2024 EXPLORER GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

To use with:

2024 Explorer Grant Application Form

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Part A: What is an Explorer Grant?

1. Introduction

The HRC will provide seed support for transformative research at an early stage, prior to an application for greater investment through standard funding mechanisms.

Explorer Grants are available in any health research discipline and are worth $150,000 (research working expenses only) for a term of up to 24 months. The grant is not available to provide long-term support for successful projects.

Transformative research has the potential to radically change our knowledge base by disrupting understanding of existing theories or concepts, or by creating a new paradigm or pathway to a new field[1]. Transformative research is not restricted by discipline and can include any health-related research in the clinical, kaupapa Māori, Māori health, Pacific health, basic, behavioural, social, public-health and translational sciences. Transformative research encompasses novel hypotheses, methods, tools, technologies, and/or conceptual frameworks.

Assessment will focus on the research idea; the identity of applicants will not be disclosed to the assessing committee. Applicants must **NOT** name the investigator(s) or host organisation in the body of the application but are encouraged to describe skills, experience and details of the research environment without direct reference to the people and host organisation involved.

The selection of successful proposals will not be the same as that for other HRC contracts. All proposals that meet the eligibility criteria will be assessed for compatibility with the scheme's intent; proposals will not be scored or ranked. All proposals that are considered eligible and compatible will be considered equally eligible to receive funding, and a random process will be used to select the proposals to be offered funding. A full description of the assessment process to determine eligibility, compatibility and which applications will receive funding can be found in Appendix 1.

2. Eligibility considerations

First named investigator

New Zealand must be the principal domicile (see definition below) and principal place of employment for all first named investigators. Host organisations are responsible for ensuring that New Zealand is the principal domicile and principal place of employment for the first named investigator. By submitting an application, the host is satisfied that this criterion has been met.

The HRC's definition of 'principal domicile' is in line with the definition used within the New Zealand Government, which defines principal domicile as requiring an individual to be a citizen of New Zealand; or have a permanent resident visa or a resident visa, and either be domiciled or residing in New Zealand with the intention of residing here indefinitely, having done so for the immediately preceding 12 months.

For more information about our general contract requirements, please read the HRC rules document under 'Helpful links'.

Specific Explorer Grant eligibility criteria:

- The proposal must have host institution support. The submission of the application by the host will be taken as agreement to cover research costs other than those supported by the HRC.
- Explorer Grants are worth $150,000 (research working expenses only).
- Applicants must **NOT** name the investigator(s) or host in the body of the application but are encouraged to describe skills, experience and details of the research environment without direct reference to the people and host organisation involved.

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[1] https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/documents/2007/tr_report.pdf

3. Explorer Grant categories

Applicants **must** select one of the following categories:

- **Rangahau Hauora Māori**: Supporting Māori health research that upholds rangatiratanga and uses and advances Māori knowledge, resources, and people.
- **Pacific**: Making significant improvements in, or developing knowledge contributing to, Pacific health outcomes.
- **Health Delivery**: Having the potential to directly inform changes to health delivery policy, practice or systems; and demonstrating a clear connection to a healthcare need.
- **General**: Supporting excellent ideas and innovations proposed by researchers, designed to improve health and wellbeing outcomes, equitably, for New Zealanders.

The same proposal cannot be submitted to different categories as this creates avoidable duplication of both application and assessment effort.

The HRC does not provide advice on choice of category as that decision is best made by the investigator. Applicants may change their final choice of category by creating duplicate applications and deciding on the most appropriate category before the closing date for registration. Please note that all categories of Explorer Grants are assessed against the same criteria.

4. Rules regarding named investigators on Explorer Grant contracts

There is a limit of **two** Explorer Grant applications per first named investigator/co-first named investigator. Failure to comply with this limit will result in the withdrawal of the application(s) (i.e. all applications submitted after the limit was reached).

5. Key dates

Event	Description	Due date
Explorer Grant opens	Explorer Grant opens in HRC Gateway	1pm, 3 October 2023
Explorer Grant closes	Complete online sections & upload 2024 Explorer Grant Application Form	1pm, 7 November 2023
Explorer Grant results	Outcome	Late April 2024

Part B: General rules for submitting an Explorer Grant application

1. Use of 2024 Explorer Grant Application Form

When to use the 2024 Explorer Grant Application Form

The 2024 Explorer Grant Application Form must be used when submitting an Explorer Grant application in any category.

