BRAGATO RESEARCH INSTITUTE
RANGAHAU KAREPE, WĀINA O AOTEAROA

Grower Trials Programme – 2025-26

AIM

The Grower Trial (GT) initiative is a collaborative, grassroots research programme designed to support grape growers and viticulturists in conducting their own vineyard trials. It was launched in response to a need for research that directly addresses practical challenges faced in the field.

The facilitation of grower trials forms a key theme of the Knowledge Transfer (KT) pillar within BRI's research strategy. It aims to place growers and viticulturists at the centre of the research process, focusing on answering real-world, applied research problems.

OBJECTIVES

- **Innovation** – Test new ideas and practices in a real-life setting
- **Adoption and practice change** – Initiate uptake of research and best practice to realise economic impact
- **Knowledge sharing** – Increase peer-to-peer learning opportunities and develop a network of engaged viticulturists, growers and partners
- **Responsiveness** – Access to funds to answer immediate research trial questions
- **Leverage** – Access to BRI capability to facilitate applied and practical industry outcomes

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The GT initiative sits within the BRI Knowledge Transfer & Engagement function and is managed by the Knowledge Transfer & Engagement Leader.

The programme structure (Figure 1) is designed to streamline the application and execution process for members.

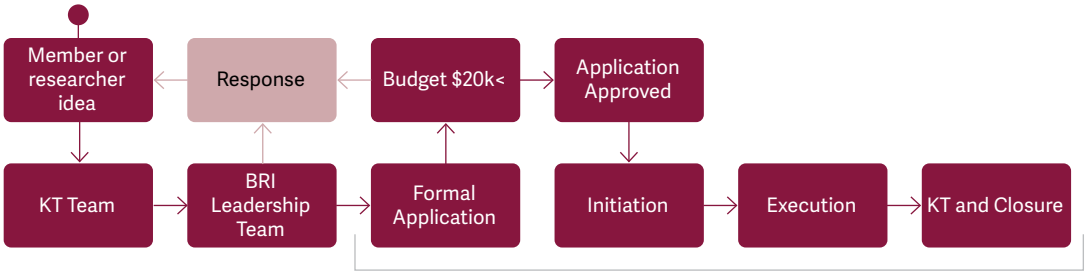

Figure 1. Flow diagram of project structure

What BRI will contribute:

- Project planning and initiation
- Development of trial and trial design
- Expertise
- Reporting and KT function
- Funding (up to $20,000)

What industry partners contribute:

- Project execution and data collection
- Monitoring
- Facilitating and disseminating KT across the broader industry

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The process for funding of projects follows the guiding principles:

- Projects must be aligned with one or more of the seven BRI key Priority Outcomes (Appendix II).
- Projects will be of benefit to the wider industry at both a national and/or regional level.
- Projects are not commercially sensitive; results will be communicated through BRI and NZW communication channels.
- Industry partners will be involved in the process, including development, trial design, data collection and communication/extension.
- Projects should give immediate impact and be available for uptake.

EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES

Examples of activities that could be funded are in Table 1. These activities would align with the guiding principle of the programme and be clearly articulated within the milestones of each project.

Task	Example
Project requires purchase of equipment or consumables to execute trial	Flowering non-crop seed is purchased to test for beneficial parasitoid attraction.
External sample analysis	Soil sample analysis is required to compare treatments and controls.
Purchase of equipment that is below the stipulated Capex limit	A leaf wetness sensor is purchased and used to determine seasonal botrytis risk.
Project requires expertise not held by either BRI or project participants	A consultant is contracted to fill a knowledge gap around mechanised thinning, to team members in a thinning trial.
Data collection	Additional support needed by viticulture technician to capture critical data collection.
Data analysis	BRI undertakes data analysis using in-house capability.
Specialist equipment is required	A machine harvester is hired for mechanical shaking trials to compare botryticide removal programme.

Table 1. Examples of task and operational expenditure

What would not be funded:

- Capex expenditure above $2,500 (Capex purchases remain the property of BRI)
- Projects exceeding $20,000
- Payments to individual wine companies
- Payments to cover staff labour costs of industry partners
- Multiyear trials

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR GROWER TRIALS

BRI can facilitate communication between participants, extensionists, consultants, specialists and researchers. BRI also has capabilities within the team to support GT, including:

- Viticulture specialists
- Data analyst – for statistical analysis and trial design
- Soil specialists
- Winemaking specialists
- Communications channels (EDM, CRM, social media, workshops and training)

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The aim of GT is to engage directly with industry, pairing science with growers, and engaging with a wide range of members, leveraging peer-to-peer learning opportunities. As an industry partner in projects, involvement would include facilitating workshops, grower days and aiding in the communication of findings.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

