



New Zealand Government
Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa

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

2027

Peer Review Manual

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**For research
applications to the
Health Research Council
of New Zealand**



Contents

1	Purpose of the Peer Review Manual	3
2	The Health Research Council of New Zealand	3
3	Te Tiriti o Waitangi	3
4	How we make funding decisions	4
5	The HRC priorities	4
6	Acknowledgements	5
7	Integrity of peer review process	6
7.1	Management of interest	6
7.2	Declaration of conflict of interest	6
7.3	Evaluation of interest	7
7.4	Minimising bias	7
7.5	Levels of peer review	8
7.6	Confidentiality and retention of applications	9
7.7	A note on generative artificial intelligence (AI)	9
8	Assessing Committee (AC)	10
8.1	Assessing committee membership	10
8.2	Responsibilities of assessing committee members	11
	Committee reviewer (CR) roles	11
	Preparing for assessing committee meetings	12
	Assessing committee meeting	13
	Assessing committee independent online scoring	13
8.3	Assessing committee administration	13
	Time commitment	13
	Expenses	13
	Meeting review	14
	Committee members' survey	14
9	Council funding decisions	14
	Appendix 1. Assessing committee fees and expenses	15
	Appendix 2. Assessing committee chairs' report	17
	Appendix 3. Abbreviations	18

1 Purpose of the Peer Review Manual

The Peer Review Manual is for assessing committee members involved in the Health Research Council of New Zealand's (HRC) research applications. It focuses on the overarching principles, roles, and considerations relating to the HRC peer review process.

Sections 1 to 6 focus on the overarching principles, roles, and considerations relating to the HRC peer review process. Sections 7 to 8 focus on the assessment processes specific to the HRC assessing committees.

Grant-specific information, including assessment processes, eligibility criteria, and assessment criteria are available in the application guidelines for each grant type. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the assessment processes described in the application guidelines for the relevant grant type that they are applying to.

Refer to the Peer Review Manual CDA for assessment processes for Career Development Awards. Please contact HRC at info@hrc.govt.nz if you have any queries.

2 The Health Research Council of New Zealand

The HRC is a Crown agent established under the Health Research Council Act 1990 and accountable to both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology. Our major activity is investing in excellent health research that:

- generates evidence-informed solutions, innovations and impacts that improve health, wellbeing and economic prosperity
- addresses priority national and global health issues
- fosters national and international research collaborations
- supports the early exploration of innovative high-impact ideas
- engages clinicians to ensure research is focused on delivering what the health systems needs
- supports the development of research skills and expertise to meet New Zealand's needs now and in the future.

We invest over \$110 million a year in health research through a range of funding opportunities to support emerging and established researchers. All HRC-funded research has a direct line of sight to improving health outcomes or the delivery of quality, timely and effective health services for all New Zealanders. We have a strong track record in funding research that leads to disease prevention, treatment and cures, better models of care, improved efficiencies, and commercial applications.

As a Crown agent, and part of the wider public service, we strive to deliver the best value for public investment through innovative and efficient service delivery, and add value to the nation's health sector, science, innovation and technology system and the wider economy.

3 Te Tiriti o Waitangi

As a Crown agent, the HRC has a responsibility to ensure Te Tiriti o Waitangi¹ is reflected in our investments. The HRC is committed to:

- supporting research that upholds Te Tiriti o Waitangi by reflecting Te Tiriti principles (Tino Rangatiratanga, Equity, Active Protection, Options, and Partnership) in practice
- supporting and encouraging research that advances Māori health
- implementing processes to promote fairness and minimise bias.

¹ Te Tiriti o Waitangi (known in English as the Treaty of Waitangi) is an agreement signed in 1840 between Māori and the British Crown.

4 How we make funding decisions

The HRC applies several levels of peer review to its applications. There are slight modifications for different funding rounds or grant types, but the objective remains to fund the highest quality research and minimise the influence of individual conflicts of interest.

