

# Changes to the 2026 Project and Programme Grants

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## Karakia

Kia tau rā  
ngā manaakitanga  
ā te runga rawa  
Ki tēnā, ki tēnā  
o tātou e tau nei  
Kia tūturu ōwhiti  
Whakamaua  
kia tīna, tīna  
Hui e, Tāiki e!

Let  
the blessings  
of above descend upon  
each and everyone  
gathered here  
And be bound  
and fastened  
Amidst this gathering  
Till it is so



# Today's webinar

- HRC - a Crown entity
- Health research priorities
- Changes to the 2026 Project and Programme Grants
- Further information and contacts
- Q&A

# HRC – A Crown Entity

- Established by the Health Research Council Act – 1990
- The government's principal funder of health research
- Accountable to both the Ministers of Health and Science, Innovation and Technology
- Responsive to the expectations set by our ministers in investing taxpayer money

# Funding context

- Clear signalling from the government about the purpose and scope for HRC funding
- Budget reductions due to funding being reprioritised to support aspects of the Science, Innovation and Technology reforms
- Need to develop and maintain robust, sustainable process that identifies the highest quality applications

# HRC research requirements

# Requirements for HRC funding

- HRC mandate includes the expectation that NZ's investment in health research must contribute to achieving the goals of the health and science, innovation & technology systems:
  - Health system: *Improving health outcomes by providing New Zealanders with timely access to high-quality health services.*
  - Science, Innovation and Technology system: *Harness the benefits of research and innovation to drive economic transformation.*
- Applicants should identify how their research will add value and contribute to these goals

All HRC investments must have a clear line of sight for improving health outcomes for all New Zealanders.

HRC funded research must meet the following requirements:

1. Research must be focused on health and improving health outcomes and/or the health system, where health outcomes are defined as:
  - a. absence or reduction of disease, symptoms or morbidity, and/or
  - b. timely access to quality healthcare, for all New Zealanders, including strengthening prevention of disease and injury, earlier diagnosis, earlier patient-specific (precision) intervention, and new and improved models of care, or medicines, treatments and cures and/or
  - c. longer life expectancy, and/or
  - d. improved quality of life.
2. Research into the causes of ill health, or the determinants of health (e.g. environmental, socio-economic, cultural, and behavioural factors) must demonstrate a pathway to improvements in health outcomes and/or the health system (as defined above).
3. The research proposal provides an evidence base when describing areas of high health need and population groups with high health need.



# Overview of Project and Programme Grants

## Projects

### Investment streams:

- General
- Rangahau Hauora Māori
- Pacific

Budget: up to \$1.2M (\$1.4M for clinical trials)

Timeframe: Up to 3 years

## Programmes

### Investment streams:

- General
- Rangahau Hauora Māori

Budget: up to \$5M

Timeframe: Up to 5 years

# Changes to 2026 Project and Programme Grants

# Funding Priorities

# In scope priorities

Council will prioritise opportunities to invest in research that:

1. Maximises benefit for healthcare delivery and/or
2. Demonstrates a pathway to commercialisation and/or
3. Enhances the development of clinician-researchers and/or
4. Contributes to achieving the health and/or mental health and addiction targets

Council makes final decisions on funding, informed by the assessing committee recommendations and taking into consideration Government priorities and the balance of investment across the portfolio.

# In scope priorities

Council will prioritise opportunities to invest in research that:

## Priority 1: Maximises benefit for healthcare delivery

Could include:

New models of care and treatments

Improved effectiveness and efficiency

Innovation and technology in health care

# In scope priorities

Council will prioritise opportunities to invest in research that:

## Priority 2: Demonstrates a pathway to commercialisation

- Commercialisation will look different for different groups
- No expectation that there will be a commercial product by the end of the funding period
- Should demonstrate that there are mechanisms in place that would allow commercialisation, e.g.:
  - What steps will be taken to facilitate commercialisation?
  - Plans to protect IP?
  - Is there experience within the team? If not, who will the team be working with?

