



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government



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

2026 Health Delivery Research Project Grant Expression of Interest Application Guidelines



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Part 1: The HRC Health Delivery Research Project Grant – key information and requirements

Part 1 sets out the requirements for the **Health Delivery Research Project Grant**, including:

- information about the grant, including the maximum value and duration
- information about the HRC's general requirements
- eligibility criteria that applicants must meet
- an overview of the specific 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 Description

The Health Research Council Health Delivery Research Project Grant provides support for health delivery research of varying values and durations.

The research must be within the scope of the [2026 Health Delivery Research Investment Signal](#) and must directly contribute to improved healthcare delivery at a policy, practice or systems level within 3-5 years (from commencement of the research contract). The research must take place in a healthcare delivery setting, which we define as the physical, virtual, or community-based environment where health services are provided to improve, promote, and protect the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.¹ The research team **must** include practicing clinicians and/or health policymakers who are involved in all aspects of the project, particularly in shaping the research need, undertaking the research, and identifying translational potential. In this context, identifying translational potential means disseminating health research knowledge and outcomes to key stakeholders for future use (including policy and health service development).

Project applications are processed through a two-stage process. In the first stage, applicants submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) application that provides an overview of the proposed research. On the basis of the EOI stage, selected applicants will be invited to submit a Full application in the second stage of the process. The Full application demonstrates the quality, scientific rigour and priority alignment of the research project in greater depth and detail. Council funding decisions will align with current priorities to the greatest extent possible.

1.2 Health research priorities

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

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

¹ [Health system overview and statutory framework | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

² [Letters of expectations for health statutory entities | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

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 [Going For Growth | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#)

researchers and research organisations to identify how research to be funded by the HRC will add value, deliver impact and contribute to these goals and wider system performance.

1.3 HRC requirements

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:

1. Research must be focused on health and improving health outcomes and/or the health system, where health outcomes are defined as:
 - a. absence or reduction of disease, symptoms or morbidity, and/or
 - b. 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
 - c. longer life expectancy, and/or
 - d. improved quality of life.
2. 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).
3. 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.

In scope for the 2026 Health Delivery Project Round

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

1. maximises benefit for healthcare delivery, such as:
 - a. new models of care and treatments
improved effectiveness and efficiency
 - b. innovation and technology in healthcare, and/or
2. demonstrates a pathway to commercialisation, and/or
3. enhances the development of clinician-researchers and/or
4. contributes to achievement of the health and/or mental health and addiction targets.

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 Health Delivery Project Round

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

1. 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
2. research that describes a health need or community with high health need without providing a clear evidence base for that need
3. research that duplicates research already undertaken overseas (without articulating the additional value of undertaking it in New Zealand)

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

4. 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)
5. 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)
6. research that is unlikely to inform decisions or changes to health delivery policy, practice or systems in New Zealand within the next 3-5 years.

Applications involving out-of-scope research types will be withdrawn.

1.4 Changes this year

The HRC has made changes to the application and assessment processes for this round.

The changes include:

- Applications must meet all eligibility and formatting requirements. Please carefully read these guidelines to ensure your application aligns with the requirements for this round. Applications that do not meet all of the specified requirements will be withdrawn and will not be assessed.
- You must begin your Expression of Interest (EOI) application on HRC Gateway by the 'Application creation deadline.' A list of named investigators and the application lay summary must be also provided by the creation deadline.
- Assessment of EOI applications will be completed using assessing committee independent scoring only. Assessing committees will not meet to discuss applications. The top ranked list of applications following independent scoring and the normalisation process will be used to determine the applications that will proceed to the Full stage.
- Assessment of Full applications will be completed using external peer review and assessing committees.
- Applications will be assessed on the full range of standard HRC score criteria. Please refer to Appendix 3 for further details.

1.5 Value

- The HRC expects to fund and encourages a range of grant values and durations up to a maximum term of 5 years and a maximum value of \$1.4 million.
- Funding requests will be pro rata by months – the maximum amount available per full year is \$466,666.
- The HRC encourages applicants to consider the most suitable budget and timeframe for their research, including smaller research projects over a shorter duration.

1.6 Eligibility criteria

Applications must be within the scope of the 2026 Health Delivery Research Investment Signal to be considered for funding.

Health Delivery Research Project Grant applications must meet **all** of the following requirements:

1. the application must have described the potential to directly inform changes to **health delivery** policy, practice or systems within the next 3-5 years (from commencement of the research contract),⁶ and
2. the research will be conducted in a **healthcare delivery setting**,⁷ and
3. the research has a clear connection to a **healthcare need**,⁸ and
4. the research team (named investigators) includes practicing clinicians,⁹ or health policymakers.

