



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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

2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Application Guidelines

February 2025

Use with the 2025
Artificial Intelligence in
Healthcare Application
Form



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Part 1: HRC 2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Request for Proposals

1.1 Introduction

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) has established a funding initiative to invest in health research centred on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a potentially transformative technology to support delivery of timely access to quality healthcare for New Zealanders. Through this request for proposals (RFP), the HRC is seeking to fund investigator-led research that will directly address priorities identified in the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024 – 2027. Proposals must identify the health or healthcare area where AI can be leveraged safely and ethically to improve health outcomes in the New Zealand health system.

1.2 HRC priorities

All HRC investment must have a clear line of sight to improving health outcomes for all New Zealanders, with a focus on areas of highest health need and communities with the highest health needs¹.

New Zealand's investment in health research must contribute to achieving the goals of the health system and the Science, Innovation and Technology (SI&T) sector. It is important to consider and identify how your research will add value and contribute to these goals and wider system performance. The vision for the health system is timely access to quality healthcare². A key focus for the science system is to harness the benefits of research and innovation to drive economic transformation.

1.3 Value

A total funding pool of \$5 million (exclusive of GST) is available. There is one funding opportunity available to apply for:

- **Project Grants** that will generate evidence with clear line of sight to how the research will advance the objectives set out in the RFP. We expect to fund a range of projects across three grant tiers: small projects up to \$100,000 excluding GST over a term of 6 to 12 months; medium projects up to \$400,000 excluding GST over a term of 12 to 18 months; and large projects up to \$700,000 excluding GST over a term of 18 to 24 months. The requested budget needs to be justified and reflect the activities being proposed.
- There is a limit of **one** application per first named investigator/co-first named investigator.

1.4 Eligibility criteria

You are eligible to apply if you meet the following:

- Have New Zealand as your principal domicile (see definition in the HRC Rules) and your principal place of employment³.
- Submit only 1 project application as the first named investigator/co-first named investigator. The HRC will withdraw any applications once this limit has been reached.

¹ Areas of highest health need and communities with the highest health needs are identified in the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027.

² The Government Policy Statement on Health (2024-2027) outlines 5 priority areas; 5 non-communicable diseases; 5 modifiable behaviours; 5 health targets; and 5 mental health targets.

³ 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 condition has been met.

- Complete all progress or end of contract reports that are due from previous contracts in HRC Gateway. You cannot submit a new application in HRC Gateway if you have any outstanding reports.

The HRC welcomes proposals for 'co-first named investigators' to create a research team of exceptional strength, such as interdisciplinary work. In addition, early and mid-career researchers who have not previously held a project contract are encouraged to apply as co-first named investigator with a mentor/experienced researcher. Eligibility criteria apply to both first named investigator and co-first named investigator.

1.5 Key dates

| Event | Description | Due date |
|--|---|-----------------------|
| Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Request for Proposals opens | Applicants are invited to submit their full application | 1pm, 26 February 2025 |
| Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Request for Proposals closes | Complete the full application via HRC Gateway | 1pm, 23 April 2025 |
| Results | Outcomes confirmed | 3 July 2025 |
| | Deadline for commencing research | 1 October 2025 |

1.5.1 Submission deadline

Please submit your application to HRC Gateway by **23 April 2025**. Applications will not be accepted **after 1pm** on the closing date unless you have **written** authorisation from the HRC.

Important: Your application will be released to the HRC only after it has been approved by your host organisation's Research Office or equivalent. **You should submit your application before your host organisation's internal submission deadline**, which is usually several working days before the HRC closing date. If your host organisation does not have a Research Office, your application will be forwarded directly to the HRC.

Part 2. General rules for submitting an Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare application

2.1 Preparation

2.1.1 HRC Gateway account

You will need an HRC Gateway account to apply for the Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare RFP. Use your existing account or create a new one if you do not have one, via the following URL: <https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz>. If you have issues logging into your HRC Gateway account, contact info@hrc.govt.nz.

Note: All members of your research team must have an HRC Gateway user account so that their details can be included in the online form. Individual HRC Gateway accounts should be updated annually.

2.1.2 Forms

You will need to download and complete two different forms when submitting an Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare application:

- 2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Application Form (Microsoft Word template)
- 2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Budget Form (Microsoft Excel template)

2.1.3 Before submitting an application

Before submitting an application, please read the following resources:

- 2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Application Guidelines (this document)
- [2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Request for Proposals](#)
- [Government Policy Statement on Health \(2024-2027\)](#)
- [New Zealand Health Research Strategy \(2017-2027\)](#)
- [New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework](#)
- [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) AI Principles](#)
- [HRC Research Ethics Guidelines](#)
- [National Ethics Advisory Committee National Ethical Standards](#)
- [Guidelines for Researchers on Health Research Involving Māori](#)
- [HRC Māori Health Advancement Guidelines](#) and [supporting resources](#)
- [Guidelines for Pacific Health Research](#)
- [HRC Research Impact Slideshow](#)
- [ARRIVE guidelines for animal research](#) (if applicable)

Click the document name to access the file. Most of these documents can also be found on HRC Gateway.

2.1.4 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 your application if it is successful. The host organisation will be responsible for ensuring that the activities are completed according to the contract, the HRC Rules, and the HRC Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare RFP requirements.

If your organisation has not been previously funded as the host organisation by the HRC and your application is successful, your organisation will need to provide due diligence information before a contract can be offered. The HRC will provide information and the relevant forms for your organisation to complete.

2.2 Formatting your application

2.2.1 General formatting

Please write your application in a clear, concise manner with sufficient detail. The assessing committee reviewing your application includes a broad range of expertise. It is important that they can understand the scope and implications of your application.

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).

Please:

- use Arial 10-point type font or larger
- use default margins
- use single line spacing
- keep to the page limits

2.2.2 Compliance

The HRC will not process your application if you do not use the correct HRC application forms or follow the stated page limit and font sizes/styles. Your application may be withdrawn.

