



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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

2026 Project Full Application Guidelines

November 2025

**Use with the 2026
Project Full
Application Form**



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

Part 1 sets out the requirements for the Project Grant in the 'General' category, including:

- information about the grant, including the maximum value and duration
- information about the health research priorities
- 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 Description

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) offers funding of \$400,000 per year up to a total of \$1,200,000 for research projects that have the potential to vastly improve the health of New Zealanders. Projects can cover a diverse range of areas, including biomedical, public health, clinical, Māori focused, and Pacific health research.

1.2 Health research priorities

New Zealand's investment in health research must contribute to achieving the goals of the health system and the innovation, technology and science system.¹ 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.² 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.³ 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

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)

¹ [Letters of expectations for health statutory entities | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

² 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.

³ [Going For Growth | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#)

- 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.⁴

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 Project 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,⁵ and/or
- contributes to achievement of the health and/or mental health and addiction targets.⁶

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 Project 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 need⁷

⁴ [CO \(24\) 5: Needs-based Service Provision | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

⁵ 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 Competence Act 2003, through registration with the relevant responsible authority, or as a member of Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand.

⁶ 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.

⁷ [CO \(24\) 5: Needs-based Service Provision | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

- 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).

Applications that are considered out of scope will be withdrawn.

1.4 Project Value

- The HRC expects to fund and encourages a range of grant values and durations.
- The HRC offers contracts worth \$400,000 per year up to a total maximum of \$1,200,000.
- The budget cap for project applications is \$1,200,000. The budget cap for randomised controlled trial project applications is \$1,440,000 if required and justified in the application (see requirement details in Appendix 1 of this document). Funding applications that exceed the budget cap will be withdrawn.
- Most projects have a term of 3 years with a budget of \$1,200,000, but shorter contracts are offered pro rata (e.g. a 2-year project may have a budget of up to \$800,000).
- You can negotiate terms of up to 5 years within the budget cap of \$1,200,000.
- The requested budget needs to be justified and reflect the activities being proposed.

1.5 Changes made this year (NEW)

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

The changes include:

- Applications will be assessed on the full range of standard HRC score criteria. Please refer to Appendices 2-4 for further details.
- If your application aligns with one or more of the priorities outlined in Section 1.3, clearly articulate how in the most relevant sections of your application.
- There will be no external peer review or applicant rebuttal for Project applications. Applications will continue to undergo peer review by full stage assessing committees, who will meet to discuss and score applications.
- The NZ Standard CV template has been updated. Please ensure the [latest version](#) of the CV template is used for submission. The new version is available to download on HRC Gateway.

1.6 Project categories

There are three categories for the Project Grant.

General: Supporting excellent ideas and innovations proposed by researchers, designed to improve health outcomes for New Zealanders.

Rangahau Hauora Māori: Supporting Māori health research that contributes to Māori health gains, upholds rangatiratanga and utilises and advances Māori knowledge, resources, and people.

Pacific: Making significant improvements in, or developing knowledge contributing to, Pacific health outcomes.

You have confirmed the category for your Project at the Expression of Interest (EOI) stage, and you cannot change the project category between the EOI and full stage application.

Please note: These specific guidelines apply to the **General** Project category.

1.5 Eligibility

You can only submit a Full application if you were invited from the EOI stage. Invitations were sent to applicants and their host organisation's research office on 6 November 2025.

Eligibility at the EOI stage was confirmed based on the application's first named investigator and co-first named investigator. You cannot change the first named investigator and co-first named investigator between the EOI and full stage without the HRC's written permission.

1.6 Key Dates

Event	Description	Date (1 pm)
Full stage applications open	Applicants who are eligible to submit a Full application are notified	6 November 2025
	Applicants confirm all named investigators, collaborators and unacceptable reviewers (if any) on HRC Gateway	26 November 2025
Full stage applications close	Applicants must complete their Full application by this date via HRC Gateway	11 December 2025
Full assessing committees	Assessment of full applications	February 2026
Decision	Council decision	April 2026

Submission deadline

Please submit your application to HRC Gateway by **1 pm on Thursday, 11 December 2025**. Your application will not be accepted after 1 pm unless you have **written** authorisation from the HRC.