Prior to Submission

The HRC only accepts applications on HRC Gateway. Prior to any submission, named investigators must have a current HRC Gateway account, that must be updated annually.

Before submitting this application form, applicants should read:

- This document for eligibility and specific instructions
- Guidelines on Ethics in Health Research
- Guidelines for Researchers on Health Research Involving Māori
- Māori Health Advancement Guidelines
- Guidelines for Pacific Health Research
- ARRIVE guidelines for animal research (if applicable).

The regularly updated reference documents and forms are on HRC Gateway.

Host organisations

The host organisation is the organisation, institution or company that will be offered a contract with the HRC to deliver the activities described in the application, if it is successful. The host organisation will be responsible for ensuring that the contracted activities are completed according to the contract, the HRC Rules, and the requirements of this grant type.

Organisations that have not previously been funded as the host organisation on a research contract with the HRC will be required to provide due diligence information before a contract can be offered. The HRC will provide further information and relevant forms for the organisation to complete following a successful outcome for the application.

2. Format

General formatting

Proposals must be written in a clear, concise manner with sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to understand the scope and implications of the proposal.

Applications must be in English or te reo Māori; if in te reo Māori, a translation in English must also be provided (any translation will not be included in the page limit).

Applicants must:

- use Arial 10-point type font or larger
- use default margins
- use single line spacing
- not exceed any page limits.

Compliance

The HRC will not process any application that does not comply with stated page limits, font sizes/styles or eligibility requirements.

Additional documents

No other documents are to be included.

3. Copies of applications required

Electronic copy

Submit the 2024 Explorer Grant form as a PDF file using HRC Gateway. Ensure that the PDF version meets page limits, and that graphics and tables are converted correctly from the Word version.

HRC Gateway will allocate file names.

Important

The application is submitted to the host Research Office when the applicant uploads the files through HRC Gateway. The application will be forwarded to the HRC after host Research Office approval. Always allow sufficient time before the HRC closing date for this approval step. For organisations without a Research Office, the application will be forwarded directly to the HRC.

Do not send files

Do not send digital files directly to the HRC. Independent researchers and research providers requiring assistance with using HRC Gateway should contact the HRC in the first instance.

4. Closing dates

Registration and submission of Explorer Grant application online

The 2024 Explorer Grant round opens in HRC Gateway at **1pm, 3 October 2023**.

Upload the 2024 Explorer Grant Application Form using HRC Gateway.

The closing date for online registration and submission of the Explorer Grant applications is **1pm, 7 November 2023** via HRC Gateway.

The application is released to the HRC only after approval by the Research Office. It must be submitted to the HRC online by the closing date and time.

Incomplete applications

Incomplete applications will be regarded as withdrawn.

5. Privacy provisions

Explorer Grant application assessment will focus on the research idea. The identity of applicants will not be disclosed to the assessing committee.

Statistical and reporting purposes

The information provided in an application will be used for assessing that application and, in a non-identifiable form, some information will be used for HRC statistical and reporting purposes. The HRC undertakes to store all applications in a secure place, which may include the New Zealand Research Information System (NZRIS) curated by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment with details provided by funders of the science sector.

Personal information

Personal information contained in the application will not be available to members of the HRC committees and external reviewers relevant to the review of the application.

Media release

The HRC publishes details of research contracts, including named investigators, host institution, research title, lay summaries and funding awarded for public interest purposes and to meet the statutory requirements of the Health Research Council Act 1990.

Official Information Act

Official Information Act requests for information about an application or research contract will be discussed with the host institution and investigator before responding to the request. Where appropriate, the request may be transferred to the host organisation.

6. Enquiries

All enquiries related to HRC applications are to be directed in the first instance to the Research Office of the applicant's host institution.

For organisations without a Research Office or where the Research Office cannot assist, or for technical enquiries relating to applications, please send an email to info@hrc.govt.nz and one of our team will be in touch.

Part C: Submitting an Explorer Grant application

Module 1 of the Explorer Grant application must be completed on HRC Gateway. The 2024 Explorer Grant Application Form contains a coversheet, Module 2 and Module 3. Module 4 is the Contract information and Budget, which is only required from applicants who have been offered a contract. Module 5 is the research classification of the research that must be completed online. The form can be downloaded and completed before being uploaded to HRC Gateway as a PDF file. The completed application (Modules 1-3) will be compiled by HRC Gateway; it can then be accessed for downloading and printing.