Applications that do not meet all of these requirements are not eligible for this funding round and will be considered out-of-scope and therefore withdrawn. Carefully consider whether the Health Delivery Project Grant is the best funding opportunity for your proposed research before applying.

Please also take note of the following eligibility criteria, which apply to the lead researcher(s) on a Project Grant application, defined as the first named investigator and co-first named investigator.

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.

The co-first named investigator (or co-lead researcher) is an individual with joint overall responsibility for the project.

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

To be eligible for a Project Grant, both the first named investigator and co-first named investigator:

1. must have New Zealand as their principal domicile,¹⁰ and principal place of employment. **Note:** Host organisations are responsible for ensuring that this criterion has been met
2. can only submit **one** Project Grant application to the 2026 Health Delivery Research Project Grant round as the first named investigator or co-first named investigator. All additional applications will be withdrawn
3. must complete all progress or end of contract reports that are due from previous contracts in HRC Gateway. HRC Gateway does not allow a new application to be submitted if the first named investigator or co-first named investigator has any outstanding reports.

⁶ **Health delivery** can include the delivery of healthcare, such as through prevention, detection, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, care and/or support, at all levels (i.e. primary through to tertiary and community-based care), and at a local, regional and/or national level in New Zealand, acknowledging that international connections can support this.

⁷ A **healthcare delivery setting** is the physical, virtual, or community-based environment where health services are provided to improve, promote, and protect the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

⁸ **Healthcare needs** are expected to be identified with involvement of health delivery sector leadership or meaningful end-user involvement, and substantiated by evidence of a gap in knowledge. As such, end-user engagement is expected, comprising consumer, clinical, health provider, health policy, support worker, community or population collaboration and/or partnership from the outset of the research proposal and throughout the research process.

⁹ A **practicing clinician** provides clinical services in any setting under a formal work arrangement and is eligible to undertake clinical practice in New Zealand either under the Health Practitioners Competence Act 2003, through a current registration with the relevant responsible authority, or as a current member of Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹⁰ **Principal domicile** means the holding of New Zealand citizenship, or a residence class visa under the Immigration Act 2009, and either be domiciled or residing in New Zealand with the intention of residing here indefinitely, having done so for the immediately preceding 12 months. According to Section 4 of the Immigration Act, "residence class visa" means a permanent resident visa or a resident visa.

1.7 Key dates

Event	Description	Date (1 pm)
Project EOI applications open	Applicants start Project EOI applications via HRC Gateway	26 March 2026
Creation deadline	You must create your EOI application on HRC Gateway by this date	22 April 2026
Project EOI applications close	You must submit your EOI application on HRC Gateway by this date	29 April 2026
Project EOI applications assessment	Applications reviewed by HRC assessing committees	June - July 2026
Anticipated EOI outcome date	Anticipated date the EOI results will be sent to applicants	16 July 2026
Anticipated Full stage open date	Anticipated date the Full stage will be open to invited applicants	16 July 2026
Project Full applications close	You must submit your Full application on HRC Gateway by this date	20 August 2026
Project Full applications assessment	Peer review	September 2026
	Applicant rebuttal	8-22 October 2026
	Applications reviewed by HRC assessing committees	November 2026
Decision	Council decision	December 2026
Results	Results available on Gateway	December 2026

Creation deadline

Please create your EOI application on HRC Gateway by **1 pm on 22 April 2026**. You will not be able to create an EOI application after this deadline has passed.

To facilitate our assessment processes, please also provide details of your research team and your lay summary on HRC Gateway by this date. You can update this information before submitting your EOI application.

Submission deadline

Please submit your application to HRC Gateway by **1 pm on 29 April 2026**. Your application will not be accepted after 1 pm unless you have written authorisation from the HRC.