All HRC funding is mission-led to some degree, meaning it must contribute to achieving the goals of the health system,² and the science, innovation, and technology system,³ including:

- improving health outcomes by providing New Zealanders with timely access to high-quality health services
- harnessing the benefits of research and innovation to drive economic transformation.

Applicants are expected to address the assessment criteria for the grant or funding round they are applying for with this in mind. All applications are screened to ensure they adhere to the requirements for this grant type or funding round.

5 The HRC 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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶ 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.

In this funding round, Council will **prioritise opportunities to invest** in research that:

- Priority 1: maximises benefit for healthcare delivery, such as:
 - new models of care and treatments
 - improved effectiveness and efficiency
 - innovation and technology in healthcare, and/or
- Priority 2: contributes to achievement of the health and/or mental health and addiction targets,⁷ and/or

² For information on health system targets and priorities see: <https://www.tewhātuora.govt.nz/corporate-information/planning-and-performance/health-targets>; <https://www.health.govt.nz/publications/government-policy-statement-on-health-2024-2027>; <https://www.health.govt.nz/publications/new-zealand-health-research-strategy-2017-2027>.

³ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-growth/going-for-growth>; <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/32023-science-investment-plan-2026-2036>

⁴ [Letters of expectations for health statutory entities | Ministry of Health NZ](https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/32023-science-investment-plan-2026-2036); <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/32023-science-investment-plan-2026-2036>; <https://www.hrc.govt.nz/resources/hrc-research-investment-plan>

⁵ [The Government Policy Statement on Health \(2024-2027\)](https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/31887-report-to-the-prime-minister-prioritisation-in-new-zealands-science-innovation-and-technology-system).

⁶ [Going For Growth | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/31887-report-to-the-prime-minister-prioritisation-in-new-zealands-science-innovation-and-technology-system), <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/31887-report-to-the-prime-minister-prioritisation-in-new-zealands-science-innovation-and-technology-system>

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

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

- Priority 3: enhances the development of clinician-researchers,⁸ and/or
- Priority 4: demonstrates a pathway to commercialisation and/or
- Priority 5: supports high-quality clinical trials, including those with a particular focus on cancer and/or blood cancers.

Further information about the HRC's research priorities can be found in the HRC's Research Investment Plan 2026/27 (pages 3-5).⁹

Applicants must clearly articulate in the most relevant sections of their application if your research aligns with one or more of the health research priorities outlined in this section. Council makes final decisions on funding, informed by the assessing committee recommendations, the balance of investments across our portfolios, and consideration of alignment with HRC priorities. Council funding decisions will align with current priorities to the greatest extent possible, subject to the proposals submitted in a particular funding round.

6 Acknowledgements

The peer review process is a critical part of the HRC assessment process. The HRC acknowledges the time, effort, and valuable contribution that committee members make to its assessment processes.

⁸ 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.

⁹ <https://www.hrc.govt.nz/resources/hrc-research-investment-plan>

7 Integrity of peer review process

The HRC undertakes numerous steps to ensure that our processes are robust, fair, and transparent. The aim is that the assessment is based on the quality of the application and not influenced by conflicts of interest or bias.

7.1 Management of interest

The HRC Management of Interest Policy applies to HRC Council members, committee members, staff, contractors, and consultants.

A conflict of interest arises when an individual's interests conflict (or might be perceived to conflict) with the interests of the HRC as a Crown agent, such as situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, professional judgement in objectively assessing research applications. In managing a conflict of interest, it is important to consider both actual conflicts and the appearance of conflict.

The HRC provides guidance to assist in identifying and evaluating a conflict's potential impact on the peer review process. It is difficult to prescribe a comprehensive set of rules on interest as individuals are best able to judge their duties, links, and potential interest in a particular circumstance.

The key question to ask when considering whether an interest might create a conflict is: Does the interest create an incentive to act in a way that may not be in the best interests of the HRC, the research, or the researcher(s)?