Please avoid these common pitfalls:

1. Only submit your application using HRC Gateway. Do not send applications or supporting documents to the HRC via email or any other means.
2. If your host organisation has a Research Office (or equivalent), your application must be approved by the Research Office first. The application will then be released to the HRC. Please allow enough time for this approval process before the HRC's closing deadline. All queries regarding applications should be directed to the host's Research Office rather than to the HRC directly.
3. Ensure you complete all modules, including Module 1 which must be completed in HRC Gateway. Incomplete applications after the closing date will be considered withdrawn and deleted from HRC Gateway.
4. Do not include any additional documents (e.g. slides, protocols, reports, other funding applications) as 'supporting documents' on HRC Gateway, and do not use hyperlinks in the application form. All additional material and hyperlinks will be removed from your application.
5. 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.

2.3 Privacy provisions

2.3.1 Statistical and reporting purposes

The information you provide will be used to assess your application. In a non-identifiable form, some information will be used for HRC's statistical and reporting purposes. The HRC stores 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 (MBIE) with details provided by funders of the science sector.

2.3.2 Personal information

Personal information in your application will be available to members of the HRC assessing committees reviewing your application.

2.3.3 Publicising results

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

2.3.4 Official Information Act

Official Information Act requests for information about an application or research contract, beyond information that has already been publicly disclosed, will be discussed with the host organisation and programme director before responding to the request. Where appropriate, the request may be transferred to the host organisation.

2.4 Additional eligibility requirements

2.4.1 Eligibility restrictions on publicly funded research

The HRC cannot accept applications made by a department of the public service, as listed in Schedule 2 of the Public Service Act 2020. Named investigators from these departments may not claim salary support.

As part of the New Zealand Government's broader response to Russia's invasion of 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 the 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 New Zealand 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 funding application that will benefit a state institution or other organisation identified for exclusion by the New Zealand Government.

2.4.2 Trusted Research Guidance

Please familiarise yourself 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 technologies⁴ and may require funded projects to identify, mitigate, and monitor risks as part of the contractual conditions of the project.

2.5 Enquiries

If you have any questions about HRC applications, please contact your host organisation's Research Office.

You can contact the HRC at info@hrc.govt.nz if:

- your organisation does not have a Research Office
- your organisation's Research Office cannot assist you
- you have any technical difficulties (i.e. with HRC Gateway)

HRC Gateway will show the status of any application. Please do not contact the HRC for an update on your application.

⁴ 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.

Part 3: Submitting an application – Completion of the application form

This section contains instructions for completing and submitting your application. It includes prompts for providing certain information that will be used to score your application.

A full application for a 2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare consists of six modules. Module 1 'General information' must be completed in HRC Gateway.

Complete Module 2 'Research', Module 3 'References', and Module 4A-C 'Contract information and budget' and Section 6D 'Research methodology categorisation' in the **2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Application Form** (Microsoft Word template). Refer to **Sections 3.2-3.5** for detailed guidance on how to complete each module.

Please upload all letters of collaboration/supporting documents/memorandums of understanding to HRC Gateway. HRC Gateway will automatically generate a list of uploaded documents under Module 4D.

Complete Modules 4E-H 'Research proposal budget', 'Subcontract budget', 'FTE summary', and 'List of collaborators' in the **2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Budget Form** (Microsoft Excel template). Refer to **Section 3.4** for detailed guidance on how to complete the budget form. Please complete all sections and upload the budget form in both **.xlsx and PDF formats** to HRC Gateway. Please make sure all budget tabs are included in the PDF.

A NZ standard CV is required for all named investigators. Upload these to HRC Gateway; they will be compiled in Module 5.

Module 6 Research classification is for HRC evaluation purposes only and is completed on HRC Gateway.

The completed application form should be uploaded to HRC Gateway as a PDF file.

3.1 The 2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Application Form

The form is compatible with most Windows PC and Mac computers. The form has default formatting that conforms to HRC requirements. Figures and tables are best pasted in from a draft document instead of created directly in the form.

Please:

- Use the original 2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Application Form as it contains special features.
- Complete all sections following the instructions on the form and described in these guidelines
- Enter the HRC reference ID# and first named investigator surname on the coversheet (HRC Gateway will remove the coversheet from the final system-generated PDF)
- Enter information only in the indicated form fields
- Do not reformat module and section headings.
- Do not delete spreadsheet columns/shaded rows; you may insert more unshaded rows.

3.2 Module 1: General information

This Module must be completed in HRC Gateway. Start the application process by clicking the 'Apply now' button on the 2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Request for Proposals information page. The button will only appear when the application submission period is open. Clicking the 'Apply now' button will open a dialog form where the following information will be required.

Research title

The research title should be succinct, written in plain language, and clearly describe the proposed research without using metaphorical terms. The title must not exceed 80 characters, including spaces and punctuation (e.g. 'growth factors' contains 14 characters). Please use sentence case. The HRC reserves the right to amend the title of the funded proposals.

Host organisation

The host organisation is responsible for administering any contract awarded. For example, for 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.

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 called 'Host organisation details' will appear in the next section and the name of the host organisation should be entered here.

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

First named investigator

Some information will be automatically populated from the first named investigator's profile in HRC Gateway (e.g. organisation and department). If your profile is not current, update your details in your Gateway profile rather than the application form. The details listed on the application will be automatically refreshed after your profile is updated. Click 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.

Named investigators

All named investigators must have an HRC Gateway account before they can be added to the application. Each named investigator needs to sign in to HRC Gateway and update their details before you submit your application. Certain information (i.e. ethnicity, gender, and whether the researcher is a clinician) is used for HRC information purposes only and will automatically populate from the individual's profile.

Click 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 study (1-2 sentences max).

The FTE for each named investigator is required, as the assessing committee needs to know each team member's commitment or responsibility level. It is particularly important to identify more junior investigators who may undertake key components for the proposed research. The FTE value should be for the first year of that investigator's involvement (from the budget spreadsheet).

Support personnel

Can be added if applicable. Examples of support personnel include individuals who will help you upload your application to HRC Gateway. Do not list named investigators or your host institution's research office staff (or equivalent) to this section. All support personnel need to have an HRC Gateway account to view and edit your application.

Research location(s)

This is a specific department(s) and organisation where most of the research or data analysis will be undertaken.

Discipline

Select from the drop-down box.

Duration

Enter the proposed term of the research (months).

Type of research

Select from the drop-down list the most appropriate term for broadly describing the research proposal for assessment purposes.

