

Request for Proposals

September 2020



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



MANATU HAUORA

2020 Maternity Services Research

Achieving equitable maternal and infant health outcomes

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) and the Ministry of Health (Ministry) have formed this funding initiative to invest in health research that will contribute evidence to help achieve equitable maternal and infant health outcomes.

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), the HRC and the Ministry ('the funding partners') are seeking to fund high-quality research and knowledge translation projects that will directly inform development of policy and practice for Aotearoa New Zealand's maternity services to achieve equitable maternal and infant health outcomes and support a quality improvement culture within maternity services.

There are two separate funding opportunities available to apply for:

- **Research projects** that will generate evidence with clear line of sight to how the research will advance the RFP objectives.
- **Knowledge translation grants** that will increase the use of existing evidence within maternity services with clear line of sight to how the translation activity will advance the RFP objectives.

Both opportunities will be funded within a total funding pool of **\$1.5 million** (exclusive of GST). The funding partners expect to fund a portfolio of research project and knowledge translation grants at a range of values within this funding pool. Proposals with a **maximum duration of 2 years** are invited.

Applicants will need to outline how their proposal addresses the RFP and provide a clear justification for the proposed approach along with a description of the team's ability to deliver the specific components of the research.

It is anticipated that contracted projects will begin as soon as practicable with funding available for an immediate start following notification of outcomes in March 2021.



1. Background

Achieving improved and equitable maternal and child health outcomes are priorities for this Government, as evidenced by the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy launched in 2019.

Achieving health equity is a priority for the Ministry of Health and the HRC. Achieving Māori health equity is receiving focused attention due to the Wai 2575 Māori Health Trends Report 2019, which highlights the inequities of access and service delivery experienced by Māori. A common understanding of equity is an essential foundation and the Ministry defines equity as “In Aotearoa New Zealand, people have differences in health that are not only avoidable but unfair and unjust. Equity recognises different people with different levels of advantage require different approaches and resources to get equitable health outcomes”.

The Ministry’s Maternity Action Plan (MAP) sits as a plan of action against the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and focuses on delivering high quality, safe, and equitable maternity services in all settings with the appropriate workforce, infrastructure, funding allocations, and services in place. The MAP operationalises the strategic direction of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and sets out a plan for maternity service transformation which is underpinned by responsiveness to, and partnership with, Māori.

The purpose of the MAP is to strengthen maternity services to be:

- capable of meeting the differing needs of women and whānau at different times in their maternity journey
- easily accessible to women and whānau, wherever they live and especially those with high and complex needs
- well-integrated with other health and social services to support other health and social needs through seamless transitions into Well Child Tamariki Ora (WCTO) and general practice
- supportive of access to mental health and other health and social services as needed
- committed to equity of outcomes for Māori women, babies and whānau, defined and driven by Māori
- responsive to the cultural diversity of the communities they serve
- sustainable in the long-term.

The MAP identifies research as a specific action in its monitoring and evaluation framework, and within the ‘Improving equity, quality and safety of maternity services’ workstream.

Research under the auspices of the MAP is expected to support the following outcomes:

- equitably improved maternal and infant health outcomes
- reduced inappropriate regional variation in birth interventions and outcomes
- reduced avoidable perinatal and maternal morbidity and mortality
- improved health outcome equity
- increased visibility of maternal health research and reporting
- increased Māori-led maternity research and reporting.

2. RFP objectives

The key objectives of this RFP are to:

1. Fund high-quality research project and knowledge translation grants that will directly inform development of policy and practice for Aotearoa New Zealand's maternity services to achieve equitable maternal and infant health outcomes, and support a quality improvement culture within maternity services.
2. Invest in research that will help achieve health equity for Māori, including supporting Māori researchers, organisations, and community groups (including iwi and hapū) to identify research priorities and undertake research that will address community-identified maternal and infant health needs.
3. Generate evidence that supports women and whānau to have equitable access to high quality, safe and culturally responsive maternity services, and receive equitable delivery of these services.

3. Scope

Applications submitted to this RFP must be within the following scope:

The focus of this RFP is on the generation and mobilisation of evidence that directly responds to the RFP objectives.

