



**HEALTH RESEARCH COUNCIL  
OF NEW ZEALAND**  
RESEARCH INVESTMENT PLAN  
2021 - 2023

## Chair's Foreword

The Health Research Council of New Zealand aspires to every New Zealander enjoying equitable improvements in health and wellbeing because of evidence and innovations from our world-leading health research system. This is an aspiration that the whole health research community can unite behind and together make real progress towards.

To be able to meet this aspiration will require a coordinated effort from the entire health research community, who are more than up to the challenge. To assist this, the Research Investment Plan (2021 to 2023) sets out the HRC's investment framework, which provides important signals about areas of focus and significance for the next three years. At the heart of every investment decision we make will be the ability of research to advance the goals of promoting innovation and impact, advancing Māori health and improving health equity, which together will help meet our aspiration. We know that the excellent research we fund has the potential to deliver on these crucial goals for New Zealand. In addition to investing in excellent health research, the HRC remains committed to investing in the diverse, inclusive and equitable health research workforce that New Zealand needs.

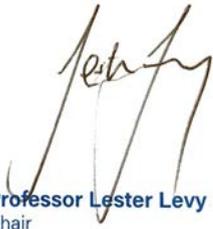
Our investment framework has also been developed in line with New Zealand's first health research priorities. The New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework (the NZHRPF) was released in December 2019 as part of our ongoing work in the implementation of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy (the NZHRS) alongside the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). The NZHRPF is an important tool for providing clear direction for all government investment in

health research. For the HRC this means investing strategically in health research that meets the domains and health research attributes to achieve high-level aspirational outcomes which realise the greatest benefits in health and wellbeing for New Zealand and maximum impact from the government's investment in health.

In 2020 work began to ensure that all our investment opportunities and processes are aligned with those actions for research funders outlined in the framework. This may result in making important changes to our funding opportunities or processes and we plan to work with researchers and research providers on any changes to find ways to support each other and coordinate our respective actions in the NZHRPF. We expect that this review may also result in new, exciting initiatives for health researchers with details to be released on HRC Gateway as they become available.

We are confident that researchers are willing and able to meet the health research needs of New Zealanders and look forward to supporting excellent and innovative health research and talented researchers over the next three years.



  
Professor Lester Levy  
Chair

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# Section 1: Introduction

This Research Investment Plan provides information about the Health Research Council of New Zealand's (the HRC's) framework and signals for investments in the wider research, science and innovation system and health sector, for three financial years from 2021 to 2023. It gives researchers high-level guidance about the intended priorities for and outcomes of the funding that the HRC administers.

The HRC's aspiration is that every New Zealander enjoys equitable improvements in health and wellbeing because of evidence and innovations from our world-leading health research system.

The HRC uses rigorous and equitable investment processes to identify research that will improve the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

Details of each funding opportunity, such as the level of funding available and eligibility and assessment criteria can be found within application guidelines which are updated annually and available on the HRC website<sup>1</sup>. Applicants should read this Research Investment Plan in conjunction with:

- The New Zealand Health Research Strategy.
- The New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework.
- HRC Gateway which outlines opportunities for funding through our researcher-initiated opportunities (multiple contestable funding rounds run annually), partnerships, mission-led and rapid response calls for research (Requests for Proposals (RFPs)) and our capacity and capability building opportunities (Career Development Awards (CDAs)).
- The relevant Peer Review Manual which sets out the application process and eligibility and assessment criteria.
- Ethics guidelines for health research, Māori health research, and Pacific health research.

Other valuable information such as a copy of the HRC research contract and the New Zealand Standard CV template are on the HRC's research contract management system Gateway.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Available at: [www.hrc.govt.nz](http://www.hrc.govt.nz)

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz/>

## Section 2: Role of the HRC in the Research, Science and Innovation System and Health Sector

The HRC is a Crown Agent and the Government's principal funder of health research. As a Crown Agency, the HRC acknowledges Māori as tāngata whenua and partners with the Crown. We aspire to all our investments, policies and systems upholding the principals of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The HRC was established through the Health Research Council Act 1990 (the Act) and is accountable to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation. The HRC has several key functions as set out in the Act, including:

1. advising our Ministers on priorities for health research and health research policy,
2. negotiating and administering funding for health research,
3. fostering the health research workforce, recruiting, training, and retaining researchers,
4. initiating and supporting health research, and
5. promoting and disseminating the results of health research.

