



CANCER RESEARCH TRUST.

NEW ZEALAND

Titikaha Rangahau i ngā Mate Pukupuku

## Research Project Grants: A guide for applicants

Please read these notes carefully before completing your application in our application portal <https://grants.cancerresearchtrustnz.org.nz/>.

### Goal

The Cancer Research Trust is proud to fund grants across the full spectrum of cancer research, including prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment of cancer, and improvements in palliative care. Our funded projects span many different fields including biomedical, clinical, public health, epidemiology and psychosocial research. Our goal is to fund the best quality science with the highest potential for impact.

### Value of the Grant

Maximum value is \$80,000 + GST, awarded over a maximum of two years.

### Purpose of the Grant

We fund Research Projects Grants across themes as diverse as immunology, drug discovery, basic cancer biology, clinical trials and applied clinical research, cancer prevention, risk factors, health policy, and peoples' lived experience of cancer. Cancer Research Trust aims to be an incubator for innovative new ideas by funding early stage proof-of-concept research that can then be used to attract further funding to take the project forward.

### Number of Grants awarded

Up to ten project grants are awarded each year, depending on the available funds and quality of applications.

### Application Cap

In order to provide the broadest possible support to the cancer research sector, the Trust caps the number of applications any individual investigator can submit.

- Each applicant can only submit *one* proposal as Principal Investigator. They may also be named as Associate Investigator on one other application. In addition to this they can be a mentor on a Fellowship or Scholarship application. This caps applications at a maximum of three per researcher.
- Cancer Research Trust expects that an individual will only be a Principal Investigator on one active Research Project Grant at a time. The individual may also be named as a co-investigator on one or more active grants at the same time.
- Research projects must be based in New Zealand.
- When a proposal has been declined, applicants can resubmit their proposal in a subsequent grant round. Only one resubmission of a previously unsuccessful project grant application is permitted. It is an expectation that the applicant addresses all concerns raised by the referees and Assessment Committee in their re-submission. The stable composition of the Trust's Assessment Committee helps to eliminate year-to-year variations in Committee perspectives.
- An applicant who has been unsuccessful twice may submit further proposals in their chosen field of research, but these proposals will need to be based on a new or substantially revised hypothesis. Resubmissions are included in the application cap.



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## Principal Investigators

The named Principal Investigator should be the researcher with the main responsibility for design and preparation of the proposal, and overall management of the research project. If intellectual leadership of the research is shared, there can be two named Co-Principal Investigators. If this is the case, the applying Principal Investigator can list a Co-Principal Investigator on the application, however the grant application can only be completed by one Principal Investigator as it is not possible to have a shared login for the grants portal.

Principal Investigators need to meet the minimum formal qualification requirements. A graduate degree is expected, and most applicants will have a PhD or equivalent research experience. The proposal can include an unlimited number of Named Investigators, defined as people who make tangible contributions to the design, preparation, or delivery of research activities, or to the dissemination or implementation of results.

The Principal Investigator should be a member of staff of a New Zealand academic institution or New Zealand cancer-care organisation. The head of the facility or clinic, or academic department must approve the application.

## How to Apply

- All applicants need to create an account on our [grants portal](#). Note that if you have been previously named as a co-investigator, you may get a message to contact an administrator. This prevents duplicate applicant profiles for individual researchers. The issue can be quickly resolved by contacting the Trust's General Manager Michelle Sullivan on 027 434 0926.
- Once the funding round opens, your applicant dashboard will display available funding opportunities. Typically this is around two months prior to the closing date. Note that Host Institutions may have internal deadlines prior to the Trust's closing date so applicants are advised to check with their institution's research office.
- Applicants should pay attention to any details in the subheadings of each section of the application. If unclear, contact the Trust's General Manager for advice and guidance.
- CVs should be in the standard New Zealand MSI Curriculum Vitae template. This can be downloaded from the link within the application form. Each applicant should complete all of Parts 1 and 2a, and upload the CV in PDF format.
- Applicants may attach any images, figures, charts or diagrams referred to in the body of the application. Clinical trial protocols may also be attached. Applicants **must not** use these attachments to circumvent the application word limit and supply additional details. Such information will be disregarded by the Committee and your application may be rejected.
- Applicants must upload a PDF copy of the application including all diagrams and figures within the five-page limit. A template is provided in the portal.
- Attachments may include details of other sources of partial funding, ethics approval letters, quotes for items of equipment, sub-contracts with other institutions, and letters of support for collaborations.
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to include as much information as possible within the wordcount to enable the proposal to be assessed.
- Clearly written proposals that are highly valued. Applicants should bear in mind that proposals are reviewed by both experts in the relevant field and also the Assessment Committee which is necessarily broad in composition. As such, proposals should be readily understandable by experts unfamiliar with the field.
- It is likely that some applicants who are eligible for Trust support will be new to the art of grant preparation. Those with limited previous experience of writing competitive funding



