



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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

2026 Explorer Grant Application Guidelines

November 2025

**Use with the 2026
Explorer Grant
Application Form**



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Part 1: 2026 HRC Explorer Grant – key information and requirements

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

- information about the HRC's requirements
- 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, before 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 field.¹ 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 Health research priorities (NEW)

New Zealand's investment in health research must contribute to achieving the goals of the health system and the innovation, technology and science system.² The HRC is the principal government funder of health research.

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

² <https://www.health.govt.nz/about-us/new-zealands-health-system/health-system-roles-and-organisations/crown-health-entities/letters-of-expectations-for-health-statutory-entities>

For the health system, the Government is committed to improving health outcomes by providing New Zealanders with timely access to high-quality health services.³ A key focus for the science system is to harness the benefits of research and innovation to drive economic transformation. The Government wants to ensure that the research it funds is progressing its priorities, and that they have a clear pathway to translate new ideas into successful commercial enterprise.⁴ Therefore, it is important for researchers and research organisations to identify how research to be funded by the HRC will add value and contribute to these goals and wider system performance.

1.3 HRC requirements (NEW)

All HRC investment must have a clear line of sight to improving health outcomes for all New Zealanders.

HRC-funded research must meet the following requirements:

- Research must be focused on health and improving health outcomes and/or the health system, where health outcomes are defined as:
 - absence or reduction of disease, symptoms or morbidity, and/or
 - timely access to quality healthcare, for all New Zealanders, including strengthening prevention of disease and injury, earlier diagnosis, earlier patient-specific (precision) intervention, and new and improved models of care, or medicines, treatments and cures, and/or
 - longer life expectancy, and/or
 - improved quality of life.
- Research into the causes of ill health, or the determinants of health (e.g. environmental, socio-economic, cultural, and behavioural factors) must demonstrate a pathway to improvements in health outcomes and/or the health system (as defined above).
- The research proposal provides an evidence base when describing areas of high health need and population groups with high health need.⁵

Council makes final decisions on funding, informed by the assessing committee recommendations and taking into consideration Government priorities and the balance of investments across our portfolio.

Please carefully read the 'in scope' and 'out of scope' guidance below before preparing your application.

In scope for the 2026 Explorer Grants

Council will **prioritise opportunities to invest** in research that:

- maximises benefit for healthcare delivery, such as:
 - new models of care and treatments
 - improved effectiveness and efficiency
 - innovation and technology in healthcare, and/or
- demonstrates a pathway to commercialisation, and/or
- enhances the development of clinician-researchers,⁶ and/or

³ The Government Policy Statement on Health (2024-2027) outlines five priority areas; five non-communicable diseases; five modifiable behaviours; five health targets; and five mental health targets.

⁴ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-growth/going-for-growth>

⁵ [CO \(24\) 5: Needs-based Service Provision | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

⁶ A clinician-researcher conducts research and provides clinical services in any setting, under formal work arrangement and is eligible to undertake clinical practice in New Zealand either under the Health Practitioners

- contributes to achievement of the health and/or mental health and addiction targets.⁷

Council funding decisions will align with current priorities to the greatest extent possible, subject to the proposals submitted in a particular funding round.

Out of scope for the 2026 Explorer Grants

This round, the HRC is **NOT** intending to invest in:

- evaluations with a sole focus on audits, surveys, and needs assessments undertaken as part of routine operational practice or as part of a government organisation's performance, accountability, or monitoring activities
- research that describes a health need or community with high health need without providing a clear evidence-base for that need⁸
- research that duplicates research already undertaken overseas (without articulating the additional value of undertaking it in New Zealand)
- social science research that focuses exclusively on determinants of health (e.g. environmental, socio-economic, cultural or behavioural factors) except where it demonstrates a pathway to improvements in health outcomes and/or the health system (see HRC requirements)
- basic research that focuses exclusively on mechanistic pathways except where it demonstrates a pathway to improvements in health outcomes and/or the health system (see HRC requirements).