To minimise potential conflict of interest, HRC has developed the following guidance:

- Anyone who is a first named investigator (including co-first named investigator) or a named investigator on an application under consideration in that round should not sit on the assessing committee that is assessing their application, but they may sit on, or chair, another assessing committee.
- A named investigator on a Programme application cannot participate in the assessment on a competing Programme application.
- Council members cannot serve on an assessing committee.

7.2 Declaration of conflict of interest

As an assessing committee member, you must declare a potential conflict of interest if you:

- are a named investigator on any application in the same funding round
- are from the same immediate department, institution or company as the applicant(s)
- have direct involvement in the research application being assessed
- have collaborated, published or been a co-applicant with the applicant(s), within the last five years
- have been a student or supervisor of the applicant(s) within the last 10 years
- are a close personal friend or relative of the applicant(s)
- have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant(s)
- are in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application
- have direct involvement in a competing application in the current funding round
- for whatever reason, feel that they cannot provide an objective review of the application.

All members must complete the conflicts of interest declaration on the HRC Gateway when accessing the applications.

You will be asked to:

- declare any potential conflicts with people or organisations
- provide details of your conflicts

Declarations should be made **as soon as possible** to allow the conflict to be evaluated and an appropriate outcome or resolution to be achieved.

7.3 Evaluation of interest

The HRC staff will review your conflict of interest and determine the most appropriate action. You can only access the application on the HRC Gateway once your conflicts have been reviewed by HRC staff. Conflicts of interests are managed through the actions below:

Level 1	Minor conflict: no action is necessary.
Level 2	Moderate conflict: the assessing committee member may be present due to their unique knowledge of the research area. They may be asked direct questions relating to the score criteria by other committee members, but they will not participate in general discussion, and they will not score the application. Reviewer reports will be managed at the discretion of the HRC staff and assessing committee chairs.
Level 3	Strong conflict: the assessing committee member must not assess or be present during the discussion and scoring of the research application.

The HRC staff and the assessing committee chairs are responsible for raising any potential conflict of interest issues, resolving any areas of uncertainty, and working with the assessing committee in making final decisions in managing potential conflicts of interest. Potential conflicts of interest may be discussed with the assessing committee as a whole; the member concerned may be asked to leave the meeting during this discussion.

All declared conflicts are recorded, including the action taken.

Where a potential conflict of interest, such as a recent co-authored publication, arises from a person's technical expertise, e.g. biostatistics or other limited involvement, this may be considered a minor conflict if the person was/is acting in a capacity similar to that of a consultant. If the association extends to the person being considered an integral member of the research team, then this is likely to be considered a strong conflict.

In determining conflicts of interest with collaborators who are not named investigators but contribute in other ways to an application, the HRC will consider the declaration in line with our conflicts of interest policy. The specific involvement of the collaborating individual or organisation will be considered.

If an assessing committee member does not recognise or declare a conflict of interest, but the potential conflict is later detected, the level of conflict will be determined and managed according to the guidelines in this section.

Any concerns about another member's potential or actual conflict of interest should be raised with the assessing committee chairs or HRC.

7.4 Minimising bias

The HRC continually seeks to minimise the impact of unfair and unreasonable bias related to gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or any other grounds prohibited by the Human Rights Act 1993. In addition, the HRC seeks to minimise the impact of biases more specific to the health and research sectors, such as those related to discipline, methodological choices, or research background. This is not an

exhaustive list; the HRC acknowledges there are numerous biases that can unfairly influence assessment, and that these can intersect and have a cumulative negative impact.

While a peer review process inherently relies on subjective assessment, the HRC aims to minimise the impact of various biases by ensuring that the assessment of each application is informed by experts with a diverse range of perspectives as well as subject matter knowledge.

The HRC actively manages committee composition to minimise potential impacts of bias and has steps in place to reduce the influence of bias during assessing committee meetings. For example, assessing committee members are asked to watch the Royal Society video on unconscious bias prior to assessment.¹⁰ Assessing committee chairs, supported by HRC staff, are briefed to manage discussions to ensure that the knowledge contributed by each member is respected.

