



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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

2025 Explorer Grant Application Guidelines

October 2024

Use with the 2025
Explorer Grant
Application Form

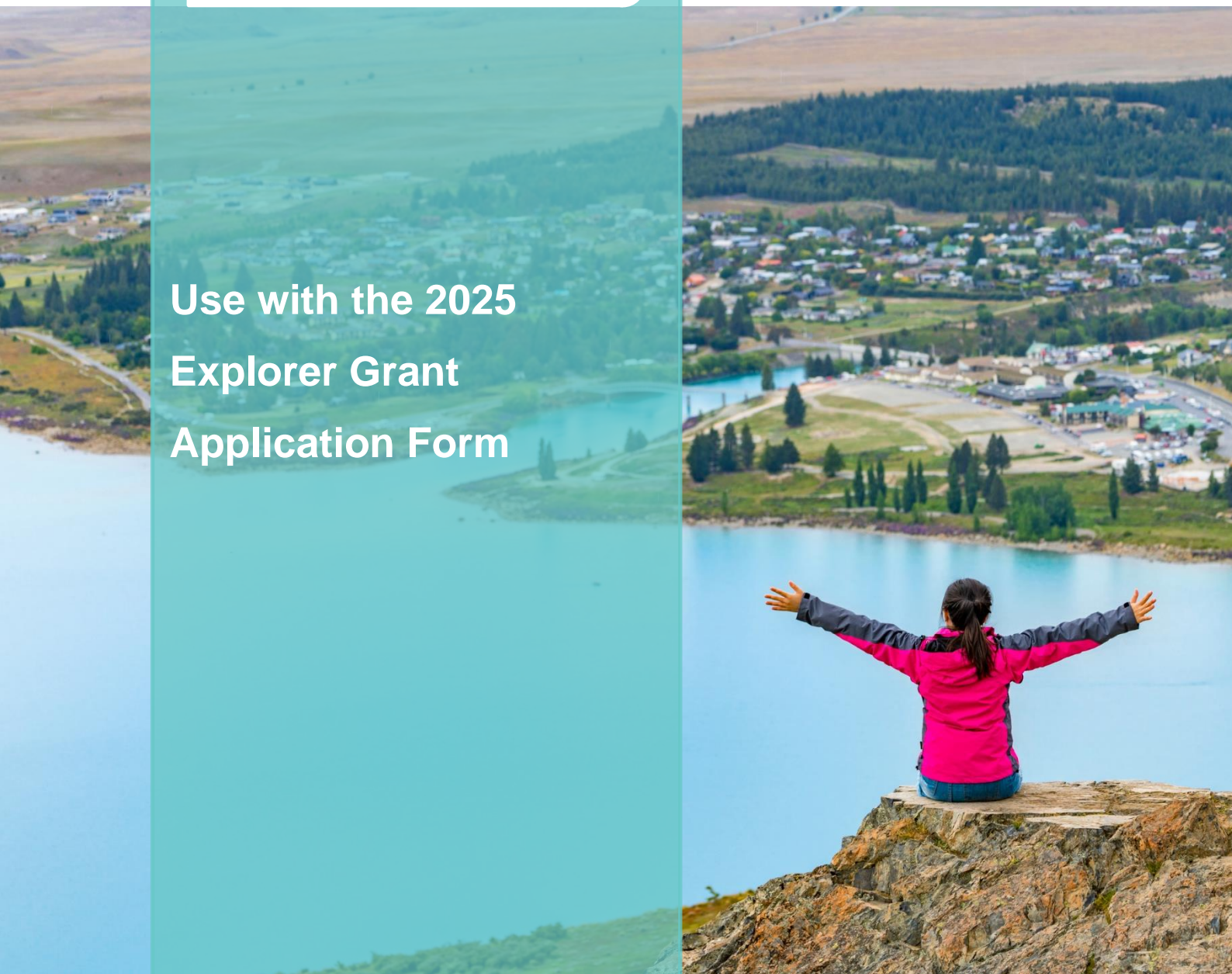


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Part 1: 2025 HRC Explorer Grant – key information and requirements

Part 1 sets out the requirements for the HRC Explorer Grant, including:

- information about the HRC’s priorities
- information about the grant, including the maximum value and duration
- eligibility criteria that applicants must meet
- an overview of the application process and requirements, including key dates
- an overview of the assessment process and assessment criteria.

Parts 2 and 3 contain instructions for applicants on submitting an application, including administrative requirements and how to demonstrate that the requirements for funding are met.

1.1 Introduction

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) Explorer Grants provide seed support for transformative research in areas of priority and opportunity for New Zealand at an early stage, prior to an application for greater investment through standard funding mechanisms.

