

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How is the HRC working with MBIE and the Ministry of Health to set national priorities for health research?

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), the Ministry of Health, and the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) have each been tasked with specific actions as part of the implementation of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy (NZHRS). Representatives of each of the three agencies formed a Working Group in October 2017, overseen by a Steering Group, comprising senior officials from MBIE, the Ministry of Health, the HRC, Callaghan Innovation, District Health Boards, and Universities NZ. MBIE and the Ministry of Health will also receive high-level advice from an External Advisory Group, which will meet twice a year, and had its inaugural meeting in February 2019.

The HRC – as the Government’s primary funder of health research – is responsible for Action One, to set national priorities for health research. The HRC developed the priority-setting process based on a review of methods used by other countries and incorporating feedback from a range of interested stakeholders. The proposed process was first presented in outline to the NZHRS Working and Steering Groups in October 2017, to gain initial feedback, and has been refined with their input over the past 6 months. The HRC also sought advice from the HRC Council, the HRC’s Māori Health Committee and Joint Research Committees, and other interested stakeholders who responded to the open public consultation. The HRC received final approval for the process from the NZHRS Steering Group on 17 April 2018.

### 2. How will priority-setting relate to other elements of the Strategy?

The [New Zealand Health Research Strategy \(2017–27\)](#) identifies four strategic priorities:

1. Invest in excellent health research that addresses the health needs of all New Zealanders;
2. Create a vibrant research environment in the health sector;
3. Build and strengthen pathways for translating research findings into policy and practice; and
4. Advance innovative ideas and commercial opportunities.

Each of the four strategic priorities has a set of underpinning actions, and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), the Ministry of Health, and the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) have each been tasked with implementation of specific actions. Representatives of each of the three agencies formed a Working Group in October 2017, to ensure alignment between the Actions. Progress in implementing the other Actions is necessary to ensure that the new priorities can be taken up by researchers. For example, if a new priority were to be identified for research on delivery of health or healthcare services, health promotion, prevention of disease or injury prevention, Actions 5 and 6 would enable the health sector to respond. Similarly, if data science or genomics were to be identified as a priority for New Zealand, it would be important to have appropriate support for data infrastructure and governance, as per Action 8.

### 3. How can people have their say on the national priorities for health research?

The New Zealand Health Research Strategy specifies that the process for prioritising investments should be inclusive. Consultation will be primarily online via the HRC's website, which should allow most people to review the draft Strategic Investment Areas (SIAs) when they are first published online in early September 2018. Anyone who is interested will have 6 weeks to review and suggest any changes to the SIAs. They'll also be asked to submit research questions or Themes on the issues that matter to them. The HRC will also be arranging face-to-face meetings, so please check the website for opportunities to have a say. You could also sign up to the HRC's 'Update' newsletter at <http://hrc.govt.nz/newsletter-signup>

The detailed Themes which emerge from consultation in mid-2018, will be refined by experts in NZ and overseas. Anyone interested will have another opportunity in 2019 to provide comment on the final priorities, consisting of broad Strategic Areas with detailed research Themes, before they are approved and announced by the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation and Minister of Health.

### 4. How will healthcare consumers have input into the priorities?

The end-users of health research include patients and other people who interact with health services. All healthcare consumers and members of the public will be able to review the draft Strategic Investment Areas (SIAs) and suggest more specific Themes for research during an open, online consultation in September 2018. They'll have 6 weeks to review and give input on the issues that matter to them. The HRC will also be arranging face-to-face meetings and will be seeking input from healthcare consumers. The HRC is also developing a strategy to ensure appropriate engagement with other groups such as people from rural areas, clinicians, health-sector agencies, philanthropic bodies, Pacific peoples, community organisations, disabled people, and government agencies.

Anyone interested will have another opportunity to provide comment on the final SIAs and Themes in 2019, before they are approved and announced by the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation and Minister of Health.

### 5. How will rural communities have input into the priorities?

The end-users of health research include people who live in both urban and rural areas. Consultation will be primarily online, which should allow most people to review the draft SIAs in September 2018. The HRC will also be arranging face-to-face meetings at various locations throughout New Zealand.

Anyone interested will have another opportunity to provide comment on the final SIAs and Themes in 2019, before they are approved and announced by the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation and Minister of Health.