Commencement date

Enter the proposed commencement date. Please note that your research must start by 1 October 2025.

Lay summary

Ensure your lay summary includes a clear statement covering the following key elements

- 1) purpose of the research, why it is needed and how it contributes to government priorities
- 2) how the research will be undertaken including the methodological approach
- 3) anticipated health benefits, expected outcomes; and value for money.

This information will be used to inform the Council in the final approval process if the application is recommended for funding. The lay summary will also be publicised through the HRC's communication channels (e.g. website) and should be easily understood by members of the public (150-word limit). The HRC reserves the right to amend the lay summary of funded proposals.

Research costs

Click the 'Update' button to enter the totals for staff costs, overhead, working expenses and the total cost of research. The totals entered must match the totals in the uploaded budget form.

Nominated impartial peer reviewers

You can nominate up to two individuals to review your application. Click the 'Update' button to enter their name, organisation and areas of expertise.

Unacceptable peer reviewers

You can identify up to two individuals who are not acceptable who are not acceptable to review your application. Click the 'Update' button to enter the name, organisation, and reason for exclusion.

Objectives and milestones

Objectives and milestones are assessed, included in a resulting research contract, and used for contract monitoring in progress and end of contract reports. Objectives and milestones must be measurable and achievable within the term of a contract.

Objectives

Briefly describe the intended objectives of your project application. Objectives should relate to the overall goal or aim of the research. The HRC suggests **2 to 3 objectives for small projects, 4 to 5 objectives for medium projects** and **6 to 7 objectives for large projects** with sufficient standalone operational detail and scientific information to assess your performance in subsequent years.

All objectives must be added before milestones can be added. There is no limit to the number of objectives and milestones.

Milestones

Provide key milestones that you aim to achieve by the end of each year of a resulting contract. Each milestone must relate to one or more of the objectives previously added. For contract monitoring and HRC accountability reporting, if the research requires ethics and/or regulatory approval (human, animal, or biological safety), and/or clinical trial registration, these should be identified as separate Year 1 milestones, even if you expect to gain these approvals before starting the proposed research award.

Example milestones:

| 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 | Submit manuscript to NZMJ | All objectives |

3.3 Module 2: Research

3.3.1 Section 2A: Type of project

You need to indicate the type of project you are applying for: small, medium or large.

3.3.2 Section 2B: Summary of proposed research (1-page limit)

This section should clearly summarise the aims and objectives, research plan (including outline of methods), and significance and relevance of the research proposal to the RFP objectives. A clear and succinct summary including all important points of the application provides a good overview and is useful as a quick reference for assessing committee members. Use the headings and add subheadings if required.

3.3.3 Section 2C: Description of proposed research (10-page limit, excluding references)

Give an overall description of your research project. Your audience includes discipline-specific and a more broadly experienced assessing committee. Therefore, not all members will have specialist knowledge of your research topic. It is in your best interest to structure your writing clearly and logically. Using graphics and tables is an efficient use of space (please ensure font type and size are easily legible). Ideally, seek feedback from a colleague outside your immediate research area. Ensure that the format of non-text content is compatible with PDF conversion software. In the application form, please do not delete the numbered headings; enter your text under each heading.

Fit with Request for Proposal

Clearly describe how your proposed research is relevant to the key objectives of the RFP:

Timely access to quality healthcare

Describe how your proposed research will support timely access to quality healthcare for New Zealanders. Demonstrate your collaboration and connection with health researchers and healthcare system stakeholders to affect knowledge transfer and uptake to maximise the likelihood that the research will result in change.

AI as a transformative technology

Include information that you feel is essential for the HRC assessing committee to understand why this proposed AI research is potentially transformative and how it will directly address government priorities and targets for the healthcare system as identified in the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024 – 2027. Describe the unique and novel attributes of AI and its application in the health

system that your research seeks to address. Discuss how those attributes of this transformative technology may lead to innovative change to the delivery of health services.

Ethical, safety and data management

Describe how you have considered ethical, safety, data governance and sovereignty principles at the outset of your research. Describe your data management and monitoring arrangements, including consent of the person or collective whose data is being used. Discuss how you have considered safety and security risks and your mitigation plan including identifying and addressing the existing limitations and biases within the datasets.

Contribute to improved health outcomes

Describe how the proposed research contributes to improved health outcomes for New Zealanders, including for populations with the highest health needs as specified in the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024 – 2027 and the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022. Discuss how the proposed research builds on and advances existing knowledge, addresses an important knowledge gap, and demonstrates clear potential to improve health outcomes.

Research design and methods

Include sufficient detail of study design and methods so that an assessment can be made of its appropriateness, robustness and/or innovativeness. This will include a description of the datasets (including number, gender and ethnicity where relevant), description of data and safety monitoring arrangements, study methodology, and proposed methods of data analysis. Applicants should address the limitations and biases of the AI technology and ensure appropriate privacy, data sovereignty, governance and data management are entrenched in the research.

Consultation with specialists such as methodologists, AI experts, Māori health experts, ethicists or ethics committees, statisticians and health economists before finalising research design is recommended. Where possible, detail the validity of the proposed analyses, and the feasibility of attaining the statistical power sought (if appropriate).

When research is patent protected, applicants are encouraged to provide the patent number and a summary of information available (if no technical information can be provided). The HRC Data Monitoring Core Committee (DMCC) provides an independent Data Monitoring Committee with appropriate trial specific expertise that follows best international practice, if required. For more information on trial monitoring in general, and the HRC DMC in particular, see (<https://www.hrc.govt.nz/resources/datamonitoring-core-committee>). Indication of timelines for the research should be included.

Research impact

We recommend you structure your response in two sections as follows:

- A **description** of the anticipated benefits of the proposed research and how it will influence healthcare practice, health delivery policy and/or the health system leading to improved health outcomes. **What types of benefits** are expected to arise from your research, and **who will benefit**? Clearly discuss the benefits over time (a 'line of sight' or 'pathway' to impact) including identifying the more immediate benefits, and users of the research. Describe how the proposed research will generate timely and actionable evidence with potential for economic benefit to the health system.
- The **action plan** and **specific activities will you undertake**, during the life of the project, to maximise the use and benefits of your research. Summarise **the team's track record of knowledge transfer** from similar research. Describe what targeted actions have been, or will be, taken to improve the likelihood of research uptake and impact in healthcare, health delivery policy and the wider health system. What elements of the team's track record of knowledge transfer provide confidence in the likelihood of research uptake? For example: describe your current connection and collaboration within healthcare and evidence of engagement with key stakeholders to maximise impact, including social and economic impacts. Describe the research-related benefits of the proposed research including developing the research capacity and capability of the health research workforce.