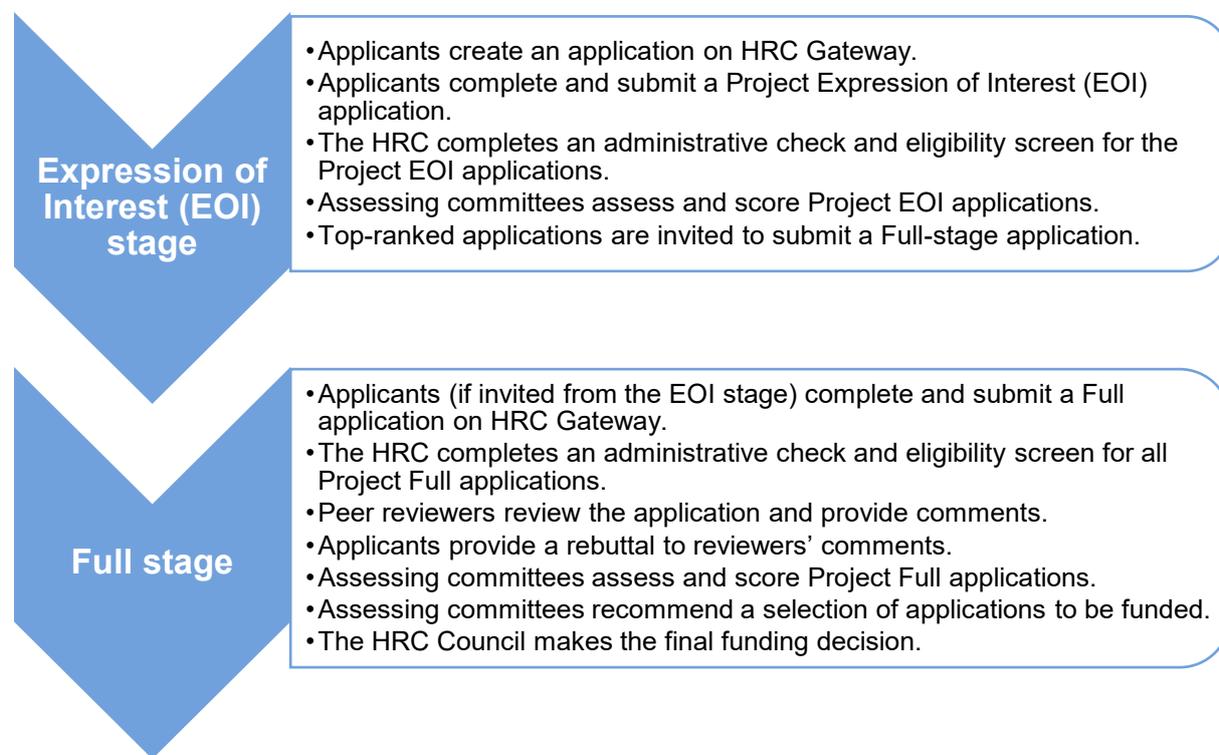
Note: Your application will be released to the HRC only after it has been approved by your host organisation's research office or equivalent. You should submit your application before your host organisation's internal submission deadline, which is usually several working days before the HRC closing date.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

Commencement date

Contracts must commence between **1 February 2027** and **1 April 2027**.

1.8 Application process overview

Refer to Appendix 1 for further information on the assessment process.



1.9 Grant reporting

All recipients of a Health Delivery Research Project Grant are required to submit annual progress reports and an end of contract report within three months of the contract end date.

Recipients are also invited to complete post-contract surveys two and five years after the completion of the contract to capture more information on the impact of the research.

Part 2. General information on applying for a Health Delivery Research Project Grant

This section includes general information on how to apply for a Health Delivery Research Project Grant.

The information provided in this section includes:

- instructions for using HRC Gateway to submit an application
- formatting requirements for applications
- guidance about the privacy of application content
- contact information if you need assistance with your application.

Please follow the instructions set out in this section.

2.0 Preparation

HRC Gateway user account

You will need an HRC Gateway account to apply for a Project 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 named on your proposed research team must have an HRC Gateway user account so that their details can be included in the online form. Individual HRC Gateway accounts must be updated each year.

Before submitting an application

Please read the following resources:

- [2026 Health Delivery Research Investment Signal](#)
- 2026 Health Delivery Research Project 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)
- [SPIRIT 2025 checklist](#) (if your application includes a randomised trial)
- HRC Peer Review Manual (accessed via the Health Delivery information page on HRC Gateway)

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

Application forms

Download the **2026 Health Delivery Research Project Expression of Interest Application Form** (Microsoft Word template) from 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 form as a **PDF file** to HRC Gateway.

Host organisation

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 Project 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 further information and relevant forms for your organisation to complete.

Ethical requirements

All Project applications approved by the HRC must seek an ethics review from an HRC-approved ethics committee. Further information will be provided at the Full stage. Please note that if your EOI application is successful, evidence of this review will be required, and completion of the ethics review must be listed as a first-year milestone at the Full stage.

2.1 Writing 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 conduct an initial compliance check. Your application will be considered ineligible and withdrawn from this funding round if it does not comply with the application formatting requirements stated in these guidelines or in the application form. This includes using the incorrect font size and style; altering margins and spacing around headings and subheadings; or exceeding page limits.

Please:

1. Download the correct application form directly from HRC Gateway and use the stated font sizes and styles.
2. Keep within the stated page limits.
3. Ensure **all** individuals involved in the research are listed as either a named investigator or collaborator on HRC Gateway.
4. 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.

5. Do not include any additional material (e.g. slides, protocols, CVs, other funding applications) as 'supporting documents' on HRC Gateway and avoid using hyperlinks in the application form. The HRC will remove all additional material and hyperlinks from your application.

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 organisation's research office.