The HRC is the home of health and wellbeing research in New Zealand. Our core activity is to invest in excellent health research that improves the health, health equity, and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

The HRC administers the largest contestable fund for health research in New Zealand. Funding opportunities are offered across the full spectrum of health research, including biomedical, clinical, public health, health services, Māori health and Pacific health research<sup>3</sup>. We invest around \$125 million each year in the health research New Zealand needs, and the diverse and skilled workforce required to do it. The majority of HRC funds support investigator-led, project-based research contracts through multiple annual funding rounds.

The HRC invests in strategically led and rapid response research through targeted Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and its Partnership Programme. The Partnership Programme enables government and non-government partners to meet specific knowledge needs, including the health sector, to improve the health system.

Through our International Programme, we partner with funders around the world to create opportunities for New Zealand researchers to connect with and contribute to international research efforts and expertise and support New Zealand's researchers in tackling issues of global urgency.

The HRC plays an important role within the science system and health sector by investing in Career Development Awards (CDAs), to ensure New Zealand has the diverse, inclusive and equitable health research workforce it needs. Funding opportunities are offered across all career stages and where increased capacity is needed, with specific CDAs on offer for clinical practitioners and health professionals, Māori and Pacific health researchers, and emerging research leaders.

The HRC has a crucial role in maintaining a safe and ethical health research environment, advising the Minister of Health on the safe uptake of new health technologies and conduct of clinical trials.

### Wider strategic context

The HRC makes an important contribution to wider science policy, health system and government priorities by aligning its operations with, and delivering on, key government strategies and policies.

The documents which guide us are Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the HRC Act 1990, and our annual Letter of Expectations from our Ministers<sup>4</sup>. The box below details the government strategies and priorities we are responsive and contribute to.

<sup>3</sup> Operational or management focused research is excluded from HRC funding

<sup>4</sup> HRC is accountable to the Minister of Health, our ownership Minister and the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation, our funding Minister



## Relevant Government priorities and strategies

### Research, Science, and Innovation (RSI) Strategy

The Government has consulted on a draft Research, Science and Innovation Strategy, which will set the Government's vision for the RSI system, provide enduring policy to guide investment, and establish priority areas for change. The draft strategy proposed core principles of connections, excellence, and impact, and aimed, by 2027, for New Zealand to be a global innovation hub, a world-class generator of new ideas for a productive, sustainable, and inclusive future. It also highlighted the need to support and protect mātauranga Māori, distinctive knowledge held within Māori communities, within the framework of te Tiriti o Waitangi.

### New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017 - 2027 (NZHRS)

The NZHRS brings together the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), the Ministry of Health and the HRC to jointly implement four strategic priorities with 10 associated Actions. The vision is for New Zealand to have a world-leading research and innovation system that, through excellent research, improves the health and wellbeing of all New Zealanders. The HRC is leading Strategic Priority One Invest in excellent health research that addresses the health needs of all New Zealanders, and its four Actions: Action 1. Prioritise investments through an inclusive priority-setting process; Action 2. Invest in research for healthy futures for Māori; Action 3. Invest in research that results in equitable outcomes for Pacific peoples and helps them to lead independent lives; Action 4. Develop and sustain a strong health research workforce.

The New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework (NZHRPF) was developed under Action 1 of the NZHRS and launched in December 2019. The NZHRPF prioritises how and why health research needs to be done in New Zealand. The NZHRPF has four Health Research Domains, that represent high-level aspirational outcomes for New Zealand and identify areas of critical inquiry or investment need. At a high level these are Domain 1: Healthy people, whānau and communities; Domain 2: People-centred healthcare; Domain 3: Meeting our needs in a changing world; Domain 4: Connected government and systems.

Domain 3 of the NZHRPF identifies an increasingly important role for the HRC in enabling health research that addresses environmental challenges, by taking an integrated approach to health, the environment, animals, and sustainability. Investing in health research that helps us to understand the impact of climate change or environmental issues on health and wellbeing will ensure we have the knowledge, innovations and health research workforce necessary to improve the wellbeing of New Zealanders and their families, and our environment.