Transformative research has the potential to radically change our knowledge base by disrupting our understanding of existing theories or concepts, or by creating a new paradigm or pathway to a new field¹. Transformative research is not restricted by discipline and can include any health-related research in the basic, clinical, behavioural, social, public health, kaupapa Māori, Māori health, Pacific health, and translational sciences. Transformative research encompasses novel hypotheses, methods, tools, technologies, and/or conceptual frameworks.

Assessment will focus on the research idea; your identity will not be disclosed to the assessing committee. Please do **NOT** name the investigator(s) or host organisation in the body of the application. Instead, describe your skills, experience, and details of your research environment without directly referring to the people and the host organisation involved.

The process of selecting successful applications will not be the same as that for other HRC contracts. All applications that meet the eligibility criteria will be assessed for compatibility with the scheme’s intent; applications will not be scored or ranked. All applications that are considered eligible and compatible will be considered equally eligible to receive funding, and a random process will be used to select the applications that are 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](#).

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 needs².

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 healthcare³. A key focus for the science system is to harness the benefits of research and innovation to drive economic transformation.

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

² Areas of highest health need and communities with the highest health needs are identified in the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027.

³ 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.

1.3 Value

- HRC Explorer Grants have a term of up to 24 months and a budget of up to \$150,000.
- Funding is available for research working expenses only. Note: Salary for named investigators and other research personnel, and stipends for Masters or PhD students, cannot be funded under Explorer Grants.

1.4 Eligibility criteria

You can apply as a first named investigator if you have New Zealand as your principal domicile (see definition in the HRC Rules) and your principal place of employment⁴.

In addition, your application must have your host organisation's support. The host organisation submitting the application will be taken as agreeing to cover research costs other than those supported by the HRC.

1.5 Explorer Grant categories

When applying, you need to choose one of the following categories:

- **General:** Supporting excellent ideas and innovations proposed by researchers, designed to improve health outcomes for New Zealanders.
- **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.
- **Rangahau Hauora Māori:** Supporting Māori health research that contributes to Māori health gains, upholds rangatiratanga and uses and advances Māori knowledge, resources, and people.
- **Pacific:** Making significant improvements in, or developing knowledge contributing to, improved Pacific health outcomes.

Applications can only be submitted to one category. The HRC does not provide advice on which category you should choose. You may change your final choice of category by creating duplicate applications and deciding on the most appropriate category before the closing date for registration.

1.6 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. All applications submitted after this limit has been reached will be withdrawn.

1.7 Key dates

Event	Description	Due date
Explorer Grant opens	Explorer Grant opens in HRC Gateway	1pm, 1 October 2024
Explorer Grant closes	Complete online sections & upload 2025 Explorer Grant Application Form	1pm, 5 November 2024
Explorer Grant results	Outcome	Late April 2025

1.7.1 Submission deadline

Please submit your application to HRC Gateway by **1pm, 5 November 2024**. 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.

⁴ 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.

Part 2. General rules for submitting an Explorer Grant application

2.1 Preparation

2.1.1 HRC Gateway account

You will need an HRC Gateway account to apply for an Explorer Grant. 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 Before submitting an application

Before submitting an application, please read the following resources:

- 2025 Explorer Grant Application Guidelines (this document)
- [Government Policy Statement on Health \(2024-2027\)](#)
- [New Zealand Health Research Strategy \(2017-2027\)](#)
- [New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework](#)
- [HRC Research Ethics Guidelines](#)
- [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](#)
- [Rangahau Hauora Māori Investment Stream details](#)⁵
- [Health Delivery Research Investment Signal](#)⁶
- [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.

2.1.3 Forms

Use the **2025 Explorer Grant Application Form** when submitting an Explorer Grant application in any category.

The HRC templates for these forms must be downloaded from the 2025 Explorer Grant information page on HRC Gateway. Do not use any other templates; these documents have special features required for HRC to process them. The application form should be completed in Microsoft Word, and the budget form should be completed in Microsoft Excel. Once completed, upload these documents to your application in HRC Gateway.

Note: The application form must be uploaded as a PDF.

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 Explorer Grant requirements.

⁵ Only if applying to Rangahau Hauora Māori category.

⁶ Only if applying to the Health Delivery category.

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) as 'supporting documents' on HRC Gateway, and avoid using 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.
6. For Explorer Grant applications, do not name the investigator(s) or host organisation in the application form.

2.3 Privacy provisions

The assessment process will focus on the research idea. Your identity will not be disclosed to the assessing committee.

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

2.3.3 Media release

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 technologies⁷ 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)

⁷ 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.

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

Part 3. Completing and submitting an Explorer Grant application

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 Explorer Grant consists of five modules.

Module 1 'General information' must be completed in HRC Gateway. You need to register your application to receive an HRC Reference ID#. This registration step must be approved by your host organisation's research office (if it has one) to complete and submit the full application.