An Assessing Committee Code of Conduct is presented to the committee at the start of the meeting; members are asked to adhere to the code and keep it front of mind throughout the meeting process. The HRC has mechanisms in place to monitor for the expression of biases in reviews and discussion, and to intervene to minimise impact and recurrence, which we will continue to improve.

HRC Assessing Committee Code of Conduct

As an organisation, the HRC aims to ensure that:

- diversity, equity, safety, and inclusiveness are embedded in our assessment processes, and that diverse perspectives are respected and valued
- committee members are not placed in unsafe positions through either exposure to, or negative impact from, discriminatory, biased or disrespectful comments
- applicants and applications are assessed objectively, constructively and respectfully
- the committee meeting process is undertaken according to the principles of HRC assessment, which helps ensure:
 - conflicts of interests are managed appropriately, in line with best practice and HRC policy
 - confidentiality is maintained
 - discussion/scoring is fair and balanced
 - there is “round table” expertise and discussion
 - decision-making is impartial and non-discriminatory.

All discriminatory and biased assessments are a detriment to the quality of our application assessment process.

Embedding diversity, equity, safety, and inclusiveness in HRC assessment processes is a critical step in ensuring that we fund high-quality, high-impact research that improves health equity within New Zealand.

7.5 Levels of peer review

The HRC applies several levels of peer review to applications. There are slight modifications for each type of application, but the objective remains to minimise the influence of individual conflicts of interest by using several committees, of different membership, to decide the progress of each application. An individual is restricted in the number of roles that they can have during a funding round. For example, Council members do not serve on assessing committees. The HRC research committees provide representatives to chair assessing committees and advise on improving assessment processes.

¹⁰ <https://royalsociety.org/news-resources/publications/2015/unconscious-bias/>

7.6 Confidentiality and retention of applications

In agreeing to take part, please keep details of each application's assessment confidential.

This is because:

- members do not sit on the peer review process in a representative capacity
- members must feel able to discuss applications freely
- applicants' intellectual property needs to be protected, especially where applications have declared commercial interests.

The following guidance is for assessing committee members. These guidelines maintain confidentiality and protect the integrity of the peer review process:

- Applications and meeting documents are confidential and must not be shared with anyone. Should external advice from those outside the peer review process be necessary, members should discuss this with the HRC before engaging.
- Information in the application and/or directly related to the application must not be entered into generative artificial intelligence (AI) (see below for further information).
- Committee discussions and scoring for applications must remain confidential at all times. Any comments on applications are restricted to the committee discussion and cannot continue during breaks or outside of the meeting.
- Meeting materials must be destroyed after the assessing committee meeting.
- Assessing committee members are encouraged to note their service on an HRC committee in CVs or other material but must not reveal the specific committee's name. The HRC publishes a list of assessing committee members each year, but members are not listed by committee. Members must not disclose the names of other members associated with a specific committee or the names of external peer reviewers associated with a specific application.

Any suspected breaches in confidentiality should be immediately reported to the HRC. The HRC will take appropriate steps to investigate and manage any suspected breach.

Committee chairs may keep copies of research applications and committee meeting notes for three months following the award of new HRC research contracts. This is to ensure that any queries regarding the outcome of funding results can be clarified. The primary committee reviewer (CR1) of an application may retain notes until appropriate review summaries for applicant feedback are complete. Due to the risk of sensitive or confidential information being lost, applications and meeting materials should be stored as electronic files in a secure system instead of paper copies.

7.7 A note on generative artificial intelligence (AI)

Generative AI uses prompts and models to create and generate outputs closely resembling human-created-content.¹¹

Entering information from an application into generative AI tools as part of undertaking peer review breaches the HRC's Confidentiality policy (as defined in the Confidentiality section above).