### MBIE Diversity in Science Statement

The Statement aspires to a vibrant and successful science and research base that reflects the diversity of New Zealand. It recognises that diversity is vital for our science system to realise its full potential and ensures New Zealand will capture the very best ideas and talent to support the highest quality research. The HRC supports the Statement with a focus on diversity among our Council, staff, committees, the research teams we fund, and utilises diversity metrics in its analytics and reporting. The HRC is working to build and sustain a health research workforce that reflects our diverse communities.

### Vision Mātauranga

The Vision Mātauranga mission is to unlock the science and innovation potential of Māori knowledge, resources and people for the health, environmental, economic, social, and cultural benefit of New Zealand. The policy is supported by the Vision Mātauranga Capability Fund (VMCF), and accompanying Te Pūnaha Hihiko VMCF Investment Plan, and makes investments which strengthen capability, capacity, skills and networks between Māori and the science and innovation system, and increases understanding of how research can contribute to the aspirations of Māori organisations and deliver benefit for New Zealand.

The HRC is committed to improving health outcomes for Māori through investment in research and the Māori health research workforce. Approximately 10% of the HRC's investment goes into funding Māori health research and we invest approximately \$1.982 million annually from the VMCF to foster Māori development research and build capacity and capability to undertake health research that is unique in New Zealand.



## Relevant Government priorities and strategies

### Vision Mātauranga (continued)

The HRC has introduced a Māori Health Advancement criterion, which scores proposals from all health research disciplines for their potential to advance Māori health and reduce health inequities. In 2019, the HRC renewed the Tripartite Agreement on Indigenous Health Research between New Zealand (HRC), Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) and Australia (National Health and Medical Research Council, NHMRC), aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of indigenous peoples within the three countries.

### New Zealand Health Strategy

This is a Ministry of Health Strategy that sets the future direction for the New Zealand health system from 2016 to 2026, with the aim of improving the health of people and communities. It has five interconnected strategic themes – that the health system is people powered, closer to home, delivers value and high performance, operates as one team and is a smart system. The HRC tracks how the research it contracts delivers on each of these strategic themes and provides the research needed to create a learning health system through translating evidence into policy and practice, informing the design of health services, improving equity of health outcomes and building research expertise among the health sector workforce.

### He Korowai Oranga

New Zealand's Māori Health Strategy guides Government and the health and disability sector to achieve the best health outcomes for Māori. The HRC is committed to advancing Māori health and wellbeing and achieving health equity. We invest approximately 10% of our funds in Māori health research and workforce development that contributes to achieving the aims of He Korowai Oranga.

### Ola Manuia: Pacific Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2020–2025

The Ministry of Health's Pacific Health and Wellbeing Action Plan builds on the 'Ala Mo'ui: Pathways to Pacific Health and Wellbeing 2014 – 2018. The Plan has three high-level outcomes: Pacific people lead independent and resilient lives; Pacific people live longer in good health; and Pacific people have equitable health outcomes. The HRC supports these aims by investing in Pacific health research and the Pacific health research workforce. The HRC supports Pacific researchers to apply culturally relevant methods and approaches to research which will be effective and meaningful in the communities they serve.

### The New Zealand Disability Strategy

This is a Ministry of Health Strategy that sets government priorities on disability issues from 2016 to 2026. It aims to create a society that highly values the lives and continually enhances full participation of disabled people. It provides an enduring framework to ensure that government departments and agencies consider persons with disabilities before making decisions. HRC investments contribute to the evidence needed to achieve this aim. Work to align with the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework will identify further opportunities to reduce health inequities for persons with disabilities and enhance the capacity and capability of the workforce needed to undertake this research.

## Section 3: HRC investment framework

The HRC's investment framework is intended to give clear direction to researchers and provides a platform for determining what and how the HRC will make its investments in health research. From 2021 to 2023, the HRC's investment framework (see over page) provides general investment signals for researchers, namely how HRC funded research must respond to the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework. This is intended to signal areas of focus and importance for the HRC over the next 3 years.