Complete Module 2 'Research' and Module 3 'References' in the **2025 Explorer Grant Application Form** (Microsoft Word template).

Module 4 'Contract information and Budget' is only required if you have been offered a contract.

Module 5 'Research classification' is for HRC evaluation purposes only and is completed on HRC Gateway.

Once you have completed your application form, upload it to HRC Gateway as a PDF file. Modules 1-3 will be compiled by HRC Gateway. Before submitting your application, refer to the application checklist at the end of Part 3.

3.1 The 2025 Explorer Grant 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 Explorer Grant Application Form as it contains special features.
- complete all sections following the instructions on the form and described in these guidelines
- enter the HRC Ref ID and Research title 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

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 Explorer Grant information page. The 'Apply now' 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.

1st step

Explorer Grant category

Select a category for the Explorer Grant.

The HRC cannot re-assign applications that are entered into the wrong category. If you wish to change categories while applying, please register for and submit a new application in the correct category.

Research title

The research title should be succinct, written in plain language and clearly describe the proposed project. Where metaphorical or technical terms are used, they should also be clearly explained so the purpose and focus of the research can be easily understood by a lay audience. 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 funded proposals, in consultation with the first named investigator.

Host organisation

The host organisation is the organisation 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 organisation is the University of Otago.

Select the relevant 'Host organisation' from the drop-down list (this shows host organisations currently recognised by the HRC). A specific Research Office and Research Office contact can be selected, if applicable.

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 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.

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). Please update the profile details if they are not current. The details listed on the application will be automatically refreshed after the 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.

Third step

Click 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 named investigator before submitting the application so that the current details are in the application. 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 project (1-2 sentences max).

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

Note: Information on ethnicity, iwi, and whether the researcher is a clinician or practising clinician do not need to be entered as these details will automatically populate from the individual's profile.

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.

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

Research location(s)

This is the 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 in months, up to 24 months.

Type of research

Choose 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 contracts cannot be activated until 1 July 2025. Recipients are required to begin within three months of the contract being offered.

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 no 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.

You 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. The HRC reserves the right to amend the lay summary, in consultation with the first named investigator.

Research costs

Budget information is not required when submitting an Explorer Grant application. Budget information will only be required from successful Explorer Grant applicants offered a contract. Explorer Grants are worth \$150,000 (excluding GST) and provide funding for research working expenses only.

Objectives and milestones

Objectives and milestones are 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 this research application. Objectives should relate to the overall goal or aim of the research. The HRC suggests a minimum of 3 objectives, 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 your 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	Register clinical trial prospectively in ANZCTR	Objective 1,2
1	Gain ethics approval for clinical trial	Objective 1,2
2	Recruit 20 participants to clinical trial	Objective 1
2	Complete recruitment to clinical trial (20 total)	Objective 1
2	Complete statistical analysis of clinical trial	Objective 2

3.3 Module 2: Research

Due to the grant's anonymised nature, you must **NOT** name the investigator(s) or host in the body of the application. Instead, describe the skills, experience, and research environment without directly referring to the people and host organisation involved.

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

This section should clearly summarise the research proposal. Reviewers use this section to get an overview of your application and as a quick reference. Include all the important points of your application but keep this section to only one page long. Use the suggested headings and add subheadings if required.

3.3.2 Section 2B: Description of proposed research

Give an overall description of your application. Your audience includes discipline-specific peer reviewers 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. Refer to [Appendix 1: Explorer Grant Assessment process](#) for details on the application assessment criteria. 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.

Transformative nature of the research (3-page limit)

The transformative research description below maintains the core elements of the National Science Foundation's definition of transformative research⁸ (applied in previous years) and includes additional elements relevant to health research in 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:

- has the potential to radically change our knowledge base by disrupting our understanding of existing theories or concepts, OR has the potential to create a new paradigm or pathway to a new field⁹
- is not restricted by discipline, and can include any health-related research in the basic, clinical, behavioural, social, public health, kaupapa Māori, Māori health, Pacific 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 question¹⁰, 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.

⁸ a range of endeavours which promise extraordinary outcomes, such as: revolutionising entire disciplines; creating entirely new fields; or disrupting accepted theories and perspectives – in other words, those endeavours which have the potential to change the way we address challenges in science, engineering, and innovation.

⁹ https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/documents/2007/tr_report.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR506.html

The proposal should not be for an idea that 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, given the anonymised nature of the Explorer Grants, **explicit details on who is on the research team and any key relationships cannot be provided**. Instead, provide general information on the skills and knowledge these individuals and relationships will bring.

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:

1. How will your research outcomes 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?

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.