See the [HRC's impact assessment slideshow](#) for further information that should be covered in this section.

Māori health advancement

Consideration of Māori health advancement is context-specific, as determined by the nature and scope of the research. To meet the requirements for this criterion, you will need to answer two questions:

- How will your research outcomes contribute to Māori health advancement?
- 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?

When responding to these questions, consider how your research is informed by the four domains of Māori health advancement (see the [Māori Health Advancement Guidelines](#) for more details). You are not required to specifically address all four domains of Māori health advancement in your application; however, doing so could help create the strongest rationale for the application.

Expertise and track record of the research team

Provide evidence that the team has the experience, qualifications, knowledge, networks and infrastructure to deliver the proposed research. Outline the role of each team member.

Consider the following when responding to this section:

- Demonstrate that the team has the appropriate qualifications, AI and healthcare knowledge, networks and collaborations within healthcare, health system stakeholders and policymakers; history of productivity and delivery; and the right research environment/infrastructure to deliver the research and disseminate results.
- Attach a letter of support from your head of department to support your application. The letter should confirm your availability and specifically outline your contribution to the research. Include confirmation that you will have access to necessary resources and support. The letter of support must be uploaded to HRC Gateway as a supporting document with the application and state the relevant HRC reference number.
- The expertise and track record of each member of the team (i.e. named investigators) must be described. The assessing committee consider the FTE of senior investigators on each proposal and weight their scoring on the expertise and track record of the research team accordingly, i.e. high scores should not be allocated for a senior named investigator who has a small percentage FTE involvement in the research. Briefly describe the team's track record related to the proposal area, to demonstrate the ability to deliver proposed study outcomes. Highlight important skills, expertise and previous collaborations in the team that would support delivery of the proposed research. A justification for staff roles should be provided.
- Describe any career disruptions, and their impact, that may be relevant to your career history. A career disruption is defined as a prolonged interruption to your capacity to work due to pregnancy, major illness/injury, parental leave, and/or carer responsibilities.

The HRC recognises that applicants with experience in sectors other than public sector research may have gained valuable expertise or produced outputs (e.g. patents) relevant to research translation, and this may have limited the applicant's opportunity to produce more traditional research outputs.

The research team in the application must be included in any subsequent contract resulting from the application.

3.4 Module 3: References

Please start this module on a new page. There is no page limit.

Citations for key references in the text in Module 2 should be supplied. Details must include a full list of all author(s), title of article, journal, year, volume and page numbers. Endnote lists must be copied

into a plain text editor before pasting it in this section. Place an asterisk beside named investigators' publications.

A reference to Māori terms in the application with brief interpretation should be included here.

3.5 Module 4: Contract information and Budget

Sections 4A-4C are part of the **2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Application Form**.

Section 4D are letters of collaboration/supporting documents/memorandums of understanding. These documents will need to be uploaded to HRC Gateway; a list of uploaded documents will be automatically generated under Module 4D.

Sections 4E-4H should be completed in the separate Microsoft Excel budget spreadsheet – **2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Budget Form**.

Please complete all modules and then upload the budget form as both **.xlsx and PDF formats** to your application in HRC Gateway.

3.5.1 Section 4A: Justification of expenses

Justification of research staff

Use this section to justify the role and FTE of the named investigators and any other research staff listed in Section 4E. Please include the following (if applicable):

- An explanation of each person's role (named or un-named, funded or not funded by the proposal), who will be actively associated with the research. These may be research assistants, technicians, medical staff, interviewers and support staff or similar, whose names or position titles are listed in the budget under 'research staff' and who have specific FTE involvements. Time-only staff require clear justification.
- A justification for un-named postdoctoral fellows. Named postdoctoral fellows should be included as named investigators and provide their CVs.
- Evidence that biostatisticians, data managers and health economists are integrated into the team as appropriate, e.g. sufficient FTE is allocated for each year of the contract.
- Roles in mentoring junior team members.
- Details on whether staff will be promoted during the project and a clear justification for this.

Funding requests may be declined for roles that are not fully justified or are only described as a 'training opportunity'. It is your responsibility to ensure that no personnel in this section will exceed 100% FTE of their combined commitments during the term of the contract. The roles of students and casual staff should be justified in the next section 'Justification of working expenses and casual staff'.

Justification of working expenses and casual staff

All items listed under 'Materials and research expenses' in the budget should be justified. Provide costs per item unit and full costs per item for the number of units requested. Costs associated with knowledge transfer activities can be included. Quotes must be provided to support discretionary costs, where available.

The assessing committee will consider the appropriateness of the budget and working expenses. If there are exceptional requests for working expenses, ensure they can clearly understand why the requested materials, travel, research tools or significant one-line items are necessary.

Justify the roles of students and casual staff so that the assessing committee can appreciate how these individuals are necessary for the proposed research. For students, stipends must be included at the per annum values approved by the HRC: \$30,000 for PhD students, \$20,000 for Masters students and up to \$7,500 for summer students, or pro-rata for part-time students.

Students should be named if they have been identified at the time of application, along with a description of how their expertise relates to their role. Unnamed students can be included in the application budget, e.g. “PhD student (not yet appointed)”. Once you have appointed an unnamed student, please advise the HRC of the student’s name and relevant expertise. If you include an unnamed student, you cannot include any information about your intention to recruit and appoint a student with any particular expertise or other characteristic, such as ethnicity or gender. Any such detail on unnamed students is considered unjustified and will be disregarded in the assessment process.

It is your responsibility to ensure that students do not exceed 100% FTE on their combined commitments with the host organisation during the term of the contract.

3.5.2 Section 4B: Previous/Current contracts and awards

Using the table provided, outline current and previous funding contracts from any agency that have been received in the last 5 years by **the first named investigator (and co-first named investigator if applicable) as principal investigator**. Copy the table and repeat for each received grant as required. This section provides the HRC reviewers and assessing committees with an overall summary of your abilities to secure funding for research.

