Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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

2025 NZ–China Biomedical Research Alliance Application Guidelines

May 2025

Use with the 2025 NZ–China Biomedical Research Alliance Application Form

Part 1. HRC 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Request for Proposals

1.1   Introduction

This research initiative aims to support the development of research collaborations between New Zealand researchers and China-based colleagues. It is supported through the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment's (MBIE) Catalyst Fund: Strategic. The Health Research Council (HRC) is responsible for administering a portion of the Catalyst Fund: Strategic investment with a focus on biomedical research to support the development of collaborative research relationships that demonstrate long-term health and economic benefits to New Zealand. The Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) and the HRC, together with MBIE, are jointly responsible for the funding decisions. HRC funding will support the successful New Zealand project team, and MoST's funding will support the Chinese project team in the same collaboration.

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 needs[1].

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 healthcare[2]. 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 $810,000 (exclusive of GST) is available annually to fund a maximum of 2 research projects each year.

The HRC invites applications for funding of up to $405,000 (exclusive of GST) and duration of up to 3 years. The HRC anticipates funding up to two projects if the associated collaborator projects are also shortlisted by MoST.

There is a limit of **one** application per 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 employment[3].
- Submit only one application to this round as the first named investigator. The HRC will withdraw any applications once this limit has been reached.
- Have identified suitable research collaborators from a leading China-based research organisation(s).
- 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.

---

[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.

1.5   Key dates

Event	Description	Due date
Funding round opens	Applicants are invited to register	1pm, 1 May 2025
Registrations close	Registrations to be completed by this date	1pm, 29 May 2025
Full application due	Complete the full application via HRC Gateway	1pm, 3 July 2025
Pre-scoring	Applications pre-scored by assessing committee	Mid July – Mid August 2025
Applicants notified of application status	Applicants notified whether application will progress to full assessment	Late August 2025
Peer review period	Highest scoring applications proceed to external peer review	Late August – Mid October 2025
Applicant rebuttal opens	Applicants invited to provide a rebuttal to reviewers' comments	1pm, 22 October 2025
Applicant rebuttal closes	Rebuttal period closes	1pm, 5 Nov 2025
Committee assessment	Applications assessed by committee	Late November 2025
Results	Outcomes confirmed by HRC, MBIE and MoST	From March 2025

1.5.1 Submission deadline

Please submit your application to HRC Gateway by **3 July 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.

1.6   Grant contract and reporting

- The standard HRC research contract will be used for this grant.
- For new host organisations, due diligence will be undertaken prior to contracting. The HRC will provide further information and relevant forms for the organisation to complete following a successful outcome for the application.
- It is anticipated that funding will be available from **April 2026**, however, there may be unavoidable delays to the funding announcement and the start date of the research project.
- All recipients of a NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance grant are required to submit annual progress reports, an end of contract report within three months of the contract end date, and post-contract reports due two and five years after the completion of this contract.
- All recipients of a NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance grant are required to participate in an HRC-led evaluation during and after completion of their grant, as applicable.

Part 2. General rules for submitting an NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance application

2.1 Preparation

2.1.1 HRC Gateway account

You will need an HRC Gateway account to apply for the NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance 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 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance application:

- 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Application Form (Microsoft Word template)
- 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Budget Form (Microsoft Excel template)

2.1.3 Before submitting an application

Before submitting an application, please read the following resources:
- 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Application Guidelines (this document)
- 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Request for Proposals
- Government Policy Statement on Health (2024-2027)
- New Zealand Health Research Strategy (2017-2027)
- New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework
- 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 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance 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).

When applying, 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 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, your application 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 technologies[4] 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 a registration

When applying, you must first submit a registration via HRC Gateway. This step generates an HRC reference number to use on the application form. The information you enter as part of the registration will form Module 1 of your full application.

Once you have submitted your registration, it is forwarded via HRC Gateway to your host organisation's Research Office. Your Research Office will need to approve the registration and then forward it to the HRC. **Always allow sufficient time near the registration closing date for these steps**. If you are applying from an independent organisation or if your host organisation does not have a Research Office, your registration will be automatically forwarded to the HRC.

Note: All named investigators must have an HRC Gateway account to be included in your application. Named investigators will be able to be added after a registration has been submitted and before the full application is submitted.

Incomplete or late registrations will not be accepted.

Completing the registration

This Module must be completed in HRC Gateway. Start the application process by clicking the 'Apply now' button on the 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance 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. **All members named on the research team must be added to this application on HRC Gateway and will be included in Module 1**. 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.