# In scope priorities

Council will prioritise opportunities to invest in research that:

## Priority 3 Enhances the development of clinician-researchers

The definition is included in application guidelines and is noted below:

*Someone who conducts research and provides clinical services in any setting, under formal work arrangement and is eligible to undertake clinical practice in NZ under either the Health Practitioners Competence Act through registration with a relevant responsible authority or as a member of allied health Aotearoa NZ*



# In scope priorities

Council will prioritise opportunities to invest in research that:

## Priority 4 Contributes to achieving the health and/or mental health and addiction targets

- the five health targets are: faster cancer treatment; improved immunisation in children; shorter stays in emergency departments; shorter wait times for first specialist assessment; shorter wait times for 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.

# Out of scope

Council is not seeking opportunities to invest in:

- evaluations undertaken as part of routine operational practice
- research that describes a health need without providing clear evidence
- duplicates research already undertaken overseas (without articulating the additional value of undertaking it in New Zealand)
- social science research that focuses exclusively on determinants of health except where there is a demonstrated pathway to improved health outcomes
- basic fundamental research that focuses exclusively on mechanistic pathways, except where there is a demonstrated pathway to improvements in health outcomes

# Screening

HRC will screen all applications as part of compliance checks.

Applications involving out-of-scope research activities will be withdrawn, unless they address the exceptions noted and clearly articulate the pathway to health impact.

# Assessment Process

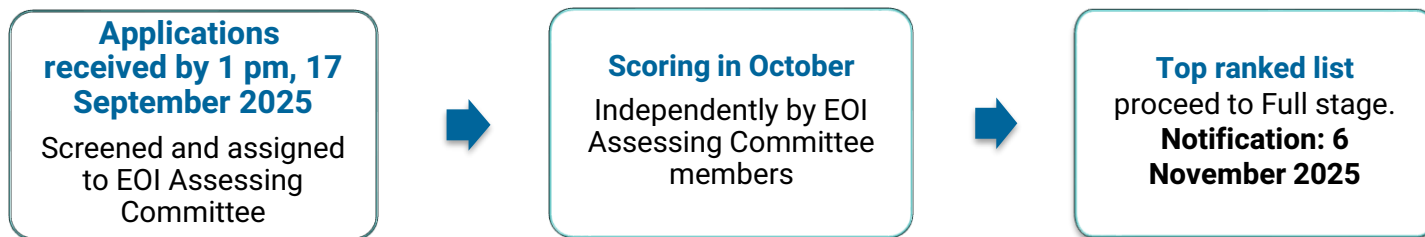
# Assessing Committees (AC)

Who are the Assessing Committees made up of?

- The HRC seeks to match an assessing committee's expertise to the applications' research fields.
- Committee chairs typically sit on an HRC statutory or standing committee or are designated by them.
- The size of the assessing committee members depends on the scope of the applications, taking into account conflicts of interest.
- Applications are scored on a 7-point word ladder using the same equally weighted score criteria from previous years, as shown in the guidelines.

# Changes to the 2026 Project round – Expression of Interest (EOI) stage

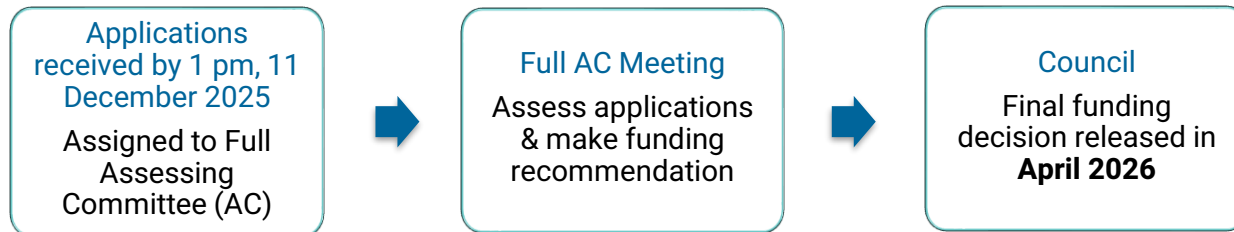
- You must begin your application by **1 pm, 10 September 2025**.
- Submit only one application as the (co) first named investigator.
- Not all applications are required to align with the specified funding priorities.
- EOIs will be assessed using independent scoring.
- You will not receive any committee feedback at the EOI stage.



