

Statement of Intent

1 July 2024 - 30 June 2028

Presented to the House of Representatives pursuant
to section 149 of the Crown Entities Act 2004



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

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Foreword from our Chair

The Health Research Council (HRC) of New Zealand is committed to making the most valuable contribution it can towards our country's collective vision for health, and our science, innovation and technology system. To do this, we must ensure research is excellent, innovative and impactful; directly connected and responsive to health needs; and embedded into the health system.

In recent years, the HRC has adapted and aligned its funding mechanisms with the strategic priorities of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy and the aims of the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework. Over the next four years we will implement new initiatives to support high-level priorities for the health system and science sector, to further the goals and priorities outlined in the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027.

We have begun by clearly signalling the HRC's priorities and expectations to the health research community through updates to our funding round requirements, to help give researchers guidance on how they can contribute to health gains and add greatest value. Central to this is the need for collaboration to address the wider determinants of health, and to focus efforts on areas of highest health need, such as non-communicable diseases and modifiable risk factors, and communities and populations with high health needs. Further changes taking effect in coming months include a new targeted opportunity in the priority area of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare.

The fundamentals of what we do are more essential than ever to achieving our aspiration, which means our work will continue to focus on three key areas: investing in research skills and expertise; investing in research, evidence and solutions; and targeting research needs and opportunities.

How we invest in each of these makes a genuine difference to health outcomes in New Zealand. The HRC is committed to developing the people and capability New Zealand needs, now and in the future. We also need our best health researchers

to connect and collaborate with each other, so we can support the transdisciplinary research response needed to effectively address complex health issues.

For research to have its greatest reach and impact, these connections should extend to the next users and end-users of research, such as patients, consumers, communities, healthcare providers, non-government organisations, policymakers and industry, bringing together the skillsets and expertise required for innovation, translation and change.

Better healthcare and health outcomes begin with robust evidence and often by challenging conventional wisdom. The HRC looks forward to building strong relationships across the health and science, innovation and technology sectors to achieve the health targets set by the government and the goal of timely access to quality healthcare. By supporting healthcare professionals to engage and take part in the research process, we help bridge the gap between research findings, health practice, and health outcomes by ensuring quality evidence underpins health promotion and service delivery in New Zealand. By investing in research excellence and innovation, we contribute to driving New Zealand's economic transformation.

We are all excited for the work ahead and maximising our opportunity to make a meaningful difference for New Zealand and beyond.



Professor Lester Levy, CNZM, Chair



Professor Jeroen Douwes, Chair, Public Health Research Committee

Section 1

About the Health Research Council

This Statement of Intent covers the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2028 and has been updated in 2024 in accordance with the 7 May 2024 Letter of Expectations.

Who we are

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) is the government agency dedicated to funding high-impact, high-value research that improves health outcomes for New Zealanders.

We invest around \$120 million a year in research across all health disciplines, including biomedical, clinical, public health, and health delivery fields.

We are responsible for developing the research workforce, ensuring New Zealand has the skills and expertise to address the complex health challenges facing us now and into the future. And we are proud to contribute to evidence-informed clinical and public health interventions that underpin quality healthcare services and practice.

Across our broad portfolio of research, we aim to uphold health research excellence, innovation and impact; focus on health need; foster the people and capability New Zealand needs; add value through connection and collaboration; and support the safe and ethical conduct of health research.

The Health Research Council Act 1990* sets out our functions and responsibilities, which include the following:

1. advise our Ministers on national health research policy
2. initiate and support health research focused on high-priority issues
3. foster the recruitment, training, and retention of those engaged in health researchers in New Zealand

4. negotiate and administer funding for health research
5. promote and disseminate the results of health research
6. maintain a safe and ethical health research environment, including ensuring the safety of large clinical trials.

**See the HRC's functions under the current HRC Act in Appendix 3.*

What we do

Guided by the goals of Government, the HRC invests in the research skills and evidence required to address priority health issues and to prepare our country for current and future health challenges, across the lifecycle.

We support research from activation stage through to project and programme stage, ensuring the most innovative ideas and solutions can make a real-world difference. We also initiate targeted research in areas of specifically identified high health need, where we see evidence gaps and opportunities, or where a rapid research response is needed, ensuring we work across agencies and sectors to address the wider determinants of health, including social, environmental and economic factors.

