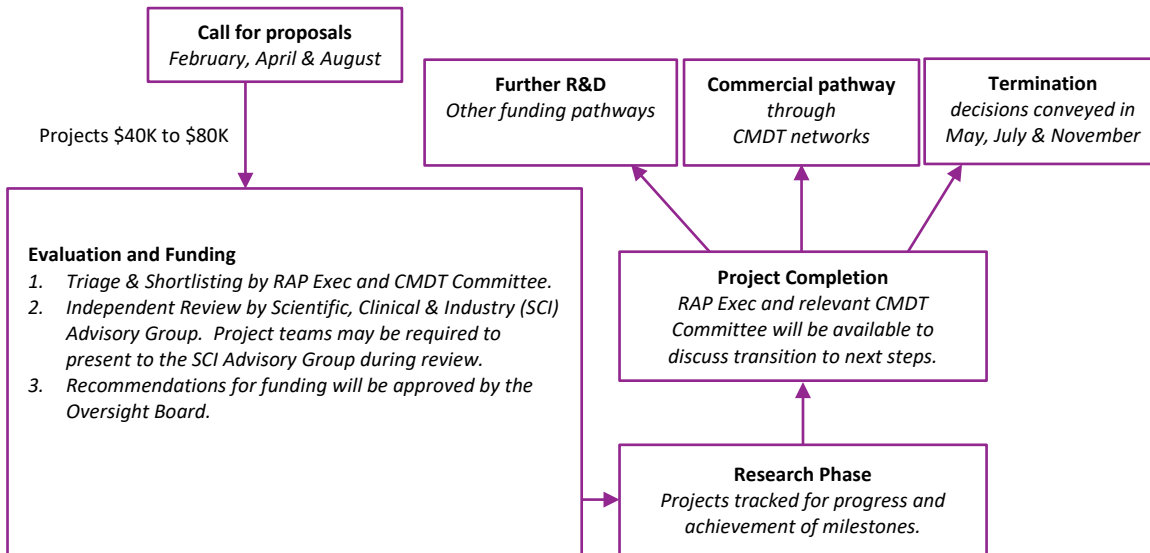


RAP STAGE II: Concept Seeding Fund Guidelines



1. Overview of Funding

This fund is part of the Research Acceleration Programme (RAP) of the Te Tītōki Mataora MedTech Research Translator initiative.

The RAP Stage II Concept Seeding Fund is a mechanism to identify concepts with the potential to become viable for clinical application and commercialisation. The RAP emphasises translational research, and Concept Seeding projects are expected to build on proven basic research to take it to the next stage of clinical validation and commercial translation.

Projects on medical and health technologies are welcome (see Section 5 – Other Considerations for further information).

Inter-organisational collaborative behaviour is a strong push; all projects are expected to involve researchers from at least two of the following organisation types: NZ universities, Te Whatu Ora, primary healthcare providers, independent research institutes (including CRIs), and/or Whānau Ora / Fonua Ola providers who also have a deep knowledge of the needs of their communities. One of the organisations involved must be from the CMDT partnership (see Section 3 – Project Eligibility Criteria).

The funding process is outlined above. There will be three calls for proposals (RfPs) annually. Projects of **up to \$80,000 (excluding GST)** are sought, typically for completion within a 12-month period from project start date. Funding should be used within New Zealand unless in exceptional circumstances.

Projects will be contracted with the Project Team Leader’s organisation. The project start date is flexible but must be within 3 months of contracting.

Funded projects will be tracked and assessed against milestones and outcomes by the RAP Executive Team over its duration. The RAP advocates a fast-fail philosophy to ensure that we have a continuing pipeline of fresh ideas.

Reporting will be required at the completion of the project.

2. Capability Building Modules

Alongside the RAP, Te Tītōki Mataora MedTech Research Translator also offers modules for capability development through its HealthTech Capability Programme, which projects can access for specific support. These are:

- **Mātauranga Māori:** supports relationship building with Māori communities and organisations, and capability building for Māori researchers and students.
- **Pacific Engagement:** connections to Pacific organisations and community, capability building of Pacific researchers and students, and workshops and programmes to understand Pacific health and wellbeing requirements.
- **Future Leaders:** connections to early- and mid-career researchers’ networks and activities.
- **Clinical Translation:** connections to clinicians interested in translational research and innovation, workshops on clinical trial design, and clinical validation of technology.
- **Commercial Translation:** access to seminars on technology translation and commercialisation, workshops to understand regulatory requirements and market validation, and specialist advice to guide early-stage commercialisation strategies.