For 'Nature of support', indicate whether the funding supports salaries only, working expenses only, both salary and working expenses, equipment, a junior research fellow, etc.

Note: You can replace the table with an Excel spreadsheet. If doing so, please use the same layout as the original table.

3.5.3 Section 4C: Other support

Other research applications awaiting decisions

List any relevant research applications pending with other funders that might alter the project’s budget. If applicable, indicate in the spaces provided any overlap (research, resources and personnel) that the listed application might have with this application. By providing this information, you agree that the HRC may seek clarification details from the other funders if required.

Co-funding

Provide details if you have approached other funders to co-fund this research. If applicable, detail the joint funding arrangements.

Financial or other interest(s)

For HRC funding applications, a financial or other interest is anything of economic value or a political/philosophical perspective, including relationships with entities outside of the research host organisation. While not an exhaustive list, examples of financial interests include positions such as consultant, director, officer, partner or manager of an entity (whether paid or unpaid); salaries; consulting income; honoraria; gifts; loans and travel payments. Examples of other interests include aligning with special interest groups seeking to advance or promote a particular worldview or policy.

Please disclose and provide details of any significant relationship to third parties (e.g. commercial sector entities contributing to project costs, equipment, staff joint appointments). Clearly describe how the current application relates to those relationships. Assessing commercial links is **not** part of the HRC peer review process.

A conflict of interest is a situation in which an individual’s financial relationships or interests may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the individual’s professional judgment in conducting or reporting research. If you can identify financial or other interests in your funding application, outline the specific details of your proposed conflict management strategy.

3.5.4 Section 4D: Letters of collaboration/support documents

Any additional documentation (including subcontracts/Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), letters of collaboration/support, and other supporting documents) should be uploaded as separate PDF files under the ‘Letters of collaboration/support documents’ on HRC Gateway. You can upload up to 15 documents.

A letter of collaboration should outline how the interested party intends to implement the findings of the research upon its completion, or provide material or actual support for the research, **not simply state that the research is necessary**. Please ensure that any organisation providing a letter of collaboration recognises their intended commitment to conduct the proposed research and the timeline of their involvement.

3.5.5 Section 4E: Research proposal budget

Use the 2025 Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare budget form available on HRC Gateway. In section 4E of the budget spreadsheet, please select the size of your project from 'Small', 'Medium' or 'Large' from the drop-down list. The budget limit will auto-populate. Further instructions are contained in the Notes tab of the file.

The guidelines below should be considered only as a summary of the HRC's funding rules. For more information, please refer to the *HRC Rules* document, which is available on HRC Gateway.

Budget calculations and spreadsheet

All calculations should be **GST exclusive and in whole dollar amounts**, i.e. no cents or decimals.

'Salary', 'Working expenses' and 'Total cost of this research' are components of Section 4E. The spreadsheet automatically calculates totals for each year of costs. Insert more rows into the table if required.

The 'Total cost of research' shaded section automatically calculates all the figures in this box.

Do not enter any details into the shaded areas as these are completed automatically.

Salary

Only enter **contract research staff** employed or to be employed by the host organisation in this section. This includes academics.

All positions should specify grade and level, FTE and salary; time only is permissible. The monetary value (\$) should be the **actual** salary amount that the named staff member is expected to receive for their part each year.

The budget form does not accept FTE less than 3%. The HRC Assessing Committees do not favour listing numerous investigators with a very low FTE, and salary requests should only be for significant input and involvement in the project. Advisory groups of contributors, who have FTE commitments less than 3%, may be a consideration for the research team.

Do not enter salary associated costs (i.e. amounts requested for employer's contribution to approved superannuation schemes and accident compensation levies) for research staff in this 'Salary' section. Instead, enter them in the 'Working expenses' section.

Note: Overheads will be paid at a negotiated rate for each institution on all eligible contracts.

Staff that must not be entered into the 'Salary' section of the budget are subcontracted staff, named or unnamed Masters and PhD students on stipends, and casual staff.

- Subcontracted staff are those who are **not** employees of the host organisation. The salary and all other expenses for these staff should be broken down into appropriate categories on a detailed subcontract/memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the host organisation and non-host organisation using Section 4F. The total GST-exclusive dollar figure for the subcontract/MOU should be all-inclusive, including overhead calculations. **Note:** the HRC does not cover overheads for overseas-based organisations. The subcontract/MOU total should then be entered under 'Working expenses - subcontracts' for each year.
- If you request funding to provide a stipend for a PhD student (\$30,000 per year) or Master's student (\$20,000 per year), enter these into 'working expenses – materials and research expenses'. Students should be named if they have been identified at the time of application. Unnamed students can be included in the application budget as e.g. "PhD student (not yet appointed)". The HRC must be advised of the student's name once appointed.

- Casual staff (those persons without an ongoing role or commitment to the research but providing one-off services to the research on a part-time, hourly or per diem basis, e.g. interviewers) should also be requested under 'Working expenses - materials and research expenses'.

Working expenses

Working expenses include 'direct costs' only. The only exception is in the case of subcontracts, as described above. Estimates of costs should be expressed in current prices **exclusive of GST**.