Note: As the application assessment process will focus on the research idea, your identity will not be disclosed to the assessing committee. This includes assessing Māori Health Advancement. You must **NOT** name investigator(s), iwi, Māori communities or Māori organisations contributing to the research. Instead, describe the skills, experience and details of the relationships (if applicable) without directly referring 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 New Zealand, and (2) the action plan to maximise the use and benefits of the research.

Consider how your research will contribute to HRC's priorities and how it will help achieve the strategic goals outlined in the New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017-2024, the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework, and the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027.

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. There is no limit to the number of reference pages. **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.

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

3.5 Module 4: Contract information and budget

Budget information is not required when submitting an Explorer Grant application. Budget information 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: Salary for named investigators and other research personnel, and stipends for Masters or PhD students, cannot be funded under the Explorer Grant.

Note: The proportion of contract budget allocated to overseas costs must not exceed 20%.

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:

- Research consumables (these should be itemised at the current cost per unit and the full cost for the 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 and justified.
- 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 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.
- Disseminating research results. Contract funds can be used to pay 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 if reasonable and justified.
- Casual research staff without an ongoing role or commitment to the research may be included and justified (the hourly rate must be provided and the total cost for the number of hours required).
- 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 will not be supported as research working expenses, and for the purposes of the Explorer Grant, are considered the host organisation's 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
- all library charges

Note: You will need to have your host organisation's support to share in the costs of the research, by covering the named 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.

3.6 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.

3.6.1 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 research.

3.6.2 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.

3.6.3 Health Issues

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

3.6.4 Mapping Category

Enter the requested information on HRC Gateway (select one). 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.

Mapping Category	Description
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: Explorer Grant 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 applications received by the HRC are assessed using a three-step assessment process to determine eligibility, compatibility, and funding selection. All applications that meet the eligibility criteria will be assessed by the Explorer Grant Assessing Committee (EGAC) for compatibility with the scheme's intent; applications 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 which applications are offered funding.

The process used to assess Explorer Grant is quite different from other assessment processes:

Step 1 – Confirm the application is eligible to be considered for funding

Applications will be reviewed by the HRC Investment Process Coordinator and the assessing committee chair before being reviewed by the full assessing committee. Clearly ineligible proposals will not be assessed or discussed by the full committee.

The following criteria **must** be met for an application 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 their host organisation's support. The submission of the application by the host will be taken as an agreement to cover research costs other than those supported by the HRC.
- The application must conform to the prescribed format.

Step 2 – Confirm the application is compatible with the Explorer Grant's intent

The purpose of this step is to eliminate any applications that do not meet the Explorer Grant's intent, not to determine a score or a rank order of applications. A panel of assessors will be appointed by the HRC Investment Coordinator. All eligible applications will be assigned to a subpanel of 3 members, who will be asked to review applications and confirm (not score) 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 subpanel will apply the core elements of the USA National Science Board's definition of transformative research¹¹, 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.¹²

¹¹ 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

¹² https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/documents/2007/tr_report.pdf

- is not restricted by discipline and can include any health-related research in the basic, clinical, behavioural, social, public health, kaupapa Māori, Māori health, Pacific 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.¹³
- may be interdisciplinary.
- is likely to be untested and lacking supporting data.
- is not incremental - a next step or extension to current research.

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

2. The application is exploratory but viable

The subpanel must decide by majority that the application is viable. The assessing subpanel 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 application is likely to advance Māori health

The subpanel must decide by majority that the proposal is likely to advance Māori health. The subpanel will consider whether applicants have described how their research could lead to improved Māori health and the activities undertaken to address Māori health advancement (as appropriate to the scope and context of the research). Applicants cannot name investigator(s), Iwi, Māori communities or Māori organisations contributing to the research. Instead, applicants should describe the skills, experience and details of the relationships (if applicable) without directly referring to the people, communities and organisations involved.

Each member will return their judgement about the three criteria for each assigned research application, along with a supporting statement to justify how the transformative criterion is or is not met. Applications for which there is unanimous agreement that all three criteria are met will enter the pool of potentially fundable applications.

- If there is unanimous agreement that the application does not meet the Transformative criterion or Māori health advancement criterion, the application will be considered not fundable.
- If the majority of the assessing panel agree that the application meets the Transformative criterion and the Māori health advancement criterion, the application will be discussed and assessed at the EGAC meeting. Other proposals can be nominated ('rescued') by the EGAC members to be discussed at the meeting.

The subpanel members will have the opportunity to discuss applications for which there are discrepancies of opinion about the three criteria at a subpanel meeting. After discussion, these applications will be re-evaluated by each subpanel member. The applications 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.

Step 3 – Randomly select applications to receive funding

¹³ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR506.html

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

2. HRC Explorer Grant Assessing Committee (EGAC)

The 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)
- the 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 must 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 cannot sit on EGAC if they are a named investigator on an Explorer Grant application.

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