

Do you have an innovative idea that can improve outcomes in primary health care?

Idea to Impact: Research in Primary Care Grants Expressions of Interest (EOI) Guidelines

The Primary Care Research Unit (PCRU) is a partnership between the Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network (HNECC PHN) and Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI). The PCRU is inviting primary care professionals across our region to pitch their ideas for innovative research in primary health care. This opportunity aims to support your research project journey, anywhere from idea to implementation, and will guide successful participants through the research process. The intention is that support of your research might lead to tangible impact in primary care settings.

Innovative research in primary care settings could include:

- Piloting of or testing a new idea.
- Implementation of recent research outcomes.
- Evaluation of a research implementation.

This EOI is seeking short video submissions from primary care professionals in the Hunter, New England, Manning and Central Coast regions, pitching their innovative research project ideas for primary health care.

Two pitch events will be held:

- New England region: 3 November 2026
- Hunter, Central Coast and Manning region: 10 November 2026

At each event, up to four (4) short listed applicants will be invited to present their idea in person at a live pitch event and compete for:

- **One (1) Grant of up to \$25,000 (ex GST)** to support their research activity.
- **12 months of advice and support from the PCRU.**

How it will work

- EOIs (submitted as a short 3-minute video submission – see Guidelines) will be accepted **for 4 weeks between Monday 17th of August to Friday 11th of September 2026.**
- EOIs will undergo a thorough assessment process (Assessment criteria and weighting outlined in the Guidelines - Appendix 1) with an assessment panel to be chaired by the HMRI Director or nominee, and comprising representatives from health, research and the Primary Care Research Unit.
- Up to four (4) EOIs will be shortlisted per region
 - 4 for the New England region
 - 4 for the Hunter, Central Coast and Manning regions

- All shortlisted pitches (finalists) will present their 10-minute pitches in person at the live pitch event in the selected region:
 - o New England region - **Tamworth 3rd November 2026** at University of Newcastle Tamworth Education Centre; Or
 - o Hunter, Central Coast and Manning regions – **Newcastle 10th November 2026** at HMRI, New Lambton Heights

Note: Travel and accommodation will not be covered for attendance at these events and will be at the own cost of those attending to pitch.

Never pitched before? The Primary Care Research Unit will assist the short-listed applicants to prepare their idea for the pitch event to ensure they have the best chance possible of securing the audience vote.

The pitch events will be hosted by the Primary Care Research Unit. Each event will include an assessment panel comprising research and health experts, as well as a live audience, consisting of community members and key research and health stakeholders.

- The audience will hear all (up to four (4)) pitches and then vote for their favourite pitch.
- The grant fund recipients of each event will be decided based on the assessment panel vote, combined with the total audience vote.
- The successful applicant for each event will receive \$25,000 ex GST in funding (split payments over the 12-month duration of the program) to support the development of their idea. In addition to funding, recipients will receive support from the Primary Care Research Unit (PCRU), including guidance on project development, assistance with ethics applications, support with project planning, access to relevant research services and expertise, and regular connections with PCRU staff and researchers. Recipients must agree to participate in bi-monthly meetings with the PCRU to monitor progress, receive advice, and support the successful delivery of their project.

Please note:

- Pitch Night funding is a one-off grant and is not ongoing. It is designed to provide seed funding to allow practicing health professionals the opportunity to test and trial innovative research in a primary care setting.
- Failure to attend and present (pitch) in person at the Pitch Night event will result in a forfeit of the opportunity and no funding will be paid.
- Payment of the grant will be split and paid upon meeting reporting requirements. Applicants should consider their ability to carry out the project based on receiving split payments of \$20,000 ex GST at project commencement and \$5,000 ex GST after successful reporting at the project completion.