> **Note: By submitting an application on HRC Gateway, the applicant is confirming that the submitted application complies with all requirements, including formatting and page limits. The HRC will not accept changes after the closing date.**

1. Use of 2024 Explorer Grant Application Form

Please use the original 2024 Explorer Grant Application Form as it contains special features:

- complete all sections following the instructions on the form and described in the guidelines
  - enter the HRC Ref ID and research title on coversheet
  - HRC Gateway will remove the coversheet from the final system-generated PDF.

2. Module 1: General information

This module must be completed in HRC Gateway. Start the application process by clicking on the 'Apply now' button on the 2024 Explorer Grant information page. The 'Apply now' button will only appear when the application submission period is open. Clicking on the 'Apply now' button will open a dialog form where the following information will be required.

1st step

The applicant will first be required to select an Explorer Grant category, enter a research title, and select a host organisation (there will also be options to select a specific Research Office and Research Office contact, if applicable).

Explorer Grant category

Select the category for the Explorer Grant.

The HRC cannot re-assign applications that are entered into the wrong category. If you wish to change streams while applying, you need to create a new registration on HRC Gateway.

Research title

The research title should be succinct and clearly describe the proposed project. The title must not exceed 80 characters, including spaces and punctuation (e.g. 'growth factors' contains 14 characters). Do not use all uppercase type.

Host organisation

The host organisation is the organisation that will be responsible for administering any contract awarded. For example, for those applicants at Wellington School of Medicine, Dunedin School of Medicine or Christchurch School of Medicine, the host institution is the University of Otago.

Select the relevant 'Host organisation' from the drop-down list (this shows host organisations currently recognised by the HRC). If applicable, a specific Research Office and Research Office contact will be able to be selected.

Please note: If your host organisation does not appear in the drop-down list, please tick the check box 'My host organisation is not in the list'. A field 'Host organisation details' will appear in the next section and the name of the host organisation should be entered here.

If the host organisation has a Research Office with more than one staff member, please select the contact in the Research Office who will most likely be handling the application, or who will be the principal contact.

If the host organisation has more than one Research Office, please select which Research Office will be handling the application.

Second step

First named investigator

Some of this information will be automatically populated from the first named investigator's profile in HRC Gateway (e.g. organisation and department). If the profile is not current, details must be updated. The details listed on the application will be automatically refreshed after the profile is updated. Click on the 'Update' button to enter and update the information requested.

The first named investigator will be considered the first point of contact during the application and assessment process, and will be understood to be acting for, and in concurrence with, the other named investigators. All correspondence for the application will be addressed to this person and the host. Once an application is created, the first named investigator cannot be changed.

Third step

Click on the 'Update' button to enter details for the following fields.

Named investigators

All named investigators must be registered users of HRC Gateway before they can be added to the application. User profiles must be updated by each NI before submitting an application so that the current details are in the application. Click on the 'Update' button to enter additional information as requested. All named investigators on successful applications may be cited by the HRC in its various communication channels.

Role in project should include brief information on what the investigator will undertake in the project (1-2 sentences max).

Information on ethnicity, gender and whether the researcher is a clinician (and is practicing) is used for HRC information purposes only.

Note: ethnicity, iwi, clinician, or practising clinician are not required to be entered as these details will automatically populate from the individual person profiles. Each named investigator will need to sign-in to HRC Gateway and check and update their details before applications are submitted.

You may wish to designate a hapū, iwi or Māori organisation conducting the research that needs to be acknowledged in their own right as investigators on the application. It is still essential to list supporting named investigators.

FTE for each named investigator is also required. the FTE value should be the value for the first year of that investigator's involvement.

Research location(s)

This is the specific <u>department</u>(s) and <u>organisation</u> where the majority of research or data analysis will be undertaken.

Discipline

Select from the drop-down box.

Duration

Enter the proposed term of the research in months, up to 24 months.

Type of research

Choose from the drop-down list what you consider the most appropriate term for broadly describing the research proposal for assessment purposes.