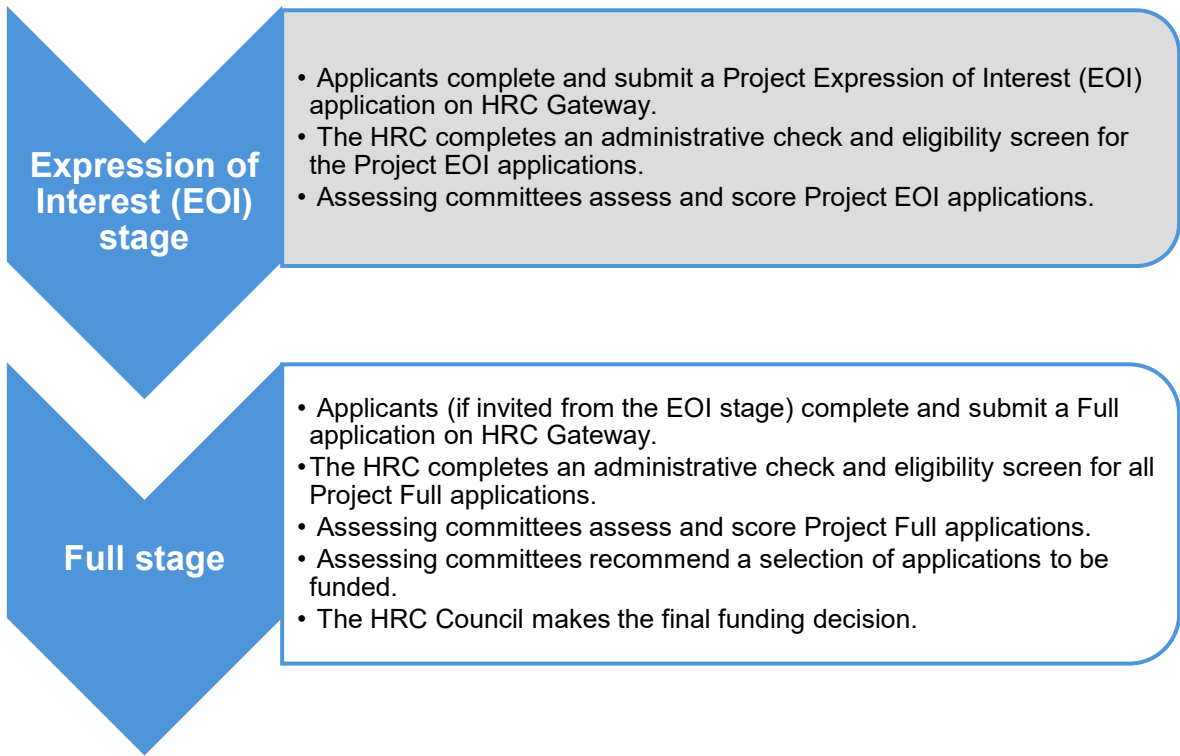
Note: Your application will be released to the HRC only after it has been approved by your host organisation's research office or equivalent. **You should submit your application before your host organisation's internal submission deadline**, which is usually several working days before the HRC closing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

Commencement date

Your project needs to start by **1 August 2026**.

1.7 Application process overview

Refer to **Appendix 2** for further information on the assessment process.



Part 2: General information on submitting an application to the 2026 Project Grant Round

This section sets out general information for applicants to the 2026 Project Grant in the 'General' category, including:

- 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.

2.1 Preparation

HRC Gateway 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 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 Project Full 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)
- HRC Peer Review Manual (accessed via the 2026 Projects information page on HRC Gateway)

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

Forms

You will need to download and complete two different forms when submitting a General Project full application:

- 2026 Project Full Application Form (Microsoft Word template)
- 2026 Project Budget Form (Microsoft Excel template)

Note: If you are applying for a Rangahau Hauora Māori Project or a Pacific Project, please use the specific Rangahau Hauora Māori or Pacific Project Full Application Forms and Guidelines, respectively.

If you use the incorrect application form, your application may be withdrawn.

The HRC templates for these forms must be downloaded from the 2026 Projects information page on HRC Gateway. Do not use any other templates; these have special features required for HRC to process them. The application form should be completed in Microsoft Word, and the budget form should be completed in Microsoft Excel. Once completed, upload these documents to your application in HRC Gateway.

Note: The application form must be uploaded as a PDF, while the budget form must be uploaded in both Excel (.xlsx) and PDF formats. When converting your budget form into a PDF format, make sure all Excel spreadsheet tabs are included.

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 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 you with information and the relevant forms for your organisation to complete.

Consents necessary to carry out research (NEW)

All Project 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 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 not process your application if you do not use the correct HRC application forms or follow the stated page limits and font sizes/styles. Your application may 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 limits.
3. 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.
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, other funding applications and CVs) as 'supporting documents' on HRC Gateway, and avoid using hyperlinks in the application form. All additional material and hyperlinks will be removed from your application.
6. Do not send digital files directly to the HRC.

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 Allowed changes between the Expression of Interest and Full Application stage

Please do not make any significant changes to the research team or research plans outlined in your Expression of Interest (EOI) application. Significant changes may result in your full application being disqualified. Slight modifications can be made to your research title and lay summary.

Generally, you cannot change or add any named investigators to the team at the full stage, except:

- for statistical expertise in clinical trials
- to replace an existing member due to unforeseen circumstances
- for applications submitted to the Rangahau Hauora Māori or Pacific health project categories.

The form to request an additional named investigator, or to replace or remove an investigator, is available from your research office. If your organisation does not have a research office, please contact the HRC. You will need to email the completed change request form to info@hrc.govt.nz by **1 pm on 26 November 2025**. No further changes will be accepted after this time.

In the EOI form, named investigators indicated their FTE commitment by selecting from one of the following 'FTE bands':

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

In the full application, please enter a defined FTE value for each named investigator. This value should fall within the band that was selected in the EOI application.

Note: The HRC will consider changes of FTE between EOI and full application that move to a different band; however, these must be justified and the HRC will need to be notified of these changes. The form to request a change of FTE is available from your research office. If your organisation does not have a research office, please contact the HRC.