Eligibility Criteria

EOI submissions must meet the following criteria:

1. Applicants must be a practicing primary health care professional which includes:
 - General Practitioners (GPs)
 - Allied health clinicians
 - GP practice managers
 - Primary care nurses and midwives
 - Pharmacists.
2. Applicants must be in and providing primary health care services in the following regions:
 - **Hunter** is defined as LGAs inclusive of Greater Newcastle and Lower Hunter: Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland, Cessnock and Dungog.
 - **Central Coast**: defined as all LGAs within the Central Coast.
 - **Manning**: Taree LGA, Gloucester LGA, and Forster-Tuncurry LGA
 - **New England**: defined as LGAs inclusive of Peel, Mehi and Tablelands: Tamworth, Gunnedah, Walcha and Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Narrabri and Gwydir, Inverell, Tenterfield, Uralla, Armidale and Glen Innes.
- Research must be completely independent. The PCRU, HNECC PHN or HMRI are not responsible for supplying resources, contacts or facilities for the proposed research projects.
- If successful in the EOI, shortlisted applicants must participate in all activities related to Pitch Night.

Eligibility FAQs

Who can apply?

This EOI is open to all practicing primary health care professionals currently providing primary health care services in the New England, Hunter, Manning, Central Coast regions of NSW.

Do I need a fully developed project to be eligible?

No. Your idea should be well thought out, but it doesn't need to be fully developed. The program is designed to help refine and advance promising projects.

Can I apply if I was a finalist at the 2025 Idea to Impact pitch events?

No. The 2025 finalists who presented their pitches to an audience are ineligible to apply, including finalists that received grant funding. However, 2025 applicants who were not named finalists are eligible to apply to this year's scheme.

Can I apply if I have already received funding for this research project?

Maybe. This will be assessed case by case, but you must demonstrate how you see the project developing your idea beyond existing funding sources.

What timeframe should my project be delivered within?

The project must be able to be implemented within the 12-month funding and support period (funding period begins once the grant agreement is executed and signed – expected to be November 2026 to December 2027). Throughout the 12-month funding period, grant fund recipients are expected to

attend bi-monthly meetings with the PCRU and work towards completing a component of their research in the year of implementation.

What cannot be funded?

1. Any activity not carried out in the funding period (funding period is once the grant agreement is executed and signed in November 2026 – December 2027, or retrospective costs).
2. Applications from those who are not primary care providers including universities and their staff, students, research organisations, hospitals, Local Health Districts, non-primary care health providers (including specialists).
3. Capital items, assets and works and costs not directly associated with the research.
4. Activities that include advocacy campaigns, religious or political campaigns, crisis appeals, overseas aid, or health research outside of that which is approved.
5. Activities that do not utilise qualified staff, contractors, or partners.
6. Activities not being undertaken in the LGAs as approved.
7. Activities deemed business as usual for the applicant.
8. Activities deemed not eligible by HNECC PHN or HMRI, judged to not meet the selection criteria.
9. Activities that are primarily service delivery or expansion of existing services and not research related.

How to apply

Applications open **Monday, 17th August 2026** and close **Friday, 11th September 2026** through the PHN Grants Portal - Smarty Grants.

1. The PHN is facilitating the application submissions via their grants portal SmartyGrants and welcomes applications from primary care professionals.
2. Applicants must submit an innovative research idea with an indicative budget utilising the \$25,000 ex GST. Applications are accepted from any applicant that meets the eligibility criteria.
3. Applications are to include a VIDEO of maximum of 3 minutes (**maximum size 25 mb**) outlining their idea. All activities must relate to the research project and not routine service delivery. Applicants should show consideration of workforce availability constraints within the grant timeframe.
4. Up to four (4) applications in the combined Hunter, Central Coast and Manning region, and up to four (4) applications in the New England region will be shortlisted and invited to pitch. You may submit a separate application for each region (if meeting the criteria) but only one application across both regions, can be successful.
5. One applicant/pitch will be voted to receive \$25,000 of grant funding split over the funding period to implement their research. Pitch Night funding is not ongoing, and the research must be delivered within 12 months and no later than 31st December 2027.
6. A final report on your research must be provided to the PCRU by 31st December 2027. This report will be linked to a final payment of funds.

Other things to consider:

Ethics- If ethics approval is required, please include this in your proposed timeline within the EOI. The Primary Care Research Unit (PCRU) will provide support throughout the ethics process to help facilitate timely approval and minimise impacts on timelines.