Refer to the 2026 Project EOI application guidelines for further information.

# Changes to the 2026 Project round – Full stage

- If your research aligns with a specified funding priority, you must clearly articulate this throughout your application.
- We may notify your Research Office of any issues with your application between **9-13 January 2026**.
- There will be no external peer review or applicant rebuttal.



# Programme Assessing Committees (PAC)

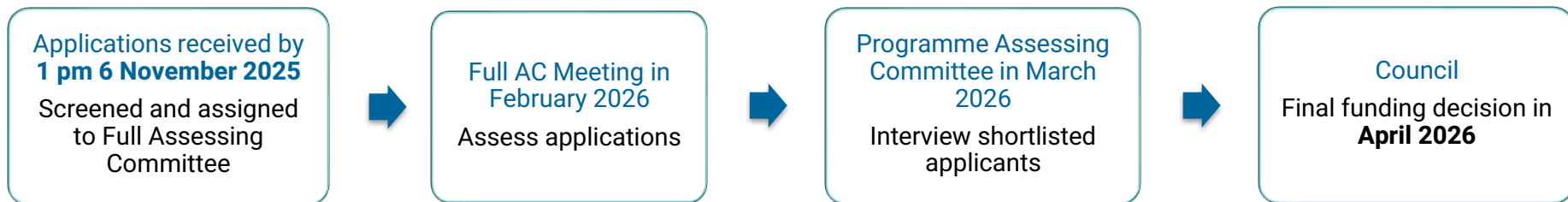
Who are the Assessing Committees made up of?

- PAC is a multidisciplinary assessing committee with New Zealand and Australian/international members who have experience in managing research involving teams of investigators.
- PAC use the feedback from ACs (Stage 1) and their interviews (Stage 2) with applicants to score the applications.
- In the final stages of the process, PAC will provide a list of recommendations for fundable applications to the Council.



# Changes to the 2026 Programme round

- You must begin your application by **1 pm, 31 October 2025**.
- If your research aligns with a specified funding priority, you must clearly articulate this throughout your application.
- There will be no external peer review or applicant rebuttal.



Refer to the 2026 Programme application guidelines for further information  
*(available 28 August)*

# Avoid these common mistakes

1. Please use the correct application form and use the specified font sizes and styles.
2. Follow the stated page limits.
3. Ensure you complete all modules, as incomplete applications after the closing date will be considered withdrawn and deleted from HRC Gateway.
4. Do not include any additional material (e.g. slides, protocols, CVs) as 'supporting documents' on HRC Gateway and avoid using hyperlinks in the application form. All additional material and hyperlinks will be removed.

If your host organisation has a research office (or equivalent), your application must be approved by the research office first. The application will then be released to the HRC. Please allow enough time for this approval process before the HRC's closing deadline.

# Changes in the forms & guidelines

- All changes are outlined in the application guidelines and marked as **(NEW)**.
- Use the updated CV template on HRC Gateway.
- Carefully read the scoring criteria.
- There will be an opportunity to indicate alignment with health research priorities at full stage.

# Where to find more information

- See the HRC Gateway for further details about funding opportunities:  
<https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz>
- **Ensure you read the application guidelines**
- **Refer to your Research Office in the first instance**
- Sign up to newsletter on HRC website under “News & Events”
- Contact [info@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:info@hrc.govt.nz)

# **Q&A. Please refer to the additional document**

Ngā mihi/Thank you

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