1.4 Changes made this year (NEW)

The HRC has made changes to the application and assessment processes for the Explorer Grant round. Please carefully read these guidelines to ensure your application meets the requirements for this round.

The changes include:

- Applications involving out-of-scope research types will be withdrawn. Please review **Section 1.3** carefully.
- Successful applicants may now request funding for salary and overheads for named investigators and other research personnel within the maximum budget of \$150,000 (excluding GST).
- Explorer Grant applications will be assessed via independent online scoring (which aligns with the first stage of assessment in previous years). Applications that receive a majority vote that all three score criteria have been met will automatically enter the pool of fundable applications. Applications will not be discussed at an assessing committee meeting.
- Applicants are no longer required to select a research investment stream when applying (e.g. General, Health Delivery, Rangahau Hauora Māori, Pacific health). Applications will continue to be assessed by discipline-specific expertise (e.g. biomedical, clinical, public health).

Competence Act 2003, through registration with the relevant responsible authority, or as a member of Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand.

⁷ The [five health targets](#) are: faster cancer treatment; improved immunisation for children; shorter stays in emergency departments; shorter wait times for first specialist assessment; and shorter wait times for elective treatment.

The [five mental health and addiction targets](#) are: faster access to specialist mental health and addiction services; faster access to primary mental health and addiction services; shorter mental health and addiction-related stays in emergency departments; increased mental health and addiction workforce development; and strengthened focus on prevention and early intervention.

⁸ [CO \(24\) 5: Needs-based Service Provision | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

1.5 Value (NEW)

- 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. Salary and overheads for named investigators and other research personnel can now be claimed.
- Stipends for master's or PhD students cannot be funded under Explorer Grants.

1.6 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 employment.⁹

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.

You can only submit **one** Explorer Grant applications as the first named investigator or co-first named investigator. All additional applications will be withdrawn.

1.7 Key dates

Event	Description	Date
Explorer Grant opens	Explorer Grant opens in HRC Gateway	20 November 2025
Explorer Grant closes	You must complete your application via HRC Gateway by this date	30 January 2026
Decision	Council decision	Late May 2026
Results	Results available on HRC Gateway	June 2026

Submission deadline

Please submit your application to HRC Gateway by **1 pm, 30 January 2026**. Applications will not be accepted **after 1 pm** 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.

⁹ 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

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.

Before submitting an application

Before submitting an application, please read the following resources:

- 2026 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 Assessment 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.

Application Form

Use the **2026 Explorer Grant Application Form** when submitting an Explorer Grant application in any category.

You can download the template from the 2026 Explorer Grant information page on HRC Gateway. Do not use any other templates; otherwise, your application will be withdrawn.

Complete the application form in Microsoft Word. Once completed, upload the document to HRC Gateway as a PDF file.

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.

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.

Consents necessary to carry out research (NEW)

All funding applications approved by the HRC must identify and obtain all consents necessary to carry out the research (including but not limited to all biosafety, regulatory, human and animal ethical consents) at or prior to the time the consent is necessary.

For contract monitoring and HRC accountability reporting, if your research requires biosafety, regulatory, human or animal ethical consents, or clinical trial registration, these must be identified as separate Year 1 milestones, even if you expect to gain these consents before starting the proposed research.

Please refer to your institution's policies or the [website of the Health and Disability Ethics Committees](#) for further guidance.

2.2 Formatting your application

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.

Application formatting compliance

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

Scope compliance

Please review **Section 1.3** carefully, as applications involving out-of-scope research types will be withdrawn.

Please avoid these common pitfalls:

1. Use the correct application form and the stated font sizes and styles.
2. Keep within the stated page and word limits.
3. Ensure your application is anonymous. Your research team and host organisation should not be named in Module 2.
4. 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.

5. 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.
6. Avoid using hyperlinks in the application form. All additional material and hyperlinks will be removed from your application.

If you are new to the HRC application process and need assistance with using HRC Gateway, please contact the HRC. There are also helpful [user guides](#) available.

2.3 Privacy provisions

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 the 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.

Personal information

Personal information contained in the application will not be available to the HRC assessing committees.