Research projects

Proposals are invited for research projects that will generate evidence with clear line of sight to how the research will advance the RFP objectives.

Proposals are invited from all research disciplines that are relevant to health and wellbeing, including health delivery research, health services research, kaupapa Māori research, clinical research, social science research, behavioural studies, and evaluation research.

The funding partners encourage research that is Māori-led, collaborates with Māori communities, and advances Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge).

Communities and experienced researchers are encouraged to work together to identify and respond to community evidence needs that can inform policy and practice. For example, identifying and addressing sociocultural barriers to early access to primary (community-based) maternity services in population groups.

Knowledge translation grants

The funding partners recognise that the generation of evidence is not sufficient to guarantee its equitable integration into clinical care and health delivery. The funding partners seek to close this gap by offering knowledge translation grants that will increase the use of existing evidence within maternity services with clear line of sight to how the translation activity will advance the RFP objectives.

The scope includes a broad range of activities such as knowledge synthesis, dissemination of evidence to next- or end-users, translation of evidence-based

innovation to policy, service or models of care, and implementation research which seeks to understand how evidence is applied in real-world conditions.

Examples of knowledge translation projects include:

- incorporation of existing evidence into clinical guidelines or clinical decision-making tools
- use of existing evidence to develop and test new or improved health services policies, programmes, or models of care to ensure they are evidence-based, culturally responsive, and supporting equitable health outcomes
- research on factors affecting implementation of existing evidence or national guidelines. For example, identifying and addressing barriers to compliance with nationally agreed guidelines such as 'Screening, Diagnosis and Management of Gestational Diabetes in New Zealand: A Clinical Practice Guideline' and 'Diagnosis and Treatment of Hypertension and Pre-eclampsia in Pregnancy in New Zealand'.

4. Funding streams and value

This RFP provides two separate funding opportunities: **research project** and **knowledge translation grants**.

A funding pool of **\$1.5 million** (exclusive of GST) is available. The funding partners expect to fund a portfolio of research project and knowledge translation grants at a range of values (fully costed, excluding GST) within this funding pool. Proposals with a **maximum duration of 2 years** are invited.

Applicants can submit proposals for either a research project, a knowledge translation grant, or both.

Funding will be available for an immediate start following notification of outcomes in March 2021.

Applicants should note that if competing proposals are equal in terms of their scientific value, the funding partners will consider best value for money offered by each proposal.

5. Proposal requirements

Clear and coherently written applications are essential in allowing the Assessing Committee to effectively read and assess applications submitted to this RFP.

Applicants will need to outline how their proposal addresses the objectives and scope of the RFP and provide a clear justification for the proposed approach along with a description of the research team's ability to deliver the specific components of the research. Applicants will also need to provide a fully costed budget.

Proposals must demonstrate the following:

- The proposal is **relevant to the objectives** of the RFP; will address **health equity issues**; respond to the needs of women and their babies **at risk of, or experiencing, adverse health or social outcomes**; and demonstrate a **clear line of sight to change**. Commitment to the **principles of equity must be demonstrated in the execution of the research**, not only in the research topic. The proposal should demonstrate that the design or conduct of the research does not perpetuate current inequities, by provision of a mitigation plan or similar.
- The proposal will **generate evidence to support Aotearoa New Zealand's** unique, diverse populations and social and cultural contexts, and inform the development of solutions that are culturally responsive and relevant to Aotearoa New Zealand.
- The proposal will demonstrate the **appropriateness, soundness and rigour of the research methodology and design**, while allowing for solutions to be developed in a flexible manner with appropriate stakeholder and community input; ensuring the approach leverages what is already known from the literature and related data sets and is complemented by primary data collection (as appropriate).
- The proposal will demonstrate specific plans for how the research may **contribute to advancing Māori health and achieving equitable health and wellbeing outcomes for Māori** within the context of the research topic. Research should uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi and reflect the treaty principles in practice; for example, Māori leadership; a commitment to equity for Māori; support of mana Motuhake; meaningful engagement with communities; reciprocity; sound reporting and dissemination pathways; and support of Mātauranga Māori, Māori research methods, and Māori concepts of health and evaluation.
- The proposal will demonstrate the **appropriate mix of disciplines and expertise** in the composition of the research team, including **Māori health and Pacific health expertise and leadership**. Communities and relevant stakeholders should also be represented in the research team and leadership. Consideration should be given to inclusion of a **broad range of research expertise related to health and wellbeing**. The proposal should **demonstrate and highlight the capability, skill, and experience of those personnel with the highest FTE on the project**, those undertaking the majority of work. The research team's capability to work effectively with **a range of stakeholders and key participants** at the different stages of the research should be highlighted. It is expected that applicants will make active use of existing stakeholder networks to engage a wide range of parties and work with the relevant next- and end-users to ensure translatability.

