

Request for Proposals

Partnering for Innovation in Breast Cancer 2020 - \$600,000

A research initiative from Breast Cancer Foundation NZ

Overview

Breast Cancer Foundation NZ (BCFNZ) is committed to funding research with potential for significant impact on breast cancer detection, treatment or outcomes in New Zealand.

In 2020, we are offering a single grant of \$600,000 (paid over 4-5 years) to support an important study where a research team has defined a project and pathway with clear clinical potential.

In this Request for Proposals (RFP), BCFNZ is seeking to proactively encourage research in areas aligned to our mission – ***Pushing for new frontiers in early detection, treatment and support*** – in the pursuit of our long-term, aspirational vision of ***Zero deaths from breast cancer***.

These new frontiers could be in any area of cancer research or practice, including radiology, pathology, surgery, oncology, bioengineering, immunology, genetics, chemistry, informatics, automation, mathematics and human interface technology. We expect that the successful project will involve an interdisciplinary approach and collaboration with other researchers or institutions; there is also a requirement to have a named clinician on the research team.

We welcome proposals for research (including clinical trials) in the following areas aligned to the BCFNZ mission:

- Early detection and diagnosis
- Innovative and targeted treatments in early breast cancer
- Extending survival for metastatic breast cancer patients
- Improving clinical practice and supportive care for better patient outcomes

See the section **Scope of the Research** for more details of our interest in these areas.

Please note, the significant investment and longer term partnership nature of this grant will involve ***a different assessment process from that which you may previously have experienced with us***. Shortlisted teams will be required to present their proposal in person.

How to apply

Applicants should complete the application form available on the BCFNZ grants portal at <https://grants.breastcancerfoundation.org.nz/>

Applications close February 29, 2020*

**please contact BCFNZ if there is a good reason this deadline can't be met*

Assessment Process

1. Preliminary review / shortlist

Researchers will submit a detailed description of the research goal and the initial phase of the study (e.g. Year 1 or Years 1-2), plus an outline for the remainder of the project. Proposals will be reviewed by Breast Cancer Foundation NZ and its medical advisors. Projects not deemed of sufficient quality or interest will be declined at this stage. A shortlist of four or five applications will move to further assessment.

2. Peer review

Shortlisted applications will be sent for peer review, internationally and / or nationally.

3. Applicant rebuttal

Reviews will be sent to applicants for rebuttal (with the identity of the reviewer removed). Applicants may wish to respond to specific reviewer comments or questions, or to provide clarification to allow an accurate assessment of the proposal.

4. Presentation to BCFNZ

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to present their application in person to a panel of BCFNZ representatives and advisors. Guidance will be given as to what is required for this presentation. The presentation may take place at BCFNZ's Auckland office (in which case BCFNZ will meet reasonable travel expenses for the research team), or at the research institution.

5. MAC and Board Approval

Assessment panel recommendations will be submitted to BCFNZ's Medical Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees for confirmation of funding.

Funding Timeline

Publish RFP	January 30, 2020
Applications due	February 29, 2020
Preliminary review / shortlist	April 10
Peer review	Mid April – late May
Rebuttals	May-mid June
Presentations to Assessing Group	Late June
Submit to Board of Trustees and MAC for approval	June 29, 2020
Applicants notified of outcome	June 30, 2020

Background

Breast Cancer Foundation NZ's mission is ***Pushing for new frontiers in early detection, treatment and support*** in the pursuit of our long-term, aspirational vision of ***Zero deaths from breast cancer***. The Foundation's core activities are awareness and education around early detection of breast cancer, funding scientific and clinical research, and supporting women with breast cancer. We also invest in medical equipment and training, and advocacy.

BCFNZ has been one of NZ's major funders of breast cancer research for the past 20 years. Funding of the Breast Cancer Foundation National Register (which records detailed information about diagnosis, treatment and outcomes of patients with breast cancer within New Zealand) stretches back to the inception of the Auckland register in 2000.

Research Objectives

The key objectives of this RFP are to:

- Establish a partnership with a research team that has a clear vision for a programme of work that has clear clinical potential, within a definable timeframe, for New Zealanders with breast cancer.
- Leverage expertise, experience and technologies across multiple scientific and clinical disciplines and / or institutions to maximise effectiveness and utility of the proposed work.
- Support projects where there is a clear benefit or logic in this research being undertaken in New Zealand rather than elsewhere.
- Enable a significant investment that provides a level of confidence and certainty that encourages others to invest.

What do we mean by partnership?

In providing a grant of \$600,000, Breast Cancer Foundation NZ is looking to establish a named partnership (for example, the BCFNZ Ferrier Institute Breast Cancer Research Partnership) with an excellent research group. The grant is intended to enable work towards a specific research goal over four or five years, giving confidence to the research team and to other potential funders.