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. It is anticipated that funding will be available from 1 April 2026 however there may be unavoidable delays to the funding announcement and the start date of the research project.

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.

Nominated impartial peer reviewers

You must nominate at least two individuals to peer review your application. Nominated peer reviewers are not references to support the application. Nominated external peer reviewers (local or

international) will undergo due diligence and conflicts of interest checks and invited by the HRC to carry out peer review of full applications. They should **not** be people that may be compromised in their assessment of applications due to a conflict of interest such as having a professional, working, collegial or personal relationship with an applicant or a current collaborator of any of the named investigators. Ideally, the nominated peer reviewers should not be at the same institution as the named investigators.

Unacceptable peer reviewers

You can identify up to two individuals or research groups that would be unacceptable to review your application. An individual or research group may be unacceptable as a reviewer because: 1) they are competitors, 2) there is a conflict of interest, 3) there are commercially sensitive issues. Click the 'Update' button to enter the name, organisation, and reason for exclusion

Chinese collaborators

Click on 'Add collaborator' to update your collaborators from China-based research organisation(s). Collaborators do not need to be registered HRC Gateway users.

Update the collaborator's title, name, organisation and country in the text box. Select whether it is in-kind or indicate the value of any funding for this research provided by the collaborator in New Zealand dollars. For **collaboration purpose**, select one of the following options: Research; Commercialisation; Knowledge transfer, and provide details of the collaboration in the textbox.

Part 4: Submitting an application – Completion of the application form

4.1 The 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Request for Proposals (RFP) 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 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Application Form as it contains special features.
- Complete all sections following the instructions on the form and described in these guidelines
- Ensure you have completed all instructions by ticking the boxes at the beginning of the application form.
- 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.

Details on where to complete each Module are summarised in the table below.

Module/Section	Action required
Cover sheet	Complete in **2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Request for Proposals (RFP) Application Form** (Microsoft Word template) – this section is removed by HRC Gateway once you have submitted your completed application.
Module 1	Complete in HRC Gateway
Module 2	Complete in application form (Microsoft Word template)
Module 3	Complete in application form (Microsoft Word template)
Module 4: Sections 4A-4C	Complete in application form (Microsoft Word template)
Module 4: Section 4D	Upload supporting documents as separate PDF files to HRC Gateway
Module 4: Sections 4E-4G	Complete in **2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Request for Proposals (RFP) Budget Form** (Microsoft Excel spreadsheet)
Module 5	Upload CVs as separate PDF files to HRC Gateway
Module 6	Complete in HRC Gateway

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

4.2 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 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance 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. This module incorporates the registration information, with some additional fields required at the full application stage. Some fields may be editable or updated from registration.

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.

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 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 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

4.3 Module 2: Research

4.3.1 Section 2A: 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.

4.3.2 Section 2B: Description of proposed research (7-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.

Rationale for research

Demonstrate that you have adequately reviewed what is already known in the area and that there is a clear case for further research. For example, refer to systematic reviews or an otherwise robust demonstration of a research gap. Include information that you feel is essential for the reader to better

appreciate or understand why you feel your proposed research should be undertaken. What is the significant/important gap in knowledge or what is the potential to advance knowledge in the field or health issue, policy, practice or service delivery that your research will address? How does your research contribute to, or align with, research currently being undertaken either nationally or internationally? Where does your proposed research fit relative to the world-wide perspective? For example, is it unique to New Zealand? Do your hypotheses build on existing knowledge? How original is the approach? What is the significance of the health issue for New Zealand health and society? Has responsiveness to Māori been considered?

Fit with Request for Proposals

The relevance and contributions of this research application to the aims and objectives of the RFP must be clearly expressed. For example, what is the significance and contribution of the research to this research field; where relevant, how could the research impact upon health policy and/or the provision of health services? Rather than wasting valuable space with large amounts of background information on the general health problem, focus on how your research will address the problem and/or develop new knowledge.

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 might include a description of sample recruitment and characteristics (including number, gender and ethnicity where relevant), study methodology, and proposed methods of data collection and analysis. Where appropriate, it is essential to provide power calculations and an estimate of the likely effect size and the sample size required to detect this (power analysis), after consultation/involvement with a statistician. Clinical trial applications (see Appendix 1) are to include a description of statistical guidelines for early termination and a description of data and safety monitoring arrangements, where appropriate. Basic science applications are encouraged to provide control data to aid with committee assessment. In addition, applicants should provide evidence that mouse models have been generated (even if not in house) and viable if transgenic/knock out mice. 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 DMC 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/data-monitoring-core-committee).