2.4 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 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 in your application will be available to members of 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.

2.5 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 status.

2.6 Additional eligibility requirements

Eligibility restrictions on publicly funded research

The HRC cannot accept applications made by a public service department, 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 government funding does not support scientific research collaborations that could further Russia's ability to continue its aggression in Ukraine. As a Crown entity, 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,⁸ and may require funded projects to identify, mitigate, and monitor risks as part of the contractual conditions of the project.

2.7 False or misleading information

Once submitted to the HRC, a funding application is considered final and no changes will be permitted, although it may be withdrawn. The application is the primary source of information available for assessment. As such, it must contain all the information necessary for assessment without the need for further written explanation or reference to additional documentation at the assessing committee meeting. All details in the application, particularly concerning any awarded grants, must be current and accurate at the time of application.

If an application contains false or misleading information, it may be excluded from any further consideration for funding.

⁸ 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.

If the HRC believes that omission or inclusion of misleading information is intentional, it may refer the matter to the host organisation for the situation to be addressed under the provisions of the organisational code of conduct. The HRC also reserves the right to not accept future applications from the relevant investigators and/or to pursue legal action if appropriate. Examples of false or misleading information in an application include:

- violating the standard codes of scholarly conduct and ethical behaviour
- providing fictitious CVs or biographical sketches, including roles in previous research
- omitting advice of publications which have been retracted or are to be considered for retraction
- falsifying claims in publication records (such as describing a paper as accepted for publication when it has only been submitted).

2.8 Complaints and appeals process

The HRC has a policy for considering and ruling on allegations of unfairness from an applicant for any HRC research funding. Complaints or requests for review of an application outcome must be submitted in writing, through the research office of the applicant's host organisation, or directly to the HRC in the absence of an organisational research office. An applicant may submit a complaint or request for review if they consider their application has been processed unfairly or differently from other like applications, setting out how the applicant feels the application was processed differently, the alleged unfairness, and the remedy sought.

Part 3: Instructions on completing and submitting your application to the 2026 Project Grant Round

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

A full application for a 2026 Project Grant consists of six modules.

Complete Module 1 'General information' on HRC Gateway. The HRC Reference ID# was generated at the EOI stage.

Complete Module 2 'Research', Module 3 'References', and Sections 4A-C 'Contract information and budget' in the **2026 Project Full Application Form** (Microsoft Word template). Refer to **Sections 3.2-3.5** for detailed guidance on how to complete each module.

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

Complete Sections 4E-G 'Research proposal budget', 'Subcontract budget' and 'FTE summary' in the **2026 Project Budget Form** (Microsoft Excel template). Refer to **Section 3.5** for detailed guidance on how to complete the budget form. Please complete all sections and upload the budget form in both **.xlsx and PDF formats** to HRC Gateway. Please make sure all budget tabs are included in the PDF.

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

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

The completed application form should be uploaded to HRC Gateway as a PDF file. Before submitting your application, refer to the checklist in the application form to ensure that all requirements have been met.

3.1 The Project Full application forms

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

Please:

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

Alignment with health research priorities

In the application form's cover sheet, you will need to indicate if your application aligns with one or more of the priorities outlined in Section 1.3 (select all that apply). In the most relevant sections of your application, clearly articulate how your research project aligns with the chosen priority/priorities.

3.2 Module 1: General information

Module 1 is completed in HRC Gateway, and most information will have been provided at the EOI stage. Most fields cannot be edited or updated. Update Module 1 in HRC Gateway to include the following information.

Research title

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

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.

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.

Named investigators

The research team from your EOI application should match the research team in your Full application. Therefore, you cannot change or add any named investigators at the Full stage without the HRC's permission. Refer to Section 2.3 for detailed guidance. Each named investigator will need to sign in to HRC Gateway and update their details before Project applications are submitted. 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: the co-lead investigator 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).

Certain information (i.e. ethnicity, gender, and whether the researcher is a clinician) is used for HRC information purposes only and will automatically populate from the individual's profile. All named investigators on successful applications may be cited by the HRC in its various communication channels.

Role in project should include brief information on what the named investigator will undertake in the Project (1-2 sentences maximum).

Enter a defined FTE value for each named investigator. Use the FTE value for the first year of that investigator's involvement (from the budget spreadsheet).

A **CV** is required for all named investigators and must be uploaded into this section using the 'Upload CV' button.

Collaborators

Collaborators must be added to HRC Gateway by **1 pm on 26 November 2025**. 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, consultancy, resources, or services to support research activities.

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

A letter of support for each collaborator must be uploaded to HRC Gateway. Refer to **Section 3.5** for detailed guidance.

Research costs

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

Unacceptable peer reviewers

You can identify up to two individuals who are not acceptable as peer reviewers for the application. Click the 'Update' button to enter the name, organisation, and reason for exclusion. You will need to provide this information by **1 pm on 26 November 2025**.

Objectives and milestones

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

Objectives

Briefly describe the intended objectives of your Project application. Objectives should relate to the overall goal or aim of the research. The HRC suggests a minimum of three 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.

Note: 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.