The investment framework also outlines the HRC's investment objectives which are supported by specific investment goals. It is a prerequisite that all HRC funded research meets the Investment Principles of being excellent and impactful. All applicants are encouraged to consider how their proposal responds to the Investment Signals and meets the investment objectives set out in this Research Investment Plan.

### Investment Objectives

#### *What does the HRC want to achieve through its investments over the next 3 years?*

The HRC has three investment objectives designed to ensure that every investment decision made is focused on the HRC meeting its aspiration.

The objectives<sup>5</sup> are:

- **Fostering excellence and innovation:** To invest in the best ideas and innovations proposed by New Zealand's brightest researchers, designed to improve equitable outcomes and make a tangible difference to the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.
- **Increasing engagement and connection:** To align and connect funders, providers, and users of health research in New Zealand, form strategic research partnerships to address priority health issues, and build strong links to international research efforts.
- **Strengthening skills and systems:** To develop and sustain the people, processes and systems required to deliver the ethical, excellent, innovative, and impactful research New Zealand needs.

The investment objectives are applicable across the entire spectrum of health research, from basic to applied and across all research disciplines.

To achieve these investment objectives there are specific actions for both the HRC and for researchers. Each investment objective has three investment goals (see the investment goals over page) that give further guidance to researchers on what the HRC is looking to invest in. Researchers are encouraged to think about how their research proposal connects with and advances one or more of the Investment objectives and goals.

When making an application for funding, proposals will need to follow the more detailed requirements outlined for each individual funding opportunity. This information is located on HRC Gateway. By following the guidance and documentation for a specific funding opportunity, researchers will have fulfilled their requirements to align with our investment objectives.

<sup>5</sup> For more detailed information about each investment objective and the actions the HRC will be taking to achieve them please refer to our Statement of Intent 2020 - 2024 available on the HRC website

## HRC Investment Signals & Investment Objectives

All HRC funded research must respond to the Health Research Prioritisation Framework by:

1

Aligning with one of the Domains and their aspirational outcomes for New Zealand

**Domain 1**  
Healthy people, whānau and communities

**Domain 2**  
People-centred healthcare

**Domain 3**  
Meeting our needs in a changing world

**Domain 4**  
Connected government and systems

Explaining why the research needs to be done in New Zealand, and how the research design meets the New Zealand Health Research Attributes

Why in New Zealand?

Mana tāngata

Excellence

Impact

Equity

2

Meet the investment principles of excellence and impact

As reflected in application and assessment processes

HRC funded research must also help to achieve at least one of the following investment objectives and corresponding investment goals:

3

### Investment objectives

What does the HRC want to achieve through its investments over the next three years?

Fostering excellence and innovation

To invest in the best ideas and innovations proposed by New Zealand's brightest researchers, designed to improve equitable outcomes and make a tangible difference to the health and well-being of New Zealanders.

Increasing engagement and connection

To align and connect funders, providers, and users of health research in New Zealand, form strategic research partnerships to address priority health issues, and build strong links to international research efforts.

Strengthening skills and systems

To develop and sustain the people, processes and systems required to deliver the ethical, excellent, innovative, and impactful research New Zealand needs.

4

### Specific investment goals for achieving each investment objective

- Investing in excellent research for innovation and impact
- Advancing Māori health through excellent research
- Improving health equity through excellent research.

- Connecting for innovation and impact
- Advancing Māori health through meaningful partnerships
- Improving health equity through engaging across government and the health sector.

- Investing in people and systems for innovation and impact
- Advancing Māori health through building research capacity and capability
- Improving health equity through investment in a diverse research workforce.

## Investment Goals

### *What is the HRC looking to invest in over the next 3 years to achieve its aspiration?*

The HRC has three overarching priority areas that form the specific investment goals within each investment objective. That is to:

- promote innovation and impact
- advance Māori health
- improve health equity

The investment framework (see previous page) outlines how each of these goals are applied across the investment objectives. Every investment decision the HRC makes needs to advance one of these goals. To support this, researchers must be able to connect the contribution their research will make to the HRC furthering one or more of the investment goals.

