

MĀORI HEALTH ADVANCEMENT GUIDELINES

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Health Research Council
of New Zealand

Te Kaunihera Rangahau Hauora o Aotearoa



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Māori Health Advancement Guidelines

The HRC Act 1990 acknowledges the importance of Māori health (hauora). The HRC is committed to all health research in Aotearoa New Zealand contributing to the advancement of Māori health.

The HRC considers that all health research in Aotearoa New Zealand has the opportunity to advance Māori by upholding and valuing Māori rights, worldviews and knowledge, tikanga Māori (Māori processes and protocol), and by addressing inequity.

Informing our goals and vision for excellent health research that benefits all New Zealanders is the Treaty of Waitangi which identifies the importance of Māori having equal benefit and rights as non-Māori. The *New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017 – 2027* states that all health research should incorporate the Treaty of Waitangi principles of partnership, participation, and protection. The Strategy also identifies four additional principles to achieve increased impact of government investment in health research - these being research excellence, transparency, collaboration with Māori, and collaboration for impact.

Hauora encompasses the dynamic and inter-connected nature of health in Aotearoa New Zealand, embracing social, physical, environmental and spiritual dimensions. Health equity is a complex societal issue, and as such, all health research can contribute to reducing inequity in different ways and to different degrees.

The HRC is introducing a transparent framework for the assessment of potential Māori health advancement in HRC funding applications. The provision of robust assessment data will enable the HRC to evaluate and report to stakeholders the degree to which its investment delivers on the goal of advancing Māori health.

The purpose of these guidelines is to support health researchers in describing how their proposed research contributes to Māori health advancement. The HRC recognises that the most appropriate approach to advancing Māori health will vary by the type of research, so accordingly it supports context-specific consideration of Māori health advancement, as determined by the nature and scope of the research. While research may focus on communities or populations other than Māori, applicants

for all HRC funding will be required to also consider how their research will advance Māori health.

Strategies that provide context for the scope of these guidelines include the *New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017 – 2027*, *He Korowai Oranga: Māori Health Strategy 2002*, and *Vision Mātauranga 2007*.

What is Māori Health Advancement?

Māori health advancement, in the context of health research funded by the HRC, is defined as positive contributions to, and improvements of, Māori health and wellbeing, and/or reduction in health inequity. Consideration of this is complex and extends beyond describing the relevance of a specific health condition to Māori.

Māori health advancement can be achieved through multiple stages of research, from developing research questions, design and methodology, through to outcomes, dissemination, and capacity-building. Advancements can occur in many diverse ways, for example:

- By impacting individuals, whānau, communities, and organisations
- Through meaningful engagement and relationship-building
- Through the development of relevant knowledge
- Through the transformation of health services or policies
- By strengthening the health research workforce and leadership
- By improving health and health research literacy.

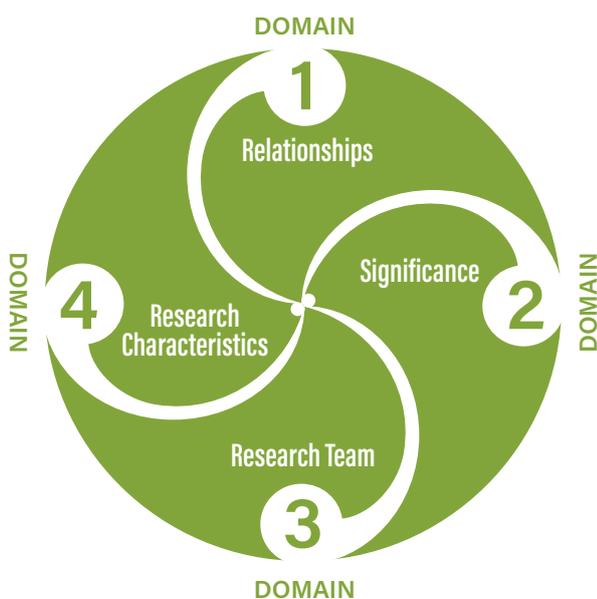
The relationship between health researchers and Māori is fundamental to ensuring that research addresses Māori health advancement. Contributions and improvements to Māori health and wellbeing require partnership between Māori, health researchers, and research institutions that is meaningful, reciprocal, and enduring.

Research organisations have an important role in facilitating relationships between their health researchers and iwi, hapū, and other Māori communities. For many years, the HRC research contract has specified that research providers must have policies and processes in place to ensure that consultation with Māori has occurred, and that research is responsive to the needs of Māori. The HRC will continue to expect, and work with, host organisations to support the development of appropriate resources to aid researchers to engage with Māori.

Domains of Māori Health Advancement

When considering submission of a proposal for HRC funding, researchers are expected to demonstrate consideration of, and take related actions towards, Māori health advancement. As noted previously, contributions to Māori health advancement can be achieved throughout all stages of research, in a number of different ways.

The HRC proposes that Māori health advancement is underpinned by four broad domains relevant across all types of research. These domains highlight the importance of ensuring: that relationships between health researchers and Māori are meaningful and reciprocal; that research addresses issues of significance to Māori, including tangible improvements in health and wellbeing and/or other advances for Māori that should result; that research teams have the required skills and expertise to build capability and capacity of the Māori health research workforce; and that research is conducted in a culturally-appropriate manner.



