

# Request for Proposals



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

October 2016



Health Research  
Council of  
New Zealand



BREAST  
CANCER  
CURE™



THE NEW ZEALAND  
BREAST CANCER  
FOUNDATION

## 2017 Breast Cancer Research in New Zealand

*A joint research initiative funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand, Breast Cancer Cure and The New Zealand Breast Cancer Foundation.*

### Overview

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC), Breast Cancer Cure (BCC) and The New Zealand Breast Cancer Foundation (NZBCF) previously formed a partnership in 2013 to fund innovative research into breast cancer in New Zealand.

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), the HRC, BCC and NZBCF ('the funding partners') are seeking high quality research in breast cancer to improve and ultimately ensure survival from the disease.

This initiative is managed through the HRC's Partnership Programme, through which the HRC forms strategic partnerships with funders and stakeholders.

Applicants are invited to establish a project that will consist of two separate phases over two years (each phase lasting 12 months). In the initial 12-month phase, applicants will look to identify potential targeted and immune therapies for breast cancer with a focus on: targeted treatments, aspects of early detection, prognostic and predictive diagnoses, or preventative therapies. At the completion of the first phase, researchers will be required to submit a report outlining their research progress and detailing their research plan for the second phase. In the second 12-month phase, researchers will select and further develop what was successful from the first phase of their research.

The total budget for this research initiative is **\$400,000** and the funding available per proposal is up to a maximum of **\$200,000** over **24 months** (fully-costed, exclusive of GST).

It is anticipated that projects will begin as soon as practicable, with funding available for an immediate start (from April 2017). Research proposals should realistically be able to be completed within a 24-month timeframe.

## Application procedure

All forms and guidelines are available via the HRC website ([www.hrc.govt.nz](http://www.hrc.govt.nz)). The process below is outlined in more detail in the ***Application Guidelines for the 2017 Breast Cancer Research in NZ RFP***. These guidelines provide full details on the application process for this RFP.

### STEP 1: REGISTRATION

Applicants are required to submit a Registration via HRC Gateway (the HRC's online application system) by **1:00pm, Thursday 3 November 2016**. This web-based form signals the intent of the applicant to submit a full application.

Once submitted, the Registration is forwarded (via HRC Gateway) to the applicant's host Research Office. The Research Office will need to approve the Registration and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices, the application will be forwarded directly (via HRC Gateway) to the HRC.

Please note that first named investigators and all other named investigators must have an HRC Gateway account, to be able to be included in an application.

### STEP 2: FULL APPLICATION

Applicants are then required to complete a full application using the JV217-BreastCancerNZ form, JV217-BC-Budget and the New Zealand Standard CV template, and submit via HRC Gateway by **1:00pm, Thursday 1 December 2016**.

Once submitted, the full application is forwarded (via HRC Gateway) to the applicant's host Research Office. The Research Office will need to approve the full application and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices, the application will be forwarded directly (via HRC Gateway) to the HRC.

A complete PDF of the full application is created by the HRC Gateway after the deadline for submission, at which time it can be printed in hard copy and sent to the HRC to arrive by **5:00pm, Thursday 8 December 2016**. Refer to the ***Application Guidelines for the 2017 Breast Cancer Research in NZ RFP*** for details of this process.

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

## ASSESSMENT

### 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 reviewer comments, to answer questions raised by the reviewer, 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 for the 2017 Breast Cancer Research in NZ RFP***. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these criteria.

The Assessing Committee will make recommendations for funding, to be considered and approved the HRC, the BCC and NZBCF. Applicants will be informed of final funding decisions in **March 2017**.

### Key Dates Summary

Action	Date
Registration due (via HRC Gateway)	<b>1pm, 3 November 2016</b>
Full application due (via HRC Gateway)	<b>1pm, 1 December 2016</b>
Full application hard-copies due	<b>5pm, 8 December 2016</b>
External peer review (managed by the HRC)	<b>December 2016/January 2017</b>
Applicant rebuttal opens	<b>10am, 8 February 2017</b>
Applicant rebuttal opens	<b>1pm, 15 February 2017</b>
Applicants notified of outcome	<b>Late-March 2017</b>

### Background

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of breast cancer in the world – over 600 New Zealand women lose their lives to breast cancer each year, and one in nine women in New Zealand will develop breast cancer during their lifetime.