In addition to breaching confidentiality requirements, the use of generative AI to inform peer review would be considered to compromise the integrity of the HRC's peer review process, through the introduction of biases, inappropriate comments, generic statements, and/or restatements of the application.

If the HRC identifies that an assessing member or a peer reviewer has used generative AI when completing their review, appropriate action will be determined and managed by HRC staff, and the report will not be used in the assessment process.

¹¹ Definition from: <https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/technology-and-architecture/artificial-intelligence/responsible-ai-guidance-for-the-public-service-genai>

8 Assessing Committee (AC)

8.1 Assessing committee membership

Each assessing committee generally consists of 1-2 co-chair(s) and 7-12 committee members, with overall membership dependent on the expertise requirements and the number of applications to be assessed. The chair(s) of each assessing committee is a member (or designee) of one of the statutory research committees: the Public Health Research Committee, the Biomedical Research Committee, and the Māori Health Committee. However, to avoid conflicts of interest, other members of the health research community who are familiar with HRC processes may chair. Committee members represent a mix of disciplines and are appointed based on their research experience and ability to effectively assess the applications received in that funding round.

Where possible, assessing committee members represent a wide range of departments or institutions in New Zealand, Australia, and on occasion from other countries (as appropriate). Nomination and selection of assessing committee members is undertaken by the HRC and assessing committee chairs, with recommendations from research committees, and self-nomination by individuals via HRC Gateway to achieve widespread representation.

Applications may be grouped so that all related applications are reviewed by the same assessing committee (e.g. all biomedical applications within a sub-discipline), although the assessing committee may have expertise in several sub-disciplines (e.g., cardiology and renal disease). Clinical trials and public health trials may be assessed by a separate assessing committee(s) with appropriate expertise. The HRC will consult with the chairs to ensure there is appropriate expertise available on each assessing committee to review the grouped applications. If there are gaps in committee expertise for a particular application, the HRC may seek expert comment to support assessment.

Māori health research applications may be assessed by the Māori Health Assessing Committee or by another appropriate assessing committee. Pacific health research applications may be assessed by the Pacific Health Assessing Committee or by another appropriate assessing committee.

Assessing committee members are experienced researchers who have expertise relative to the breadth and scope of the research applications and the assessment criteria. Māori health and Pacific health experts are included in the review process. To minimise scoring variation between committees, and from year to year, some members will have previous experience on an assessing committee.

Assessing committee members are expected to have:

- postgraduate qualifications in a discipline relevant to health research, and/or
- a track record as an active health researcher (i.e. a named investigator on a funded research application by a relevant funding agency (e.g. the HRC, Marsden Fund, Cancer Society) in the past three years), and/or
- a track record in policy analysis/advice in an agency/department relevant to health research (e.g. the Ministry of Health), and/or
- a track record of community engagement or as a community or consumer advocate, and/or
- expertise in assessing the impact of health research.

In some circumstances, members' expertise and experience may differ from that described above; however, all members must be able to carry out the required roles and responsibilities. It is sometimes necessary to have specialised expertise on an assessing committee to assess an aspect of applications that require their review, e.g., a biostatistician or a health economist.

To minimise potential conflicts of interest, the following are key considerations for assessing committee membership:

- Anyone who is a first named investigator (including co-first named investigator) or a named investigator on an application under consideration in that round should not sit on the assessing committee that is assessing their application, but they may sit on, or chair, another assessing committee.
- A named investigator on a Programme application cannot participate in the assessment on a competing Programme application.
- Council members cannot serve on an assessing committee.

For rounds that utilise a two-stage process, the number of committees involved in assessing Full applications may be less than for Expressions of Interest, and fewer committee members may be required to provide expertise on the mix of applications. It is desirable to have some continuity of committee membership between the two stages.

