

National Research Grant Round 2026

Full Application Guidelines Robert McClelland Fellowship

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Introduction

Document purpose

The aim of the Cancer Society's National Research Grant Round is to fund high-quality research across the cancer continuum (including prevention, diagnosis, treatment and supportive care). This guide is for those who intend to apply for a Robert McClelland Fellowship.

About the Cancer Society of New Zealand

The Cancer Society's vision is "Working together towards a future free from cancer."

The Cancer Society's mission is to reduce the incidence and impact of cancer. We support anyone, anywhere, with any cancer. Our focus areas include:

- **Providing community support** to people affected by cancer, their families/whānau and carers.
- **Advocating for better outcomes:** we drive change that achieves equitable outcomes across the cancer continuum.
- **Supporting research and innovation:** by increasing investment in research, and driving targeted, equitable and evidence-based outcomes.
- **Partnering for impact:** by working collaboratively with organisations who share similar goals to the Cancer Society.

The Cancer Society is reliant on funding support from the communities in which it works.

Research and Innovation at the Cancer Society

The Cancer Society's [Research and Innovation Strategy](#) highlights our big dream to build the research foundations for a national comprehensive cancer network that connects people, knowledge, and resources, to enable coordinated research activity, for increased access and equitable health outcomes. This network will be equity-led, uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi and embed Māori leadership.

Priority populations

Our strategy prioritises Māori, Pacific peoples and those living in rural areas, as these populations experience the greatest inequities in cancer outcomes across Aotearoa.

Our Strategic Priorities:

- **Strengthening the cancer research workforce** by supporting early career researchers,

clinical professionals, and medical students to engage in research.

- **Elevating lived experience in research and innovation** to ensure the research we support reflects real world needs.
- **Increasing access to clinical trials** by increasing support for and engagement with clinical trials from the bench to bedside.

About the Robert McClelland Trust

The Robert McClelland Charitable Trust was established under the Will of Mr. Robert McClelland with the purpose of supporting initiatives that contribute to research into the causes, prevention, and treatment of cancer. In administering the Trust, the Trustees are mindful of the intent of the Will and their governance obligations and seek to ensure that funding decisions align with this purpose while supporting high quality research and capability within New Zealand.

The Trust is a registered charity under the Charities Act 2005, with Registration No. CC32172.

Donor's Charitable Intent

Mr. McClelland expressed in his Will that it was his earnest desire to assist humanity in the endeavours being made to cure the ravages of cancer and to ascertain the cause or causes of this dread disease, and should the causes of cancer be found he wished for the Trust to then support the research into the cure of other maladies afflicting the human race.

The Will further states that if at any time the cause or causes of cancer are found or the Trust Board considers that unsatisfactory progress has been made in New Zealand in cancer research or for the cure of cancer, then the Board may exercise its discretion to apply income toward the research and cure of other maladies afflicting the human race.

Contact information

Please contact the Cancer Society's Research Managers at research@cancer.org.nz if you have any questions or require further information.

1. Scope

The Cancer Society will consider any research grant application that is relevant to cancer outcomes across the continuum. Applications peripheral to cancer research should not be submitted.

2. Eligibility

Description	Maximum value of award	Maximum grant duration
The Robert McClelland Fellowship provides support for an outstanding individual who has recently completed a degree at doctoral level.	Up to \$150,000 To fund a salary, top up or research costs, fully justified.	36 months

All Cancer Society Post-Doctoral Fellowships are for applicants within six years of gaining their research degree (excluding parental leave), in line with the Health Research Council Emerging Researcher criteria.

Grant applications will be considered from any person who holds a PhD or will have their PhD degree conferred by the time the contract starts, as long as the applicant is a resident in New Zealand or intends to become a resident.

The Robert McClelland Fellowship is intended to support applicants at the post-doctoral level who have already been part-funded for their research. The primary goal of this funding is to cover a salary top up over a 3-year period. Research costs may be considered for this funding if they are well justified. Applicants must provide evidence that they have secured part funding for their research or are currently waiting to hear results on part funding of their research.

Applicants should include letters of collaboration outlining how the collaborator intends to provide material or support for the research, where appropriate. Applicants should ensure the named collaborator(s) recognise their intended commitment to the proposed research and timeline of their involvement.

Please note the Cancer Society only funds 'direct costs' of the research and does not pay any 'indirect costs' of the research, such as institutional overhead recovery.

3. Application process and timelines

All grants will be awarded by open competition (for all individuals who meet the above eligibility criteria to apply for funding). Applications will be assessed by the Cancer Society’s National Scientific Advisory Committee (NSAC). For all grant types, the final funding decision will be made by the Cancer Society’s National Board. Applications will be assessed through several stages:

22 June 2026	Open for applications
12 October 2026	Deadline for Full Applications (1 pm, submitted via the grant portal)
October/November 2026	Applications sent for external peer review.
January 2027	Applicants receive peer review comments and are given the opportunity to provide a rebuttal (no more than one page in total).
February 2027	The NSAC meet to review the applications and make a recommendation to the Cancer Society’s National Board.
March 2027	The Cancer Society’s National Board consider the NSAC’s recommendation and make a final funding decision.
April 2027	Applicants notified of outcome

The Cancer Society may refuse to consider an application if it considers actions of the applicant to be contrary to the interests of the Cancer Society or may bring the Cancer Society into disrepute.