3. Project Eligibility Criteria

Projects need to meet the following criteria to be eligible for funding:

- Projects must be a collaboration between at least two organisations. One of the organisations involved must be from the CMDT partnership comprising:
 - AUT
 - Massey University
 - University of Auckland
 - University of Canterbury
 - University of Otago
 - Victoria University of Wellington
 - Te Whatu Ora | Health NZ
- The other organisation(s) may be any NZ university, Te Whatu Ora, primary healthcare provider, independent research institute (including CRIs), and/or Whānau Ora / Fonua Ola providers who also have a deep knowledge of the needs of their communities. While collaborators can be located within the same city, we strongly encourage forming networks across New Zealand as well.
- The project must be led by researchers at any of the organisations listed above. Projects should bring together research, clinical/end-user, and technology transfer expertise. The inclusion of a Tech Transfer advisor (or equivalent) from one of the collaborating organisations in the project is advisable.
- International organisations may be included, but note that: 1) they do not contribute to the two-organisation requirement; 2) the benefit to NZ must be clear; and 3) their inclusion must be justifiable.
- The concept must have the potential to initiate a collaborative project that can grow into a substantial and more extensively funded project in medical technology including devices, software, diagnostics and tools, informatics, tissue engineering, imaging, and medical design.
- Commercial collaboration links are strongly encouraged but not mandatory. Funding does not cover the cost of company participation unless they are delivering a specific service to the project.
- Total funding of up to \$80K should cover project implementation, Te Tiriti Partnership & Māori Capability Outcomes, Pacific Partnership & Capability Outcomes, and any travel needs.

4. Scoring criteria

Criteria	Score Weighting
1. Multi-party collaboration with one being from the CMDT partnership	Pass/Fail

2. Introduction and science quality	25%
3. Clinical end-user need and engagement (including ethics/consent, if needed)	25%
4. Pathway to market and business engagement	20%
5. Project roles	Pass/Fail
6. Team capability building (development of project team expertise and/or student training)	5%
7. Te Tiriti Partnership and Māori Capability Outcomes and Pacific Partnership and Capability Outcomes (combined)	25%
8. Budget details	Pass/fail

5. Other Considerations

- Contracting will be with the Project Leader's organisation, with that organisation receiving and distributing any awarded funding.
- An investigator may be named Project Team Leader on one Concept Seeding proposal only per RfP.
- Early/Mid-Career Researchers (ECMRs) and Clinicians are encouraged to apply. It is recommended that all applications address the building of EMCR capability and clearly state the roles of ECRs within the team. Leadership roles for EMCRs should be clearly shown where possible. Doctoral and Masters' students are not eligible to lead a project and may not be named as AIs; they may however be part of the proposed research. Students may also be included in the meetings, workshops, and activities that the project will support.
- RAP generally does not fund PhD or Masters student thesis work because these types of projects are too long for a RAP project. However, exceptions may be made in the following circumstances:
 - RAP does not fund student stipends. RAP may fund a research assistant with expertise in the subject matter to work on the project, who may be a student.
 - RAP may fund Masters/PhD project work if the student has identified a translation opportunity part-way through their thesis, or has finished their thesis and identified a translation opportunity as part of their work. In this case, the student should be co-PI with their supervisor.
 - RAP may fund Masters/PhD project work that is part of a broader project, as long as translation is the focus of the RAP project and that the project fits within RAP timeframes.
 - Proposals that include a PhD student/candidate should be clear and transparent about their involvement.
- Clarity is needed on the value of a collaboration and the role of collaborators. The CVs of participants from multiple organisations are requested.
- A project aimed at saving healthcare costs is eligible. However, the proposal needs to address cost-saving arguments, how the team would position the technology for uptake by the healthcare system, and/or other relevant considerations on commercialisation.
- A project focused on animal health is eligible.
- A cosmeceutical project is eligible if it clearly provides a novel medical/health technology that offers a clear health/clinical benefit.
- Teams should advise whether alternate funding sources are either secured or available for the proposed project, and also whether the Concept Seeding funding will be used to leverage other grants. This information will not exclude applicants from receiving funding; rather it can show reviewers that teams have considered other prospects.
- RAP funding may NOT be used for purchases of major research equipment >\$5000.
 - Funds may be used for purchases of minor research equipment under \$5000.