## Investment Principles

### *All research must meet the HRC's investment principles of excellence and impact, as reflected in application and assessment processes.*

#### Excellence

The HRC has a broad and inclusive approach to excellence for health research, that aligns with the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework's definition of excellence<sup>6</sup>. Excellent research is ethical, scientifically sound, novel, innovative, well-designed, well-performed and well-reported. It is vital that the HRC feeds the innovation pipeline with novel research that challenges and shifts established knowledge and identifies new possibilities. We recognise the value of indigenous knowledge and kaupapa Māori methodologies, the need for new research models to be developed, and existing models to change and evolve.

Excellent research is sought across the entire spectrum, from very basic to very applied and practical research – and across a full range of research disciplines including biomedical, clinical, health services, public health, and social and data sciences. Our assessment processes are continually evolving to ensure we identify excellent health research in all its forms.

## Impact

The HRC defines impact for health research as the direct and indirect influence of excellent research on individuals, communities, or society, including improvements to health and equity, and other social, economic, cultural, or environmental benefits for New Zealand. The HRC's definition is focussed on the creation of 'real-world' benefits for our diverse end-users.

The inclusion of 'excellence' signals our ongoing commitment to fund high-quality research, which is a prerequisite for research impact, but not sufficient to maximise the benefit derived from the research.

Our key message is that research impact is not created by researchers alone; but rather, requires communication, relationships and actions that connects research to people. Researchers are expected to connect with the next-users of research to increase research impact and deliver best value from the government's investment.

## Investment Tools

### *How does the HRC make its investments?*

The HRC uses rigorous and equitable assessment processes and investment tools to identify research that will improve the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders. Our investment tools are tailored to suit the purpose and aims of each of our three investment objectives:

#### Investment tools for investment objective 1: Fostering excellence and innovation

- **Investigator-initiated:** the majority of our funds are awarded through multiple contestable funding rounds run annually, to research ideas and opportunities identified by researchers.
- **Randomised assessment:** to identify highly innovative and novel research applications are blinded to mitigate bias. For those assessed as both 'viable' and 'transformative'<sup>7</sup> funding is awarded based on randomisation.
- **Rapid response:** where there is critical need to commission an urgent health research solution, HRC launches a rapid response health research opportunity.

<sup>6</sup> Note that the Research Science and Innovation Strategy adopts definitions of Excellence and Impact for the entire science system, which is broader than the definitions used by the HRC for the purpose of health research

<sup>7</sup> HRC defines transformative research as research that promises extraordinary outcomes, such as revolutionising entire disciplines; creating entirely new fields; or disrupting accepted theories and perspectives. In other words those endeavours which have the potential to change the way we address challenges in health.



### Investment tools for investment objective 2: Increasing engagement and connection

- **Mission-led research:** HRC funds mission-led research through partnerships formed with research funders and government and non-government stakeholders. Requests for Proposals (RFPs) identify the research knowledge needed.
- **Negotiated funding:** where HRC seeks to directly engage with particular research providers and invest in particular research outcomes.
- **International agreements and consortia:** HRC connects with the international research effort through international agreements and consortia. Research calls in areas of mutual priority are released annually.
- **Rapid response:** (see explanation above).

### Investment tools for investment objective 3: Strengthening skills and systems

- **Career Development Awards and Fellowships:** support excellent people to gain research skills and advance careers in health research, and grow diversity of the workforce.

Peer review is undertaken by discipline-based Science Assessing Committees (SACs) with specific expertise for the applications submitted for funding opportunities<sup>8</sup>. The HRC ensures end-users are appropriately considered when assessing research potential, by their inclusion on our research and assessment committees. To ensure a tailored and culturally appropriate assessment process, we have separate Māori and Pacific Assessing Committees for Māori and Pacific health research proposals, respectively.

Details of all funding opportunities and assessment processes are available in full on HRC Gateway.

<sup>8</sup> The Peer Review Manual is updated annually and available on HRC Gateway.

## Section 4: General investment signals for 2021 – 2023

- *Research aligns with the Health Research Domains*
- *Research design meets the New Zealand Health Research Attributes*

The HRC's total Crown funding for the 2020/2021 financial year is \$125 million. New funding opportunities that further the HRC's investment objectives and goals will be developed over the next three years. These new funding opportunities will be informed by our Ministers' and Council's priorities, and the documents and strategies that guide us. Any new funding opportunities released will be communicated to researchers and details published on HRC Gateway.