Commencement date

Enter the proposed commencement date. Please note that contracts cannot be activated until 1 July 2024 at the earliest. Recipients are required to begin within three months of contract offer.

Lay summary

The lay summary is important. It will be considered by the Council when final funding decisions are made. The lay summary should be a statement of not more than 150 words suitable for dissemination to, and understanding by, a lay audience, e.g. in a media release. Include a description of the following:

a) exploratory and innovative aspects

b) principal methodologies

c) why your research could be considered potentially transformative.

Applicants must NOT name the investigator(s) or host organisation in the lay summary.

Also ensure the content has been reviewed and is in a final form ready for publication if needed. Note that if objectives are modified, the first named investigator will need to submit a revised lay summary.

Research costs

Budget information is not required for Explorer Grant applicants at the time of application. Budget information will be required for successful applications prior to contracting. Explorer Grants are worth $150,000 (research working expenses only).

Objectives and milestones

Objectives and milestones are entered on HRC Gateway and will be included in an awarded research contract and used for contract reporting templates. This section is now inserted immediately after the list of named investigators in the final system-generated PDF.

Poorly described milestones and objectives can result in delayed processing of an application or requests for further information at contracting.

Objectives

Briefly describe the intended deliverables of this research application. Objectives should be **clear** and **measurable** to allow evaluation of research performance of an awarded contract.

Note: The HRC suggests a minimum of three objectives, with sufficient standalone operational detail and scientific information included to be able to inform progress assessment in subsequent years. There is no limit to the number of objectives and milestones.

Milestones

Provide key milestones that you aim to achieve. Each milestone must relate to one or more of the objectives, e.g.:

Year	Milestone	Objective(s)
1	Gain animal ethics approval	Objective 1
1	Complete animal study, data collection, and analysis	Objective 1
1	Register clinical trial prospectively in ANZCTR	Objective 2
1	Gain ethics approval for clinical trial	Objective 2
2	Publish results of lab-based study	Objective 1
2	Recruit 200 participants to clinical trial	Objective 2
3	Complete recruitment to clinical trial (300 total)	Objective 2
3	Complete statistical analysis of clinical trial	Objective 2
4	Submission of manuscript to NZMJ	All objectives

Remember that any contract will be monitored, and progress measured against the milestones and objectives provided in this proposal.

For contract monitoring and HRC accountability reporting, if the research requires **ethical consent**, this should be identified as a milestone.

ANZSRC and keywords

This information is for HRC data collection purposes only.

Categorise the proposed research using the ANZSRC codes for the Fields of Research (FOR) and Socioeconomic Objective (SEO). Enter the percentage to the nearest 10% for each category to a total of 100%.

Enter keywords that categorise the research.

3. Module 2: Proposal

Applicants must **NOT** name the investigator(s) or host in the body of the application but are encouraged to describe skills, experience and details of the research environment without direct reference to the people and host organisation involved.

Section 2A – Summary of proposed research (1-page limit)

This section should clearly summarise the research proposal. The summary should be a maximum of **one page**. A clear and succinct summary including all the important points of the application can help reviewers get an overview of the proposal and is useful as a quick reference for Science Assessing Committee members. Use the suggested headings and add subheadings if required.

Section 2B – Description of proposed research

Throughout your discussion, remember that your audience includes a multidisciplinary and broadly experienced assessing panel. It is in your best interest to structure your discussion in a clear and logical fashion. Ideally, seek feedback from outside your immediate research area.

The use of graphics and tables is an efficient use of space (please ensure font type and size are easily legible). Ensure that the format of non-text content is compatible with PDF conversion software.

Transformative nature of the research (3-page limit)

The transformative research description below maintains the core elements of the National Science Foundation definition of transformative research[2] (applied in previous years) and includes additional elements relevant to health research in Aotearoa New Zealand. Collectively, this description is intended to convey the uniqueness of transformative research while not being overly detailed and restrictive of the essential element of free and creative thinking.

Transformative research description:

- has the potential to radically change our knowledge base by disrupting understanding of existing theories or concepts, OR has the potential to create a new paradigm or pathway to a new field[3]
- is not restricted by discipline, and can include any health-related research in the clinical, kaupapa Māori, Māori Health, Pacific health, basic, behavioural, social, public-health and translational sciences
- may be challenging to accept

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[2] a range of endeavors which promise extraordinary outcomes, such as: revolutionizing entire disciplines; creating entirely new fields; or disrupting accepted theories and perspectives – in other words, those endeavors which have the potential to change the way we address challenges in science, engineering, and innovation.