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applications are advised to seek the help and input of colleagues who are practised and successful grant writers.

### Letters of Commitment

In developing a proposal, applicants frequently engage with research supporters and partner organisations in addition to any named co-applicants. To assure the Assessment Committee that these external parties are fully supportive of the proposal, we require applicants to upload a signed letter of support by each individual / organization representative. The Letter of Commitment indicates the signatory's intent to commit time and/or resources to the funded project as specified in the letter, should the proposal be funded. Multiple partner/support letters may be uploaded where required. Applicants are advised to seek any required Letters of Commitment well in advance of the due date so there will be sufficient time for signatures.

### Preparing your Budget

- Salary costs for named investigators can be included in the budget if the individual is dependent on external funding sources for salary support (so-called soft money). Salary buy-out for permanent staff is not an eligible expense.
- Salary costs for post-doctoral research fellows, research assistants and/or technicians that are dependent on external funding are also eligible budget expenses.
- Only actual costs for ACC and superannuation should be included in salary associated costs.
- Working expenses should be itemised in the budget by adding a new line for each item and providing sufficient detail about the item (e.g. cost of the item and quantity needed).
- Travel costs that are essential to the project may be included in the budget.
- Publication costs can be included in the budget, but will be paid out retrospectively and require a copy of the submitted publication.
- Cancer Research Trust does not fund capital costs but small items of equipment can be a valid budget expense if well justified and accompanied by a quote.
- Attendance at conferences and training courses cannot be included in a Research Project Grant application. Research Project Grant and Fellowship holders are welcome to apply for travel funds by submitting a separate Professional Development Award application.
- Cancer Research Trust does not fund overheads including: property costs; depreciation; utility charges such as lighting, heating and water; telephone line charges; library; office stationery and accessories; or laboratory "bench fees".
- Cancer Research Trust has dedicated funding for post-graduate students. Therefore student stipends and/or post-graduate fees will not be funded and cannot be included in a Research Project Grant budget.

### Your Host Institution

Every Host Institution must have the necessary governance structures, financial processes, and research capacity to employ research staff, oversee the research, and administer the grant funds. Host Institutions are required to manage and administer Cancer Research Trust grants to an auditable standard and provide a financial acquittal of the grant expenses at the conclusion of the project.

Host Institutions are responsible for ensuring that the research is conducted to the highest ethical standards and complies with all applicable legislation and regulations governing health research.

Host Institutions usually have designated representative/s (e.g. research office staff) and typically set their own internal deadline ahead of the Cancer Research Trust closing date. Please take note of the internal deadline, which allows for institutional compliance processes including budget review, and



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approval of the application, and acceptance of Cancer Research Trust's standard Terms and Conditions for Research Project Grants.

When a Principal Investigator finishes their application, clicking 'submit' will send the application to the Host Institution for completion of their requirements. The Host Institution can return the application to the Principal Investigator for further editing if needed, or proceed to formal submission of the application to the Cancer Research Trust.

### Regulatory Requirements

Every application should consider the relevant regulatory requirements:

- Experimentation or questionnaires involving human subjects requires approval from an accredited ethics committee. Experimentation with animals requires approval from a registered animal ethics committee. Either attach the approval(s) to the application, or indicate that approval is being sought.
- For clinical trials, applications should provide details of the trial registry and data safety monitoring committee if applicable.

