The Agency for Science, Technology and Research of Singapore (A*STAR) and the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) seek to allocate funds to enable research teams from Singapore and New Zealand to conduct collaborative research into cancer. A total funding pool of up to approximately NZD$1.8M (exclusive of GST) is available through the HRC’s International Investment Opportunities Fund (Objective 2) and A*STAR for this joint initiative.
A*STAR and HRC PARTNERSHIP

In 2008, A*STAR and the HRC formed a partnership and signed a Memorandum to promote collaborations in the research of metabolic diseases and cancer. The agencies have agreed to each invest NZD$1.8M (creating a total fund of NZD$3.6M) to this initiative. The initiative will be run in two separate rounds.

In Round one, A*STAR and the HRC invested approximately NZD$1.8M (half of the total fund) for two years for research into metabolic diseases. The HRC was responsible for the administration of this round.

In Round two, A*STAR and the HRC will invest an approximate total of NZD$1.8M (half of the total fund) for two years for cancer research.

Round two – Cancer

Funding for Round two is available to support the development and implementation of collaborative research projects involving scientists from both countries. Applications must reflect the focus of Round two and outline a research project within the area of cancer. Research conducted in Singapore will be funded by A*STAR and research conducted in New Zealand will be funded by the HRC. In line with this, two budgets will be submitted with the full application. Each agency, through a local science assessing committee, will review all applications and relevant budgets.

In running the fund, A*STAR and the HRC will:

- seek commitment from the research institutions submitting proposals to provide infrastructural support and organisational co-funding for successful projects;
- seek to leverage Singapore and New Zealand funding to ensure the best outcomes for Singapore and New Zealand research and researchers;
- seek to ensure benefit to Singapore and New Zealand is captured for the wealth and wellbeing of Singaporeans and New Zealanders, and
- ensure the process is as flexible and responsive to opportunity as possible.

A*STAR and the HRC will allocate funds through a contestable funding pool to enable outstanding researchers (including emerging researchers) to establish research collaborations with research teams from Singapore and New Zealand. The fund will support applicants to engage in hypothesis-driven research activities that will produce gains for Singapore and New Zealand, and/or the leveraging of overseas funds to support a longer term research project.

At this stage, there is no restriction on the type of partnership opportunity that will be considered, as this fund is intended to respond to a wide range of opportunities within the research area of cancer. The proposal should align with priority areas for investment for A*STAR and the HRC1. Priority will also be given to proposals which are able to demonstrate their alignment with the New Zealand Government’s Growth and Innovation Framework (www.gif.med.govt.nz).

Proposals must involve a genuine collaboration with at least one research team each from Singapore and New Zealand. The proposed collaboration should be additional to the research organisations’ current activities and require joint input of both the Singapore and New Zealand teams to be successful. The project must be a new one, although it may be based on relationships that have been developed over time. Successful proposals will present a vision for long-term, sustainable international collaborations.

The over-riding issue for this fund is the demonstration of the potential benefit to Singapore and New Zealand from the proposed international partnership. This may, in part, be through access to the research programme, resources (such as equipment), data, intellectual property and expertise, but is also expected to be through specific, measurable, time-bound outcomes that will benefit both Singapore and New Zealand.

The most successful proposals will present a compelling case for the delivery of the best outcomes for Singapore and New Zealand research and researchers. The fund is intended for researchers seeking to conduct collaborative research which could lead to development of a subsequent collaborative research proposal.

**BUDGET**
A*STAR and the HRC will allocate a total funding pool of approximately NZD$1.8M over two years (fully-costed, exclusive of GST) to this initiative into cancer research. This pool may be used to fund multiple research projects. The fund will not be used to fund any single project for longer than two years. Funding will be available for an immediate start for the research project, although the start-date for the project is negotiable.