Example milestones:

Year	Milestone	Objective(s)
1	Gain animal ethics approval	Objective 1
1	Complete animal study, data collection, and analysis	Objective 1
1	Register clinical trial prospectively in ANZCTR	Objective 2
1	Gain ethics approval for clinical trial	Objective 2
2	Publish results of lab-based study	Objective 1
2	Recruit 200 participants to clinical trial	Objective 2
3	Complete recruitment to clinical trial (300 total)	Objective 2
3	Complete statistical analysis of clinical trial	Objective 2
4	Submit manuscript to NZMJ	All objectives

3.3 Module 2: Research

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. The content should be similar to your EOI. Use the suggested headings and add subheadings if required.

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

Note: The section headings provided in the application form must be used, as they correspond to the assessment criteria for the Project Grant applications.

Your audience includes discipline-specific peer reviewers and a more broadly experienced assessing committee. Therefore, not all members will have specialist knowledge of your research topic. It is in your best interest to structure your writing clearly and logically. Using graphics and tables is an efficient use of space (please ensure font type and size are easily legible). Ideally, seek feedback from a colleague outside your immediate research area. Please refer to Appendix 2 for the scoring criteria for these categories.

Ensure that the format of non-text content is compatible with PDF conversion software.

Rationale for research

All HRC-funded research must focus on health and improving health outcomes and be within the scope outlined in Section 1.3. You will need to clearly describe the health and health system issues that your research aims to address.

Outline why your research is important, worthwhile and justifiable to New Zealand. Strongly demonstrate the research gap and how your research plans to address it. Include your research's purpose and aims, hypothesis, and anticipated new knowledge, technical advance or innovation.

Consider the following when responding to this section:

- What is the significance of the health issue for New Zealand?
- Does the proposed research provide a clear evidence-base when describing areas of high health need and population groups with high health need?
- What is the significant/important gap in knowledge, policy, practice, or service delivery that your research will address?
- How does your proposed research build on existing knowledge and evidence, and how will it contribute to, extend, or align with research currently being undertaken either nationally or internationally?

Research design and methods

Provide sufficient details so the assessing committee can review your scientific protocol, feasibility, appropriateness, robustness and innovativeness. Clearly state what will be done, how, by whom, where and when.

Consider the following when responding to this section:

- Subject recruitment and characteristics (including number, gender and ethnicity where relevant).
- Study methodology, and proposed methods of data collection and analysis. Where appropriate, provide power calculations, an estimate of the likely effect size and the sample size required to detect this (power analysis). The HRC recommends involving a statistician in this process.
- Timelines for your research. The HRC recommends that you consult with specialists, such as methodologists, statisticians and health economists before finalising your research design. Where possible, detail the validity of the proposed analyses and the feasibility of attaining the statistical power sought.
- Clinical trial applications should include a description of statistical guidelines for early termination and a description of data and safety monitoring arrangements, where appropriate (refer to Appendix 1 for more details).
- Basic science applications are encouraged to provide control data to help the assessing committee. In addition, please provide evidence that mouse models have been generated (even if not in-house) and are viable if transgenic/knock out mice.
- If your research is patent-protected, provide the patent number and a summary of information available (if no technical information can be provided).

The HRC provides an independent data monitoring committee that has appropriate trial-specific expertise and follows best international practice if required. For general information on trial

monitoring and the HRC Data Monitoring Core Committee (DMCC), see <http://www.hrc.govt.nz/about-us/committees/data-monitoring-core-committee>.

Research impact

Describe how your research might be used, the anticipated benefits for New Zealand and your action plan to maximise the research's use and benefits. Refer to the [HRC's Research Impact Assessment slideshow](#) for additional guidance on completing this section.⁹

What types of benefits are expected to arise from your research, and **who will benefit?**

This section should provide a realistic description of how research findings could contribute to improving health outcomes and/or the health system over time (a 'line of sight' or 'pathway' to impact). Importantly, it should also identify the more immediate benefits, and users of the research who will form a focal point for your action plan (below). The balance between describing short-term benefits and potential longer-term impact will be dependent on the specific research context, with emphasis on considerations within your sphere of influence throughout the life of the research project.

The HRC's Research Impact Assessment slideshow includes discussion of elements that should be covered in this section.

What specific activities will you undertake throughout the life of the research project to **maximise the use and benefits** of your research?

Describe the targeted actions that have been, or will be, taken to improve the likelihood of research uptake and impact, and to ensure that the next users or end users (identified in the previous section) can meaningfully contribute to, and/or benefit from, the research.

Describe other planned dissemination activities that are designed to reach broader audiences. Who can enable the uptake of your research, and how have they been involved in your research? Identify uncertainties to uptake, or systematic/institutional barriers, and your mitigation strategies (where relevant).

What elements of the team's track record of knowledge transfer provide confidence in the likelihood of research uptake? For example: existing links, relationships, or networks with relevant research next-users or end-users; demonstrable examples of knowledge mobilisation, or changes in health outcomes or societal impact generated from similar research. This component is considered relative to opportunity.

Māori health advancement

The HRC expects applicants for HRC research funding to consider all potential ways in which their application will advance Māori health, and to outline what actions they will undertake to help achieve this potential. Assessment of Māori health advancement will explicitly consider two components:

- An outline of contributions the research may make to advancing Māori health.
- Specific actions that have been, and will be, undertaken to realise the contribution to advancing Māori health through the life of the project and also beyond it.