Indication of timelines for the research should be included. Consultation with specialists such as methodologists, 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).

The Assessing Committee needs this information to judge and appropriately score this criterion, so ensure that the practicalities are clearly stated, i.e. what will be done, how, by whom, where and when. Assessing committees are also reassured when methodologies have been used/trialled before.

Responsiveness to Māori

Consideration should be given to how the research will contribute to the health needs of Māori, recognising that the most appropriate approach to advancing Māori health will vary by the type of research and consideration should be context-specific, as determined by the nature and scope of the research. For example, how might your research contribute to the health needs of Māori? What is the health significance and context of this research to Māori? Discuss the incidence or prevalence in Māori, or indicate if not known to be significantly different from the general population. Are you partnering or engaging with Māori, or have you sought advice for the study from a Māori researcher/representative? Does the research team have the required skills and expertise, and builds capability and capacity of the Māori health research workforce?

Dissemination of results and knowledge transfer

Provide full details of your proposed dissemination strategy. As all partnership initiatives are designed to contribute to an evidence base in key areas of need, and strengthen the links between policy and practice, this should include how the research results will be underlined appropriately disseminated to the following end-users:

- Policy-makers, professional colleagues, health service funders and providers, the general public, study participants, iwi and other important groups.

As well as peer-reviewed publications, dissemination examples include leaflets, reports, workshops, participant newsletters, guidelines, hui and public meetings, conference presentations and mass media items as appropriate. Processes for ensuring that all information is tailored to the needs of the intended audience, so that research findings can be of maximum utility, should be fully detailed. Describe how knowledge transfer activities have been integrated into the research plan. Specify who is responsible for any key knowledge transfer activities. **Expenses associated with certain dissemination activities may be included in your budget (Module 4E) but must be included in the budget justification section.**

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, knowledge, and networks and collaborations within healthcare; 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.

Partnership

Describe how the international partnership will enable a unique research contribution that has the potential to advance the field further due to the collaborative nature. Provide details of how the partnership will enhance the transfer of new knowledge and/or technologies and build New Zealand research capacity to address global health research priorities.

4.4　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 with brief interpretation and any technical terms in the application should be included here.

4.5　Module 4: Contract information and Budget

4.5.1　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, for example if in a mentorship role.
- 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.

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.

4.5.2 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 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.

4.5.3 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.

4.5.4 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.

Additional documents such as protocols, other funding applications and CVs should not be included. There is a limit of 15 letters of collaboration/support documents. Your uploaded documents will be added to the end of your application.

4.5.5 Section 4E: Research proposal budget

Use the 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance budget form available on HRC Gateway. Further instructions are contained in the Notes tab of the file. Please complete all modules and then upload the budget form as both .xlsx and PDF formats to your application in HRC Gateway.

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. If your host organisation has not submitted an application to the HRC before, please contact the HRC for information on overhead rates.

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.'

4.5.6 Section 4F: Subcontracts/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.

4.5.7 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).

4.6   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 RST 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.

4.7   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.

ANZSRC Field of research and Socioeconomic objective

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%.

Keywords

Enter keywords that categorise the area of health or health research that your application is connected to.

Health research domains

Please provide at least one health research domain from the list. You may provide a maximum of 2 domains.
- Domain 1: Healthy people, whānau and communities
- Domain 2: People-centred healthcare
- Domain 3: Meeting our needs in a changing world
- Domain 4: Connected government and systems

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.

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.

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	
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).
Diagnostics	This includes innovations and the development/refinement of new or existing diagnostic tools.
Gene	Research into the genetic basis of disease, identification of genes involved. Linkage analysis falls here and not under clinical studies.
Pharmaceuticals /treatments	This includes the development of new pharmaceuticals (drug design and development) as well as new treatments for diseases (e.g. vaccines, other therapies).
Physiology	This includes all physiology and anatomy. Animal models of disease are included in this category, and studies on host-pathogen interactions.
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	
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.
Health economics	Research into the cost-effectiveness of treatments/services etc.
Public health	
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.
Interventions	Research that includes the design and evaluation of interventions.
Knowledge resources	This includes all epidemiology, underpinning social science (qualitative and quantitative), development of tools and new methodologies, and development of indicators.
Risk factors	Research linking life experiences, behaviours, exposures etc. with health outcomes.