The incidence of breast cancer increases as women age and is highest in women aged 50 to 54. While women over 50 are most at risk, around 11% of breast cancers occur in women between the age of 25 and 44.<sup>1</sup> Māori and Pacific women are at a greater risk of dying of breast cancer, with Māori women 40% more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer and 60% more likely to die from the disease when compared to non-Māori women.<sup>1</sup>

BCC is a not-for-profit charitable trust established solely to support research into finding a “cure” for breast cancer by making the disease one that women can endure and survive by funding novel research into: prevention, earlier detection, predictive and prognostic diagnosis, tailored treatments and immune therapies and broadening the knowledge base around breast cancer and treatment with a focus on those with poorer outcomes.

BCC has funded over \$10M of research in New Zealand for over 15 years ranging from studies into the use of antibodies as a targeted treatment for controlling growth of breast cancer cells, to early detection of breast cancer, to research in the field of immunotherapy and the harnessing of our own immune systems to combat breast cancer. Many cancers gain from the base molecular and genetic work funded.

The NZBCF is a not-for-profit charitable trust and is New Zealand’s largest non-government funder of breast cancer research, education/awareness and support services, actively pursuing projects that will help achieve its mission of preventing New Zealand women developing and dying of breast cancer.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health. 2014. *Cancer: New registrations and deaths 2011*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Current NZBCF priority areas for research investment include: breast cancer prevention; new technologies for early detection; prevention of metastasis; improving clinical practice for better patient outcomes; genomic testing; treatments for advanced breast cancer (including immunotherapies); and benchmarking/best practice (including use of 15 year New Zealand specific data collection of the regional Breast Cancer Patient Registers funded by the NZBCF).

The BCC, NZBCF and HRC have identified the need to support more innovative research into breast cancer to enable New Zealand to develop solutions to this significant health issue.

## Research Project Requirements

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of this RFP are to:

- Fund innovative research that will improve and ultimately ensure breast cancer survival.
- Promote and engender a culture of scientific excellence, relevance and innovation in the area of breast cancer research.
- Ensure meaningful multidisciplinary engagement and partnership (supporting collaboration between teams that can contribute to the goals of this funding initiative).
- Identify, attract and develop the best people to conduct high quality research that encompasses the scope of this RFP.

### SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Research undertaken in response to this RFP should focus on the identification and development of:

- Targeted treatments and immune therapies which ultimately improve progression-free survival or overall survival from the disease;
- Effective, accurate and innovative methods of early detection (beyond the scope of imaging radiology);
- Prognostic and predictive techniques and tests, to predict an individual's propensity to develop certain types of breast cancer, or tests to predict a patient's response to a specific treatment, or biomarkers to distinguish aggressive cancers from nonaggressive or non-progressing cancers; or
- Preventive therapies (i.e., in the context of targeted treatments and immune therapies).

In responding to this RFP, researchers should not seek to undertake research on the pathophysiology of breast cancer but should aim to develop this knowledge to facilitate research in one or several of the above areas.

Scientific developments are indicating that the most effective treatments for breast cancer in the future will focus on targeted treatments and immune therapies developed specifically for the individual types of breast cancer. This is the area of research that the funding partners believe offers the best chance for the biggest impact on breast cancer treatment and survival rates, and as such, priority should be given to this research area.

Where relevant, applicants should provide details of health equity issues and the specific health needs of Māori and Pacific peoples within the context of the research topic.

Please note that this RFP specifically excludes:

- Replicated, non-innovative, “me-too” research.
- The commercial development of new technologies, devices or diagnostics (although research supported through this RFP may contribute to later commercial development).

## RESEARCH APPROACH

The funding partners for this initiative strongly support the use of innovative, non-duplicated, breakthrough approaches to this research, which will have the potential to make a significant contribution to the goal of improving and ultimately ensuring breast cancer survival.

Applicants may combine novel processes with existing successful strategies when developing applications in response to this RFP. Projects should build on the existing evidence-base but should not seek to replicate studies already undertaken. It is anticipated that the development of the methodology, establishment of the research team and calculation of the research budget will be reflective of the scope of the proposed research project.

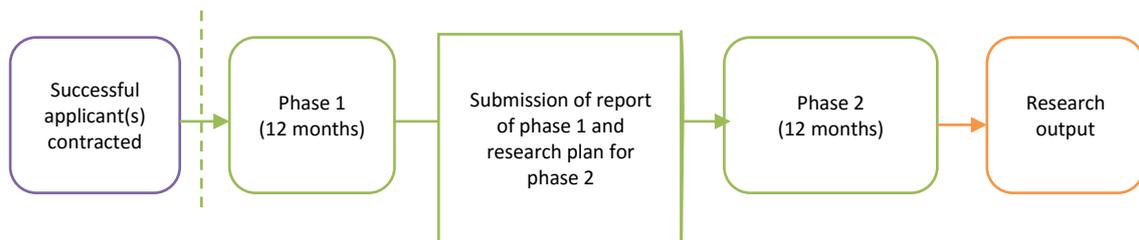
Applications should demonstrate engagement with other key researchers and/or processes for communications and dissemination of research findings to other research teams.