8.2 Responsibilities of assessing committee members

Committee chairs' responsibilities

The HRC appoints committee chairs or co-chairs where there is appropriate expertise, as this helps to spread workload, achieve balance in chairing style and allow for succession planning. Consideration should also be given to limiting the term of an assessing committee chair, e.g. in line with their research committee term. The main responsibilities of the assessing committee chairs, with support from HRC staff, may include the following:

- approve (as required) the allocation of applications to be assessed by the committee
- approve and suggest potential committee members, taking into consideration: expertise, conflict of interest, institutional spread, location, gender balance, international balance, turnover of members, and Māori and/or Pacific expertise
- approve and suggest committee reviewer (CR) assignment of applications
- manage potential conflicts of interest
- attend the chairs' online pre-meeting (where available)
- ensure the assessments are fair and balanced
- work with the HRC team to actively mitigate against, manage and respond to instances of bias in the meeting discussion
- ensure that all committee members contribute to the discussion
- ensure that committee discussion includes reference to all scoring criteria
- provide a committee chairs' report with the committee's feedback on the process with a consensus view
- approve review summaries after the meeting
- help respond to any complaints.

It is the responsibility of the chairs and HRC staff to resolve any concerns regarding the integrity of the process.

Committee reviewer (CR) roles

For most assessing committees, members may also be assigned a 'committee reviewer' role for specific applications. The assignment of this role is undertaken by the HRC, in consultation with the assessing committee chair(s), and consider potential conflicts of interest, expertise, experience, and workload.

Due to the workload associated with the chairs' responsibilities and to ensure that assessing committee processes are efficiently and consistently followed, the assessing committee chairs will be assigned few or no committee reviewer roles, unless there are special circumstances, such as last-

minute withdrawals from the assessing committee or otherwise insufficient assessing committee expertise.

Specialised experts (e.g. biostatisticians, health economists) are generally not assigned committee reviewer roles so they can provide a consistent review across all applications assessed by that committee. However, they may do so if they have some subject expertise. For example, a biostatistician can act as a committee reviewer if a key aspect of an application includes novel methodology or statistical design, and a health economist can act as a committee reviewer if the application has a strong health economics component.

The committee reviewer may be asked to:

- provide a reviewer report before the assessing committee meeting
- provide a brief verbal summary of the application at the meeting, commenting on how the application addresses the score criteria. This is intended to be a brief recap for the committee of the application under consideration
- provide a verbal summary of the committee's main feedback after the application has been discussed. This summary highlights the application's key strengths and potential areas of improvement
- provide a written review summary after the meeting. A review summary is a short, written summary of the committee's feedback for an application (based on the committee's meeting discussion).

Grant types that incorporate external peer review process will also include an additional committee reviewer role to:

- suggest and select potential external peer reviewers (with the HRC staff) considering location and institutional spread, international balance, gender balance, and the relevant expertise needed
- summarise the findings and quality of the reviewer reports and applicant rebuttals at the meeting, particularly noting issues addressed well by the applicant, and those perhaps addressed less well or omitted.

The HRC generally aims to receive 3-4 reviewer reports for each application (depending on the grant type). If this number is exceeded, additional reports will be cancelled on the following basis: where a strong conflict of interest exists, the report is of exceptionally poor quality, or the report was the last received by the HRC. The HRC coordinates all communication with the reviewers. Committee members and applicants should **not** contact reviewers. Reviewer reports are anonymised for the applicant rebuttal but are identifiable to the assessing committee.

Some committees may instead use a more generalised committee reviewer role, which may include some of the tasks specified under the two committee reviewer roles above. Other committees may also have other specific committee reviewer roles.

Preparing for assessing committee meetings

Before the assessing committee meeting, committee members will be given access to the applications to be assessed, along with additional details about the round or grant type, and any other relevant instructions or information.

Committee members will not have access to any applications for which a strong conflict of interest has been identified. Depending on the round or grant type, further documentation and information may be provided closer to the meeting date (for example, peer reviewer reports and applicant rebuttals).

Committee members are expected to read all the applications assigned to the committee and all associated documentation. Committee members are expected to be familiar with all applications to be able to contribute to the discussion at the meeting.

