likelihood that the proposed study will be successfully completed within the stated timeframe will be specifically assessed. The timeframe for obtaining ethical approval (if appropriate) should be considered to avoid delays to the start of the project.
- **Budget:** The budget is appropriate for the proposed study.
- **Dissemination:** Plans for study findings to be disseminated nationally via tailored approaches to a broad range of relevant audiences to maximise the utility of the research. Dissemination should also include publication in international, peer reviewed journals.

## 6. Project Deliverables

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

- A **final deliverable 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 knowledge transfer activities, including the processes or steps that will support uptake of the research findings.

The research provider will also be required to provide **verbal presentations** to the Steering Committee on project progress and findings.

In addition to research deliverables, **six-monthly progress reports** will also be required for the project. These reports detail progress of the project and highlight any risks to its progress. The research provider 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 project.

## 7. Application Procedure

All application forms and guidelines are available via [HRC Gateway](#), the HRC's online application system. The **2020 National Breast Cancer Register RFP Application Guidelines** provide full details on the application process summarised below.

### Step 1: Registration

Applicants are required to submit a registration via [HRC Gateway](#) by **1pm, 2 September 2020**. This web-based form signals the intent of the applicant to submit a full application. The project title, all named investigators, host organisation and lay summary will be required. These details should be similar to those in the full application although minor adjustments are allowed.

HRC Gateway will forward the submitted registration to the applicant's host Research Office, who will need to approve the registration and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices, HRC Gateway will forward the registration to the HRC.

All named investigators must have an HRC Gateway account (*with an updated profile*), to be able to be included in an application. Creating an HRC Gateway account is easy and can be done by clicking on 'New user – sign up for HRC Gateway' on the HRC Gateway homepage (<https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz/>).

### Step 2: Full Application

Applicants are then required to complete a full application. Full applications should be submitted via HRC Gateway by **1pm, 16 September 2020**.

Applicants should use the **2020 National Breast Cancer Register RFP Application Form**, **2020 National Breast Cancer Register RFP Budget Form**, and **New Zealand Standard CV template**.

HRC Gateway will forward the submitted full application to the applicant's host Research Office or designated research manager who will need to approve the full application and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices or a research manager, HRC Gateway will forward the full application directly to the HRC.

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

## **8. Assessment Procedure**

The **2020 National Breast Cancer Register RFP Assessment Criteria** outlines the assessment criteria. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these criteria. The assessment procedure is summarised below.

### **Step 1: Peer Review**

Full applications will be assessed through an external peer review process managed by the HRC. This involves comprehensive peer review by independent national and international experts.

Applications to this RFP will also be reviewed by the Register's Clinical Advisory Group (CAG). The CAG will assess the viability and originality of the proposed use of the Register and the likelihood of the proposed research leading to original and impactful outcomes.

### **Step 2: Applicant Response (Rebuttal)**

Applicants are given the opportunity to view the peer review reports for their application and provide a response to the comments made. This is not an opportunity to rewrite major sections of a proposal, but rather the opportunity to respond to specific peer reviewer's comments, to answer questions raised by the peer reviewer, or to clarify an issue for the Assessing Committee.

### **Step 3: Assessing Committee**

An independent Assessing Committee will assess applications, taking into consideration the peer review reports and applicant response (rebuttal). The Assessment Criteria are outlined in the **2020 National Breast Cancer Register RFP Application Guidelines**. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these criteria.

Depending on the number of full applications, a triage process may be used 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 funding partners. Applicants will be informed of final funding decisions in February 2021.

### Key actions and dates for this initiative:

Action	Date
Registration due (via HRC Gateway)	1pm, 2 September 2020
Full application due (via HRC Gateway)	1pm, 16 September 2020
External peer review	21 September to 13 November 2020
Applicant response (rebuttal) opens	8am, 23 November 2020
Applicant response (rebuttal) due	1pm, 4 December 2020
Applicants notified of outcome	February 2021

## 9. General Notes

### Decision Advice

No legal obligations will arise between the funding partners and applicants for this RFP 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, 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 share the cost with multiple interested parties.

### Enquiries

All enquiries related to this RFP should be directed to Lea Narciso, Research Investment Manager, Research Partnerships (09 280 3860 or [lnarciso@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:lnarciso@hrc.govt.nz)).