### Our Assessment Process

- All Research Project Grant applications are first peer reviewed by experts in the relevant field of research. Many of these reviewers are international experts who expect to see sufficient methodological detail to enable them to provide informed feedback to the Assessment Committee. Every international and New Zealand-based peer reviewer will provide a written report on the hypothesis, general aims, methodology, and originality of the proposal.
- All applications that rank in the top 50% based on peer review scores will proceed to full review by the Assessment Committee. The Committee may also by consensus choose to advance applications from below the median based on other factors, including relevance to cancer care in the New Zealand setting.
- The Assessment Committee maintains a balance of biomedical, clinical and public health research to enable assessment of the best quality science with the highest potential for impact. The Cancer Research Trust website details current members of the Assessment Committee <https://www.cancerresearchtrustnz.org.nz/apply-for-a-grant/grant-round-process>.
- The Cancer Research Trust's Assessment Committee considers the peer review input, local relevance and Māori health advancement in order to make funding recommendations to the Cancer Research Trust Board.
- The Assessment Committee uses the same criteria as the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) to assess Māori health advancement.
- Unsuccessful applicants will receive access to the peer review report/s and written feedback from the Assessment Committee at the conclusion of the funding round. The intention is to provide constructive feedback to help applicants develop their grant writing skills.

### Application Essentials

To ensure that the Cancer Research Trust is investing funds in line with its charitable purpose, all applications must meet two essential criteria. If the Assessment Committee deems that a proposal does not meet both criteria it will be declined. These criteria are considered when each application is discussed by the full Assessment Committee.



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#### *The proposal must be cancer-focused.*

The Trust funds research across all types of cancer and all stages of cancer. Research proposals can be from any discipline but must be primarily focused on cancer.

#### *The proposal must support the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi.*

The Trust has adopted the HRC's four domains of Māori Health Advancement and applies this to every application in every category. Failure to adequately respond to te Tiriti will result in the proposal being declined. Further guidance on expectations is outlined under Māori Health Advancement.

- All applicants must consider what relevance their research or cancer care project has to Māori and in reducing cancer inequalities.
- All applicants must comment on their level of knowledge of tikanga Māori (Māori customs and cultural involvement) and the relationships (partnerships) they have had or currently have with Māori researchers, academics, Māori advisors (including kaumatua/elders). Where possible applicants should provide evidence of this (e.g. letters of support) to enhance their application.

### Guiding Principles

In addition to the application essentials outlined above, four guiding principles support the assessment process and help frame the Assessment Committee discussion, scoring and ranking of applications. These principles are intended to help the Committee score applications in a way that is fair, transparent, and consistent. The four principles considered during the discussion of each proposal are described in further detail below.

- Quality: Is the proposal of the highest quality?
- Impact: Will the proposal enhance outcomes for patients, whānau or cancer research/cancer care professionals?
- Innovation: Is the proposal innovative?
- Sustainability: Does the proposal promote sustainability?

To assess these dimensions, the Trust relies on the expertise of peer-reviewers combined with the diverse skills of the Assessment Committee. These dimensions are not scored individually. They are considered during the Assessment Committee discussion to help the Committee members form their final, individual view of the merits of the proposal. Committee members then score each proposal individually, and the average score of each proposal then determines its place in the final rankings.

#### *Is the proposal of the highest quality?*

Peer review is the primary tool by which scientific excellence is assessed. However, the Assessment Committee recognizes that from time to time, applications that are of relevance to New Zealand can be misunderstood by international reviewers. For example, a reviewer may expect the clinical standard of care in New Zealand to match their jurisdiction and might consequently score a proposal poorly, but in fact the proposal may be highly relevant to the New Zealand setting.

The Assessment Committee will carefully review the proposed design, methodology and analysis of the research to reach a view on how well it will deliver on the proposed objectives. This includes assessment of whether the research team matches the scope of the project and has the necessary skills and experience to successfully carry out the research. It also includes consideration of elements specific to each proposal, such as whether the sample size is sufficient based on the proposed method of analysis.



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The collective expertise of the Assessment Committee is deliberately broad, to ensure a multi-disciplinary approach when reviewing proposals. Applicants should bear in mind that their proposal will be reviewed by both experts in the field and by this multi-disciplinary committee and it is to their benefit to ensure the proposal can be readily understood by an expert unfamiliar with their field of research.