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

Scope compliance

Please review the 2026 Health Delivery Investment Signal and Section 1.3 of these guidelines carefully. Applications must meet **all** of the scope and eligibility requirements to be considered eligible for this funding round. Applications that do not meet all requirements will be considered ineligible, withdrawn and not assessed.

2.2 Allowed changes between the Expression of Interest and Full application stage

The Expression of Interest (EOI) provides an overview of your proposed research aims, design/methodologies, rationale and potential for impact (including Māori health advancement). The EOI should provide sufficient information for assessing committees to review your proposed research and determine whether you should proceed to the Full stage based on established score criteria.

If you are invited to the Full stage, your full application should be an extension of your EOI application. Therefore, you will need to **carefully consider your research plans and objectives when writing your EOI application**. Significant changes at the Full stage, beyond expanding on the EOI research proposal in greater depth, may result in your Full application being considered ineligible and not assessed.

All changes between the EOI and Full stage must meet the scope for the 2026 Health Delivery Research Project round and the HRC requirements.

Changes to the research team

You can add named investigators to the team at the Full stage, such as:

- for additional statistical, methodological or cultural expertise
- in response to feedback from the EOI stage.

If you wish to **replace** or **remove** a named investigator, you must submit a 'change request form' to the HRC with clear justification. The HRC reserves the right to determine whether sufficient justification has been provided. Any unapproved changes to the research team may result in your Full application being withdrawn. Further details on this process will be provided if you are invited to the Full stage.

Changes to FTE commitments

You will need to carefully consider FTE commitments when writing your EOI application. At the EOI stage, you must select an FTE band for each named investigator:

- 3% - 10% (Low FTE)
- 11% - 40% (Medium FTE)
- 41% - 100% (High FTE)

At the Full stage, you will be asked to provide a defined FTE value for each named investigator (i.e. 15% FTE). This value should fall within the band that was selected in your EOI application (i.e. 15% FTE falls within the 'medium FTE' band).

If you wish to change FTE bands between the EOI and Full application stage, you must submit a 'change request form' to the HRC with clear justification. The HRC reserves the right to determine whether sufficient justification has been provided. Any unapproved changes to FTE commitments may result in your Full application being withdrawn. Further details on this process will be provided if you are invited to the Full stage.

2.3 Privacy provisions

Statistical and reporting purposes

The information you provide will be used for assessing 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.

Personal information

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

Public announcements

The HRC publishes details of research contracts including named individuals, 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 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.

2.5 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 cannot 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.

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,¹¹ and may require funded projects to identify, mitigate, and monitor risks as part of the contractual conditions of the project.

¹¹ 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. Instructions on completing and submitting your application

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

The application form consists of three modules.

Module 1 'General information' must be completed on HRC Gateway. Click the 'Create application' button to start your application. Update the required areas as indicated on HRC Gateway.

Complete Module 2 'Proposed research' in the **2026 Health Research Delivery Project Grant Expression of Interest Application Form** (Microsoft Word template). Refer to Section 3.3 for detailed guidance on how to complete this module.

Upload evidence of collaboration/support to HRC Gateway as separate PDF files. HRC Gateway will automatically compile these documents in Module 3.

3.1 The Project EOI application form

The **2026 Health Research Delivery Project Grant Expression of Interest Application Form** is a Microsoft Word form that contains a coversheet, Module 2 and Module 3 of the EOI application.

The application form is compatible with Windows PC and MAC computers. The form has default formatting that conforms to the HRC's requirements.

Please:

- Use the original HRC application form template, downloaded directly from HRC Gateway.
- Complete all sections following the instructions on the application form and described in these guidelines.
- Enter the HRC Ref ID# and the first named investigator's surname on the coversheet. HRC Gateway will remove the coversheets from the final system-generated PDF.
- Enter information only in the indicated form fields.
- Do not reformat module and section headings.

Note: By submitting an application on HRC Gateway, you confirm that your application complies with all requirements, including formatting requirements and page limits. The HRC will not accept changes after the closing date.

3.2 Module 1: General information

Step 1

Start the application process by clicking the 'Create application' button on the 2026 Health Delivery Research Project Grant information page on HRC Gateway. This button will only appear when the application submission period is open. Clicking the 'Create application' button will open a dialog form where the following information is 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 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, select which research office will be handling the application.

Step 2

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

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. A good way to check whether your lay summary is easily understood is by sharing it with colleagues in a different discipline or sector, or friends or family members not involved in research. 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 location(s)

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

Discipline

Choose from the drop-down box. This should be the area of health delivery research that your application is connected with.

Duration

Enter the proposed term of the work in months. This cannot exceed 60 months (5 years).

Type of research

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

Commencement date

Enter the proposed commencement date. This should be between **1 February 2027** and **1 April 2027**.