Public announcements

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. This may include publishing details on research activities you provide to the HRC in media releases, on the HRC website, in newsletters, and in publications and reporting.

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 first named investigator before responding to the request. Where appropriate, the request may be transferred to the host organisation.

2.4 Additional eligibility requirements

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.

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 all applications for risk related to sensitive technologies,¹⁰ 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.

¹⁰ 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. Completing and submitting an Explorer Grant application

This section contains instructions on how to complete and submit your application. It includes prompts for providing certain information that will be used to score your application.

A full application for a 2026 Explorer Grant consists of five modules.

Module 1 'General information' must be completed in HRC Gateway.

Module 2 'Research' and Module 3 'References' must be completed in the **2026 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 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 checklist in the application form to ensure all requirements have been met.

3.1 The 2026 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 creating it directly in the form.

Please:

- use the original 2026 Explorer Grant Application Form template
- 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 via HRC Gateway. Start the application process by clicking the 'Create application' button on the 2026 Explorer Grant information page. This will only appear when the application submission period is open. Clicking the 'Create application' button will open a dialog form where the following information will be required.

Step One

Research title

The research title should be succinct, written in plain language, and clearly describe the proposed research. 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 applications.

Host organisation

The host organisation is the institution or organisation that will be responsible for administering any contract awarded. 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 can 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 'Host organisation details' will appear in the next section, and the name of the host organisation should be entered here.

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

Step Two

First named investigator

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

Once an application is created, the first named investigator cannot be changed.

In the case of co-first named investigators, applicants need to add 'named investigators' and choose the role of 'co-first named investigators' in the dropdown list. The role of the co-first named investigator should be described in the appropriate section of the form.

Information on ethnicity, gender and whether the researcher is a clinician (and is practising) is used for HRC information purposes only. Please note that ethnicity, iwi, clinician, or practising clinician are not required to be entered as these details will automatically populate from the individual's profile.

Step Three

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. **All members named on the research team must be added to this application on HRC Gateway and will be included in Module 1.** 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.

Under 'role type' you can assign a role to each individual as follows:

- Co-first named investigator: A co-principal investigator (or co-lead researcher) with joint overall responsibility for the project.
- Named investigator: A named investigator listed on the application, whose expertise and involvement are critical to the project's success.

- Student: A master's or PhD student named in the project application.
- Technician: An individual who will complete specific tasks that require technical knowledge and experience (e.g. those collecting participant data, processing and analysing samples, managing datasets, operating equipment, or providing biostatistical or cultural expertise).

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. Information on ethnicity, iwi, and whether the researcher is a clinician or practising clinician will automatically populate from the individual's profile. All named investigators on successful applications may be cited by the HRC in its various communication channels.

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 completed.

Discipline

Choose 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. The HRC reserves the right to reassign applications to the most appropriate assessing committee.

Commencement date

Enter the proposed commencement date. Please note that contracts cannot be activated until 1 September 2026. Recipients are required to begin within three months of the contract being offered.

Lay summary

The lay summary must be 150 words or fewer and clearly state: 1) the purpose of the research and why it is needed; 2) how the research will be completed including the research activities; and 3) anticipated contribution to improvements in health outcomes and/or the health system and value for money (being specific about the anticipated outcomes where possible).

If your proposal receives funding, your lay summary will be published on the HRC website to communicate to the public the aims, activities, impact and value of your research.

Please use plain language that can be easily understood by members of the public and avoid using technical terms, with any acronyms fully written out in the first instance. The HRC reserves the right to amend the lay summary of any HRC-funded research in terms of its readability for a lay audience.

Research costs

Budget information is not required when submitting an Explorer Grant application and will only be required from successful applicants who are offered a contract. Explorer Grants are worth

\$150,000 (excluding GST). Budget requests can include research working expenses and salary support (and associated overhead) for named investigators and research personnel.

Objectives and milestones

Objectives and milestones are included in a resulting research contract and are 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

The Explorer Grant is anonymised. You must **NOT** name the investigator(s) on your research team or your host organisation 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

The section headings provided must be used. Refer to Appendix 1 for details on the application assessment criteria.