- The potential for **knowledge transfer** and the processes or steps in place that demonstrate what the research team will do to maximise the uptake of research findings by key stakeholders, including the strategy for engaging throughout the research process with stakeholder and community groups who represent the next- and end-users of the research. The proposal should demonstrate how the collective capability, skill, and experience of the research team will maximise the likelihood that the research will result in change.
- The proposal will demonstrate plans for research findings to be **disseminated via tailored, culturally appropriate approaches** to a broad range of audiences in order to maximise the utility of the research. Proposals should articulate how dissemination plans will use the capability, skill, and experience of research team members. Dissemination should also include publication in international, peer-reviewed journals, as appropriate.
- The proposed research is **achievable within the specified timeframe**. The proposal should provide clear and unambiguous milestones and associated timeframes for achieving the desired outcomes for all stages of the project. An outline of the project management and organisational support available to the project should be included, with appropriate project management FTE included in the budget, as applicable. Applicants should consider the timeframe for obtaining ethical approval (if appropriate), institutional approvals, and access to data from key organisations and stakeholders.
- The proposal should demonstrate the budget is appropriate for the proposed research and fully justified.

6. Deliverables

Deliverables will be confirmed with the selected providers; however, deliverables must include the following elements:

- A **final report** detailing results, key findings and evidence-based recommendations that can be used by the Ministry and/or other key stakeholders to inform development of policy and practice for Aotearoa New Zealand's maternity services to achieve equitable maternal and infant health outcomes and support a quality improvement culture within maternity services.
- **Tailored products** for a range of audiences, for example:
 - key findings and policy briefings for the Ministry of Health and other key stakeholders
 - summaries, fact sheets and case studies that are incorporated into accessible guidance materials for relevant agencies and community groups.

Research providers will be required to engage with the Ministry on a regular basis and present their research findings to the Ministry and other key stakeholders at completion.

In addition to research deliverables, **quarterly progress reports** will also be required. These written reports detail progress of the research and highlight any risks to its progress. Research providers will complete and submit progress reports via the HRC's online reporting system, HRC Gateway (<https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz>).

An **HRC end of contract report** is also required upon completion of the research.

7. Application procedure

All application forms and guidelines are available via [HRC Gateway](#), the HRC's online application system. The **2020 Maternity Services Research Application Guidelines** provide full details on the application process summarised below.

Step 1: Registration

Applicants are required to submit a registration via [HRC Gateway](#) by **1pm, 4 November 2020**. This web-based form signals the intent of the applicant to submit an application. The project title, all named investigators, host organisation and lay summary will be required. These details should be similar to those in the application although minor adjustments are allowed.

HRC Gateway will forward the submitted registration to the applicant's host Research Office, who will need to approve the registration and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices, HRC Gateway will forward the registration to the HRC.

All named investigators must have an HRC Gateway account (with an updated profile), to be able to be included in an application. Creating an HRC Gateway account is easy and can be done by clicking on 'New user – sign up for HRC Gateway' on the HRC Gateway homepage (<https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz/>).

Step 2: Application

Applicants are then required to complete an application. Applications should be submitted via HRC Gateway by **1pm, 11 November 2020**.

Applicants should use the **2020 Maternity Services Research Application Form**, **2020 Maternity Services Research Budget Form**, and **New Zealand Standard CV template**.