Support personnel

Examples of support personnel include individuals who will help you with the project application process (i.e. upload your application to HRC Gateway). Do not list named investigators, collaborators or your host organisation's research office staff. All support personnel need to have an HRC Gateway account to view and edit your application.

Step 3

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 HRC Gateway 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.

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.

Named investigators

A named investigator is an individual with a significant role in the design, conduct, or reporting of a research project. **All key team members** who contribute to the research, have a specific role and are named in the body of your application should be listed as a 'named investigator' in Module 1.

Each named investigator must have an HRC Gateway account before they can be added to Module 1 of your application. Information from Module 1 will be used to assess eligibility. It is very important that all named investigators check and update their HRC Gateway profile, including their professional details and health practitioner qualifications, before you submit your application. All details provided at the time of submission will be considered final.

Refer to the next section for information on how named investigators differ from collaborators.

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 responsibility for the project. Note that the co-first named investigator must fulfil the same eligibility criteria as the first named investigator (outlined in Section 1.5).
- Named investigator: A team member involved in the design, conduct or reporting of the study.
- Student/Intern: A master's or PhD student or research intern named in the project application.
- Technician: An individual who will complete specific tasks and critical study procedures that require technical knowledge and experience.

Role in project should include brief information on what the named investigator will undertake (1-2 sentences maximum). It should be clear which individual(s) is contributing in a mentoring capacity.

You will need to select an **FTE** band for each named investigator:

- 3% - 10% (Low FTE)
- 11% - 40% (Medium FTE)
- 41% - 100% (High FTE)

Some details will automatically populate from the individual's HRC Gateway profile. All named investigators on successful applications may be cited by the HRC in its various communication channels.

Collaborators

Collaborators are individuals who are not named investigators (i.e. not listed as members of the research team) but who contribute in-kind or paid support to assist in conducting the research. Their involvement may include providing expertise, resources, or services to support research activities. Generally, collaborators do not have the same level of responsibility as named investigators.

Collaborators do not need to be registered Gateway users. When adding collaborators, provide the person's title, name, organisation, country and support level. You will also need to provide brief details on the purpose of the collaboration.

You can upload a letter of support to HRC Gateway to provide evidence of any collaboration (see Section 4.1 for further details).

Step 4

Click the 'Update' button to enter the classification for your application. This information is for HRC data collection purposes only.

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.

3.3 Module 2: Proposal (3-page limit)

You must use the section headings provided in the application form as they correspond to the score criteria that will be used by the assessing committee. The assessing committee 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 your application for members with a general understanding of the research area/field.

If you wish to include figures and tables, it is best to copy and paste these from a separate Word document instead of creating them directly in the application form. Ensure that any non-text content is compatible with PDF conversion software.

General information

Briefly outline the research aim(s), research question(s), and proposed research design/methodologies. This information will provide the assessing committee with important context when they assess your application.

Rationale for research

What is the critical healthcare need?

Healthcare can include prevention, detection, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, care and/or support, at all levels (i.e. primary through to tertiary and community-based care), and at a local, regional and/or national level in New Zealand.

Clearly demonstrate the significant/important gap in knowledge, policy, practice, or service delivery that your research has the potential to directly address.

Outline any potential impacts of the proposed research for reducing or avoiding exacerbating health inequities.

Who has been involved in determining the proposed research?

Demonstrate the involvement of key health sector organisations, groups, communities, consumers, and expertise in the research process (e.g., with identifying the research need/gap, developing and undertaking the research, and being in a position to ensure uptake and translation as required).

How will this research directly contribute to improved healthcare delivery by informing decisions or changes to policy, practice or systems in the New Zealand health and disability sector?

Demonstrate that your research meets the scope requirements of the [2026 Health Delivery Research Investment Signal](#), any alignment with HRC priorities, and how your research can contribute to improved healthcare delivery, and can therefore be supported by public funds.

Research impact

What benefits are expected to arise from your research within the next 3-5 years, and who will benefit?

Give a realistic description of how your research findings have the potential to influence health delivery policy, practice, or systems in New Zealand, with a clear pathway to improved health and associated economic impacts. The timeframe of 3-5 years is from contract commencement.

The [HRC's Research Impact Assessment slideshow](#) includes additional guidance on completing this section.

Māori health advancement

Demonstrate:

- how the outcomes of your research could contribute to improved Māori health outcomes or reduction in inequity in the short-term or over time
- activities undertaken or that will be undertaken during this research to maximise the likelihood that it will contribute to Māori health advancement
- culturally appropriate research practices and principles, as appropriate.

Consideration of Māori health advancement is context-specific, as determined by the nature and scope of the research. See the HRC's [Māori Health Advancement Guidelines](#) for further information.