The assessing committee membership is broadly discipline-based, matched to the range of applications assigned to that committee. Therefore, not all members will have specialist knowledge of every research topic. Try to write the application for members with a general understanding of the research area/field.

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

Transformative nature of the research (3-page limit)

The transformative research description below maintains the core elements of the National Science Foundation's definition of transformative research (applied in previous years) and includes additional elements relevant to health research in New Zealand.¹¹ 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 field¹²
- 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 and may be interdisciplinary
- is likely to be untested and lacking supporting data, and
- is not incremental - a next step or extension to current research.

The application 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 application.

Ensure your proposed research activities 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)

Note: The description of Māori health advancement should be considered relative to the scope and context of an Explorer Grant. Given the anonymised nature of the Explorer Grant, **explicit**

¹¹ 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.

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

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

details on who is on the research team and any key relationships cannot be provided.

You must not name any investigators or collaborators, iwi, Māori communities or organisations contributing to the research. Instead, describe the skills, experience and knowledge that these individuals and relationships will bring.

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.

Research impact (300-word limit)

Research impact should be considered relative to the scope and context of an Explorer Grant.

Assessment of impact includes two components: 1) a description of 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. See the [HRC's Research Impact Assessment slideshow](#) for additional guidance on completing this section.

Consider how your research will contribute to the health research priorities outlined in Section 1.2.

3.4 Module 3: References

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 authors, 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 will only be required from successful Explorer Grant applicants who are offered a contract. A maximum of \$150,000 (excluding GST) can be funded.

Note: Salary support (and associated overhead) for named investigators and other research personnel can be requested.

Overheads will be paid at a negotiated rate for each institution on all eligible contracts. **The HRC does not contribute to the overhead of overseas investigators.**

If you wish to request salary support, you will need to justify the role and FTE of the named investigators and any other research staff listed in the proposal budget. FTEs less than 3% or half percentages (e.g. 3.5%) are not permitted. You will need to explain each person's role (named or unnamed, funded or not funded by the proposal), who will be actively associated with the research. These may be research assistants, technicians, medical staff and support

staff, whose names or position titles are listed in the budget under 'research staff' and who have specific FTE involvements.

Time-only staff will require a clear justification.

All named postdoctoral fellows should be included as named investigators and provide their CVs at the pre-contracting stage. Any unnamed postdoctoral fellows must be justified.

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

Working expenses include 'direct costs' only. The direct costs of the research include all the disbursements that can be identified, justified and charged to a contract. Estimates of costs should be expressed in current prices **exclusive of GST**.

Approved research expenses

Costs 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 – 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 on research applications.
- 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 assist 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 your 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 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.
- Casual research staff who do not have 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 the employer's contribution to approved superannuation schemes and accident compensation levies for casual research staff.

Unsupported expenses

The following expenses are considered the host organisation's contribution to the project and will not be supported by the HRC:

- 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.

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.

Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC)

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 research.

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
- 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	
Gene	Research into the genetic basis of disease or identification of genes involved. Linkage analysis falls here and not under clinical studies.
Cell biology	Analysis of molecular-level interactions. This includes protein-protein interactions, determination of the function of genes involved in diseases, and whole cell studies (e.g. immunological studies, transfections, etc).
Physiology	All physiology and anatomy, including animal models of disease and studies on host-pathogen interactions.
Diagnostics	Innovations and the development/refinement of new or existing diagnostic tools.
Pharmaceuticals /treatments	The development of new pharmaceuticals (drug design and development), as well as new treatments for diseases (e.g. vaccines, other therapies).
Clinical	
Clinical studies	Research involving human subjects. This excludes research in which samples from human subjects are used for fundamental biomedical research, such as genetic linkage analyses.
Clinical trials	Randomised clinical trials, usually randomised controlled clinical trials.
Health Services	
Health economics	Research into the cost-effectiveness of treatments/services, etc.
Clinical services	This includes primary and secondary care services. Access to and appropriateness of services are also included, and safety of services and compensation. Macro-level analysis of health system changes falls into this area.
Public Health	
Knowledge resources	All epidemiology, underpinning social science (qualitative and quantitative), development of tools and new methodologies, and development of indicators.
Risk factors	Research linking life experiences, behaviours, exposures etc. with health outcomes.
Interventions	Research that includes the design and evaluation of interventions.
At-Risk populations	Includes research on specific population groups. These groups may be based on age, ethnicity, occupation, etc. Includes research using diagnostics in a particular group.
Community services	Research around community-run services and community groups, e.g. Marae-based healthcare services.