An aim of the partnership is to reduce the risk of "orphan" projects that depend on one investigator remaining in their position, or that come to an end when a smaller grant runs out.

We require an annual meeting with the research team, where the team will report progress and outline the next year of work. The aim of the meeting is to ensure that the overarching goal of the project remains in scope. We would expect the research team to propose a redirection of the work programme if it becomes clear that the current trajectory will not address the goal. In a case where it had become clear that the research could in no way achieve the goal, both parties might need to agree an acceptable alternative goal or project. If no way forward can be agreed that is acceptable to BCFNZ, the partnership would cease.

Scope of the research

Our first priority with this research is that **the proposed programme of work must have a clear and realistic pathway towards the clinic**. We recognise that this may not be achievable within the proposed project, or, given the very nature of research, may turn out not to be attainable at all. But we expect the research team to identify clear potential for transition to early clinical trial or implementation, and to devise a work programme that will focus their efforts on advancing down this pathway.

Research proposals **must include a named clinician** among the investigators.

Detection and Diagnosis

Examples of areas of interest include, but are not limited to: new detection and diagnostic modalities, imaging technologies, liquid biopsies, artificial intelligence, imaging-based biomarkers

Development or trial of innovative and/or targeted treatments to improve *early breast cancer survival*

Examples of areas of interest include, but are not limited to: surgical advances, genomic assays, prevention of metastasis, innovations in radiotherapy, immunotherapies, computer modelling to predict therapy effects, new drug delivery technologies, bioengineering / synthetic biology; 3D technologies.

Extending survival for *metastatic breast cancer patients*

Examples of areas of interest include, but are not limited to: new approaches to surveillance for recurrence, treatment of oligometastases, immunotherapies, computer modelling to predict therapy effects, innovations in radiotherapy, clinical trials, new drug delivery technologies, genomic assays, synthetic biology, repurposing of existing medicines.

Improving clinical practice and supportive care for better patient outcomes

Examples of areas of interest include, but are not limited to: new approaches to symptom management; implantables; wearables; e-engagement; virtual/augmented reality; clinical trials testing of clinical hypotheses based on biomedical informatics.

Additional considerations:

We are interested to see projects in any of the above areas that offer any of the following:

- **Disruptive technology** – with potential for radical change in patient pathways, resource implications, and treatment cost-effectiveness
- **Novel applications of existing technologies (including medicines)**
- **Innovative convergence of technologies and/or disciplines**, including computational biology, mathematics, oncology, surgery, pathology, epidemiology, physics, engineering, materials science, and chemistry.
- **Cross tumour-stream research** – we encourage the extension into breast cancer of research or clinical initiatives that show significant promise in other tumour types. This maximises efficiencies of study setup and overhead, encourages collaboration, and builds on existing knowledge or results.

- **International collaborations** – we welcome applications for NZ participation in international or global studies, which may or may not have originated in NZ.

Guidelines for research proposals

The research proposal should provide information on:

- How the research project represents innovation in breast cancer.
- Excellence in scientific and/or clinical approach, properly scoped and clearly achievable within the specified timeframe.
- The impact of the proposed research programme on breast cancer in New Zealand and the timeframe in which that impact is likely to be achieved. Research programmes that clearly identify a transition to early clinical trial or implementation will be favoured.
- The key members of the research team how they will contribute; why this team is well positioned to achieve the research goal.
- Where this study sits in the international body of research on the chosen subject: what similar or different approaches are being taken overseas; why this work should be done in New Zealand; why there is value in the BCFNZ funding your team to work in this area rather than relying on overseas findings.
- Where relevant, the potential to address specific needs of Māori and Pacific people.
- Potential for publication in international, peer-reviewed scientific or medical journals, and a plan for disseminating the results of the research within New Zealand.

Budget

The BCFNZ will commit **\$600,000** (plus GST where applicable) to a single project, to be completed over four or five years. BCFNZ will not fund overheads.

Reporting

BCFNZ requires the following reporting:

- An annual meeting and written report, detailing progress and highlighting any issues, agreed redirection or changes in timeline.
- A draft and final deliverable report detailing results, key findings and recommendations (including next steps) of the complete programme of research.
- We reserve the right to request a verbal presentation to our Medical Advisory Committee and / or our Board of Trustees at any point.
- We may request a site visit for our executives and / or Medical Advisory Committee.

Further Information

We are very happy to discuss your proposed project with you before you submit your application. Please contact: Adèle Gautier, Research & Communications Manager, Breast Cancer Foundation NZ, 09 304 0961 / 021 423 353 or AdeleG@bcf.org.nz