Applicants will be required to submit two budgets with their proposals – a Singapore budget and a New Zealand budget. It is expected that the two budgets will seek a similar level of funding to support the Singapore-based research expenses and the New Zealand-based research expenses. A*STAR and the HRC will separately allocate and manage these funds. Each joint project is expected to receive a combined grant of NZ$300,000-500,000 for 2 years.

**Agency for Science, Technology and Research of Singapore**
A*STAR funds must be used for research and for research-related expenses. The fund will only be used to support the research activities of the Singapore-based research team and the research must be conducted in Singapore.

**Health Research Council of New Zealand**
HRC funds allocated through IIOF must be used for research and for research-related working expenses, which may include travel grants and other associated costs. The fund will only be used to support the research activities of the New Zealand-based research team. The fund is not intended to support international funding activities that are already underway, and have an established funding route. Nor is it intended to support opportunities that could be achieved through negotiating a Variation of Contract (where there is existing HRC funding in a related area and the priority nature of the international opportunity can be demonstrated). The IIOF will not be used to support direct or indirect costs of research funded through another scheme (based in New Zealand or overseas).
ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
The main criteria against which proposals will be measured are the potential benefit to Singapore and New Zealand from the international collaboration, and scientific and technological quality. Each proposal will be considered against the following criteria:

• Health significance
• Scientific merit
• Design and methods
• Expertise and track record of the research team
• Quality of the research Partnership
• Potential benefit to Singapore and New Zealand from the proposed international collaboration

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
Proposals funded under this initiative will:

• Address an area of high priority for Singapore and New Zealand
• Involve hypothesis-driven research that will lead to specific, measurable, outcomes for Singapore and New Zealand within a defined timeframe
• Involve a genuine collaboration with at least one research team each from Singapore and New Zealand, and not just short-term exchange of personnel or specimens/reagents
• Outline a research project in the area of cancer
• Demonstrate that the research could not be done without the joint input of the teams from Singapore and New Zealand for the full term of the project
• Represent a new collaborative opportunity, and not a partnership for which the research is already underway
• Be submitted under the auspices of a Singapore- and New Zealand-based research organisation (including international organisations with a base in New Zealand). Only Singapore-based researchers from all public institutions in Singapore, including restructured hospitals, national centres, research institutes, local universities and A*STAR research institutes/consortia are eligible to apply for this collaborative grant.

The fund will not be used to support:

• The overhead component of research funded under another scheme
• Research proposals that come under the remit of Technology New Zealand

APPLICATION PROCEDURE
Individuals and organisations interested in undertaking research that meets the eligibility criteria are invited to register their intent to submit a full application by completing the form (ROI210_IIOF) and returning it electronically to Suzanne Rolfe, HRC Project Coordinator by 5.00pm 7 April 2010 (NZST). Applicants will have the opportunity to nominate reviewers in the Registration of Interest form prior to the submission of a full application. Singapore PI must obtain the endorsement (namely Section 7C IV of the application form) from their organization’s Office of Research or its equivalent. A full research application on application form (IIOF210_O2) should

2 See the HRC’s research strategies,
be submitted to the HRC Secretariat by **5.00pm 31 May 2010 (NZST)**. The two budgets (Singapore, New Zealand) should also be submitted to the HRC Secretariat by **5.00pm 31 May 2010 (NZST)**. All forms are available from the HRC website, [www.hrc.govt.nz](http://www.hrc.govt.nz) (Partnership Funding Forms) and A*STAR website, [http://www.a-star.edu.sg/Research/FundingOpportunities/GrantCalls/tabid/134/Default.aspx](http://www.a-star.edu.sg/Research/FundingOpportunities/GrantCalls/tabid/134/Default.aspx).

The scientific integrity of the full application will then be assessed through a peer review process. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the Request for Proposals by **October 2010**. A*STAR and the HRC will then work with the research team(s) to negotiate a contract and schedule for the research.