Appendix 2: Assessment criteria and scoring

Applications assessed and scored by external peer reviewers and Assessing Committee members will use the following criteria and anchor point descriptors. The best possible score for any specific application is 35. All assessment and scoring are conducted via HRC Gateway system.

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

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

Criteria	Score
Fit with RFP	7
Scientific merit	7
Design and methods	7
Expertise of the research team	7
Quality of the research partnership	7
Total	**35**

A.   Fit with RFP

Score of 7 The applicants have convincingly demonstrated that the proposed research fully aligns with all the objectives and requirements as stated in the RFP. The proposal clearly conveys a thorough understanding of the objectives and requirements and has outlined how the components of the RFP will be addressed.

Score of 4 The applicants have attempted to align the proposed research with the objectives and
requirements as stated in the RFP. The proposal does not address all the objectives and requirements or does not sufficiently address all the objectives and requirements to provide the desired outcomes of the RFP. The proposal conveys an understanding of the requirements and has attempted to outline how the components of the RFP will be addressed.

Score of 1 The applicants have not aligned the proposed research with the objectives and requirements to provide the desired outcomes of the RFP. The proposal conveys no understanding of the objectives and requirements of the RFP.

B.   Scientific merit

Score of 7 The rationale for the proposed research is extremely well made. The aims and (where appropriate) hypotheses are excellent. The proposed research may represent a highly original and innovative approach to addressing the health question. Original findings are highly likely to result.

Score of 4 The rationale for the study is well made. The aims and (where appropriate) hypotheses are acceptable. Original findings may result.

Score of 1 The rationale, aims and hypotheses for the study are poor or absent. Original findings are unlikely to result.

C.   Design and methods

Score of 7   The proposed study design is excellent. The methods and proposed analyses are very comprehensive and clearly appropriate. The applicants demonstrate full awareness of the relevant technical issues. The statistical power (where appropriate) is sufficient to ensure a definitive outcome and the statistical analyses are well-developed. It is difficult to suggest improvements.

Score of 4   The study design is adequate. There may be either insufficient detail for parts of the method and proposed analyses, or the study would benefit significantly by improvements in one or more of these areas.

Score of 1   The study design is unacceptable as proposed. Either the design is inappropriate, or there is no (or very little) detail on the methodology and proposed analyses.

D.	**Expertise of the research team**

Score of 7   The research team collectively have outstanding academic qualifications, as well as excellent topic-based knowledge and experience to undertake the proposed research. They have an outstanding publication track record in major peer reviewed scientific journals as well as other professional publications, and/or substantial experience in disseminating research results.

Score of 4   The research team collectively have the academic qualifications, topic-based knowledge, and experience to undertake the proposed research. They have a track record of publication in peer reviewed scientific journals and other professional publications, and/or experience in disseminating research results. There are some areas, however, where this has not been fully demonstrated.

Score of 1   The research team collectively have inadequate and/or inappropriate academic qualifications or research backgrounds to undertake the proposed research. They collectively have a weak publication record and there are serious doubts as to whether the research will be completed and disseminated appropriately

---

E.	**Quality of the research partnership**

Score of 7   The partnership will enable a unique research contribution that has the potential to advance the field further due to the collaborative nature. Excellent opportunities for capability building of researchers, including early career researchers, is provided for. Diversity of gender and ethnicity within the team are considered. The partnership will enhance the transfer of new knowledge and/or technologies and build New Zealand research capacity to address global health research priorities. The collaboration will extend the impact and reach of New Zealand research and provide opportunities to advance to higher levels of research excellence.

Score of 4   The partnership detailed in this application may provide opportunities for contributions to existing research, training and development of New Zealand researchers and/or collaborative research in this area. There are some areas where the quality of the partnership has not been fully demonstrated or could be strengthened.

Score of 1   The proposed partnership detailed in this application is inadequate and/or unacceptable. There is very little detail and/or there are serious doubts as to the quality of this partnership or the opportunities this research may provide.

Appendix 3: Assessment process for 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance RFP

1. Overview

NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance RFP applications are assessed in several steps:

1.1 Assessing Committee independent scoring and triage

An Assessing Committee will be formed, and each member will be allocated a sub-set of applications to assess and score independently as per the HRC assessment criteria. Scores will be ranked and only the 10 highest-ranking applications will progress to the next step of the assessment process. Applications which do not progress at this stage will be triaged and will not continue to full assessment. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application when this step is complete.