### Two-Phase Approach

The project will consist of two separate phases over two years (each phase lasting 12 months). Applicants are required to clearly outline the 2 phases of proposed research in their application.

In the initial 12-month phase, applicants will undertake research that looks to identify potential targeted and immune therapies for breast cancer with a focus on: targeted treatments, aspects of early detection, prognostic and predictive diagnoses, or preventative therapies as outlined under the scope of the research for this RFP.

At the end of the first 12 months, researchers will be required to submit a brief report on their results of phase 1, as well as to provide confirmation of the details on the next phase of their research, including what has been selected for further development and the relevant evidence to support this selection. Therefore, phase 2 will be informed by phase 1, as researchers will select which aspects were successful and will be able to be further developed.



**Note:** The funding partners intend that research will progress to a third phase, which will continue the development of the research undertaken in Phases 1 and 2. Funding for phase 3 is beyond the scope of this RFP.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

The research proposal needs to provide information on:

- How the research project represents excellent science, is properly scoped and clearly achievable within the specified timeframe (research proposals should realistically be able to be completed in the 24-month timeframe).
- The innovative approach(es) employed by the research team to address the scope and objectives of this RFP.
- The collaborative nature of research team with expertise and skills that clearly match the proposed study.

## BUDGET

The total budget for this research initiative is **\$400,000** and the funding per proposal is up to a maximum of \$200,000 over two years (fully-costed, exclusive of GST) and research contracts for this partnership initiative will be tailored specifically to meet the needs of the funding partners and allow for review of the research at key milestones or annually.

This funding comprises 50 per cent contribution from government funds and 50 per cent contribution from non-government organisations.

**Applicants should note that overhead costs can only be claimed for the share of the total funding pool that is derived from government funds (i.e. no overhead costs can be claimed for the share of the funds provided by non-government organisations).** The application budget form for this initiative has been configured to automatically provide the correct total research costs once the appropriate overhead rate for the host institution has been entered in the spreadsheet.

Funding will be available for an immediate start for the research project from April 2017. Please carefully consider the start date, as applicants will be held to what they have proposed. Applicants should take into account the timeframe for obtaining ethical approval (if appropriate) and should ensure that this doesn't delay the start of the research project.

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.

## PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Actual deliverables will be confirmed with a selected provider; however, deliverables must include the following elements:

1. a research report due at the end of Phase 1 (after 12 months);
2. a research plan for Phase 2 of the project due at the end of Phase 1 (after 12 months);
3. meaningful and detailed six-monthly reports on research progress (the research provider will complete these reports via the HRC's online reporting portal); and
4. a final deliverable report detailing the results, key findings and recommendations of the complete programme of research.

The research provider may also be required to provide verbal presentations to the funding partners on research progress and/or findings, particularly at the end of each phase of the project.

## ENGAGEMENT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Research will include strategies for identifying and engaging other academic personnel working in breast cancer or other related areas to support knowledge translation and exchange. Research teams should also provide clear details of how their proposed research outcomes will address the strategic aims of the funding partners and how research progress and findings will be communicated in a meaningful way to these organisations (and their respective stakeholders).

## RESEARCH TEAM

Applicants responding to this RFP will have experience in undertaking health research, a strong academic record 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 RFP will reflect the focus of the initiative and that teams will work within an appropriate governance structure.

The funding partners are strongly supportive of collaborative approaches to this research initiative. This should include cross-sectoral collaboration in the composition of the research team, to include expertise from a range of backgrounds, disciplines and research institutions.

The research team may comprise individuals from a single institution or multiple institutions/agencies across New Zealand. Any such partnerships should be clearly articulated in the final application.

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.

## DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Dissemination of the research findings nationally 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 (including the funding partners).

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 expected that the quality of the research will be reflected through publication in international, peer-reviewed journals.

## General Notes

### DECISION ADVICE

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

### 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.

### 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

Printed hard copies of applications should be sent to the Health Research Council's office as shown below:

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

All enquiries related to this Request for Proposals should be directed to Luke Garland, Project Manager, Research Partnerships (09 303 5214 or [lgarland@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:lgarland@hrc.govt.nz)).