To get involved or if you have further enquiries, contact Programme Lead:

Braden Crosby, BRI Knowledge Transfer & Engagement Leader

braden.crosby@bri.co.nz

APPENDIX I: BRI GROWER TRIALS INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

Project Title:	
Project Objectives	1:
	2:
Research Organisation	

Project Participants

Name	Position	Roles and Responsibilities

Nominated Representative from Industry Partner *(contact person/s)*

Name:
Mobile Number:
Email Address:
BRI liaison:

Estimated Total Project Cost (ex GST) (including BRI/co-funding/in-kind):
N.B. A STOP / GO point will be standard at the end of Year 1

Funding Source *(Name source/s)*		**Budget Requested**	**Year 1 Jul25 - Jun26** *(Enter dollar amount $)*
BRI			
Estimated Start Date:		**Estimated End Date:**	

Problem Statement: *What is the challenge or problem this research is trying to solve? (75 words)*

Background: *(Give the context of the research – where has this idea come from and how does it link to the strategic alignment, as well as previous research. This should include a challenge or problem statement; the knowledge gap being addressed and why it is important.) (500-word limit)*

Science Merit/Methodology: *(Include trial design, methodology and analysis and include the outputs e.g. a new protocol or method, a report, PowerPoint or webinar.) (500-word limit)*

Research Outcomes: *(An outcome is the change that results from applying the research findings - for example, less spray inputs as a result of new insights. The outcomes should relate closely to the objectives listed on page 1. Tell us the importance of the issue, what difference your project will make. Tell us how your project will help to solve the issue and of any anticipated or likely implications. This is seen as an important component of the proposal and needs to show the reader your vision of what the research will achieve and when, even if the current proposal may not achieve this vision. We need to know it is anticipated that there will be future funding needed to realise the vision.) (500-word limit)*

Knowledge Transfer and Adoption: *(Reports, popular articles, presentations, papers etc. How the information will be best up taken by the industry.) (500-word limit)*

Project Milestones: *(Outline the milestones and proposed delivery date for each milestone. Please add the go/no go points for the project where appropriate.)*

	Description:	Provider	Cost ($)	Delivery date:
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

Project Stop/Go Points: *(Outline what triggers a stop/go points for the project where appropriate.)*

	Description:	Date:
1.		
2.		

What is the overall timeframe of the research to produce the stated outcomes? *(i.e. Is this Part 1 of a number of research proposals or will the outcome be achieved within the current proposal?)*

Public Statement: *Please provide a public statement summarising the program. (100-word limit)*
The public statement for successful proposals will be posted on the BRI and NZW websites and may be used in other public communications.

APPENDIX II: BRI PRIORITY OUTCOMES

Outcome	Definition
Enhanced plant genetic resilience against environmental challenges	Research to develop and select premium vines optimised for future growing conditions. This includes reduced disease and frost susceptibility, improved water use efficiency, and iconic typicity under future climate conditions. It also includes lowering vulnerability to biosecurity threats.
Improved vine productivity and grape quality	Research to ensure New Zealand vineyards are highly productive and efficient while maintaining premium grape quality for our wines. This includes efforts to reduce seasonal variation, disassociate relationships between vineyard yield and wine quality, and improve vineyard longevity.
Advanced vineyard efficiency and agritech adoption	Developing innovative growing systems to improve vineyard profitability and productivity while maintaining or improving wine quality. Where there is still a research knowledge gap to address, this could mean trialing, testing, and validating new technology and machinery (start-ups or new-to-wine) to improve vineyard management effectiveness and efficiency .
Reduced chemical inputs and adoption of biological control solutions	Research that allows winegrowers to achieve sustainability targets by reducing spray applications, while maintaining productivity and quality. This includes vines with enhanced pathogen tolerance, targeted and sustainable novel technologies, systems and models for more efficient disease management, and biological control solutions.
Improved soil health & protecting water quality and supply	Research that delivers management tools to help improve soil organic matter, fertility, water holding capacity and biodiversity. Research that identifies techniques to manage water use more effectively in vineyards and wineries while protecting existing water resources and quality.
Improved grape and wine circularity	Research that adds value to winery and/or vineyard waste streams through reduction of waste and/or the creation of secondary products. Research supporting the Roadmap to Net Zero, e.g. reduction of carbon footprint, or the development of new and improved sustainable packaging solutions.
New innovative wine products	Research that aims to provide winemakers with new winemaking additives, innovative techniques and new technology that will improve wine quality, and/or winery productivity, and retain wine quality through to the consumer. This could encompass research that supports the development of new product streams such as NOLO and DRV, or bulk shipment improvements.