[3] https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/documents/2007/tr_report.pdf

- encompasses novel hypotheses, methods, tools, technologies, and/or conceptual frameworks
- embraces a flexible and exploratory approach to a question[4], and may be interdisciplinary
- is likely to be untested and lacking supporting data, and
- is not incremental - a next step or extension to current research.

The proposal should not be for an idea which is well-developed enough to submit to another HRC funding mechanism.

Viability of the research (2-page limit)

Explain your approach and methodology. Preliminary evidence is not essential; however, you should describe the viability of your proposal. What can be achieved within the term of the grant? Describe how your research environment is conducive to conducting this research.

Māori health advancement (1-page limit)

The description of Māori health advancement should be considered relative to the scope and context of an Explorer Grant. In particular, consider how this is framed given the anonymised nature of the explorer grants and that information on who is involved on the research team, and/or who key relationships are with won't be able to be provided.

Consideration should be given to all potential ways in which the proposal will advance Māori health, and to outline what actions you will undertake to help to achieve this potential.

Consideration of Māori health advancement is context-specific, as determined by the nature and scope of the research. The applicant should describe (1) How will the outcomes of your research contribute to Māori health advancement? (2) What activities have you already undertaken (that are relevant to this project), and what will you undertake during this project, that will realise your research contribution to Māori health advancement?

All applicants for HRC funding will be required to address these two questions in their proposals. In responding to these questions, applicants should consider how their research is informed by the four domains of Māori health advancement (see the Māori Health Advancement Guidelines for more details). Researchers are encouraged to consider the domains during development of their research, as this may identify aspects of the research not previously considered. It is not a requirement that all four domains are specifically addressed in the proposal, but researchers are advised to consider each in formulating the strongest rationale for the application.

Note: As assessment will focus on the research idea; the identity of applicants will not be disclosed to the assessing committee. This includes in the context of considering Māori Health Advancement. Applicants must **NOT** name investigator(s), Iwi, Māori communities or Māori organisations contributing to the research but are encouraged to describe skills, experience and details of the relationships (if applicable) without direct reference to the people, communities and organisations involved.

Research impact (300-word limit)

The description of research impact should be considered relative to the scope and context of an Explorer Grant.

Describe (1) how your research might be used and the anticipated benefits for Aotearoa New Zealand, and (2) the action plan to maximise the use and benefits of the research.

4. Module 3: References

Ensure this section starts on a new page.

Citations for key references in the text in Module 2 should be supplied. There is no limit to the number of reference pages. Reference to Māori terms in the application with brief translation should

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[4] https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR506.html

be included here. **Do NOT place asterisks beside applicants' publications.** Endnote lists must be copied into a plain text editor before pasting in here. Details must include a **full list of all author(s)**, title of article, journal, year, volume and page numbers; however, if references are multi-authored, there is discretion to limit the author list to a more convenient number to fit any space limitations.

5. Module 4: Contract information and budget

Budget information is not required when submitting an Explorer Grant application. It will only be required from successful Explorer Grant applicants offered a contract. Research working expenses, to a maximum of $150,000 (excluding GST), can be funded. Working expenses include 'direct costs' only.

Note: The proportion of contract budget allocated to overseas costs must not exceed 20 per cent for Explorer Grant.

Materials and research expenses

The direct costs of the research include all the disbursements that can be identified, justified and charged to a contract and may include the following:

- Research consumables (these should be itemised at current cost per unit and full cost for number required)
- Other costs directly related to the research – telephone calls/communications, mail and freight
- Computer-related license fees for research-specific software; access to High Performance Computing infrastructure (NeSI)
- Minor research equipment (to a total of $5,000)
- A proportionate part of new specialised equipment (equipment to be acquired) may be included on research applications
- Depreciation on specialised equipment: depreciation and capital costs on existing equipment are included in the overhead rate. If an institution's auditors have certified that specific items of equipment have been excluded from the research rate, then depreciation on the excluded equipment can be included in research applications and justified in the same manner as other direct costs.
- Expenses of research participants
- Costs associated with knowledge transfer activities
- Travel costs directly related to the conduct of the research. Contract funds may be used to provide assistance with overseas travel provided the HRC is satisfied that such travel is directly relevant to the conduct of the research and that alternative sources of funding are not available. This is not intended to relieve the applicant's host organisation of its obligation to assist with the costs of overseas travel by its employees.
- Stipends for Masters or PhD students may not be included
- Dissemination of research results (fair and reasonable charges associated with the approved publication of the results of HRC sponsored research in journals, reports, monographs or books may be paid from contract funds. Also, costs incurred from other forms of dissemination, such as meeting with community groups or conference dissemination can be claimed).
- Casual staff without an ongoing role or commitment to the research
- Amounts requested for employer's contribution to approved superannuation schemes and accident compensation levies for casual research staff are considered working expenses.

The following expenses that will not be supported as research working expenses, and for the purposes of this grant type, are considered the research host contribution to the project; contributions to property costs or laboratory space, or room rental at the host organisation; cost of staff appointments; utility charges such as lighting, heating and water; telephone installation and connection fees and line charges; laboratory 'bench fees'; capital costs (with the exception of minor equipment); equipment charges (includes computer hardware and office-based software); contributions to any central or group service or utility, and all library charges.

Only successful applicants are required to submit a budget file. Applicants must have host organisation support to share in the costs of the research, by covering the investigators' salaries and

institutional costs associated with the research. The host organisation associated with a subcontracted named investigator must agree to share in the costs of the research by covering that investigator's salary and institutional costs.

6. Module 5: Research classification

Classification of research is for HRC evaluation purposes only. The information is not used in allocating funding. Required details must be entered in HRC Gateway.

Section 6A: ANZSRC and Keywords

Categorise the proposed research using the ANZSRC codes for the Fields of Research (FOR) and Socioeconomic Objective (SEO). Enter the percentage to the nearest 10% for each category to a total of 100%.

Enter keywords that categorise the research.

Section 6B: Economic Benefits

Please provide a brief description of any potential economic benefits you consider may arise from your research. If no direct economic benefits are anticipated, please state this rather than leaving the field blank. The HRC's interpretation of economic benefits is broad and includes:

- Contributing to maintaining a healthy and productive population;
- Contributing to an efficient and cost-effective health system, and
- Value generated from IP and innovation.

Section 6C: Health Issues and Mapping Category

Health Issues
Enter the requested information on HRC Gateway. Applicants need to select the health issue that best describes their research and, if required one secondary health issue.

Mapping Category

Enter the requested information on HRC Gateway (select one). Applicants need to select the category that best describes the starting point for their research. The following table provides a description of each category.

Mapping Category	Description
Biomedical	
Gene	Research into the genetic basis of disease, identification of genes involved. Linkage analysis falls here and not under clinical studies.
Cell Biology	Analysis of molecular-level interactions. This includes protein-protein interactions, determination of the function of genes involved in diseases, and whole cell studies (e.g. immunological studies, transfections, etc).
Physiology	This includes all physiology and anatomy. Animal models of disease are included in this category, and studies on host-pathogen interactions.
Diagnostics	This includes innovations, and the development/refinement of new or existing diagnostic tools.
Pharmaceuticals /Treatments	This includes the development of new pharmaceuticals (drug design and development), as well as new treatments for diseases (e.g. vaccines, other therapies).
Clinical	
Clinical Studies	Research involving human subjects. This excludes research in which samples from human subjects are used for fundamental biomedical research, such as genetic linkage analyses.
Clinical Trials	Randomised clinical trials, usually randomised controlled clinical trials.
Health Services	

Mapping Category	Description
Health Economics	Research into the cost-effectiveness of treatments/services etc.
Clinical Services	This includes primary and secondary care services. Access to and appropriateness of services are also included, and safety of services and compensation. Macro-level analysis of health system changes falls into this area.
Public Health	
Knowledge Resources	This includes all epidemiology, underpinning social science (qualitative and quantitative), development of tools and new methodologies, and development of indicators.
Risk Factors	Research linking life experiences, behaviours, exposures etc. with health outcomes.
Interventions	Research that includes the design and evaluation of interventions.
At-Risk Populations	Includes research on specific population groups. These groups may be based on age, ethnicity, occupation, etc. Includes research using diagnostics in a particular group.
Community services	Research around community-run services and community groups, e.g. Marae-based healthcare services.