Reference list (1-page limit)

Start this section on a new page. Provide the references cited in Module 2 with a list of authors, article title, journal, year, volume, and page numbers. Place an asterisk beside all named investigators' publications. You can limit the author list to a more convenient number to fit any space limitations.

A glossary of Māori terms used in your application with a brief translation can be included here. This is not included in the page limit.

3.4 Module 3: Evidence of support/collaboration

You must provide evidence of informal or formal expressions of support from stakeholders such as key sector organisations, communities, end-users, and experts who have been involved or intend to be involved in the research process. Examples of evidence include email correspondence and letters outlining how the interested party has been involved in identifying the research need, developing the research, or how they will be involved in the undertaking/translation of the research. It should not simply state that the research is necessary.

Evidence should be provided to support any collaborations mentioned in the body of your application. These should confirm the collaborative relationship and show a commitment of resources or partnership.

You can insert a document directly into the application form or insert a screenshot as an image. Each piece of evidence should be no more than two pages long. Please carefully check the final PDF version of your application (generated by HRC Gateway) before you submit your application to ensure that all evidence has been properly included and can be easily read.

The HRC reserves the right to remove any uploaded files from this module that do not provide clear evidence of support or collaboration.

Appendix 1: Health Delivery Research Project EOI application assessment process and criteria

1. Assessment overview

Project applications are processed through a two-stage process. This is designed to enable a wide range of applicants to apply in the initial stage and ensure the number of applicants who submit the longer and more detailed application required in the second stage is appropriate, given the amount of funding available.

Peer review is provided by assessing committees convened by the HRC to provide expert assessment of the quality and scientific rigour of each application. Assessing committee members are experts in relevant areas of research: some committees are multidisciplinary committees; others focus on a particular research field.

Applications are also screened for alignment with the Health Delivery Investment Signal and to determine if they are in scope for HRC funding. Applications that do not meet the Investment Signal scope and eligibility requirements or include out-of-scope research activities will be considered ineligible, withdrawn and not assessed.

In the final stages of the process, assessing committees recommend a list of fundable applications to the HRC Council, who make the final funding decisions, taking into consideration priorities in relation to health research and the balance of HRC investment.

Stage One: EOI application

The purpose of the EOI application stage is to identify which applicants will be invited to submit Full applications in the second stage of the process.

EOI applications are peer reviewed by members of the relevant assessing committee and scored. Top-ranking applications will be invited to submit a Full application in the second stage of the process.

Stage Two: Full application

The purpose of the Full application is to demonstrate in greater depth the quality and scientific rigour of the research project, including the research rationale, design and methods, impact (including Māori health advancement), the expertise and track record of the research team, and how the research aligns with HRC funding priorities for the round.

Full applications are first assessed by external peer reviewers, and applicants have an opportunity to provide a rebuttal to reviewers' comments. The relevant assessing committee will then review the application, external peer reviewer reports and the applicants' rebuttal. Each application is discussed at the assessing committee meeting and allocated an overall score and ranking (see Section 3 of this appendix).

The assessing committee membership required to assess Project Full applications may differ from the EOI stage to ensure experts are matched to the applications. Potential conflicts of interest are managed as outlined in Section 4 of this appendix, and statistical normalisation is applied to minimise the effect of scoring variation between committees.

Each assessing committee provides a recommendation for funding to the Council, who makes the final funding decisions. Their decisions take into account the quality and scientific rigour of the application (the key assessment criteria) as well as the HRC's priorities for health research and the balance of the HRC investment portfolio.

2. Assessment of Project EOI applications

2.1 Assessing committee membership

Assessing committee membership depends on the scope of the applications received. The HRC seeks to match an assessing committee's expertise to the research fields of the applications they are considering, taking into account potential conflicts of interest (see Section 4 of this appendix).

2.2 Scoring criteria

Applications are scored on a 7-point word ladder using the following equally weighted criteria. These are listed below with a full description. Scores must be whole numbers; the total maximum score is 21.

Each committee member will be assigned EOI applications to assess and score independently. They will also have the opportunity to provide applicants with brief feedback. Scores and comments are submitted confidentially via HRC Gateway and collated confidentially by HRC staff to produce a ranked list across all committees assessing EOI applications.

Statistical normalisation will be applied to minimise the effect of scoring variation between committees (see Section 5 of Appendix 2).

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

Criteria	Points
Rationale for research	7
Research impact	7
Māori health advancement	7
Total	21

A. Rationale for research

The research is important, worthwhile and justifiable because:

- it is in the scope of the [2026 Health Delivery Research Investment Signal](#), aligns with HRC priorities, and can contribute to improved healthcare delivery by informing decisions or changes to policy, practice or systems in the New Zealand health and disability sector and therefore can be supported by public funds
- it addresses a critical healthcare need that is unique or important to New Zealand healthcare delivery, with a clear demonstration of the evidence gap
- it is shaped by health sector, policy, consumer, community, or system involvement, and this involvement will continue throughout the research. Clear evidence of this ongoing involvement is provided in the application.