Should the HRC receive any additional funding during the period this Research Investment Plan covers, this will be directed into investing in new opportunities that help the HRC achieve its strategic investment objectives or areas that are identified as a result of aligning with the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework or implementation of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy. Any new investments will be publicised, and details made available on HRC Gateway.

### Research aligns with the New Zealand Health Research Domains

The New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework (the NZHRPF) was developed under Action 1<sup>9</sup> of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy. The NZHRPF sets out for all government funders of health research, why and how health research needs to be done in New Zealand, and seeks to connect, coordinate, and focus resources on research that will bring the greatest benefits in health and wellbeing. The NZHRPF has four Health Research Domains<sup>10</sup>, that represent high-level aspirational outcomes for New Zealand. Within each Domain there are Research and Infrastructure Aims that have been identified as areas of critical inquiry or investment need.

The NZHRPF<sup>11</sup> was developed as a tool to guide and coordinate all of government's investment in health research. Over the next 3 years the HRC will ensure our funding opportunities and investment processes are aligned to the NZHRPF. A review of all existing funding opportunities and processes is being undertaken in 2020 and 2021.

The HRC expects researchers to align their proposals to the NZHRPF and consider how they will give effect to the relevant Domains and associated Research and Infrastructure Aims.

Application guidelines for individual funding opportunities are available on HRC Gateway.

### Research design meets the New Zealand Health Research Attributes

The NZHRPF sets five Health Research Attributes (the Attributes), to explicitly guide 'how' health research is undertaken in New Zealand. These are:

1. Why in New Zealand?
2. Mana tāngata
3. Excellence
4. Impact
5. Equity

The Attributes ensure that government funded health research is that which needs to be done in New Zealand and is appropriate for the New Zealand context - advancing Māori by upholding and valuing Māori rights, world-views and knowledge, tikanga Māori (Māori processes and protocol), and by addressing inequity. The principles underpinning the NZHRPF also align with the pillars of the RSI Strategy of excellence, impact, and connections.

The NZHRPF requires that all government funders give effect to the Attributes. In 2020 and 2021 the HRC is reviewing how the Attributes align with our current assessment criteria as the primary mechanism for prioritising research funding. It is expected that all five Health Research Attributes, if not already, will be formally reflected in our investment criteria by 2023.

The HRC expects researchers to develop and frame their research proposals to address the five Attributes. Application guidelines for individual funding opportunities are available on HRC Gateway.

<sup>9</sup> Action 1: Prioritise investments through an inclusive priority-setting process.

<sup>10</sup> Domain 1: Healthy people, whānau and communities; Domain 2: People-centred healthcare; Domain 3: Meeting our needs in a changing world; Domain 4: Connected government and systems

<sup>11</sup> For more information refer to the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework available here: [https://hrc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-01/NZ%20Prioritisation-Framework-FA-web\\_0.pdf](https://hrc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-01/NZ%20Prioritisation-Framework-FA-web_0.pdf)

## New funding opportunities for researchers 2021 - 2023

To be able to meet our investment objectives and aspiration, the HRC is tailoring existing and introducing new funding opportunities for researchers over the next three years. New investment opportunities that we can signal at this time are identified below. As this Investment Plan covers a 3-year period, all future opportunities will be publicised with details provided on HRC Gateway, as they become available.

### Health delivery research investment round

In 2019 - 2020, the HRC redesigned and launched a suite of new health delivery and career development opportunities to actively target and build research, innovation, and translation capacity in the health sector. In 2021, the Phase 1 opportunities will be available again:

- **Health Delivery Research Activation Grant:** supports established or prospective researchers and/or research providers to establish health delivery research evidence needs or research opportunities before applying for further health delivery research funding.
- **Health Delivery Research Project Grant:** contestable project funding directed by broad health delivery themes connected to evidence needs and/or innovative opportunities.
- **Health Delivery Research Career Development Award:** supports a funded placement in a health delivery research team or health sector setting, designed as an alternative pathway into health delivery research aimed at attracting more people with relevant skills into this discipline.
- **Health Sector Research Collaboration Grant (pilot):** a protected pathway to funding where we partner with health care or health service delivery organisations to empower and intensify their research engagement and ensure that research adequately responds to health sector, patient and community needs. We will be reviewing the focus of the pilot in 2021.