Intellectual Property (IP) - If you are supported, the PCRU will expect to be acknowledged but will not own the IP. Confidentiality of ideas will be safeguarded at Pitch Events with audience members required to acknowledge this requirement.

Voting impartiality – the audience will be monitored to ensure impartiality. In the event of a tie, a panel of subject matter experts will make the final vote.

Taxation implications – Applicants should **seek professional financial advice** about any tax implications before applying.

Payments will be made directly to the bank account of the applicant ABN holder or, for applicants without an ABN, to the applicant named on the ATO Statement by Supplier Form (see below). Payments will not be made to any third party, including under auspice arrangements. Applicants who do not hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) must complete the ATO Statement by Supplier form which will be provided in the application form.

Please undertake your own due diligence in relation to this matter and your specific circumstances, prior to submitting an application.

Questions or enquiries

If you have any questions regarding the selection criteria or eligibility requirements, please contact Lisa Callipari on lcallipari@thephn.com.au

If your question relates to the Grant application platform, Smarty Grants, please contact, Marisa Wilson, grants@thephn.com.au

Terms and Conditions

The following terms and conditions will apply to all successful applicants:

- Applicants must have a valid ABN number or complete an ATO Statement by Supplier Form if they are not an ABN holder.
- Applicants may submit more than 1 application but only 1 will be short listed across all regions.
- Partnerships and collaborations are highly encouraged but only one lead applicant is permitted.
- Applications that do not meet the criteria will not be eligible.
- Funding will be paid to the applicant or paid to the organisation as per their agreement and will include reporting requirements linked to split payments.
- Payments will be made as a Recipient Created Tax Invoice.
- All conflicts of interest are to be declared.
- Previous PHN contracted providers are eligible only if they have fully complied with any previous PHN funding contract performance and commitments including reporting and acquittal requirements.

- The PHN reserves the right to extend the EOI opening timeframe.
- Applicants may be contacted to discuss their eligibility and ability to meet the selection criteria. This will constitute part of the assessment.
- Successful applicants will be required to sign a HNECC PHN agreement outlining payments and milestones, terms and conditions and evidence of reporting required at each stage.
- A copy of relevant insurances will be required if successful, dependent on the nature of the activity or appropriate insurance coverage for the type of activities they will be undertaking.
- If activities involve working with those under 18 years of age, a valid Working with Children's Check will be required.
- All funds will be dispersed through the Pitch Events. No further funding is available including at the end of the research period.

Appendix 1 - Assessment Guidelines

Video Assessment Process

If all eligibility criteria has been met, Expressions of Interest (EOIs) should be made through a short **3-minute video pitch**, preferably filmed using a phone.

In the video, applicants will need to:

1. Introduce themselves and their idea,
2. Describe the nature and size of the problem,
3. Highlight the innovative features of the idea,
4. Describe its potential impact,
5. Explain your vision for change, and
6. Explain how the funds will be used.

Further detail regarding each assessment criteria is outlined in the following pages.

Following the closure of applications, a panel will assess all EOI video pitches against the assessment criteria. The assessment panel will be chaired by the HMRI Director or nominee, with a review panel comprising representatives from the industry and members of the Primary Health Care Improvement Unit.

Please note: It is essential that the application is easy to follow and spoken in plain language. Avoid jargon and acronyms as much as possible. Ensure any complex concepts are well defined or explained.

Notification of outcome

Applicants will be notified by email as soon as practicable after the assessment process as to whether their application has been shortlisted or is unsuccessful.

From the submissions received, up to 4 applicants (pitches) from each region will be selected to present their ideas in November 2026. Following each live pitch event, through audience and panel voting, one finalist per region will receive grant funding upon execution of their grant agreement and receive tailored support to further develop and advance their idea, connect with relevant experts and collaborators, and work toward achieving significant health system impact.

Assessment Criteria

Introduction (10%)

What is the name of your research idea? (Not scored)

Introduce yourself and your research idea.