Researchers are encouraged to consider the four domains of Māori health advancement (see the Māori Health Advancement Guidelines for more details) during the development of their research,

⁹Consult the [HRC's Research Impact Assessment slideshow](#) for further discussion on the types of benefits that can arise from health research, and where these benefits might be expected to occur along a pathway to impact.

as this may identify aspects of the research not previously considered. It is not a requirement that all four domains are specifically addressed in the application, but researchers are advised to consider each in formulating the strongest rationale for the application.

Alignment of the response to the 'Māori health advancement' criterion and other assessment criteria will strengthen an application.

1. How will the outcomes of your research contribute to Māori health advancement?

Provide a realistic description of how this research could contribute to improved Māori health outcomes or reductions in inequity over time. Consideration should be given to potential short-term and/or longer-term Māori health gains, within the specific context of the research and where it is positioned along the research pathway (cf. potential 'line of sight' or 'pathway' to impact). In addition, more immediate users and beneficiaries of the research who can utilise the research findings for Māori health gain should be identified.

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?

Describe specific actions that have been, and will be, undertaken (from the development of the research idea through to the completion of the project) to maximise the likelihood that this research will contribute to Māori health advancement. Outline actions taken to ensure that the next users or beneficiaries of the research can utilise the findings for Māori health gain.

Consideration of Māori health advancement is context-specific, as determined by the nature and scope of the research.

If your research is not expected to make direct contributions to Māori health, identify actions that will be undertaken throughout the life of the project to contribute to other facets of Māori health advancement. Where relevant, identify barriers to actioning your aspirations for advancing Māori health and your mitigation strategies.

Expertise and track record of the research team

Clearly define the team's mix of expertise, appropriate networks and collaborations; history of productivity and delivery; and the appropriateness of the research environment/infrastructure to deliver the research and disseminate results.

Provide a justification for the role of each team member (i.e. named investigators). Highlight important skills, expertise and previous collaborations in the team that would support delivery of the proposed research.

A CV must be provided on HRC Gateway for all named investigators to help the assessing committee determine whether their expertise is appropriate and necessary. The assessing committee will consider the FTE of senior investigators on each proposal and weight their scoring on the expertise and track record of the research team accordingly, i.e. high scores should not be allocated for a senior named investigator who has a small percentage FTE involvement in the research.

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

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

3.4 Module 3: References

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

Citations for key references in the text in Module 2 should be supplied. Details must include a full list of all author(s), title of article, journal, year, volume and page numbers. Endnote lists must be copied into a plain text editor before pasting it in this section. Place an asterisk beside named investigators' publications.

A glossary of Māori terms used in the application with a brief translation can be included here.

3.5 Module 4: Contract information and Budget

Sections 4A-4C are part of the **2026 Project Full Application Form**.

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

Sections 4E-4G should be completed in the separate Microsoft Excel budget spreadsheet – **2026 Project Budget Form**.

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

Section 4A: Justification of expenses

Justification of research staff

Justify the role and FTE of the named investigators and any other research staff listed in Section 4E (Research Proposal Budget) and Section 4G (FTE Summary). Please include the following (if applicable):

- An explanation of 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, interviewers and support staff or similar, whose names or position titles are listed in the budget under 'research staff' and who have specific FTE involvements. Time-only staff require clear justification.
- A justification for unnamed postdoctoral fellows. Named postdoctoral fellows should be included as named investigators and provide their CVs.
- Evidence that biostatisticians, data managers and health economists are integrated into the team as appropriate, e.g. sufficient FTE is allocated for each year of the contract.
- Whether a role is involved in mentoring junior team members.

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

Justification of working expenses and casual staff

All items listed under 'Materials and research expenses' in the budget should be justified. Provide costs per item unit and full costs per item for the number of units requested. Costs associated

with knowledge transfer activities can be included. Quotes must be provided to support discretionary costs, where available.

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

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

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

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

Section 4B: Previous/Current contracts and awards

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

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

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

Section 4C: Other support

Programme applications related to this project

State if any named investigators on this Project application are also named investigators on an HRC Programme application. If this Project is a part of a Programme application, your Project application will be withdrawn if the related Programme is successfully funded. If there is a justification for why your Project application should not be withdrawn in these circumstances, provide it here.

Other research applications awaiting decisions

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

Co-funding

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

Financial or other interests

For the purposes of HRC processes, a financial interest is anything of economic value, including relationships with entities outside of the research host organisation. Examples of financial interests include positions such as consultant, director, officer, partner or manager of an entity (whether paid or unpaid), salaries, consulting income, honoraria, gifts, loans and travel payments. A financial conflict may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the individual's professional judgment in conducting, assessing or reporting research.

Examples of other interests include aligning with special interest groups seeking to advance or promote a particular worldview or policy.

Please disclose and provide details of any significant relationship to third parties (e.g. commercial sector entities contributing to project costs, equipment, staff joint appointments). Clearly describe how the current application relates to those relationships.