The domains are intended to provide guidance to researchers when developing their research. While four separate domains are presented, it is acknowledged that aspects of these domains may intersect with each other.

Within each domain, some key considerations are provided to prompt researchers to take a broad view of how Māori health advancement may inform their research and, in turn, inform specific actions. The approach by which researchers address some or all of the domains is context-dependent and will vary by the type of research.

1. Relationships

The HRC recognises the need for host institutions and their health researchers to engage in meaningful, collaborative, and reciprocal relationships with Māori. Any relationship between health researchers and Māori should be a real partnership that extends beyond the timeframe of any one research project or single instance of consultation. The HRC's view is that, in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, health research is likely to be more robust if it is recognised that iwi, hapū, whānau, and other Māori communities can make important contributions to health research and improving health outcomes, for Māori and all New Zealanders. Consideration should be given to engaging in practices which increase Māori partnership, participation, engagement, and leadership in health research.

Key considerations for researchers:

- How might this research build new, or enhance existing, relationships with Māori?
- How is the relevance and/or importance of iwi, hapū, whānau and other Māori involvement in this research (as researchers and/or partners) reflected in the proposal?
- How has collaboration between the research team and Māori informed the development of the research idea; how the research will be undertaken, and how the results will be disseminated and translated?
- How will the research team work to establish or sustain a relationship with Māori that is mutually beneficial?
- How does the host institution support establishing and maintaining relationships with Māori, and how will this support strengthen the research?

2. Significance

The HRC is committed to ensuring that Māori identify the research that is most meaningful for Māori – research that is needed to address Māori health need and inequity – and will continue to provide specific funding for this research. However, the HRC considers that all health research has the potential to advance Māori health. This may be in the form of original, high-quality contributions that, for example: build or develop knowledge related to health issues of importance to Māori; improve health equity and wellbeing; and/or build a responsive workforce.

Different approaches to advancing Māori health will be required along the research pathway, from the creation to the application of knowledge. Research findings may contribute to gains in Māori health outcomes in the short, medium, or long-term.

Connection of next- or end-users of research is key to facilitating the uptake and utilisation of research to advance Māori health. These connections will vary depending on the context of the research, though it is critical that Māori involvement is considered at each stage or opportunities

for Māori health advancement may be lost. Consideration should be given to how research findings could inform action to change assumptions, practice or policy, in a way that enhances equity and advances Māori health.

Key considerations for researchers:

- How will the research directly or indirectly address issues that have been identified as important by and for Māori? This includes, but is not limited to, the creation or development of new knowledge, protocols, programmes, guidelines, policies, and devices.
- How does the research enhance equity and/or avoid contributing to inequity?
- What knowledge, capability and skills relating to Māori health and wellbeing will be developed or enhanced by this research?
- How will the research build capability in areas that are important for Māori?
- What are the opportunities for enhanced outcomes for Māori in the short, medium, and/or long-term?
- What plans are in place for effective and appropriate engagement over results, or dissemination of results, with Māori to maximise translation and uptake of new knowledge?

3. Research Team

The research team should include appropriate Māori health expertise or community engagement/contribution to ensure that the research can deliver its intended objectives regarding Māori health advancement. Capacity and capability are important facets of Māori health advancement, and research provides opportunities to develop and strengthen the Māori health research workforce. Research should also build upon and improve the capability of non-Māori members of the team to contribute to Māori health advancement.

Key considerations for researchers:

- How does membership of the research team, including appropriate Māori health researchers, ensure objectives relating to Māori health advancement can be achieved?
- How might this research/research team develop the capacity and capability of the Māori health research workforce?
- How will the research team build their own capability or that of future researchers (including through community connection, school engagement or other activities, as relevant to the proposed research)?

4. Research Characteristics

All researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand are required to value tikanga Māori (Māori processes and protocol) as it applies to undertaking health research.

Research design and methodology should take the opportunity to advance Māori health through incorporation of research approaches that align with or demonstrate Māori research principles¹ and Māori ethics considerations.² The HRC acknowledges that the response to these considerations will vary depending on the particular domain of the research (eg. basic or applied research; public health or kaupapa Māori research; experimental or observational research). Culturally-appropriate processes regarding data management and kaitiaki (guardianship) of human tissue and other samples should be incorporated in all facets of the research.

Key considerations for researchers:

- How will the research methodology demonstrate and affirm best practice application of Māori research principles when working with Māori?
- Does the research appropriately and adequately consider design issues that could strengthen Māori health advancement?
- How does the proposed research demonstrate appropriate understanding and incorporation of Māori ethics considerations and processes?
- What processes will be implemented to ensure data is handled in a culturally-appropriate manner?

¹ Further information can be found in the HRC's *Guidelines for Researchers on Health Research Involving Māori* at www.hrc.govt.nz

² Further information can be found in *Te Ara Tika – Guidelines for Māori Research Ethics* at www.hrc.govt.nz



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