*Will the proposal enhance outcomes for patients, whānau or cancer research/cancer care professionals?*

The Trust funds research and professional development across the cancer care spectrum, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, as well as end of life palliative and supportive care. Applicants in all categories of funding should describe how their proposal will contribute to better cancer outcomes. Examples of questions to consider are:

- Is the proposal patient-centric, whānau-centric, or workforce-centric?
- Does the proposal support the appointment of Māori or Pasifika researchers or cancer care staff?

*Is the proposal innovative?*

The Trust prides itself on supporting innovative new projects that allow researchers to carry out robust, trustworthy research. The Trust funds projects that enable new ways to incubate ideas, explore novel research hypotheses, or refine innovative methods for prevention, detection, cure and care.

- For some projects, innovation means investigating new concepts and developing initial data that supports the investigator to secure further funding. For such projects consider if positive findings or results from the study would be likely to trigger larger-scale follow-on funding from another source?
- For research that is more translational in nature, consider if the proposed research delivers positive results or findings, would this project offer a step-change in cancer care?
- For projects in some fields, the most appropriate next research step could be replication of existing work to provide validation in a New Zealand context. For example risk score algorithms developed overseas may not be relevant to Māori and Pacific populations in New Zealand.

*Does the proposal enhance equity?*

The Trust is increasingly seeking to ensure that it considers all aspects of equity in reviewing each proposal. In judging the quality of an application, the applicant's CV will be considered against stage of career, relative to opportunity.

*Does the proposal promote sustainability?*

The Trust aims to support sustainability throughout its research investments and places great importance on its role helping to maintain a skilled cancer research and cancer care workforce. Consideration is given to whether the proposal contributes to cancer care or research workforce sustainability, such as helping to keep talent in New Zealand or supporting the upskilling of committed talent? Where relevant, applicants are also encouraged to outline plans to disseminate new skills/advances to others.



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## Grant Conditions

Successful applicants will be informed of the nature and amount of the grant being offered and the conditions under which it will be contracted, and asked for a formal acceptance. The conditions of the grant include:

- The grant covers a nominated period, and expenditure incurred outside this period will not be reimbursed.
- Any person engaged to work on the grant must be made aware that if for any reason the project is terminated their engagement concludes, that any leave due must be taken during the period of the grant and that payment will not be made for leave taken after the period of engagement is ended.
- All appropriate regulatory approvals must be in place before the grant can be activated.
- Annual progress reports are required on the anniversary of the start date. A final report will be required within 12 months of the grant's end date. Reports should be submitted to the Cancer Research Trust through the portal.
- If the contractual details of the project change a variation request will need to be submitted to the Cancer Research Trust through the portal.
- All presentations and publications resulting from Cancer Research Trust funding must acknowledge the Trust's support.

## Publicity

The Cancer Research Trust is a charity (CC23672) supported entirely by donations from the public. The Trust has an obligation to donors and supporters to report on the impact of the research it has funded. This includes updates through print and online media, our newsletter subscribers and our social media channels. By accepting a Cancer Research Trust grant, you automatically agree to the research team members and media summary of the project being made publicly available. You also automatically agree to be included as an available guest speaker for Cancer Research Trust public outreach, which includes research presentations to the general public.

## Contact us

The Trust welcomes all researchers planning to apply to get in touch with any questions and to seek guidance where needed. Contact General Manager Michelle Sullivan directly for a confidential chat.

- Email: [michelle.sullivan@crtnz.org.nz](mailto:michelle.sullivan@crtnz.org.nz)
- Phone: 027 434 0926



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## Māori Health Advancement

Cancer Research Trust is committed to transforming cancer outcomes in Aotearoa New Zealand. By upholding its responsibilities under te Tiriti o Waitangi the Trust is helping to achieve equitable cancer outcomes for Māori. The Trust urges all cancer researchers to actively consider how their efforts can contribute to this goal.

The Cancer Research Trust Assessment Committee takes a firm view on the need to engage with Māori when developing research project concepts. While it can be challenging for researchers to connect in a meaningful way with Māori, the Committee nevertheless requires researchers to demonstrate a commitment to Māori Health Advancement. This may take many different forms, depending on the type and stage of the research project.