Appendix 1: Assessment process

1. Assessment overview for Explorer Grant applications

Explorer grants support transformative research ideas that have the potential to make a revolutionary change to how we manage New Zealanders' health. They are available in any health research discipline and are worth $150,000 for a term of up to 24 months.

Explorer Grant proposals received by the HRC are assessed using a three-step assessment process to determine eligibility, compatibility and funding selection. All proposals that meet the eligibility criteria will be assessed by the Explorer Grant Assessing Committee (EGAC) for compatibility with the scheme's intent; proposals will not be scored or ranked. For this part of the process, investigator details are withheld from EGAC. All proposals that are considered eligible and compatible will be considered equally eligible to receive funding, and a random process will be used to select the proposals to be offered funding.

The process used to assess Explorer Grant applications follows three steps and is quite different from other assessment processes:

2. Step 1 – A proposal's eligibility to be considered for funding is confirmed

The following criteria **must** be met to be eligible for assessment:

- The proposal must identify which category it is addressing, but does not need to provide a detailed explanation. Applications in all categories are assessed against the same criteria by the EGAC.
- The proposal must have host institution support. The submission of the application by the host will be taken as agreement to cover research costs other than those supported by the HRC.
- The application must conform to the prescribed format.
- Proposals considered by EGAC to be outside the intended scope of this grant type will be excluded, with the decision of the assessing committee chair considered to be final.

Eligibility will be reviewed by the HRC research investment manager and the assessing committee chair, in advance of assessment by the full committee. Clearly ineligible proposals will not proceed to assessment or discussion by the committee.

3. Step 2 – Compatibility of the proposal with the scheme's intent is confirmed by the assessing committee

The purpose of this step is to eliminate any proposals that do not meet the scheme's intent, not to determine a score or a rank order of proposals. A panel of assessors will be appointed by the HRC manager. All eligible proposals will be assigned to a subpanel of 3 assessors, who will be asked to confirm (not score) for each proposal that the three criteria listed below are met:

- 1. The research is potentially transformative

  The subpanel must decide by majority that a proposal is potentially transformative.

  There is no universally accepted definition of transformative research. The assessing panel will apply the core elements of the USA National Science Board definition of transformative research[5],

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[5] *a range of endeavors which promise extraordinary outcomes, such as: revolutionizing entire disciplines; creating entirely new fields; or disrupting accepted theories and perspectives – in other words, those endeavors which have the potential to change the way we address challenges in science, engineering, and innovation*

alongside elements relevant to health research in New Zealand, captured in the following bullet point descriptors of transformative research:

- has the potential to radically change our knowledge base by disrupting understanding of existing theories or concepts, OR has the potential to create a new paradigm or pathway to a new field[6]
- is not restricted by discipline, and can include any health-related research in the clinical, kaupapa Māori, Pacific, basic, behavioural, social, public-health and translational sciences
- may be challenging to accept
- encompasses novel hypotheses, methods, tools, technologies, and/or conceptual frameworks
- embraces a flexible and exploratory approach to a question[7], and may be interdisciplinary
- is likely to be untested and lacking supporting data; and
- is not incremental - a next step or extension to current research.

The subpanel is encouraged to focus on strengths and potential of an application. An impact on knowledge is valid, and the research results may need not be immediately applicable in terms of a health outcome. Applications assessed as being potentially transformative would be considered to have potential for impact on health, social and/or economic outcomes.

- 2. The proposal is exploratory but viable

The subpanel must decide by majority that the proposal is viable. The assessing panel will be asked to confirm that the idea and methodology are potentially viable, the research environment is appropriate, and that sufficient progress can be made within the term of the grant.

- 3. The proposal is likely to advance Māori health

The subpanel must decide by majority that the proposal is likely to advance Māori health. The panel will consider whether applicants have provided a description of how their research could lead to improved Māori health (as appropriate to the scope and context of the research).

Each assessor will return their judgement about the three criteria for each assigned research proposal, along with a supporting statement to justify how the transformative criterion is, or is not, met. Those proposals for which there is unanimous agreement that the transformative criterion is met, unanimous agreement that the Māori health advancement criterion is met, and majority agreement the viability criterion is met, will enter the pool of potentially fundable proposals.