B. Research impact

The proposed research is likely to have an impact that adds value and benefit to New Zealand because:

- it has the potential to influence health delivery policy, practice, or systems in New Zealand, with a clear pathway to improved health outcomes (and other associated economic impacts) within the next 3-5 years (from the commencement of the research contract)
- it will contribute to developing workforce capacity and capability, including upskilling of research team members
- it has been well-designed to answer the research aim(s) and question(s).

C. Māori health advancement

The proposed research is likely to advance Māori health because:

- applicants have described how their research could lead to improved Māori health or reductions in health inequity over time
- the research team is undertaking activities to address Māori health advancement, as appropriate to the nature and scope of the research. This may include, but is not limited to, activities such as:
 - establishing meaningful, collaborative, and reciprocal relationships with Māori
 - undertaking research that addresses Māori health need and inequity
 - forming appropriate research teams
 - developing current and future workforce capacity and capability, including upskilling of research team members
 - adhering to culturally appropriate research practices and principles (as appropriate to the context of the research).

2.3 EOI application results

The top-ranked applications will be invited to the Full stage. Applications invited to the Full stage will receive an automatic email from HRC Gateway when the Full stage opens. Applicants will receive a brief feedback summary, which has been collated from independent assessors.

Appendix 2: Health Delivery Research Project Full application assessment process and criteria

1. Assessment of Project Full applications

1.1 Assessing committee membership

The membership of the assessing committee required to assess Project Full applications may differ from the EOI assessing committee. The number of members on an assessing committee and their expertise will depend on the scope of the applications, taking into account conflicts of interest.

1.2 Assessing committee pre-meeting procedure

The 'Design and methods' and 'Expertise and track record of the research team' score criteria are assessed by 2-3 external peer reviewers chosen for their scientific expertise. Two assessing committee members will concurrently assess the 'Rationale for research', 'Research impact', and 'Māori health advancement' score criteria.

Each reviewer allocates a score for each assigned score criterion with feedback/justification in the form of a written report. Applicants will have an opportunity to provide a rebuttal to the comments or questions raised.

Before the committee meeting, the assessing committee will review all applications, along with their peer review reports, committee member reports, and the applicants' rebuttal. It is expected that most or all Full applications will be discussed at the meeting. However, if it is necessary to limit the number at this stage to ensure the meeting has sufficient time to discuss the most competitive applications, pre-scoring may be applied to identify the lowest quality applications before the assessing committee.

In this case, the assessing committee members will independently allocate pre-scores on the same 1-7 scale used at the upcoming meeting to all applications assigned to the committee. The average pre-scores will be collated to identify a preliminary ranking, and some of the lower-ranked applications may not be discussed at the meeting. Where there is a marked scoring discrepancy for an application, it may be taken through to the meeting for full discussion.

1.3 Full assessing committee meeting procedure

Each application will have an assigned committee reviewer whose role is to summarise how the application aligns with each score criterion. They will also use the committee's discussion to inform the application's review summary (written feedback to the applicants).

The assessing committee chairs are responsible for ensuring the committee's discussion is fair and balanced. General discussion by all assessing committee members is essential for a balanced committee opinion, not unduly influenced by one committee member, and should not be cut short nor unduly extended.

Applications to be discussed by the assessing committee will be in random order, with 25 minutes of discussion time allocated to each application:

- declaration of conflicts of interest - 2 minutes
- committee reviewer comments - 5 minutes
- general discussion of the application - 15 minutes
- scoring – 1 minute
- committee reviewer confirms points raised in the review summary - 2 minutes.

1.4 Assessing committee meeting scoring criteria

Project Full applications are scored on a 7-point word ladder using five equally weighted criteria. These are listed below with a full description. Reviewers may only allocate whole scores; the total maximum score is 35.

Scores are submitted via HRC Gateway and collated confidentially by the HRC staff. Once the applications have been scored following discussion by the assessing committee, scores cannot be further reviewed or adjusted.

Score	Criteria descriptor	Scoring criteria	Points	%score
7	Exceptional	Rationale for research	7	20%
6	Excellent	Research design and methods	7	20%
5	Very good	Research impact	7	20%
4	Good	Māori health advancement	7	20%
3	Adequate	Expertise and track record of the research team	7	20%
2	Unsatisfactory			
1	Poor			
		Total	35	100%

A. Rationale for research

The research is important, worthwhile and justifiable because:

- it is in the scope of the [2026 Health Delivery Research Investment Signal](#), aligns with HRC priorities, and can contribute to improved healthcare delivery by informing decisions or changes to policy, practice or systems in the New Zealand health and disability sector
- it addresses a critical healthcare need that is unique or important to New Zealand healthcare delivery, with a clear demonstration of the evidence gap
- the aims, research questions and hypotheses build on existing knowledge and address the evidence gap
- it is shaped by health sector, policy, consumer, community, or system involvement, and this involvement will continue throughout the research. Clear evidence of this ongoing involvement is provided in the application.