If you can identify financial or other interests in your funding application, outline the specific details of your proposed conflict management strategy. Assessing commercial links is not part of the HRC peer review process.

Section 4D: Letters of collaboration/support documents

Any additional documentation (including subcontracts/Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), letters of collaboration/support) should be uploaded as separate PDF files under 'Letters of collaboration/support documents' on HRC Gateway.

HRC Gateway will automatically generate a list of uploaded documents.

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

Your application should contain all the information necessary for assessment without the need to refer to additional documentation. Supplementary materials, such as slides, protocols, and other funding applications, should not be included. Any additional documents containing information beyond the main body of the application may be removed at HRC's discretion.

You can upload up to 15 letters of collaboration/support documents. Your uploaded documents will be added to the end of your application.

Section 4E: Research proposal budget

The budget spreadsheet in Section 4E can be used for different types of applications. Select 'Project' from the drop-down list. Further instructions are contained in the Notes tab of the file.

The guidelines below are a summary of the HRC's funding rules. For more information, please refer to the [HRC Rules](#).

Budget calculations and spreadsheet

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

Section 4E includes the total research staff FTE and salary, total research working expenses, the host organisation's overhead rate, and the total cost of research. The spreadsheet automatically calculates these totals. Do not enter details into the shaded cells, as these are completed automatically. Insert more rows into the table, if required.

Note: Ensure the 'total cost of research' is within the budget limit outlined in **Section 1.4**.

FTE and Salary

Only enter **named investigators** and **contract research staff** employed or to be employed by the host organisation (including academics) in this section.

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

The budget form does not accept FTE less than 3%. The HRC assessing committees do not favour listing numerous investigators with a very low FTE, and salary requests should only be for significant input and involvement in the project. Advisory groups of contributors, who have FTE commitments of less than 3%, may be justified and included as research working expenses ('advisory group fees').

Salary associated costs (i.e. the employer's contribution to approved superannuation schemes and accident compensation levies) should be entered in the 'Research working expenses' section.

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

Materials and research expenses

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**.

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 (e.g. telephone calls/communications, mail and freight).
- Computer-related license fees for research-specific software; access to High Performance Computing infrastructure (NeSI).
- Minor research equipment (to a total of \$5,000).
- A proportionate part of new specialised equipment (equipment to be acquired) may be included and justified on research applications (upload any budgetary supportive documents separately on HRC Gateway as supporting documents).
- Depreciation on specialised equipment if your host organisation's auditors have certified that it will be excluded from your organisation's overhead rate. This cost must be justified

in your application and supporting documentation should be uploaded to HRC Gateway. For all other equipment, depreciation and capital costs are included in your organisation's overhead rate.

- Expenses relating to research participants.
- Costs associated with knowledge transfer activities.
- Travel costs **directly** related to conducting the research. Contract funds may be used to assist with overseas travel provided the HRC is satisfied that this travel is directly relevant to conducting the research and that alternative funding sources are not available. This is not intended to relieve your host organisation of its obligation to assist with the costs of overseas travel by its employees.
- Disseminating research results. Contract funds can be used to pay fair and reasonable charges to publish HRC-sponsored research in journals, reports, monographs or books. Also, costs incurred from other forms of dissemination, such as meeting with community groups or conference dissemination, can be claimed if reasonable and justified.
- Conference allowance: the maximum allowance for conference attendance is \$1,000 per annum per named investigator if **fully supported at 100% FTE** by the grant and must be fully justified. The allowance cannot be distributed proportionately between grants. This allowance is distinct from the cost to disseminate findings from this proposed research; this cost must also be fully justified. Fares and allowances should be calculated following the host organisation's regulations and scales.

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

Casual staff

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

Postgraduate student costs

Costs for stipends can be requested for master's and PhD students under 'Research working expenses'. Stipends must be included at the HRC-approved rates (master's \$20,000 per annum; PhD \$30,000 per annum).

Both named and unnamed students can be included; in both cases, describe the student's research project/contribution to the research activity in Section 4A. Students should be named if they have been identified at the time of application. Unnamed students can be included in the application budget as e.g. "PhD student (not yet appointed)". The HRC must be advised of the student's name once appointed.

Funding for stipends will be conditional upon the host organisation arranging a tax-free stipend that satisfies the Inland Revenue Department and host organisation's rules.

Note: Students' fees and thesis costs cannot be claimed.

Subcontract/Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) budget

Subcontracted staff are those who are not employees of the host organisation. The salaries for these staff and all other expenses requested for the subcontract (e.g. working expenses) should be broken down into appropriate categories on a detailed subcontract/Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the host organisation and non-host organisation using 'Section 4F' of the budget spreadsheet.

Enter the subcontract/MOU total, **exclusive of GST**, under 'Subcontract MOU budget' for each year. The total figure should be all-inclusive, including overhead calculations for salaries.

Note: the HRC does not cover overheads for overseas-based organisations.

A *pro forma* MOU is available upon request from the HRC. If a subcontract/MOU budget is more than \$50,000, all expenses requested should be broken down into the appropriate categories in Section 4F of the budget spreadsheet (MOU budget).