**KEY DATES**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 March 2010</td>
<td>A*STAR and the HRC release the Request for Proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 April 2010</td>
<td>Closing date for registration of intent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 May 2010</td>
<td>Closing date for receipt of full proposals and budgets; A*STAR and the HRC perform internal checks</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 June 2010</td>
<td>Peer review commences (6 weeks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 July 2010</td>
<td>Applicants invited to submit written rebuttal of referee review</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 July 2010</td>
<td>Closing date for applicant rebuttal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>Applicants submitting full proposals will be advised of the funding decisions released.</td>
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**SUMMARY OF THE INVESTMENT PROCESS**

The Investment Process for this initiative is outlined in Diagram 1, on page 6.
Diagram 1: Assessment process for HRC/A*STAR initiative

1. HRC administrative staff begins pre-identification of peer reviewers.
2. Joint Full Proposals submitted to HRC.
3. New Zealand and budget submitted to HRC.
4. Singapore budget submitted to HRC.
5. Joint Registrations of interest submitted and screened.
6. Applications and budgets to peer reviewers for assessment against HRC and A*STAR criteria.
7. Reviewers report to applicant for rebuttal.
8. New Zealand Local Review Panel assess all application materials.
11. Preferred Research Providers identified.
12. Funding recommendation made to Joint Panel for consideration.
13. Joint Panel makes final funding decision.
14. Check NZ budget against HRC criteria.
15. Check Singapore budget against A*STAR criteria.
16. HRC contract with New Zealand Research Team.
17. A*STAR contract with Singapore Research Team.
BACKGROUND

Agency for Science, Technology and Research of Singapore
The Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) was established with the primary mission to foster world-class scientific research and talent for a vibrant knowledge-based Singapore. It comprises the Biomedical Research Council (BMRC), the Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC), Exploit Technologies Pte Ltd (ETPL), the A*STAR Graduate Academy (A*GA) and the Corporate Planning and Administration Division (CPAD).

Biomedical Research Council
Established in October 2000, the Biomedical Research Council (BMRC) supports, oversees and coordinates public sector biomedical research and development activities in Singapore. The BMRC:

- Oversees the development of core research capabilities within A*STAR research units specializing in bioprocessing; chemical synthesis; clinical sciences, genomics and proteomics; molecular and cell biology; bioengineering and nanotechnology and bioinformatics. There are 7 research institutes under BMRC dedicated to building up these core research capabilities.
- Actively promotes translational medicine and cross-disciplinary research, as part of its efforts to advance human healthcare. BMRC established various research consortia to coordinate and drive translational research at the national level in strategic thematic areas such as bioimaging, immunology and stem cells.
- Supports biomedical research in the wider scientific community such as public universities and hospitals through yearly research grant calls.
- Engages in human capital development in the biomedical sciences and promotes societal awareness of biomedical research through outreach programmes

Health Research Council of New Zealand
The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) is the Crown agency responsible for the management of the Government’s investment in public good health research.

The HRC's Strategic Plan 2008-2013 is aligned with the goals and priorities of both Vote Health and Vote Research, Science and Technology. Importantly, the Plan recognises the strategies of the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology and the work of other funding and investment agencies in the sector and applies these to address the particular needs of the health sector. The Plan responds to HRC’s mission statement and recognises that high quality health research is vital for health and well-being.

The Plan consists of the following four goals:
1. Invest in research that meets New Zealand health needs and research that has international impact
2. Maximise the benefits of health research
3. Champion the integrity of the health research environment
4. Enhance the value of the organisation

HRC’s International Investment Opportunities Fund
The International Investment Opportunities Fund (IIOF) has been established with the aim of increasing the ability of New Zealand researchers to participate in research
collaborations that attract international co-funding, to recruit highly experienced researchers from overseas and to support participation in international research programmes with a high relevance to New Zealand’s economic, social and/or environmental development.

Benefits to New Zealand will be recognised through access to equipment or technologies not available in New Zealand and ensuring advanced skills are matched to areas of strong growth.