HRC Gateway will forward the submitted application to the applicant's host Research Office or designated research manager who will need to approve the application and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices or a research manager, HRC Gateway will forward the application directly to the HRC.

HRC Gateway will create a PDF of the complete application after submission.

Applicants must meet the deadlines above for their proposal to be eligible.

8. Assessment procedure

The assessment process for the 2020 Maternity Services Research RFP is outlined below.

Step 1: Peer review

Applications will be assessed through an external peer review process managed by the HRC. This involves comprehensive peer review by independent national and international experts.

Step 2: Applicant rebuttal

Applicants are given the opportunity to view the peer review reports for their application and provide a rebuttal to the comments made. This is not an opportunity to rewrite major sections of a proposal, but rather the opportunity to respond to specific reviewer comments, to answer questions raised by the reviewer, or to clarify an issue for the Assessing Committee.

Step 3: Assessing Committee

An independent Assessing Committee will assess applications, taking into consideration the peer review reports and applicant rebuttal. The assessment criteria are outlined in the document **2020 Maternity Services Research Assessment Criteria** available on HRC Gateway. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these criteria.

Depending on the number of applications, a triage process may be used to determine which applications will be discussed in full at the Assessing Committee meeting. This process would involve committee members scoring applications in advance of the meeting using the assessment criteria to yield a ranked list. The lowest-ranked applications based on the pre-scores would then be triaged and not discussed at the meeting.

The Assessing Committee will make recommendations for funding, to be considered and approved by the HRC and the Ministry of Health. Applicants will be informed of final funding decisions in March 2021.

Key actions and dates for this initiative:

Action	Date
Registration due (via HRC Gateway)	1pm, 4 November 2020
Full application due (via HRC Gateway)	1pm, 11 November 2020
External peer review	November 2020 - January 2021
Applicant rebuttal opens	8am, 27 January 2021
Applicant rebuttal due	1pm, 5 February 2021
Applicants notified of outcome	March 2021

9. General notes

Decision advice

No legal obligations will arise between the funding partners and applicants for this RFP until such time as the HRC enters into a contract with the successful applicant.

Intellectual Property Rights

It is expected that any research provider awarded a research contract under this RFP will agree to the Intellectual Property Rights as stated in the Fifth Schedule of the Ministry of Health – HRC Research Contract (refer Appendix 1). Research providers should check the provisions of the Fifth Schedule and the research contract to understand their obligations and rights regarding intellectual property.

Privacy provisions

In the event that an application is successful, the HRC reserves the right to release applicants' names, details of the host institution/company, contact details (work phone or email), contract title and funding awarded for public interest purposes and to meet the statutory requirements of the Health Research Council of New Zealand Act 1990.

HRC Partnership Programme

This RFP is a component of the HRC's Partnership Programme, through which the HRC forms strategic partnerships with funders and stakeholders to target resources towards developing the evidence-base in key areas of need and strengthen the links between policy and practice.

Applicants should note that Partnership Programme Requests for Proposals focus on key priority areas and are intended to support targeted, outcome-focused research.

Enquiries

All enquiries related to this Request for Proposals should be directed to:

Scott Aitken, Research Investment Manager - Research Partnerships, email: saitken@hrc.govt.nz

Sayaka Steed, Research Investment Coordinator, email: ssteed@hrc.govt.nz

Appendix 1:

Fifth Schedule of Ministry of Health – HRC Research Contract

FIFTH SCHEDULE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

1. The Research Provider acknowledges that HRC and the Ministry's functions and priorities include:
 - 1.1 Providing and administering funding for the purpose of implementing national health and health research policy;
 - 1.2 Fostering the recruitment, education, training and retention of those engaged in health research in New Zealand; and
 - 1.3 Promoting and utilising the results of health research in ways that will be most effective in encouraging their contribution to New Zealand health policy, health systems, health care delivery and health science.
2. In relation to the Research Material, the Research Provider acknowledges that it is expected to:
 - 2.1 Ensure that the Research Material is assessed for any potential value beyond the peer review publication of the Research Material. Wherever possible, the Research Material shall be developed and/or disseminated so that the potential benefits of any New IP flow to health policy, health systems, health care delivery and health science. Where any Research Material contains anything that can be commercially and economically protected as New IP the Research Provider shall notify HRC and take reasonable steps required by HRC and the Ministry to seek formal protection of this New IP for the benefit of HRC and the Ministry;
 - 2.2 Generally, maximise the impact of any New IP on health and economic outcomes, for the benefit of New Zealand.
3. HRC and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Her Government in New Zealand (acting by and through the Ministry of Health) (**Ministry**) will own all New IP immediately on creation. To the extent required the Research Provider assigns and will assign all New IP and all moral rights in the New IP to HRC and the Ministry.
4. The Research Provider will:
 - 4.1 Ensure that the Research Provider's employees, sub-Research Providers and agents engaged in the Research Activity (**Researchers**) agree with the Research Provider in writing that HRC and the Ministry own all New IP immediately upon creation and to the extent required, the Researcher assigns, or will assign, all New IP and all moral rights in the New IP, to HRC and the Ministry;
 - 4.2 Maintain resources in place to undertake the processes and procedures for the discovery, invention, creation, assessment and development of New IP;

- 4.3 Take all reasonable steps required by HRC and the Ministry to secure protection of the New IP for the benefit of HRC and the Ministry (including, without limitation, assistance in the registration of patents or trademarks);
- 4.4 Ensure that the Researchers do not disclose the New IP (except to those within the Research Provider who must be informed on a need to know basis) or use the New IP in any manner which is inconsistent with the Research Provider's obligations under this Contract;
- 4.5 Provide to HRC a copy of any Research Material in the format reasonably requested by HRC and the Ministry in a reasonable timeframe on request from HRC (provided that shall be no longer than 20 Business Days from the request);
- 4.6 Provide HRC and the Ministry with copies of any proposed publication of Research Material not later than 20 Business Days prior to publication.
- 4.7 Acknowledge the ownership and contribution of HRC and the Ministry in any publication or public statements relating to the New IP;
- 4.8 Report annually to HRC, and more often if requested by HRC and the Ministry (acting reasonably) on its progress on the impact generated by the development and dissemination of the realised and potential benefits of the New IP that flow to health policy, health systems, health care delivery and health science. It will also report progress, including amount invested in commercialising New IP, and, if required minutes of decisions taken at meetings of the Research Providers processes and procedures during the commercialisation process, from triage, proof of concept and pre-seed investment through to licensing and spin-out company formation;
- 4.9 The Research Provider will, following the submission of Research Provider progress reports, provide to HRC as soon as practicable such additional information on the nature and details of commercialisable New IP as HRC and the Ministry may reasonably request; and
- 4.10 Keep all matters relating to the New IP and its commercialisation in absolute confidence except where any part of that information is in the public domain, or is required by law to be disclosed, or it is necessary to disclose that information for the purpose of the Research Provider fulfilling its obligations under this Schedule;
5. The Research Provider must ensure that any third party who is involved in the commercialisation of the New IP, is bound by the same obligations as the Research Provider as set out in this Schedule and that such obligations are expressed to be for the benefit of and enforceable by HRC and the Ministry (and the Research Provider must provide evidence of that to HRC and/or the Ministry upon request).
6. HRC and the Ministry grant to the Research Provider a permanent, non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free, worldwide licence (including a right to sub-

licence) to use, reproduce, publish and adapt the Research Material and any New IP for any purposes.

7. All Intellectual Property Rights discovered, invented, created or developed prior to the Research Activity (**Existing IP**) remains the property of its owner and where the Research Provider's Existing IP is incorporated into any New IP the Research Provider grants to HRC and the Ministry a permanent, non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free, worldwide licence (including a right to sub-licence) to use the Existing IP for any purpose in connection with the New IP.
8. For the purposes of the Contract and Commercial Law Act 2017 Part 2, Subpart 1, this Schedule is intended to be for the benefit of and is enforceable by the Ministry.