

Request for Proposals

October 2014

Determining the effectiveness of the current pertussis vaccine schedule in New Zealand

A joint research initiative funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand and the Ministry of Health
Overview

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) and the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) have formed a joint research initiative which is seeking to purchase high quality research that will provide an evidence base to reduce pertussis (whooping cough) in New Zealand children.

Addressing pertussis in New Zealand is a key priority for the HRC and the Ministry, and research funded through this initiative will support the Ministry's strategic planning for pertussis management. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), the HRC and the Ministry are seeking to fund research that will investigate and estimate vaccine effectiveness at specific ages.

Specifically, research proposals to this RFP should focus on effectiveness at specific ages and inform:

- whether there is evidence to support the clinical utility and cost-effectiveness of an additional toddler pertussis dose to limit the impact of pertussis in this vulnerable population; and
- whether the adolescent pertussis dose is providing effective and efficient protection.

A total funding pool of approximately \$135,000 (exclusive of GST) is available for allocation. The funding partners invite applications for funding of up to **\$135,000** (fully-costed, exclusive of GST) and duration of approximately four months. **It is anticipated that funded project will start immediately.**

The HRC's strong focus on peer review and contestability will ensure successful applicants deliver the highest quality of evidence.

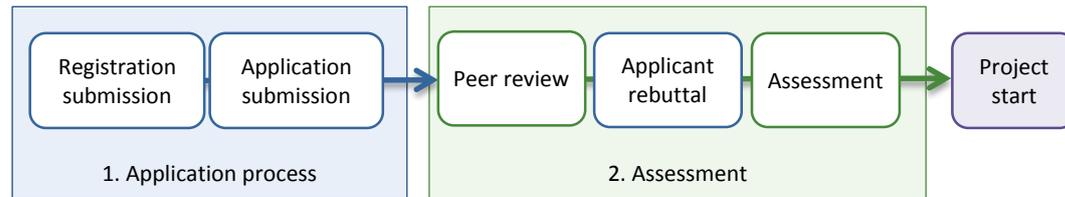
Important note: Applicants should note that the application process involves a **rapid application and assessment process** which requires submission of a condensed full application within three weeks of the release of this RFP. Applicants should refer to the Application Procedure (page 2) for more detailed information.

Application procedure

All forms and guidelines are available via the HRC website (www.hrc.govt.nz).

The process below is outlined in more detail in the *Application Guidelines for the pertussis vaccine RFP*. These Guidelines provide full details on the application process for this RFP including all required submission dates.

Applicants should note that the application process involves a rapid application and assessment process which requires submission of a condensed full application within three weeks of the release of this RFP.



APPLICATION PROCESS

Step 1: Registration submission

Applicants are required to submit a Registration via the HRC's online application system (HRC Gateway) by **12pm, 20 October 2014**. This web-based form signals the intent of the applicant to submit a full application.

Step 2: Full application submission

Applicants are then required to complete a full application using the JV214-Pertussis form and submit via HRC Gateway by **12pm, 24 October 2014**. Hard copies of the full application must then be submitted by **12pm, 31 October 2014**. Refer to the *Application Guidelines for the pertussis vaccine RFP* for details of this process. These guidelines provide information on what is required of applicants in each section of the application forms.

ASSESSMENT

There are three key steps in the assessment phase.

Step 1: Peer review

The scientific integrity of full applications will be assessed through an external peer review process which is managed by the HRC. This involves comprehensive peer review of all applications undertaken by independent national and international experts.

Step 2: Applicant rebuttal

Applicants are given an 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 referee comments, to answer questions raised by the referee, or to clarify an issue so that your proposal may be viewed as equitably as possible by the Assessing Committee.

Step 3: Assessment

An independent Assessing Committee will then assess full applications (full proposal, peer review reports and applicant rebuttal) using criteria outlined in the application guidelines. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these criteria.

The Assessing Committee will make recommendations for funding to the funding partners. Applicants will be informed of final funding decisions in **December 2014**.

Key actions and dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Key action</i>
Due 12pm, 20 October 2014	Submission of Registration to HRC
Due 12pm, 24 October 2014	Submission of Full Application to HRC
October-November 2014	Peer review undertaken by HRC
10am, 19 November 2014	Applicant rebuttal begins
12pm, 25 November 2014	Applicant rebuttal due
December 2014	Applicants advised of the outcome of the Request for Proposals

Background

The HRC and the Ministry of Health have formed a partnership to fund research that will contribute to reducing the incidence of pertussis in New Zealand children, therefore reducing the impact of pertussis outbreaks. Pertussis is covered on the New Zealand Immunisation Schedule, with babies receiving vaccination at six weeks, three months and five months of age. Booster doses are given to children at 4 and 11 years old.

An outbreak of the disease occurs every three to five years in New Zealand. The most recent epidemic began in August 2011 and rates of pertussis diagnosis are returning to near baseline in the second half of 2014. Since the outbreak began, more than 11,500 cases of pertussis (as at July 2014)¹ have been reported nationally.

Pertussis vaccines confer protection to most recipients for periods ranging between five and ten years. Due to the persistence of the disease in the population, and the risk it poses to unimmunised and partially immunised infants, ensuring the New Zealand pertussis immunisation programme is as efficient and effective as possible is an important area of research for the Ministry of Health and the Government.