Materials and research expenses

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

- Research consumables. These should be itemised at the current cost per unit and full cost for the number required.
- Other costs **directly** related to the research (e.g. 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 (i.e. equipment to be acquired). This cost must be justified in your application and supporting documentation should be uploaded to HRC Gateway).
- Depreciation on specialised equipment if your host organisation's auditors have certified that it will be excluded from your organisation's overhead rate. This cost must be justified in your application and supporting documentation should be uploaded to HRC Gateway. For all other equipment, depreciation and capital costs are included in your organisation's overhead rate.
- Expenses relating to research participants.
- Costs associated with knowledge transfer activities.
- Travel costs **directly** related to conducting the research. Contract funds may be used to assist with overseas travel provided the HRC is satisfied that this travel is directly relevant to conducting the research and that alternative funding sources are not available. This is not intended to relieve your host organisation of its obligation to assist with the costs of overseas travel by its employees.
- Costs for stipends can be requested for Masters and PhD students. Stipends must be included at the HRC-approved rates (Masters \$20,000 per annum; PhD \$30,000 per annum). Both named and unnamed students can be included; in both cases, describe the student's research project/contribution to the research activity in Section 4A. Funding for stipends will be conditional upon the host organisation arranging a tax-free stipend that satisfies the Inland Revenue Department and host organisation's rules. **Note:** students' fees and thesis costs cannot be claimed.
- Disseminating research results. Contract funds can be used to pay fair and reasonable charges to publish HRC-sponsored research in journals, reports, monographs or books. Also, costs incurred from other forms of dissemination, such as meeting with community groups, or conference dissemination can be claimed if reasonable and justified.
- Conference allowance: The maximum allowance for conference attendance is \$1,000 per annum per named investigator if **fully supported at 100% FTE** by the grant and must be fully justified. The allowance cannot be distributed proportionately between grants. This allowance is distinct from the cost to disseminate findings from this proposed research; this cost must also be fully justified. Fares and allowances should be calculated following the host organisation's regulations and scales.

Note: If you intend to ask the HRC's Data Monitoring Core Committee (DMCC) to monitor this study, there is no cost involved. However, your application must include adequate provision for statistical support to provide the DMCC with all data and analysis they request to carry out their monitoring including the preparation of biannual statistical reports. Also, costs for members of the study team (including the study statistician) to attend the meetings need to be included in the application's budget. If you have any questions, please contact the DMCC secretary at dmcc@hrc.govt.nz.

Subcontracts/Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Subcontract staff are not employees of the host organisation. The salaries for these staff and all other expenses (e.g. working expenses) requested for the subcontract should appear in a detailed subcontract/MOU between the host organisation and non-host organisation. A MOU should also include overhead calculations for salaries (**note:** the HRC does not cover overheads for overseas-based organisations). A *pro forma* MOU is available upon request from the HRC. If a subcontract/MOU is greater than \$50,000, all expenses requested should be broken down into the appropriate categories in Section 4F (MOU budget).

Please provide MOUs for time-only subcontracted staff who are not employed by the host organisation. If MOUs cannot be provided, you can include a support letter that describes the individual's role and level of involvement. If your application is successful, copies of MOUs that were not provided for any time-only individuals may be required at the contracting stage. Please upload all MOUs and letters of support as separate PDF files on HRC Gateway. Refer to section 3.5.4 in these guidelines 'Section 4D: Letters of collaboration/support documents' for further details.

Salary associated costs

Amounts requested for the employer's contribution to approved superannuation schemes and accident compensation levies for research staff should be entered in the 'Working expenses' section. Enter the amounts for each year separately in the budget form. The percentage rates for both ACC and superannuation should be noted for each individual (and justified in Section 4A where required, i.e. for non-standard rates).

International expenses

The HRC does not contribute to the overhead of overseas investigators. The total proportion of the contract budget allocated to overseas investigators must not exceed 20%.

Total cost of research

Enter the appropriate overhead rate (OHR) in the budget. Seek advice from your host organisation's Research Office on the costing of their research applications and the overhead rate negotiated with the HRC.

After entering the appropriate overhead rate, the total cost of the research will be automatically calculated. Enter the overhead and total cost of research from the budget form into the HRC Gateway section named 'Research costs.'

3.5.6 Section 4F: MOU budget

If a large proportion of the total budget is contained in a subcontract/MOU, the expenditure must be itemised in the same way as the overall application's budget. Use Section 4F to provide budget details for all MOUs requesting more than \$50,000; add a copy of Section 4F for each subcontractor. Use the overhead rate for the subcontracted staff member's host organisation, not your main host organisation. The total dollar amount for each year should then be entered under 'Working expenses – subcontracts' and a copy of the subcontract/MOU should be uploaded separately to HRC Gateway.

A CV must be provided in Module 5 for all named investigators on MOUs. This helps the assessing committee determine whether their expertise is appropriate and necessary. Without this information, the assessing committee may not support the budget for the MOU. CVs are not needed for employees of commercial enterprises providing service for fees.

If there are no subcontracts/MOUs for this application, or none requesting more than \$50,000, you can ignore Section 4F.

3.5.7 Section 4G: FTE summary

When completing this section, please:

- List the time involvement of **all** personnel (including those on a subcontract/MOU) in full-time equivalents, e.g. 10% FTE. Half percentages (e.g. 4.5%) are not allowed. Ensure the FTE figures match the budget, MOU budget sections (Sections 4F and 4G), and Module 1.

- Give all names (for unnamed positions, indicate as 'technician', 'research nurse', 'postdoctoral fellow', etc.). Indicate when named investigators are 'time only' (i.e. not receiving salary for their involvement in the project).
- Identify all postgraduate students by 'Masters' or 'PhD'.

Note: Heads of department will need to provide workload relief for research staff working on HRC contracts (principles of full cost funding).

3.5.8 Section 4H: List of collaborators (national and international)

Please complete the collaborators (not named investigators) table by providing full name, organisation, and country (the location where the organisation is based, and the collaborators undertake their research).

For 'collaboration purpose', select one of the following options: research; commercialisation; knowledge transfer.

For 'support', indicate the value of any funding for this research provided by the collaborator in NZ dollars or list any in-kind support.

3.6 Module 5: NZ Standard CV

Upload a CV for all named investigators (including those on a Memorandum of Understanding). HRC Gateway will automatically compile CVs under Module 5 of your application.

CVs must be completed on the NZ Standard CV template, which you can download from HRC Gateway. Please use the default font and stay within the page limits. The HRC will not accept any other forms of CV.

The information provided in your CV **must match** the information provided elsewhere in the application and in your HRC Gateway profile.

Your CV may indicate when career breaks (including pandemic-related disruptions) have taken place as your track record will be assessed relative to opportunity.

3.7 Module 6: Classification (additional information in HRC Gateway)

Click the 'Update' button next to each of the classifications required.

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

3.7.1 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 area of health or health research that your application is connected to.

3.7.2 Economic benefits

Briefly describe any potential economic benefits which may arise from your research. If you do not anticipate any direct economic benefits, 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.

3.7.3 Health issues

Enter the requested information on HRC Gateway. Select the health issue that best describes your research and, if required, one secondary health issue.