Submission

The application form should be completed and submitted on the grant portal by **12 October 2026**.

Reporting

Applicants successful in receiving funding through the Grant Round will be required to submit annual progress reports and a final report. Reports will include a lay person's summary which may be used to inform the public about the work we support, an update on the project's timelines and milestones; whether they are met, partially met or delayed, and an explanation for any delays. The Cancer Society recommends writing lay summaries at the **reading age of twelve years old**. Annual reports in Te Reo Māori must also provide the English translation. Funding for the subsequent year will only be released upon receipt of a satisfactory annual report.

Privacy provisions

The information requested in an application will be used for assessing that application and, in a non-identifiable form, some information will be used for Cancer Society statistical purposes. All research applications will be stored in a secure place. Security and confidentiality will be preserved for any application declined. Personal information contained in the application may be made available to external referees and members of the Cancer Society National Scientific Advisory Committee reviewing the application. When an application is successful, the Cancer Society reserves the right to publish the applicants' names, details of the Host Institution, lay summary and funding awarded. You can find the Cancer Society's privacy policy online [here](#).

4. Assessment criteria

Applicants should address the following criteria in their application:

- **Suitability of the applicant:** The application represents an independent research stream, the applicant is able to carry out the proposed work, has a strong track-record of achievement to date relative to opportunity, and demonstrates strong potential for a career in cancer research, including mentorship of less experienced researchers. The applicant is likely to make a significant contribution to the wider research environment and research community.
- **Training environment:** Opportunities for training and career development are actively identified and supported by strong commitment from supervisors, mentors and the Host Institution.
- **Strong rationale for research:** addresses important research questions, likely to result in significant benefit for people affected by cancer or advancement in the scientific understanding of cancer.
- **Research design:** clear objectives and deliverables, excellent and appropriate research design.
- **Research Impact:** the expected outcomes of the proposed research will add value and contribute to achieving the “big dream” and ultimately the Cancer Society’s vision. For further information on the big dream, please refer to the [Research and Innovation Strategy 2026 – 2031](#).
- **Equity:** clear identification how the research will contribute to equitable cancer outcomes across the continuum for priority populations identified by the Cancer Society. For further information on the equity goals of the Cancer Society, please refer to the [Research and Innovation Strategy 2026 – 2031](#).
- **Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** the application should demonstrate commitment and application of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and responsiveness to Māori. For an example of the type of considerations you could consider, please consult this document: [Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Health Research in Aotearoa](#).

5. Eligible costs

All calculations should be GST exclusive and in whole dollar amounts i.e. no cents or decimals.

Please use the below table to help calculate the total costs requested. The Robert McClelland Trust Fellowship is intended to partially cover the salary of the fellow (up to \$50,000 excl. GST p.a.). Research costs (noted below under “Acceptable Costs”) may be considered for this funding if they are well justified.

Note, the Cancer Society only funds ‘direct costs’ of the research and does not pay any ‘indirect costs’ of the research, such as overhead recovery.

ACCEPTABLE COSTS	UNACCEPTABLE COSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research consumables (these should be itemised at current cost per unit and total cost) • Other costs directly related to the research, e.g., mail and freight. • Computer-related license fees for research-specific software. • Minor research equipment (to a maximum of \$5,000 across the full award). • Expenses of research participants. • Costs associated with knowledge transfer activities. • Fair and reasonable charges associated with the approved publication of the results of Cancer Society sponsored research in journals, reports, monographs, or books. • Casual salaries. • Animal costs, including transportation, maintenance (including food), and experimentation costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel costs. • Standard per unit IT charges. • Phone/ computer accessories (drivers, cases, chargers, batteries). • Contributions to property costs or laboratory space. • Cost of staff appointments. • Utility charges such as lighting, heating and water, telephone installation and connection fees and line charges. • Capital costs, (with the exception of minor equipment). • Contributions to any central or group service or utility. • Library charges. • Home Office Licenses and animal handling training costs. • Financial services. • Personnel services. • Public relations. • Subscriptions to journals. • Furniture.

If you believe that any of the ‘unacceptable costs’ above should be seen as direct costs of the research, you must provide a full and detailed justification for this in your application.

6. Research ethics approval

All areas must be fully and accurately completed for this section to be accepted. List the full name of the accredited Ethics Committee(s) from which you are seeking approval. If the applicant has not sought ethical approval, a detailed reason is required.