Appendix 1: Explorer Grant Assessment process

1. Assessment overview for Explorer Grant applications

Explorer Grant applications 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 for compatibility with the scheme's intent; applications will not be scored or ranked.

2. HRC Explorer Grant Assessing Committee

Assessing committee membership

The Explorer Grant Assessing Committee consists of a chair and approximately 12 members. The chair is usually a member (or designee) of one of the HRC statutory research committees (Biomedical Research Committee, Public Health Research Committee, or Māori Health Committee). Assessing committee 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.

Assessing committee members are expected to have:

- postgraduate qualifications in a discipline relevant to health research
- a track record as an active health researcher (i.e. a named investigator on a funded research proposal by the HRC or another relevant funding agency (e.g. Marsden fund or the Cancer Society) in the last three years)
- 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 differ from that described above; however, all members must be able to carry out the roles and responsibilities required by the committee.

Managing conflicts of interest

Assessing committee members must declare at the outset any potential conflicts of interest, specific to the applications to be assessed by the committee, so that their impact on the assessment process is managed appropriately.

Committee members cannot be involved in the assessment process if they are a named investigator on an Explorer Grant application. In addition, as the assessment process is anonymous, the number of conflicts of interest is expected to be minimal.

Committee members must keep all information about the assessment of research applications confidential, i.e. they may not share details about applicants, committee members, applications or outcomes. However, they can talk about their assessing committee experience to their colleagues.

3. Explorer Grant assessment process

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

Applications will first be screened by the HRC to confirm eligibility. An application must meet the following criteria to be eligible for assessment:

- 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, and
- The application must conform to the prescribed format.

Ineligible proposals will be withdrawn.

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 rank applications. Each application will be assigned to a subpanel of three members from the Explorer Grant Assessing Committee, who will review the application and confirm (not score) that the criteria listed below have been met. They will also provide a supporting statement to justify why the transformative criterion is or is not met.

1. The research is potentially transformative because it:

- 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 field¹⁴
- 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 question¹⁵
- may be interdisciplinary
- is likely to be untested and lacking supporting data
- is not incremental - a next step or extension to current research
- has the potential to impact health or economic outcomes.

As there is no universally accepted definition of transformative research, assessment is based on the USA National Science Board's definition of transformative research,¹⁶ alongside elements relevant to health research in New Zealand. 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.

2. The application is exploratory but viable because:

- the approach and methodology are suitable
- the research environment is appropriate

sufficient progress can be made within the term of the grant.

3. The application is likely to advance Māori health because:

¹⁴ https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/documents/2007/tr_report.pdf

¹⁵ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR506.html

¹⁶ 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.

- the research could lead to improved Māori health
- the activities undertaken to address Māori health advancement are appropriate to the scope and context of the research.

Step 3 – Determine which applications are fundable

Applications will need to achieve a majority agreement that they meet all three score criteria to be considered fundable. Otherwise, the application will be deemed not fundable.

All fundable applications are equally likely to receive funding. The fundable 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 Council for final funding approval.

Note: In previous years, applications with a unanimous agreement that all three score criteria were met, after independent online scoring, were automatically considered fundable. All other applications were either considered not fundable or required an additional review in an online assessing committee. Applications that reached a majority agreement that all three score criteria were met during the meeting were then added to the pool of potentially fundable applications.

Applications will not undergo an additional review via an online assessing committee meeting this year. Applicants will not receive committee feedback on their application.