For some meetings, members will be required to provide preliminary scores, which are used to rank the applications. Based on these preliminary scores, a proportion of the lowest-scoring applications may be triaged and not discussed at the meeting, and the committee members will be updated as required.

Assessing committee meeting

For most of the assessing committee, members are required to attend an online meeting to discuss and score applications. At the start of the meeting, the HRC provides a briefing that includes identifying and dealing with conflicts of interest, maintaining confidentiality and managing bias, the meeting process, and the score criteria. This provides committee members with the information and guidance they need to be consistent in their assessment.

The remainder of the meeting is allocated to discussing and scoring research applications. After all applications have been scored, the committee will produce a ranked list, which is used to make a funding recommendation to Council, or to recommend which applications should proceed to the next stage of assessment.

Assessing committee independent online scoring

For some grant types, assessing committee members are asked to independently review and score applications on HRC Gateway. These scores are used to rank the applications and inform which applications progress to the next stage. Scores may also be used to inform the funding recommendation. In these instances, an online meeting to discuss the applications may not be required.

8.3 Assessing committee administration

Detailed information is provided to members when their committee membership is confirmed. Committee meetings are currently held virtually. The HRC is using virtual meetings as this format presents an opportunity to decrease the HRC's environmental footprint, potentially increase the diversity of committees, and reduce the risk of travel disruptions impacting on the assessment process.

Time commitment

Committee members may be assigned committee reviewer roles for a set of applications to be assessed by the committee. In addition, all members must be able to discuss all other applications at the committee meeting.

Pre-meeting preparation is an important part of the assessing committee process, and members must allow sufficient time to read all applications. The time needed is dependent on the grant type and the number of applications. For example, at an assessing committee for the Project Full applications, 8-15 applications could be assigned to a committee, and 1-2 applications could be assigned to a committee reviewer. This may require several days to review and prepare for the committee meeting.

One day is generally required for most assessing committee meetings, however members may be required to join a two-day meeting if a large number of applications are received by the HRC. The meeting date will be provided in the committee members' invitation.

Expenses

Assessing committee fees and claimable expenses payable to committee members are listed in Appendix 1 of this document. Fees are calculated on a pro-rata basis for shorter meetings.

Meeting review

A review of the committee's effectiveness and functioning is a final responsibility at the end of any assessing committee meeting. All members can provide comments and suggest areas of improvement. The assessing committee chairs are asked to provide a short report noting issues that would be useful for future rounds. Feedback should be the consensus view of the committee or clearly identify where the view is that of an individual. A chairs' report template is in Appendix 2 of this document.

Committee members' survey

Committee members are also required to complete a short, anonymous survey about participating in the assessing committee. The HRC is capturing this information to monitor overall satisfaction and inform improvements to our assessment processes.

9 Council funding decisions

The assessing committees' recommendations of fundable applications are presented to the Council.

The HRC Council makes final decisions on funding, informed by the assessing committee recommendations, the balance of investments across our portfolios and consideration of alignment with HRC priorities.

Council manages any members' conflicts of interest (in relation to applications or applicants) in the same way as described in this manual for those involved in the peer review process.

Appendix 1. Assessing committee fees and expenses

Project Expression of Interest Assessing Committee (independent online scoring)			
	Committee Chair	Committee member	Ad hoc member*
Application review fee	\$900.00	\$675.00	\$675.00
Chair's report to the HRC	\$225.00		
TOTAL	\$1125.00	\$675.00	\$675.00

Full Project Application Assessing Committee (for a 2-day meeting)				
	Committee Chair	Committee member	Ad hoc member*	Technical reviewer
Meeting fee (<i>per diem</i> x 2 days)	\$600.00	\$450.00	\$450.00	
Meeting preparation fee	\$300.00	\$225.00	\$225.00	
CR1 reviewer report preparation	\$337.50**	\$337.50**		
Review summary preparation	\$225.00**	\$225.00**		
Presentation report preparation			\$112.50	
Review of review summaries	\$112.50			
Chair's report to the HRC	\$225.00			
Technical report preparation				\$56.25 per application
TOTAL	\$1,800	\$1,237.50	\$787.50	