1.2 Peer review and applicant rebuttal

The scientific integrity of the ten highest-ranked applications will be assessed through an external peer-review process managed by the HRC. This involves comprehensive peer review by independent national and international experts. Applicants are given the opportunity to view the peer-review reports for their application and provide a rebuttal to the comments made.

1.3 Assessing Committee assessment

The Assessing Committee will meet to discuss and assess the 10 highest-ranked applications, taking into consideration the peer-review reports and applicant rebuttal. The Assessing Committee will make recommendations for funding to be considered and approved by the HRC. This shortlist of fundable applications will then be compared with the shortlist of fundable applications provided by MoST. A maximum of two proposals can be funded annually; both of which must appear in the shortlist for the HRC and for MoST, and then be confirmed for funding by the HRC, MBIE and MoST. The highest-quality and highest-ranked matches will be offered funding.

2. HRC Assessing Committees

Applications submitted to the 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance RFP will be assessed by a multidisciplinary 2025 NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Assessing Committee.

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.

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.

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.   Assessing committee preliminary independent score

Committee members (based on their own reading of the applications) will be required to undertake pre-scoring of a sub-set of applications assigned to them and allocate scores using the assessment criteria in Appendix 2.

The HRC will collate average scores for the applications and only the 10 highest-ranking applications will proceed to full assessment, after discussion with the committee chair(s). Applications which do not rank in the top ten will not proceed further in the assessment process and will be notified once this decision has been made.

5.   Peer Review

External reviewers score the full applications on the 7-point scale, provide comments, and ask questions for each of the scoring criteria.

Reviewer reports are available for applicants' rebuttals (applicant's rebuttal template in Appendix 4). The review reports and applicants' rebuttals are sent to the assessing committee before the meeting. The HRC aims to obtain 3-4 reviewer reports for each application. Once the HRC has received 4 reviewer reports, any additional reports will be cancelled on the following basis: where a clear major conflict of interest exists, the report is of exceptionally poor quality, or the report was the last received by the HRC. A fifth reviewer report may be accepted if the reviewer's expertise was explicitly needed for a specific component of the research application (and a peer review report covering that component had yet to be secured). It is the HRC's role to coordinate and oversee all communications with the reviewers. Committee members and applicants should **not** contact reviewers.

The applicant rebuttal is an opportunity for applicants to respond to comments or questions raised by the external reviewers. The rebuttal should address the main issues raised by the reviewers, remain objective and avoid emotional responses.

Applicants do not know who provided the external reviewer reports. However, this information is available to the assessing committee.

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 for each application is 20-25 minutes, as follows:
- Declaration conflicts of interest – 1 minute
- Committee Reviewer comments – 5 minutes
- Discussion of the application – 10-15 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 as per the criteria listed in Appendix 2: Assessment criteria. 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 Shortlist approval

The NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance Assessing Committee results and recommendations are provided to the HRC Council for funding approval.

8.4 Shortlist matching

The NZ-China Biomedical Research Alliance shortlist of fundable applications is compared against the MoST shortlist of fundable applications. A maximum of two of the highest ranked and matched collaborations will be approved for funding.

9. Feedback to applicants

At the end of the funding round, you can access your application outcome via the HRC Gateway. If your application progressed as one of the top 10 highest scoring applications, 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 5 for a review summary template.

Appendix 4: Applicant rebuttal template

Applicant surname		HRC reference #	
Funding round		Due date	
Title of research			

Instructions (delete after reading): The project application rebuttal has a 2-page limit, which includes references. Please ensure you address all the issues raised by reviewers and remain objective in your response. Do not change the default margins and font (size 11), although you can write in bold and underline for emphasis. Try to leave spaces to improve legibility.

This form is provided on HRC Gateway.

Appendix 5: Assessing Committee review summary

HRC reference #		First named investigator's surname	
Title of research			
Host			

Note to committee reviewer (CR): Please write **brief bullet points** and carefully consider the information and wording provided below as it will be useful for both successful applicants (in helping to shape their research) and for unsuccessful applicants (in preparing future research applications). Comments should be clearly worded, reflect the committee's discussion, and ideally be no more than one page or 4-6 bullet points total. Please delete this text before you submit the completed form to the HRC.

With regard to the criteria for assessing and scoring research applications:

1.   The Assessing Committee noted the following key strengths of the application

2.   The Assessing Committee noted the following aspects that could be improved and/or considered further

3.   Other comments/suggestions (e.g. budgets, FTE, objectives)