By 2023 we will launch these additional opportunities:

- **Health Delivery Translation Grant:** supports the 'next steps' of research where results indicate implementation readiness and viability. Funding will cover key approaches such as testing and evaluation, evidence synthesis, dissemination, and coordination.
- **Health Delivery Research Training Fellowship:** postgraduate funding for health professionals of any background to undertake a qualification in health delivery research.

- **Health Delivery Research Advanced Fellowship:** support for health professionals with research experience to undertake a research project that is relevant to health delivery, with connection to policy or practice.
- **Health Delivery Research Leader:** support for leaders in health delivery research with extensive experience who can champion and foster connectivity between health delivery settings and research fields.

### Vision Mātauranga Capability Fund

In 2020, the HRC started reviewing our funding opportunities supported by the Vision Mātauranga Capability Fund (VMCF) – the Ngā Kanohi Kitea Development Grant and the Ngā Kanohi Kitea Project Grant. The review aims to align these funding opportunities more closely with the objectives of MBIE's Vision Mātauranga Capability Fund, to strengthen capability through the development of skilled people and organisations that plan to, or are undertaking, research that supports the themes of the Vision Mātauranga policy. A key focus of HRC's review will be ensuring that these funding opportunities more effectively meet the needs of Māori communities.

Application guidelines are available on HRC Gateway for all Ngā Kanohi Kitea Development Grant and the Ngā Kanohi Kitea Project Grant funding opportunities.

### Career development awards

In 2019 and 2020, the HRC enhanced its funding opportunities for mid-career researchers. This included the launch of the Consolidator Grant to support those who have held a Sir Charles Hercus Health Research Fellowship and/or who have made progress towards being a principal investigator in health research. The Consolidator Grant will be offered annually for the next three financial years.

Application guidelines are available on HRC Gateway for all CDA funding opportunities.



### Partnership programme

The HRC has an enduring partnership agreement with the Ministry of Health to invest in areas that will address key knowledge gaps for policy development and service provision. Details of any new partnerships entered into between HRC and the Ministry of Health over the course of the next 3 years, will be publicised, and details made available on HRC Gateway.

The HRC also partners with many other government and non-government organisations to meet knowledge and evidence needs for New Zealand. New partnerships are developed on a regular basis. Details of any new partnership opportunities arising over the course of the next 3 years, will be publicised, and details made available on HRC Gateway.

Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are available on HRC Gateway for all partnership funding opportunities.

### Rapid response research opportunities

Over the next 3 years the HRC will develop an ongoing Rapid Response Research Fund so mechanisms are in place when there is critical need to commission an urgent health research solution.

In late 2020, the HRC released a second rapid response funding opportunity that further addressed New Zealand's COVID-19, infectious disease and pandemic response, evidence needs. This funding opportunity focused on equity in the context of COVID-19.

Application guidelines are available on HRC Gateway for all rapid response research opportunities.

## Section 5: Performance management of the HRC's investment

The HRC's investments are monitored at the portfolio and contract level to ensure that we are investing in excellent, high-impact research for equitable health and wellbeing outcomes, and the people to do it.

At the portfolio level, we have a performance framework in place that monitors if all our investments are fostering excellence and innovation; increasing engagement and connection; and strengthening skills and systems within New Zealand and around the globe. The performance framework forms the basis of our Annual Report which reports on the HRC's strategic and financial performance against its goals. The performance framework and annual report are externally audited and hold the HRC to account and ensure that our investments are appropriately managed.

At the contact level, all researchers are required to submit periodic reports which track the progress made against the research milestones outlined in their proposal. Research

outputs, outcomes and impacts are tracked through prospective assessment and retrospective evaluation.

The HRC has recently introduced voluntary surveys to be completed at 2- and 5-year post contract completion to track research outcomes and impacts. The information collected will allow the HRC to capture a diverse range of activities and outcomes along the pathway to impact and help us to better evaluate the impact that our investments have had and ensure that we are making the right investment choices.