3.7.4 Mapping category

Select the category that best describes the starting point for your research. The following table provides a description of each category.

| Mapping category | Description |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Biomedical | |
| Gene | Research into the genetic basis of disease or 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 | All physiology and anatomy, including animal models of disease and studies on host-pathogen interactions. |
| Diagnostics | Innovations and the development/refinement of new or existing diagnostic tools. |
| Pharmaceuticals /treatments | 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 | |
| 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 | 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: Criteria for assessing and scoring AI in healthcare project applications

The 7-point word ladder is used for all scoring categories (listed A-E).

Note: You do not have to address all the points outlined below; they are included to help guide the assessment for each of the scoring categories.

| Score | Criteria descriptor |
|-------|---------------------|
| 7 | Exceptional |
| 6 | Excellent |
| 5 | Very good |
| 4 | Good |
| 3 | Adequate |
| 2 | Unsatisfactory |
| 1 | Poor |

| Criteria | Score | % score |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Fit with RFP | 7 | 30 |
| Design and methods | 7 | 15 |
| Research impact | 7 | 25 |
| Māori health advancement | 7 | 15 |
| Expertise and track record of the research team | 7 | 15 |
| Total | 35 | 100 |

A. Fit with RFP

The research is important, worthwhile, and justifiable to New Zealand, and aligns with the objectives of the RFP, because:

- It describes how the proposed research will support timely access to quality healthcare.
- It supports research into AI as a transformative technology to address government priorities and describes how its application may lead to innovation in the health system.
- It has considered ethical, safety, data governance and sovereignty matters, and has described a mitigation plan to address these issues.
- The proposed research contributes to improved health outcomes for New Zealanders, including for populations with the highest health needs as specified in the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024 – 2027 and the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022.

B. Design and methods

The study has been well designed to answer the research questions because it demonstrates:

- A comprehensive and feasible study design that is achievable within the timeframe.
- An appropriate study design to address the aims and objectives of the research.
- Consideration of ethical, safety, and data governance and sovereignty principles including the limitations and biases of the datasets.
- Awareness of statistical considerations/technical or population issues/practicalities.
- Evidence of sound data management and data monitoring arrangements

C. Research impact

The proposed research is likely to add value and benefit to New Zealand because:

- It has provided a description of the anticipated benefits of the research and how it will influence healthcare practice, health delivery policy and or the health system leading to improved health outcomes.
- There is evidence of how the research will generate timely and actionable evidence with potential for economic benefit to the health system.

- An action plan and specific activities to maximise the use and benefits of the research has been described.
- It provides a description of the team's track record of knowledge transfer to provide confidence in the likelihood of research uptake.
- There are demonstrated connections within the healthcare sector and evidence of engagement with key stakeholders and populations to maximise impact, including social and economic impacts.
- It describes the research-related benefits of the proposed research including developing the research capacity and capability of the health research workforce.

D. Māori health advancement

The proposed research is likely to advance Māori health because:

- Applicants have provided a description of how their research could lead to improved Māori health or reductions in health inequity over time.
- The research team are undertaking activities to address Māori health advancement, as appropriate to the nature and scope of the research. This may include, but is not limited to, activities such as:
 - the establishment of meaningful, collaborative, and reciprocal relationships with Māori
 - undertaking research that addresses Māori health need and inequity
 - the formation of appropriate research teams
 - the development of current and future workforce capacity and capability including upskilling of research team members, and
 - adherence to culturally appropriate research practices and principles (as appropriate to the context of the research).

E. Expertise and track record of the research team

The team, relative to opportunity, can achieve the proposed outcomes and impacts because they have demonstrated:

- The appropriate qualifications, AI and healthcare knowledge, and the right research environment/infrastructure to deliver the research and disseminate results
- Evidence of support from head of department/programme leaders and from health system stakeholders
- Networks and collaborations within healthcare, health system stakeholders and policymakers
- The right mix of expertise, experience and FTEs, including consideration of capacity building
- A history of productivity and delivery on previous research funding.

Appendix 2: Assessment process for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare RFP

1. Overview

Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare RFP applications are assessed in several steps:

1. The application is assigned to an assessing committee
2. The applications are discussed and scored during the assessing committee meeting
3. The assessing committee makes funding recommendations
4. The HRC Council makes the final funding decision

Depending on the number of applications received, a triage process may be used to determine which applications will be discussed at the assessing committee meeting. This process would involve committee members scoring applications before 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.

Note: Applications received in the Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare RFP will not receive external peer review. Therefore, there is no opportunity to provide a rebuttal. Committee members consider each application on its own merit and score it on the relevant criteria for each category (refer to Appendix 1 for details).

2. HRC Assessing Committees

Applications submitted to the Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare RFP will be assessed by a multidisciplinary Artificial Intelligence Assessing Committee (AIAC). Depending on the number of applications received, two or more committees may be convened.

Assessing committees consist of a chair or two co-chairs and 9-12 members. The chair is a member (or designee) of a Statutory Research Committee (i.e. Biomedical Research Committee, Public Health Research Committee, Māori Health Committee). Members represent a mix of experienced health researchers, who have the appropriate expertise relative to the breadth/scope of the research applications received. National and international researchers can be included on the committee.

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 from a relevant funding agency (e.g., the HRC, Cancer Society)
- a track record in policy analysis/advice in an agency/department relevant to health research (e.g., Ministry of Health),
- expertise in assessing Māori health advancement and an understanding of the wider context and its application to research,
- expertise in artificial intelligence
- expertise in assessing the impact of health research.

In some circumstances, committees could have some members whose expertise and experience do not match that described above; however, all members must be able to carry out the roles and responsibilities of a committee reviewer (CR).

3. Responsibilities of committee members

Assessing committee members are required to declare at the outset any potential conflicts of interest so that the impact of any such conflicts on the assessment process is managed appropriately.

To minimise potential conflicts of interest, the HRC has specific guidance for assessing committee membership.

Anyone who is a **named investigator** on an application should not sit on the committee that is reviewing their application. However, they may sit on or chair a different committee.

Assessing committee members are required to keep all information about assessing applications confidential.

3.1 Committee reviewer (CR) role

In addition to reading the applications and contributing to the discussion of all applications assigned to a committee, each committee member is assigned CR responsibilities for some applications.