Every application in every funding category is assessed for Māori Health Advancement. To promote consistency, the Cancer Research Trust has adopted the HRC's Māori Health Advancement criteria. The HRC model explores Māori Health Advancement across four domains: Relationships, Significance, Research Team and Research Characteristics. Applicants should refer to guidance provided by the HRC: <https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz/funding/downloads/HRCMaoriHealthAdvancementGuidelines.pdf>

The Trust acknowledges that Māori Health Advancement expectations will vary across the different funding categories. Some examples of this variation are given below. Over time, the Trust will provide additional guidance to support applicants in the journey to deeper and more meaningful partnerships with Māori. In considering responsiveness to Māori, researchers are encouraged to consider the following questions about their proposed research:

### *What research relationships with Māori are established?*

Researchers are expected to consider where their project can benefit from Māori involvement, input, advice or engagement. Researchers should work with their Host Institution to build relationships with Māori researchers or individuals with expertise in te reo Māori and tikanga, including community research.

Researchers should look for opportunities where they can engage with Māori, seek Māori participation in part/all of the project, identify ways that their research can contribute to Māori advancement and identify any other potential benefits. Engagement should allow Māori adequate time to participate and respond fully. CRTNZ understands that quality, enduring relationships take time to build and provides specific funding support through the Cancer Education Development Fund.

### *Does the research involve or affect Māori?*

- Could Māori people, data, information or narratives be involved in the research design or undertaking?
- Is the research theme or domain important to Māori?
- Does the project include Māori staff or researchers?
- Is the research expected to contribute to Māori (iwi/hapū/whānau/community) aspirations and outcomes?
- Could the project include comparative measures involving or affecting Māori or Māori information?
- Could the project use or affect taonga - things considered to be treasured by Maori, iwi, hapū - or data rendered from these treasures?



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*Example* For a proposal focused on laboratory-based development of a potential new treatment/test for cancer: There is a clear opportunity to consider consulting with Māori and bringing Māori advisors into the research planning at the outset. That way, if a treatment/test is eventually developed there will already be a high degree of trust in the process, due to the involvement of Māori throughout, and hence in the treatment/test being offered.

*Example* For some proposals there may be value in engaging with Māori health providers that have the right networks in place.

#### *Is the research specifically relevant to Māori?*

- Is the research expected to contribute in a direct way to Māori aspirations and outcomes?
- Does the project use comparative measures involving or effecting Māori or Māori information?
- Does the research draw on mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in its design and undertaking?
- Specific relevance is often self-evident, but could include research that draws strongly on mātauranga Māori in the design and undertaking.

#### *Does the research centre Māori?*

- Is the research Māori-led?
- Does the research draw on mātauranga Māori in a major way (for example, in the method, models, frameworks, tools, data analysis, dissemination outputs or delivery)?
- Does the research consult or collaborate with Māori, usually collectively (e.g. iwi) but can also be individually (e.g. Māori researchers)?
- Does the research contribute to Māori aspirations and outcomes?
- Does the project use or affect taonga - things considered to be treasured by Maori, iwi, hapū or data rendered from these treasures?

#### *Are Māori participants involved in the research?*

For all clinical projects and any research potentially involving Māori participants, the applicant is expected to formulate a cultural safety plan. This should be done in consultation with Māori colleagues or partners and at a minimum must describe mechanisms for protecting Māori participants and their data, and a plan for training members of the research team in cultural safety.

#### *What if research is of low or limited relevance to Māori?*

If none of these categories apply to your research, you may want to consider that research can be made more relevant to Māori in most instances. There are actions that every researcher can take, even where the research is not specifically relevant to Māori, as outlined in the following examples.

*Example* All researchers have a responsibility to consider their own personal journey in learning about tikanga and incorporating this into their research. This could be reflected in diverse ways, such as how the research is conceived and planned, how the Principal Investigator creates a welcoming research environment, how principles of tikanga can be applied to teaching and graduate student supervision. The applicant should show how they have, or are establishing, relationships with Māori academics or community research people.

*Example* For a Professional Development Award proposal to attend an international conference the applicant might consider ways to spark conversation about indigenous populations' involvement in the field. This could include te reo in an oral presentation, such as an opening mihi.



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*In putting together our Māori Health Advancement guidelines, the Cancer Research Trust NZ has drawn on the work of other organisations. In particular, the Trust acknowledges the University of Otago for their internal grant process documents, the Royal Society for Vision Mātauranga guidelines and the HRC for their work on the four domains of Māori health advancement.*