Programme Assessing Committee (for a 3-day meeting)				
	Committee Chair	Committee member	MHR member	Technical reviewer
Meeting fee (<i>per diem</i> x 3 days)	\$900.00	\$675.00	\$675.00	
Meeting preparation fee	\$300.00	\$225.00	\$225.00	
CR/MHR preparation	\$675.00**	\$450.00**	\$675.00	
Review summary preparation		\$225.00**	\$225.00**	
Review of review summaries	\$112.50			
Chair's report to the HRC	\$225.00			
Technical report preparation				\$112.50 per application
TOTAL	\$2,212.50	\$1,575.00	\$1,800	

Emerging Researcher First Grant Assessing Committee (for a 2-day meeting)			
	Committee Chair	Committee member	Ad hoc member*
Meeting fee (<i>per diem</i> x 2 days)	\$600.00	\$450.00	\$450.00
Meeting preparation fee	\$225.00	\$225.00	
Review summary preparation	\$225.00**	\$225.00**	
Presentation report preparation			\$112.50
Review of review summaries	\$112.50		
Chair's report to the HRC	\$225.00		
TOTAL	\$1,387.50	\$900.00	\$562.50

Explorer Grant Assessing Committee		
	Committee Chair	Committee member
Meeting fee	\$300.00***	\$112.50****
Meeting preparation fee	\$300.00	\$225.00
Chair's report to the HRC	\$225.00	
TOTAL	\$825.00	\$337.50

*Can include biostatisticians or other members providing input related only to their area of expertise. These members do not have committee reviewer roles as above and can act in an advisory capacity.

** Only paid if assigned these roles.

***Chair paid a one-day meeting fee.

****Members attend a half-day meeting.

Expenses

Please note that fees will be paid upon receipt of review summary commitments.

An expense claim form is provided. Members should keep an accurate account of expenses and submit receipts with the claim.

Printing costs

Printed copies of applications will not be distributed to all committees. However, some committee members may wish to have hard copies to work with. In that case, printing costs may be claimed as an expense.

Appendix 2. Assessing committee chairs' report

Committee name	
Date(s)	
HRC staff	
BM/Clin/PH/MH/PaCH	

Please provide brief comments or bullet points in the following sections, which represent the consensus views from the committee. This confidential information will be forwarded to the HRC statutory committees and used for the continuous improvement of HRC processes. Committee members can also send any comments or feedback confidentially directly to the chairs and/or the HRC.

1. Administration and communications

2. Committee membership, expertise and working relationship

3. Integrity of the process

- Management of COIs
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Mitigating against bias including code of conduct

4. Assessment of applications

- Assessment of Māori health advancement
- Virtual meeting environment
- Key recommendations

5. Comments about HRC Gateway

6. Other comments

Appendix 3. Abbreviations

AC	Assessing committee
BMAC	Biomedical/Clinical Assessing Committee
BRC	Biomedical Research Committee
CDA	Career Development Awards
CDAC	Career Development Awards Assessing Committee
CR, CR1, CR2	Assessing committee reviewer, -1, -2
CV	Curriculum vitae
CTAC	Controlled Trials Assessing Committee
EOI	Expression of Interest
F/NF	Fundable/not fundable; or full stage/not full stage for EOI
HRC	Health Research Council of New Zealand
MHA	Māori health advancement
MHR	Māori health reviewer for Programme Assessing Committee
MHC	Māori Health Committee
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NI	Named investigator
NZHD	New Zealand Health Delivery Research Investment Stream
PAC	Programme Assessing Committee
PHRC	Public Health Research Committee
Pacific HRC	Pacific Health Research Committee
RHM	Rangahau Hauora Māori
RHAC	Rangahau Hauora Assessing Committee