The scheme, introduced by the Ministry of Research Science and Technology (MoRST), will give priority to opportunities involving bilateral partners identified in the Government’s Research Science & Technology International Linkages Strategy (see the MoRST website\(^3\)). If appropriate, proposals which align with the Government’s Growth and Innovation Framework\(^4\) will also be given priority.

The fund, established in 2004/05, has three separate but interlinked objectives:

1. **Building international research collaborations:** enabling New Zealand researchers to respond to out-of-cycle opportunities to gain access to international research programmes and associated funding streams;

2. **Developing international funding partnerships:** establishing joint funding pools with other countries to facilitate research programmes of joint interest;

3. **Bringing world-leading researchers to New Zealand:** assisting world-leading researchers, working in key areas of strategic interest to New Zealand, to relocate to New Zealand and establish a research team.

**GENERAL NOTES**

**Closing Date and Time**
The closing date for the registration of intent is **5.00pm 7 April 2010 (NZST)**
The closing date for the full research proposal is **5.00pm 31 May 2010 (NZST)**

**Application Form**
A registration of intent form (ROI210_IIOF) should be used to advise the HRC of an intention to submit a full application.

The HRC form IIOF210_O2 should be used when submitting a full application.

Please download these forms from the HRC website (www.hrc.govt.nz) or call Suzanne Rolfe at the HRC on (+64) 9 303 5085 to receive a hardcopy. Registrations of intent should be emailed to srolfe@hrc.govt.nz.

Applications must be presented in English. They should be typed in single space, using a font equivalent to (and not smaller than) Times New Roman 12 point type. The text must also be printed single-sided on white A4 paper.

**NOTE:** This is an example of Times New Roman 12 point font.


\(^4\) [http://gif.med.govt.nz](http://gif.med.govt.nz)
Page limits must be strictly adhered to. The HRC reserves the right to not process any application that does not comply with stated page limits or font size restrictions, as it is an unfair burden on those reviewing your application.

Applications must be correctly collated. No collation of inserts or of extra copies can take place after receipt of the application. All copies should be single sided and stapled. Please do not staple the original application.

Applications and budgets must be submitted in **hard copy** format AND in **electronic format** on a floppy disc. Faxed or emailed research proposals will NOT be accepted.

**Copies of Applications Required**
Full applications (including the New Zealand budget and Singapore budget) submitted to the HRC should include the signed original, 9 additional hard copies, plus an electronic version on IBM compatible floppy disc or compact disc. No part or parts of an application can be returned to the applicant.

**Decision Advice**
No legal obligations will arise between the Health Research Council, A*STAR and applicants for this Request for Proposals until such time as the Health Research Council and A*STAR enters into a contract with the successful applicant/s.

**Privacy Provisions**
For New Zealand-based research and researchers only, 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.

**Mailing Address**
The full application form should be sent to the Health Research Council’s office as shown below:

- **Mailing Address:** Health Research Council of New Zealand
- **Attn:** Suzanne Rolfe
- **PO Box 5541, Wellesley Street**
- **AUCKLAND**

- **Physical/Courier Address:** Health Research Council of New Zealand
- **Attn:** Suzanne Rolfe
- **Level 3, 110 Stanley Street**
- **AUCKLAND**

The first named investigator will be sent confirmation of receipt of his/her application within ten working days from the closing date.
Enquiries
All enquiries related to this Request for Proposals should be directed in the first instance to:

Suzanne Rolfe, Project Coordinator, International Investment Opportunities
Ph: (+64) 9 303 5085
Fax: (+64) 9 377 9988
E-mail: srolfe@hrc.govt.nz

Or

Koh Hui Shan, Senior Officer, Translational Clinical Sciences & Extramural Group
Ph: (+65) 6826 6291
Fax: (+65) 6478 9581
A-STAR_NZHRC_Grant_Call@a-star.edu.sg