Due to concerns around vaccine reactions most pertussis vaccines offered today are acellular vaccines. Acellular pertussis vaccines confer a shorter duration of protection and are likely to have reduced impact on infection transmission compared to whole-cell pertussis vaccines and natural infection. Therefore it is important to gather evidence that considers these limitations to inform the pertussis immunisation schedule, with the aim of reducing pertussis impact in vulnerable populations.

Research Project Requirements

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this RFP is to provide an evidence base to reduce the incidence of pertussis and the impact of outbreaks in New Zealand children, through research that will investigate acellular pertussis vaccines effectiveness at specific ages.

¹ Ministry of Health website: <http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/whooping-cough>

Given the targeted nature and the short timeframe of this research, it is expected that the outcomes will contribute to the Ministry of Health's strategic planning for pertussis management and the associated funding requirements.

RESEARCH SCOPE

The scope of the RFP is targeted. In light of this, research teams should address the specified scope of the RFP in their applications.

Research applications submitted to this RFP should cover the following two areas for investigation:

1. whether there is evidence to support the clinical utility and cost-effectiveness of an adding additional toddler pertussis dose to the current vaccination schedule as a method for limiting the impact of pertussis in this vulnerable population; and
2. whether the adolescent pertussis dose is providing effective and efficient protection.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

The research proposal needs to provide information on:

- The relevance of the project to the needs of the partner organisation(s) and position within current knowledge and practice.
- The appropriateness, soundness and rigour of the study methodology and design, while allowing for solutions to be developed in a flexible manner.
- The potential for knowledge transfer and the processes or steps in place that will support uptake of the research findings. Including the strategy for dissemination and implementation of findings; how dissemination strategies will be tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders so the results are of maximum utility, specifically the Ministry of Health.
- The consideration of health equity issues and the specific health needs of Māori and Pacific peoples within the context of the research topic.
- This research is a rapid response round, therefore the timely delivery of the information is pertinent to the funders. The research team must carefully consider their ability to deliver quality information within a short time frame without compromising the quality and evidence of the research.

BUDGET

The funding partners intend to fund one research project up to a maximum of **\$135,000** (exclusive of GST).

The duration of the project is approximately **four months. It is anticipated that funded project will start immediately.**

Where applications are of equal scientific merit, the assessing committee may also consider the relative 'value for money' of the applications.

ENGAGEMENT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND TARGET POPULATION

The engagement of key stakeholders will be essential throughout this research project and collaboration across providers is encouraged, including international collaboration if appropriate. All applications submitted in response to this RFP should provide clear details of how research teams will engage key stakeholders at the different stages of the research project. Research teams should also outline in their applications any key partnerships formed in response to this RFP.

RESEARCH TEAM

The research team will require demonstrated expertise in undertaking health research and a diverse range of skills that enables them to effectively work with research stakeholders.

It is expected that the composition of research teams developing applications in response to this Request for Proposals will reflect the focus of the initiative.

Research teams will collectively require the skills appropriate to undertake the research proposed and this should be clearly outlined in the application. Including:

- The research team need to demonstrate knowledge and experience of the vaccine schedule for pertussis and vaccine delivery.
- Knowledge of datasets that would be utilised to deliver timely research results for funding partners.
- At least one individual with requisite skills to provide cost-effectiveness analysis.

The funding partners for this initiative strongly support collaborative approaches to this project. This may include cross-sectoral collaboration in the composition of the research team, to include expertise from a range of backgrounds, disciplines and research institutions; and direct partnerships between research teams and communities.

The funding partners also recognise the importance of developing New Zealand's capacity to undertake research in this area. While this is not a specific objective of this RFP, if applicable applicants should demonstrate how their project will contribute to workforce development.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Actual deliverables will be decided once the preferred provider(s) is selected. Applicants are invited to make their own suggestions regarding deliverables but they must include:

- A draft and final deliverable report detailing results, key findings and recommendations of the complete programme of research.

There will be a requirement for a presentation at a workshop hosted by the funding partners and attended by the successful research team detailing the findings of the research project.

In addition to research deliverables, half-way point progress reports will also be required for the project. The report detail progress of the project and highlight any risks to its progress. The research provider(s) will be sent templates for the progress reports from the HRC. If research extends past April, 2015, a preliminary report on findings will be required by 13 April, 2015

DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Dissemination of the research findings will be an important component of the research project. Applications should incorporate the most appropriate methods for communication of research results to a broad range of stakeholders.

The research providers will be expected to ensure that all information is tailored to the needs of the intended audience, so that research findings can be of maximum utility. It is also anticipated that the quality of the research will be reflected through publication in peer-reviewed journals.

General notes

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, fax 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.

DECISION ADVICE

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

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. This collaborative approach to research ensures that stakeholders obtain the answers to pressing questions, but split the cost with multiple interested parties. The HRC's processes ensure that the track record of the research team, the scientific merit and the design and methods of the proposal will deliver the highest quality of evidence. Only limited funds are available to launch these co-operative research initiatives and the opportunities are strictly prioritised.

MAILING ADDRESS

The application should be sent to the HRC's office as shown below:

<i>Mailing Address:</i> Health Research Council of New Zealand PO Box 5541, Wellesley Street AUCKLAND <i>Attn: Fiona Kenning</i>	<i>Physical/Courier Address:</i> Health Research Council of New Zealand Level 3, 110 Stanley Street AUCKLAND <i>Attn: Fiona Kenning</i>
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ENQUIRIES

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

Fiona Kenning

Project Coordinator, Partnership Programme

Phone: 09 303 5208

Email: fkennin@hrc.govt.nz