B. Research design and methods

The study has been well designed to answer the research questions because it demonstrates some or all the following:

- comprehensive and feasible study design that is achievable within the timeframe
- appropriate study design to address the objectives of the research
- awareness of statistical considerations/technical or population issues/practicalities
- evidence of availability of materials/samples
- culturally appropriate methodology
- sound data management and data monitoring arrangements
- well-managed patient safety issues.

C. Research impact

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

- applicants have described a credible pathway for how their research will influence health delivery policy, practice, or systems in New Zealand, with a clear pathway to improved health outcomes (and other associated economic impacts) within the next 3-5 years (from the commencement of the research contract)
- the research is conducted in a healthcare delivery setting to maximise the potential for impact
- the research team is undertaking steps to maximise the likelihood of impact beyond the production of knowledge (with appropriate consideration to knowledge translation and implementation) and has the necessary skills, networks and experience to achieve this.

D. Māori health advancement

The proposed research is likely to advance Māori health because:

- applicants have described how their research could lead to improved Māori health or reductions in health inequity over time
- the research team is undertaking activities to address Māori health advancement, as appropriate to the nature and scope of the research. This may include, but is not limited to, activities such as:
 - establishing meaningful, collaborative, and reciprocal relationships with Māori
 - undertaking research that addresses Māori health need and inequity
 - forming appropriate research teams
 - developing current and future workforce capacity and capability, including upskilling of research team members
 - adhering to culturally appropriate research practices and principles (as appropriate to the context of the research).

E. Expertise and track record of the research team

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

- appropriate qualifications and experience
- the right mix of expertise, experience and FTEs, including consideration of capacity building
- the capability to perform research in the current research environment
- demonstrated connections with the health sector and communities, including having practicing clinicians and/or health policymakers as named investigators
- named investigators are based in healthcare delivery settings and communities, with the ability to shape the research need, undertake the research, and identify translational potential
- networks to maximise knowledge transfer and research uptake, with any plans for dissemination tailored towards specific end-users
- history of productivity and delivery on previous research funding.

The committee also takes into consideration and may make recommendations on:

- the appropriateness of the timeline for the proposed research
- the appropriateness of the milestones and objectives
- the appropriateness of the requested FTE involvement of the researchers and any direct costs requested, and
- the total cost of the research project with respect to 'value for money'.

1.5 Recommendation of fundable applications

After scoring, HRC staff generate a ranked list of applications according to the total score. The committee, noting conflicts of interest, then identifies the applications assessed as fundable.

The fundable/not fundable line refers to the position in the ranked list of applications below which all applications are of insufficient quality that, irrespective of available budget, they should not be funded. Fundable applications are then included in the normalisation process.

1.6 Funding decisions – HRC Council

The assessing committees' recommendations of fundable applications are presented to the Council who make the final funding decision, taking into consideration available investment budget, and other relevant information, including information relating to HRC's stated requirements for funding and alignment with HRC priorities, to support their decision making.

1.7 Feedback to applicants

At the conclusion of the funding round, applicants who were invited to submit Full applications will receive a review summary and can access their application outcome via HRC Gateway. The assessing committee reviewer writes a brief review summary of the assessing committee discussion for each of their assigned applications (see Appendix 3). This is to provide the applicant with a brief, balanced, objective statement of the committee's response to the research application.

Review summaries should be constructive and may include:

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

Review summaries will not mention scores or the identity of assessing committee members.

Individual outcomes will be available on HRC Gateway and will also be forwarded to the applicant's research office/host organisation.

Please note: applications not discussed at an assessing committee meeting do not receive written feedback.

2. Conflict of interest

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

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

All assessing committee members are required to declare all potential conflicts of interest on HRC Gateway before they can access any application-related information. These declarations are then reviewed by HRC staff in accordance with the HRC Conflict of Interest Management Policy.

3. Score normalisation

Statistical normalisation will be applied to minimise the effect of scoring variation between committees. Statistical normalisation calculates the z-score of a number using the mean and standard deviation of a distribution (assessing committee total scores) corrected for the mean and standard deviation of the larger distribution (all assessing committee total scores).

Appendix 3: Applicant rebuttal and review summary templates

Applicant rebuttal template

This form is provided to applicants via HRC Gateway and is used to respond to questions and comments raised by external peer reviewers and committee reviewers before the Full-stage assessing committee meeting.

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

Instructions (delete after reading): The 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.