The CR of an application is required to:

- present an overview of the proposed research to the committee, focusing on strengths and weaknesses regarding each score criterion
- write the review summary which outlines the committee's discussion.

The CR member must be able to contribute to the discussion of other applications reviewed by the committee they are sitting on.

4. Scoring of Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare applications

Committee members are asked to score the research application on a 7-point scale at pre-scoring (if applicable) and during the assessing committee meeting. The scoring criteria are outlined in Appendix 1.

The 7-point scale corresponds to a word ladder of descriptors:

| Score | Criteria descriptor | Criteria | Score | % score |
|--------------|---------------------|---|-----------|------------|
| 7 | Exceptional | Fit with RFP | 7 | 30 |
| 6 | Excellent | Design and methods | 7 | 15 |
| 5 | Very good | Research impact | 7 | 25 |
| 4 | Good | Māori health advancement | 7 | 15 |
| 3 | Adequate | Expertise and track record of the research team | 7 | 15 |
| 2 | Unsatisfactory | | | |
| 1 | Poor | | | |
| Total | | | 35 | 100 |

5. Assessing committee preliminary score

Committee members (based on their own reading of the applications) may be required to undertake pre-scoring of applications assigned to their committee and allocate scores using the 7-point scale score criteria used at the assessing committee meeting.

The HRC collates the average scores to identify a preliminary ranking and inform the order of discussion. Some of the of the lower ranked applications will be considered by the chair(s) and AC for triage, i.e. not discussed at the AC meeting. The committee will use the reviewer report and scores, and preliminary scores when making this decision. However, when there is a marked scoring discrepancy for an application, it may be taken through to the meeting for full discussion.

6. Assessing committee meeting

Assessing committee members are provided with a briefing at the start of the meeting. The briefing confirms the procedure for identifying and dealing with conflicts of interest, the meeting process, and the scoring criteria. This provides committee members with the information and guidance they need to be consistent in their approach and to follow the HRC process.

7. Schedule

The chair(s) is responsible for ensuring that a fair and balanced assessment is reached. General discussion by all members is essential for a balanced committee opinion, not unduly influenced by one committee member and should not be cut short nor unduly extended.

- The discussion time allocated to each proposal is based on the project type. A large proposal will be discussed for 25-30 minutes, a medium proposal for 20-25 minutes, and a small proposal for 15-20 minutes. Declaration of conflicts of interest – 1 minute
- Committee Reviewer – 2-5 minutes
- Discuss the application – 7-15 minutes
- Scoring – 2 minutes
- Committee Reviewer notes for the written review summary – 2 minutes

8. Assessment criteria, scoring and recommendation

The meeting scores are submitted via HRC Gateway and collated confidentially by the HRC staff. Applications are scored from 1 to 7 of different weighting, as listed in the table. The total maximum score is 35. The scoring categories are listed below; refer to Appendix 1: Criteria for assessing and scoring AI in healthcare project applications for a full description.

- Fit with RFP
- Design and methods
- Research impact
- Māori health advancement
- Expertise and track record of the research team.

The 7-point scale corresponds to a word ladder of descriptors:

| Score | Criteria descriptor | Criteria | Score | % score |
|--------------|---------------------|---|-----------|------------|
| 7 | Exceptional | Fit with RFP | 7 | 30 |
| 6 | Excellent | Design and methods | 7 | 15 |
| 5 | Very good | Research impact | 7 | 25 |
| 4 | Good | Māori health advancement | 7 | 15 |
| 3 | Adequate | Expertise and track record of the research team | 7 | 15 |
| 2 | Unsatisfactory | | | |
| 1 | Poor | | | |
| Total | | | 35 | 100 |

The committee also takes into consideration:

- the appropriateness of the timeline for the proposed research
- the appropriateness of milestones and objectives
- the appropriateness of the requested FTE involvement of the researchers and any direct cost requested; and
- the total cost of the research Project with 'value for money'.

The HRC Investment Process Coordinator will inform the assessing committee on whether the application's budget aligns with HRC policy. However, it is the committee's responsibility to determine whether the budget is appropriate for the application.

8.1 Re-ranking procedure

Once all applications have been scored, the assessing committee reviews the ranked applications. Re-ranking is possible on a case-by-case basis to address significant inconsistencies that can affect the overall funding outcome. Any assessing committee member may put forward an application for re-ranking. If the whole committee agrees, the application's scores can be changed by adding up to 0.5 points to one or two scoring criteria. This will move the application up one place. The new ranking

and adjusted total scores are then presented for consideration at the next stage. Scores cannot be added to an application's score without re-ranking the application.

The re-ranking procedure is managed carefully by the committee chair(s) and the HRC Investment Process Coordinator to avoid re-litigating applications and to prevent bias. Conflicts of interest are notified and managed appropriately. Any changes are recorded in the meeting score sheet and notes.

8.2 Fundable and not fundable line

The committee, noting conflicts of interest, then:

- identifies the applications assessed as not fundable (NF), by starting at the bottom of the ranked list and going up the list based on quality
- identifies the applications assessed as fundable (F).

Applications above the fundable/not fundable line are considered of sufficient quality and are suitable for funding. Applications below the fundable/not fundable line are of insufficient quality and should not be funded, irrespective of the available budget.

Note: Once the proposals have been scored and re-ranked, scores cannot be further reviewed or adjusted. Any concerns about the process are identified by the committee and are taken by the assessing committee chair(s) to the chair of the relevant research committee.

8.3 Funding approval

The Artificial Intelligence Assessing Committee(s) results and recommendations are provided to the HRC Council for funding approval.

9. Feedback to applicants

At the end of the funding round, you can access your application outcome via the HRC Gateway. You will receive a review summary from the assessing committee, which is designed to give you a brief, balanced and objective statement of the committee's response to your application.

Review summaries should be constructive and include:

- key strengths of the application
- key areas for improvement and/or further consideration
- other comments (e.g. budgets, FTE, objectives).

Review summaries should not mention scores or reveal who the assessing committee members were. The assessing committee chairs are responsible for approving the content of all review summaries. The HRC will forward these to your research office/host institution. Refer to Appendix 3 for a review summary template.