- NOTE: This does not mean that major research equipment can be divided into separate components all less than \$5000 each.
- Funds may be used for equipment depreciation or rental cost covering project-specific usage of research facilities and equipment not covered under overheads.
- It is recognised that Māori have a right to equitable health and economic outcomes as Te Tiriti partners. Teams are asked to complete the section on Te Tiriti Partnerships & Māori Capability Outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to seek support from the Mātauranga Māori Module where needed, to develop their applications in advance of their proposal submissions.
- An outcome measure of the RAP focuses on improved health and economic outcomes for Pacific communities. Teams are required to fill in the Pacific Partnership & Capability Outcomes section.
- A structured team and project plan showing the team member responsible for each task should be included.

6. Call for concepts and expectations from project teams

The funding process is outlined on page 1 of these guidelines. There will be three calls for proposals (RfPs) in 2025, (see table below). Successful proposals will be awarded in May, July, and November respectively.

Proposals are at maximum 2 pages outlining the project, the team, and addressing the evaluation criteria in Section 2, with an additional 600 words to address Te Tiriti Partnership & Māori Capability Outcomes, and 200 words to address Pacific Partnership & Capability Outcomes.

Travel can be included if the requirement is explained and justified. Travel should support project team interaction if members are in different cities, or to investigate prospective commercial and/or clinical collaborators.

Concept Seeding funding can be used to position researchers into a new Smart Idea application or support strengthening the concept of proposals that were unsuccessful. In this case, the full Smart Idea proposal will be requested as part of the submission documentation.

Teams will be strongly encouraged to include design and regulatory considerations, company involvement, and end-user feedback into their work within the first six months of the project commencing, where relevant. The RAP Executive Team can help initiate a market feasibility study to position and validate the opportunity where possible.

2025 RfPs

There will be three RAP Stage II rounds held in 2025. All proposals should be submitted to medtechresearchnetwork@auckland.ac.nz by the following deadlines via the appropriate channels as required by the Project Leader's organisation. Teams should ensure they adhere to their organisation's funding application processes to avoid any delays. Proposals received after the deadline will not be accepted for consideration in that round.

Proposals must be submitted by:	To be considered in:
12pm Monday 31st March 2025	Round 1, May 2025
May 2025 TBC – proposals for pitching at Research Exchange, HealthTech Week 2025	Round 2, July 2025
12pm Monday 29th September 2025	Round 3, November 2025

7. Evaluation and Funding

The RAP Executive Team, together with members of the CMDT Committee, will assess whether proposals meet the assessment criteria and develop a shortlist of fundable proposals. The Scientific, Clinical & Industry (SCI) Advisory Group will evaluate this shortlist of proposals and recommend a final list of projects for funding. The RAP Executive Team will then present the final list to the Oversight Board for funding approval (see also diagram on page 1).

Conflicts of interest arising will be handled appropriately and, if required, resolved by the RAP Co-Leads.

8. Project Completion

Projects are expected to be completed by the contracted end date. Projects can be discontinued earlier if they are not meeting milestones. For projects that are progressing well, Project Team Leaders can apply for other funding, including the RAP Stage III Acceleration Fund, to further the concept development or to take a commercial pathway.

Upon completion, project teams must provide:

1. A one-page report outlining the status of the outcomes of the Concept Seeding Project, highlighting achievements and next steps to take the project forward; and
2. A short summary (300-500 words) with photos/images of the team, technology, and/or prototypes for Te Titoki Mataora MedTech Research Translator social media posting or a lead for a feature in the MedTech Bites newsletter.

This information will be used for annual reporting and communications to showcase Te Titoki Mataora MedTech Research Translator. The progress of the collaboration will be tracked over the life of the initiative.

Research groups should expect to participate in Te Titoki Mataora showcases and TIKI Tours to promote new developments in the medtech sector.

The funding source (Te Titoki Mataora MedTech Research Translator) should be acknowledged in presentations and any media or formal communications.

Should a spinout company result from a funded project, progress of the company will be tracked to show the outcomes of RAP funding.

9. Translate to CMDT

The CMDT will assist by providing industry and clinical networks for projects going through the commercial route as needed. This can include partnerships with the relevant technology transfer offices and Commercialisation Partners Networks (KiwiNet and Return on Science), as well as investigate other forms of support including funding through Angel investment, Technology Incubators, and Callaghan Innovation's HealthTech Activator and Business Funds.

10. Contact Information

All queries can be directed to medtechresearchnetwork@auckland.ac.nz.