## 6. How is the HRC partnering with Māori to set national priorities for health research?

One of the guiding principles of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy is partnership with Māori to achieve the Strategy's overall vision: to increase the impact of government investments in health research and improve the health and wellbeing of all New Zealanders. The Strategy aims to uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi; promote rangatiratanga; ensure research contributes to health and wellbeing for Māori, and to the aim of equity for Māori; ensure active engagement with Māori stakeholders (iwi, hapu, whanau, and community); and harness the potential of Māori knowledge to deliver innovations and gains in health and social wellbeing for Māori; and reinforce the value and importance of Mātauranga Māori. One of the key performance indicators for the Strategy will be the amount and breadth of health research by and for Māori to reduce inequities and improve health outcomes for Māori people.

The Strategy asks the HRC to set priorities for Māori health research to seize opportunities for and address the challenges to Māori health and wellbeing, contribute to health equity for Māori, and harness the innovation potential of Māori health knowledge, systems and processes. The HRC is asked to uphold the principles of government policies such as *He Korowai Oranga*, *Vision Mātauranga*, and the *New Zealand Health Strategy*. In terms of the inclusive process, the Strategy notes that "Kaupapa Māori research methodologies provide some good-practice examples" of how to engage closely and continuously with consumers and communities, and therefore to ensure that the priorities "respond to the health needs and experiences of all New Zealanders".

The HRC will continue to work closely with its Māori Health Committee throughout the process for setting priorities. Information on the Committee can be found here: <http://www.hrc.govt.nz/about-us/committees>

The HRC is seeking advice on the best ways to gather Maori input into the priorities, and will arrange at least one focus group specifically for Māori.

## 7. What is the role of the Development Group in setting health research priorities?

The Development Group is an independent group which will be asked to use available evidence to develop the first draft of broad Strategic Investment Areas (SIAs) which will then go out for public input. The Development Group will make recommendations to the Steering Group for the NZ Health Research Strategy, with justification based on the evidence.

Once feedback from key stakeholders and the public has been gathered via consultation, the Development Group will review this information to refine the SIAs and develop more specific research Themes. The Development Group will be able to call on additional subject-matter experts to give advice on specific questions and to form subgroups to define and refine the priorities at the level of Themes.

The Development Group will uphold the Guiding Principles of the NZ Health Research Strategy, which are research excellence, transparency, partnership with Māori, and collaboration for impact. The Group will operate in accordance with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

This Development Group will be convened for a first meeting on 6–7 June 2018. The Development Group will review a large amount of data on NZ's current and future health research landscape. Members will need to have sufficient time and capacity to engage throughout the process of information gathering, consultation, and development of priorities. Development Group members will be required to declare and manage any potential conflicts of interest, in conjunction with the NZHRS Steering Group. The Terms of Reference for the group are available [here](#).

## **8. Who will be in the Development Group, and how will members be selected?**

The Steering Group has collected nominations for the Development Group, and is currently working towards selection of members with the appropriate expertise and skills. Once the Development Group has been convened, the names and biographies of the members will be published on the HRC's website.

Everyone in the Development Group will need to have mana and knowledge to contribute to the process. They will need to be strategic thinkers, able to look across the health research system, to focus on future needs and generations, and to work collegially to achieve the best outcome for New Zealand. To be able to make effective decisions, the size of the group will be limited to a maximum of 13 members. To ensure diverse representation, each member will need to be respected in multiple fields; for example, the healthcare, research, tertiary education, Māori, Pacific, disability, science and innovation, consumer, not-for-profit, government, and commercial sectors. The Development Group will have at least one Māori Co-Chair and at least one Pacific member. Together the members should have a good understanding of the different disciplines of health research. The Development Group will be able to call on additional subject-matter experts to give advice on specific questions and to form subgroups to define and refine the priorities at the level of Themes.

## **9. How will the Strategic Investment Areas relate to other existing priorities?**

The New Zealand Health Research Strategy envisages that the priorities identified through the HRC's process will guide Government-funded, mission-led research such as the National Science Challenges, research conducted in the health sector, and health research commissioned by government agencies. The Government will also develop new approaches for co-investment with the not-for-profit sector on the agreed priorities. However, there will still be funding outside the agreed priorities for innovative ideas proposed by researchers or end-users of research.