- Proposals where there is unanimous agreement that the Transformative criterion is not met, or the Māori health advancement criterion is not met, will be considered not fundable.
- Proposals for which there is a majority agreement that the Transformative criterion is met, and a majority agreement that the Māori health advancement criterion is met, will proceed to the meeting discussion and assessment. Other proposals can be nominated ('rescued') by the EGAC members to be discussed at the meeting.

The panel of assessors will have the opportunity to discuss those proposals for which there are discrepancies of opinion about the three criteria at a subpanel meeting. After discussion, these proposals will be re-evaluated by each assigned assessor, and those proposals for which there is a majority agreement that the Transformative, Viability, and Māori health advancement criteria are met will be added to the pool of potentially fundable proposals.

Additional reviews may be sought for an application that includes very specific areas of expertise not required for other applications, and therefore not covered by committee members.

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[6] https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/documents/2007/tr_report.pdf

[7] https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR506.html

4. Step 3 – Random selection of proposals to receive funding

All proposals that have been judged compatible with the scheme's intent are equally likely to receive funding. These proposals will be randomly ordered, with funding offered to the first ordered proposals up to the limit of the available budget. The funding recommendations will be presented to the HRC Council for approval.

5. HRC Explorer Grant Assessing Committee (EGAC)

EGAC consists of a Chair and approximately 12 members (this number allows for applications to be assigned to subpanels of approximately 3 members and not all committee members). The Chair is usually a member (or designee) of one of the Statutory Research Committees (i.e. Biomedical Research Committee (BRC), Public Health Research Committee (PHRC) or Māori Health Committee (MHC)). EGAC members represent a mix of New Zealand and Australian biomedical, clinical, public health, social science and interdisciplinary researchers and are appointed for their research expertise and ability to effectively assess the applications received in that funding round.

EGAC Members are expected to have:

- postgraduate qualifications in a discipline relevant to health research
- a track record as a health researcher and be a Named Investigator on a funded research proposal or Career Development Grant submitted to a relevant funding agency (e.g. HRC, Cancer Society)
- a track record in policy analysis/advice in an agency/department relevant to health research (e.g. Ministry of Health)
- ability to apply a transformative mindset.

In some circumstances, the committee could have some members whose expertise and experience differs from that described above, however, all members must be able to carry out the roles and responsibilities as required on the committee.

EGAC members are required to declare at the outset any potential conflicts of interest, specific to applications to be assessed by the committee, so that the impact of any such conflicts on the assessment process is managed appropriately, e.g. by seeking an alternative review from another EGAC member. However, as the assessment process is anonymous, the number of conflicts of interest is expected to be minimal. Furthermore, committee members are not able to sit on EGAC if they are a named investigator on an Explorer Grant application.

EGAC members are required to keep all information about the assessment of research applications confidential, i.e. they may not discuss outside the HRC specific details about applicants, assessors, applications or outcomes. However, they are allowed to talk about their assessing committee experience to colleagues in developing proposals.

6. Additional eligibility requirements

Trusted Research Guidance

Researchers should familiarise themselves with the [Trusted Research Guidance for Institutions and Researchers](). New Zealand has an open and collaborative research and innovation system, and values academic freedom and research conducted independently by individuals and organisations. As part of preserving trust, the HRC screens proposals for risk related to sensitive technologies*, and

may require funded projects to identify, mitigate, and monitor risks as part of the contractual conditions of the project.

Technologies become sensitive when they: are or could become dual use i.e., have both a civil and military/security application; or, underpin, or have the potential to underpin, significant economic value for New Zealand.

Eligibility restrictions on publicly funded research

As part of the New Zealand Government's broader response to Russia's continued assault on Ukraine, a new eligibility criterion has been implemented for government research funding.

For proposals to be eligible, they must not benefit a Russian state institution (including but not limited to support for Russian military or security activity) or an organisation outside government that may be perceived as contributing to the war effort.

This is not a broad ban on collaborations with individual Russian researchers. The focus is on ensuring that government funding does not support scientific research collaborations that could further Russia's ability to continue its aggression in Ukraine.

As a Crown Agent, investing in health research for the public good with taxpayer funding, the HRC reserves the right to make ineligible any application for funding that will provide benefit to a state institution or other organisation identified for exclusion by the New Zealand Government.