Score	Performance Indicator	Category Descriptors
7	Outstanding	The introduction is clear, immediately engaging, and provides a strong overview of the applicant and their idea.
6	Excellent	The introduction is clear and provides a good overview of the applicant and their idea.
5	Very Good	The introduction is clear but may lack some engagement or detail.
4	Good	The introduction is satisfactory but lacks engagement or detail.
3	Fair	The introduction is somewhat clear but lacks engagement and detail.
2	Marginal	The introduction is unclear and lacks engagement and detail.
1	Poor	The introduction is not clear and does not provide an overview of the applicant or their idea.

Describe the Size of the Problem (20%)

How significant is the problem your idea addresses?

Can you quantify or describe the scope of the issue (e.g., disease burden, cost to the health system)?

Score	Performance Indicator	Category Descriptors
7	Outstanding	The problem is critical, well-defined, and highly impactful, with clear data and evidence.
6	Excellent	The problem is significant and well-supported with data; strong potential for impact.
5	Very Good	The problem is well-articulated but may need further evidence; impact is clear but needs more refinement.
4	Good	Addresses an important problem but lacks strong quantification or clear steps for impact.
3	Fair	The problem is relevant but not clearly defined; impact is uncertain.
2	Marginal	Limited evidence of significance or relevance; unclear impact.
1	Poor	The problem is poorly defined, with no clear pathway to meaningful impact

Explain the Novelty of the Idea (30%)

Describe why you chose this research direction, how it is innovative, and what is new about this idea.

Have you researched your idea (e.g., literature review, competitor analysis)? What did you find?

Score	Performance Indicator	Category Descriptors
7	Outstanding	The idea is groundbreaking, demonstrating exceptional originality and innovation, supported by strong validation.
6	Excellent	Highly innovative idea with strong differentiation from existing solutions, validated with research.
5	Very Good	Novel concept, though similar efforts exist; validation is present but not comprehensive.
4	Good	Some originality but potential overlap with existing solutions; limited validation.
3	Fair	Idea shows only modest innovation and lacks differentiation; minimal research conducted.
2	Marginal	Not particularly novel, with similar approaches widely in use; little research or validation.
1	Poor	The idea is not innovative and lacks validation or differentiation.

Describe the Impact and Your Vision for Change (30%)

What will change as a result of your research project? Can you explain how it could benefit the community and the health system in the short and long term? Can you explain how you will measure impact?

Score	Performance Indicator	Category Descriptors
7	Outstanding	The vision is compelling, well-articulated, and demonstrates a strong case for change. Impact measurement is clearly articulated and viable.
6	Excellent	The vision is clear and demonstrates a good case for change. Impact measurement is articulated.
5	Very Good	The vision is clear but may lack some detail or compelling elements. Impact measurement has been considered.
4	Good	The vision is satisfactory but lacks detail or compelling elements. Impact measurement is present but not clearly articulated.
3	Fair	The vision is somewhat clear but lacks detail and compelling elements. Impact measurement is not clearly stated.
2	Marginal	The vision is unclear and lacks detail and compelling elements. Impact measurement is not evident.

1	Poor	The vision is not clear and does not demonstrate any change. Impact measurement is absent.
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Explain how the funds will be used (10%)

What will the funding enable you to do with this idea? Do you have other funding? What will be done in terms of evaluation/research? Outline how the \$25k will be used in terms of costs (staff time, materials, equipment, data analysis etc)

Score	Performance Indicator	Category Descriptors
7	Outstanding	Funding use is exceptionally clear, well justified, and strongly supports project delivery including a clear outline of costs relating to evaluation/research.
6	Excellent	Funding use is clear, justified, and supports project delivery including an outline of costs relating to evaluation/research.
5	Very Good	Funding use is outlined but lacks project delivery detail including an outline of costs relating to evaluation/research.
4	Good	Funding use is satisfactory but lacks project delivery detail including an outline of costs relating to evaluation/research.
3	Fair	Funding use is somewhat clear but lacks project delivery detail including an outline of costs relating to evaluation/research.
2	Marginal	Funding use is unclear and lacks project delivery detail including an outline of costs relating to evaluation/research.
1	Poor	Funding use is not clear and lacks project delivery detail including an outline of costs relating to evaluation/research.