The priorities will be designed to inform strategic investment by government agencies, tertiary institutions, Crown Research Institutes, NGOs, independent research organisations, and contract researchers around New Zealand. Other funding mechanisms, such as academic institutional funding, the Centres of Research Excellence and the Marsden Fund,

will continue to support curiosity-driven health research that may or may not fit with these priorities.

The first announcement of the new Strategic Investment Areas (SIAs) will be in early 2019, to allow other funding agencies across the sector to be ready and able to respond to the new priorities when more detailed research Themes are published at the end of 2019.

## 10. How many Strategic Investment Areas will there be, and how broad are they?

About five to ten Strategic Investment Areas, or SIAs, are envisaged; however, during recent consultation on the proposed process, some submitters thought it would be preferable to limit the number to fewer than five, while others thought ten would not be sufficient. The Development Group will be asked to determine the appropriate number of SIAs.

The SIAs should encompass a range of key knowledge needs that:

- are focused on addressing the current and future needs of New Zealanders, including future generations;
- contribute to national and international efforts in health research;
- will develop workforce capability and capacity; and
- advance the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The breadth of the SIAs means that they are likely to benefit from collaboration across health research disciplines, and the health, and science, and technology and innovation sectors.

## 11. How do the Themes relate to the Strategic Investment Areas?

Once the Strategic Investment Areas, or SIAs, are announced in early 2019, work will continue to define and develop more detailed research questions or 'Themes' within each SIA. The HRC will convene one Expert Panel for each SIA, plus a number of cross-cutting Expert Panels to ensure that the Themes are consistent and aligned with the guiding principles of the Strategy. Within each SIA, the Expert Panels will define 'Themes' which meet as many as possible of the following objectives:

- advance Māori health outcomes and research capacity;
- achieve health equity for those populations experiencing the greatest inequities of access and outcomes;
- reduce the burden of disease in NZ and meet identified needs for improving health and wellbeing;
- have potential for translation into policy or practice to improve the standard of care;
- improve the cost-effectiveness of the NZ health system;
- advance Pacific health outcomes and research capacity;
- respond to unique opportunities (e.g. research that can only be done in NZ, or innovations with commercial potential);
- address confirmed knowledge gaps;
- build the health research workforce in NZ; and/or
- be feasible, in terms of research capability, capacity, and strengths.

These Themes will be refreshed every 3–5 years

## **12. Will priorities for New Zealand reflect the context of international research?**

Once consultation on the draft SIAs is complete in September 2018, and a list of draft Themes has been generated, the HRC will identify international experts who are leaders in specific research fields. These people will be asked to review the draft priorities, and provide an assessment of how New Zealand research could contribute to the global health research endeavour in specific areas, and take advantage of opportunities and gaps where possible.

## **13. Who will make the final decision on the health research priorities?**

The Development Group will finalise the SIAs and Themes based on advice from the Expert Panels, international reviewers, and public consultation. The Development Group will make its final recommendations to the NZHRS Steering Group in October 2019, for approval. Once the Steering Group has made its final decision, it will be published online with the rationale to allow a final public review. Once the review process is complete, the priorities will be sent to the to the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation and the Minister of Health for final approval and announcement in December 2019. At that point, funding agencies across the health science and innovation sector (including the HRC) will be able to make their own decisions about how to target investment to the new priorities from 2020 onwards.

## **14. How will the health research priorities be implemented and funded?**

When the priorities are published in late 2019, all stakeholders will decide how they will implement them. This is when funders can make decisions about how much of the Government's investment should be guided by the priorities, what special initiatives may need to be initiated if more rapid progress is needed, and what changes to funding mechanisms might be necessary.

The priorities will also form the basis of the HRC's three-yearly investment plan, guide the National Science Challenges, health sector agency research and health research commissioned by government agencies. The Government will develop new approaches for co-investment with the not-for-profit sector on the agreed priorities.

## **15. When will the health research priorities be finalised?**

The first announcement of the new Strategic Investment Areas (SIAs) will be in early 2019, to allow other funding agencies across the sector to be ready and able to respond to the new priorities when the final detailed Research Themes are published at the end of 2019.