General guidelines to applicants:

- It is the responsibility of the Host Institution to evaluate the ethics involved in any research on human or animal experiments or utilizing personal information. However, the Cancer Society wishes to be fully informed on the ethical arrangements covering any work for which it supplies funds.
- The applicant must supply a copy of any submission for ethical approval that is awaiting approval and evidence of approval must be supplied to the Cancer Society before any research procedures involving animal or human materials, or personal information may commence.
- Research ethical approval(s) must come from an accredited Ethics Committee(s). Please refer to the HRC Research Ethics Guidelines for details on how to apply and a list of accredited Ethics Committees – <https://www.hrc.govt.nz/resources/hrc-research-ethics-guidelines>
- If appropriate, more than one Ethics Committee approval may be necessary, for example, if the research geographically covers an area serviced by more than one committee or if human and animal studies will be undertaken. All committees applied to for approval should be listed.
- Where a dispute arises over the ethics of experimentation, the Cancer Society reserves the right to refer the matter to the Health Research Council Committee on Ethics and Research for arbitration.

Guidelines for applicants on research involving animals:

- Animals used for research purposes shall be lawfully acquired. They shall be kept and used in strict compliance with the relevant laws and by laws.
- Any research project involving animals must be approved by a properly constituted Animal Ethical Advisory Committee and conform to the guidelines for Institutional Animal Ethics Committees, of the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee.
- An Act of Parliament (October 1984) established the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee, to advise the Minister of Agriculture. Further information on how to apply for Animal Ethics approval can be found here – <https://www.naeac.org.nz/>

Guidelines for applicants on research involving human subjects:

All research supported by the Cancer Society on human subjects must conform to the code of ethical principles established by the Health Research Council of New Zealand. In addition, research funded by

the Cancer Society must conform to the below principles¹:

- The applicant and any other researchers involved must be satisfied by forethought, by study of the literature, and by consultation that the proposed research is likely to contribute to the understanding of the matter being investigated.
- The Investigator must be satisfied that the research on human subjects is based as far as possible on the results of experiments conducted “in vitro” or on animals.
- The Investigator must be satisfied that adequate facilities will be used for the solution of the problem being investigated.
- The Investigator must be satisfied that the research will not impose unreasonable discomfort or hazard upon the subject. In order to ensure the safety of the subject in an untoward event, the Investigator must ensure that appropriately qualified persons are present during experiments and that proper facilities are at hand to ensure the safety of the subject in any emergency.
- The Investigator must modify appropriately or discontinue the research if it becomes apparent that the procedure is likely to cause unreasonable risk to the subject.
- Before the research project is undertaken, the Investigator must obtain the free informed consent of the subject or their guardian in writing and in the presence of a witness. The consent must be obtained without the exertion of pressure on the subject and without being dependent on any obligation of the subject toward the Investigator.
- The Investigator should be satisfied that the subject, or the guardian, has been informed, in terms capable of being understood, of the nature and purpose of the proposed research, the methods to be employed, and the possible risks and discomfort that may be involved.
- Special care must be taken in the case of subjects at particular risk, for example, children, the mentally infirm, the unconscious patient, and pregnant and nursing women. Children should never be the subjects of research which could appropriately be undertaken in adults and, in the case of unconscious patients, the written consent of the next of kin must always be obtained.
- The subject, or the guardian, shall be free at any time to withdraw consent for further participation in the research and must be made aware of their right in this respect. Such withdrawal does not in any way prejudice the subjects further management and treatment as a patient.
- New therapeutic or experimental procedures which are at the stage of early evaluation, and which might have long-term effects should not be undertaken unless full provision has been made for long-term care and observation of the subject.

¹ Grants may be terminated at any time and without notice should the Cancer Society find that these principles have not been observed.

7. Contract information and institutional approval

Once your application is completed and you submit it via the portal, your application will be sent to your Host Institution for final review. Only your Host Institution is able to submit applications to the Cancer Society. Your research office may have their own internal deadlines so that they can provide a full review and meet the Cancer Society's submission deadline, so make sure you are aware of internal deadlines. If your Host Institution is not listed as an option in the application form, please contact research@cancer.org.nz prior to the internal deadline.

Successful applicants will be asked to sign a research contract. The 2022 research contract template is available [here](#).

When a matter relating to research arises and the Cancer Society does not have a stated policy they may follow any existing guidelines of the Health Research Council.

8. Grant portal

Applications must be submitted through the Cancer Society Grant Portal. User guides for the Grant Portal can be found [here](#). Applicants must sign up for an account to access the application form, and the applicant must submit their application to their host institution for review using their account.

If you are having any issues accessing or using the portal, please contact our Research Managers at research@cancer.org.nz.

A note on word limits for each section of the application form

Lay summary: 150 words

Training Environment & Support

Career Plans: 500 words

Training Environment & Support: 500 words

Proposed Research Plan

Aims & Objectives: 500 words

Rationale: 1000 words

Research Design: 1000 words

Dissemination of Results: 500 words

Research Impact: 400 words

Equity: 400 words

Te Tiriti o Waitangi: 300 words

Budget

Justification of staff, research, and other costs: 500 words

Facilities available: 500 words