Please provide MOUs for time-only subcontracted staff who are not employed by the host organisation. If MOUs cannot be provided by the application deadline, you can include a letter of support that describes the individual's role and level of involvement. If your application is successful, copies of MOUs that were not provided for any time-only individuals may be required at the contracting stage.

Please upload all MOUs and letters of support as separate PDF files on HRC Gateway. Refer to 'Section 4D: Letters of collaboration/support documents' for further details.

Salary associated costs

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

International expenses

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

Total cost of research

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

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

Section 4F: Subcontract MOU budget

If a substantial proportion of the total budget is contained in a subcontract/MOU, the expenditure must be itemised in the same way as the overall research proposal budget (see above).

Use Section 4F to provide budget details for all MOUs requesting more than \$50,000; add a copy of Section 4F for each subcontractor. Use the overhead rate for the subcontracted staff member's host organisation, not your host organisation. The total dollar amount for each year should then be entered under 'Working expenses – subcontracts' in Section 4E of the budget spreadsheet.

Upload a copy of the subcontract/MOU to HRC Gateway as a supporting document.

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

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

Section 4G: FTE summary

When completing this section, please:

- List the time involvement of **all** personnel (including those on a subcontract/MOU) in full-time equivalents, e.g. 10% FTE. Half percentages (e.g. 4.5%) are not allowed. Ensure the FTE figures match the budget, MOU budget sections (Sections 4F and 4G), and Module 1.
- Give all names. Unnamed positions can be indicated as 'technician', 'research nurse', 'postdoctoral fellow', etc.
- Indicate when named investigators are time-only (i.e. not receiving salary for their involvement in the project).
- Identify all postgraduate students by masters or PhD.

Note: For successful applications, host organisations will need to provide written confirmation that all research staff named and in paid, in full or in part, from the funding provided will be given sufficient workload relief to fulfil the research contract objectives and milestones (Principles of full cost funding).

3.6 Module 5: NZ Standard CV

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

CVs must be prepared using the [NZ Standard CV template](#). Please use the default font and stay within the page limits. The HRC will not accept any other forms of CV.

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

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

3.7 Module 6: Research classification

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

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.

Economic benefits

Briefly describe any potential economic benefits which may arise from your research. If you do not anticipate any direct economic benefits, please state this rather than leaving the field blank. The HRC's interpretation of economic benefits is broad and includes:

- contributing to maintaining a healthy and productive population
- contributing to an efficient and cost-effective health system, and
- value generated from IP and innovation.

Health issues

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

Mapping category

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

Mapping category	Description
Biomedical	
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: Proposals including randomised controlled trials

The Controlled Trials Assessing Committee (CTAC) is responsible for assessing randomised controlled trials (RCTs) across all disciplines, except for Rangahau Hauora Māori Projects and Pacific Projects, which are assessed by the Rangahau Hauora Assessing Committee and Pacific Projects Assessing Committee, respectively. The purpose of establishing this committee was to ensure consistency in assessing RCTs and to improve the quality of HRC-funded RCTs. CTAC members are selected for their knowledge and experience of RCTs and have expertise in disciplines reflecting the nature of applications assigned to the committee. Member(s) of the Data Monitoring Core Committee may also be represented on CTAC.

Generic weaknesses that have been highlighted by CTAC include issues with methodological quality and poor knowledge of clinical trial conduct. To improve the rigor and completeness of clinical trial proposals, please refer to the [SPIRIT 2025 Statement](#) when developing your trial protocols and applications.

In addition, consider all items on the SPIRIT checklist. Pay particular attention to the items listed in the Methods section (items 11-29). Addressing these can improve methodological quality and enhance knowledge of clinical trial conduct. Furthermore, consider designing phase III trials with 90% power to detect well-justified minimum important differences. Exceptions would include research questions of importance to New Zealanders that can only be addressed in New Zealand, and the trial size is limited by the pool of patients and the pressure for a timely answer.

Consider the broad expertise of their audience (CTAC) when describing your trial protocol. For example, when describing your sample size (SPIRIT item 19), justify all information in the calculation and clearly describe the minimum important difference and how this translates into meaningful clinical benefit.

A significant number of clinical trial research proposals request funding for the New Zealand arm of an international study. Clear administrative information relating to funding (SPIRIT item 7) is required in your application, including the status of all sources of funding and whether the proposal is dependent on international funding. Roles and responsibilities (SPIRIT item 3) should be explicitly stated in your application, including the specific role of the New Zealand investigator (e.g. as distinct from the site coordinator role) and any New Zealand-led trial components. Additionally, address New Zealand-specific health significance and impact on clinical care in New Zealand rather than replicating generic information from the international protocol.

Clinical trial registration

As part of our commitment to supporting best practice in clinical trials, the HRC is a signatory to the World Health Organization (WHO) Joint Statement on Public Disclosure of Results from Clinical Trials (the Joint Statement). The Joint Statement sets out policy and monitoring requirements for mandatory timeframes for prospective clinical trial registration and public disclosure of the results of clinical trial research.

The Joint Statement reflects the ethical and quality standards that must be met by HRC-funded clinical trials. This will enhance the evidence base for clinical medicine, both in New Zealand and internationally, while providing easily accessible information to the public, patients and their whānau.

The HRC's full policy statement on clinical trial transparency can be found [here](#).

All RCTs funded by the HRC, either wholly or partly, are required to be registered on an established clinical trials registry (e.g. ANZCTR; Clinicaltrials.gov). Registration should be prospective and should be added to the application as a Year 1 milestone, even if you expect registration to be achieved before starting a resulting contract.

Appendix 2: General Project application assessment process

1. Overview

Two-stage process

Project applications are processed through a two-stage process that 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 HRC priorities (see section 1.3).

In the final stages of the process, assessing committees provide a list of recommendations for 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.

Each EOI application is independently scored by the members of the relevant HRC assessing committee, using assessment criteria. This scoring generates a ranked list of EOI applications, and the highly ranked applications are invited to submit full applications.

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 peer reviewed by members of the relevant assessing committee, and each application is discussed at the assessing committee meeting and allocated an overall score and ranking.

Each assessing committee then provides a list of recommendations for funding to the Council, who meet to discuss the recommendations from all committees and make 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.

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, and statistical normalisation is applied to minimise the effect of scoring variation between committees.

In previous years, applications have been assessed by both assessing committee members and external peer reviewers. Please note that the assessment process for the 2026 round does not include external peer review and rebuttal. Peer review will only be provided by assessing committee members at the Full application stage.

2. Assessing full applications

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.

Assessing committee pre-meeting procedure

Full applications are reviewed by members of the relevant assessing committee ahead of discussion of each application at the assessing committee meeting. 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 (see Appendix 2). 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 also be taken through to the meeting for full discussion.

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 notes the key points for the review summary - 2 minutes.

Assessing committee meeting scoring criteria: General Project category

Project Full applications are scored on a 7-point word ladder using the following equally weighted criteria. These are listed below with a full description in Appendix 3. The 7-point word ladder assists assessing committee members scoring according to the descriptors rather than other considerations such as success rates of applications. Reviewers may only allocate whole scores.

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

Scoring criteria	Points	%score
Rationale for research	7	20%
Research design and methods	7	20%
Research impact	7	20%
Māori health advancement	7	20%
Expertise and track record of the research team	7	20%
Total	35	100%

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'.

The scores are submitted via HRC Gateway and collated confidentially by the HRC staff.

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 not fundable, by starting at the bottom of the ranked list and going up the list based on quality
- 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.

Note: Once the applications have been scored following discussion by the assessing committee, scores cannot be further reviewed or adjusted.

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, to support their decision making.

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 AC discussion for each of their assigned applications (Appendix 4). The intent of the review summary 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 include details of specific scores or the identity of assessing committee members.

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

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

3. 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** 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.

4. 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). Projects and Programmes are included in the normalisation process.

Appendix 3: Scoring criteria and anchor point descriptors

Criteria for assessing and scoring Project applications in the General category by the assessing committee

The 7-point word ladder containing criteria descriptors is considered against each of the following assessment outlines below (listed A-E).

Notes:

- The 'Adequate' anchor point is 3 points.
- Applicants do not necessarily have to address all the points in the outlines below; they are included to help guide assessment under each of the scoring categories.

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

Scoring criteria	Points	%score
Rationale for research	7	20%
Research design and methods	7	20%
Research impact	7	20%
Māori health advancement	7	20%
Expertise and track record of the research team	7	20%
Total	35	100%

A. Rationale for research (NEW)

The research is important, worthwhile, and justifiable to New Zealand, with consideration to the international context, because it addresses some or all of the following:

- it addresses a significant health issue for New Zealand
- it provides a clear evidence-base when describing areas of high health need and population groups with high health need
- the aims, research questions and hypotheses build on existing knowledge and address a significant/important gap in knowledge, policy, practice, or service delivery need,
- the research is original and innovative.

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
- patient safety issues are well managed.

C. Research impact

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

- Applicants have described a credible pathway for how their research will:
 - result in benefits or opportunities for future research in NZ, or
 - influence policy, practice, or health services or technologies in NZ, leading to improved health or economic impacts.
- The research team is undertaking steps to maximise the likelihood of impact beyond the productions of knowledge (as appropriate to the context of the research) 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 of the following:

- Applicants have described how their research could lead to improved Māori health or reductions in health inequity over time.
- The research team are undertaking activities to address Māori health advancement, as appropriate to the nature and scope of the research. This may include, but is not limited to, activities such as:
 - 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
- right mix of expertise, experience and FTEs, including consideration of capacity building
- capability to perform research in current research environment
- networks/collaborations
- history of productivity and delivery on previous research funding.

Appendix 4: Assessing Committee review summary: Project Full application

HRC reference #		Applicant surname	
Research title			
Host organisation			

Note to committee reviewers: carefully consider the information and wording provided below. This will be useful for both successful applicants (in helping to shape their research) and for unsuccessful applicants (in preparing future research applications). Comments should be clear and concise, reflect the committee's discussion, and fit on a single page. Aim for a total of 4-6 **bullet points**. (Please delete this text before you submit the completed form to the HRC.)

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

- 1. The assessing committee noted the following key strengths of the application**
- 2. The assessing committee noted the following aspects that could be improved and/or considered further**
- 3. Other comments/suggestions (e.g. budgets, FTE, objectives)**