Building a skilled workforce, to serve our diverse populations, is pivotal to building the evidence and solutions needed to improve health outcomes in New Zealand. We do this by providing research opportunities for both emerging researchers and

our next research leaders, including opportunities for Māori and Pacific health researchers. To support evidence-informed healthcare, we are committed to engaging more healthcare professionals in research, with the aim of bridging the gap between research findings and clinical practice.

The HRC manages a fair and robust funding process involving multiple committees and hundreds of national and international reviewers a year. From the design and scope of funding rounds through to our assessment criteria, we ensure New Zealand's limited health research dollars fund proposals with a clear line of sight to improving health outcomes and having the greatest likely impact.

Ensuring health research is ethical and safe is pivotal to a world-leading Science, Innovation and Technology (SI&T) system. The HRC Ethics Committee accredits all the Health and Disability Ethics Committees and Institutional Ethics Committees in New Zealand, and our regulatory committees monitor the safety of innovations involving gene technologies, therapeutics and clinical trials involving new medicines.

Funding

Vote Health provides the funding for the ethics and regulatory functions that the HRC performs.

All other funding for the HRC is appropriated through Vote Business, Science and Innovation, which is administered by the Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology (SI&T). That means the HRC's funding allocation must align with the appropriation requirements and broader strategies of both the health and SI&T sectors.

Additionally, the Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology devolves Vote funding to the HRC for international research initiatives (from the Catalyst Fund) and for furthering the goals of Vision Mātauranga (from the Vision Mātauranga Capability Fund). The HRC's investment of these devolved funds is subject to the policies developed by MBIE.

In addition to these reports, the HRC communicates frequently with ministries and Ministers' offices on a 'no surprises' basis, to advise of funding outcomes or any matters that are likely to attract external attention to the HRC.

Appendix 1 provides a list of the reports that the HRC regularly produces to comply with requirements from both Ministers, as well as our obligations under the Crown Entities Act.

Section 2

Organisational health and capacity

Governance

The Minister of Health is responsible for the HRC and appoints our 10-member governing Council. The HRC's advisory committees connect the HRC to subject-matter experts and representatives of the populations we serve. All committees follow policies and protocols that safeguard integrity, transparency, and conflict of interest management in making funding recommendations.

Our statutory committees include:

- Biomedical Research Committee
- Public Health Research Committee
- Māori Health Committee.

We also have five standing committees, which include:

- Pacific Health Research Committee
- Grant Approval Committee
- Risk Management and Assurance Committee
- Standing Committee on Therapeutic Trials (SCOTT)
- Gene Technology Advisory Committee (GTAC).

The HRC's Māori Health Committee is a statutory committee established under the HRC Act 1990, and for the past three decades has been responsible for making funding recommendations to Council concerning Māori health research.

Our people capability

A strength of the HRC continues to be its highly skilled staff, many of whom have postgraduate qualifications and research experience. Our team of 38 fulltime and part-time employees (35.9 FTEs) are focused on investment processes, strategy and policy, communications, and finance and corporate services.

The HRC team works closely with both Council and the HRC's statutory and standing committees. Staff also maintain key relationships with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), and Health New Zealand.

We ensure all those involved in making decisions are impartial, responsible and trustworthy. We employ a comprehensive induction process and help ensure all staff meet and deliver on the State Services Commission Standards of Integrity and Conduct. The HRC has a Conflicts of Interest Register for staff and manages a robust Conflicts process for all committee members.

A recent organisational restructure has helped optimise our operational efficiency so that we continue to deliver on our performance aspirations as effectively as possible. We have made changes to some roles and responsibilities in the interests of readiness, capability and sustainability, and in line with our commitment to ongoing improvements to how we work.

Financial management

Our research investments are paid in instalments over the full term of a research contract. This means the HRC must continually balance its allocation to new funding each year against its committed

spending on existing contracts, which can result in variations from year to year. Levels have been more variable in recent years due to contract extensions resulting from COVID-19.

The HRC is subject to a Cabinet rule which imposes a capital charge if Public Equity exceeds \$15m. When research contracts are extended, and payments slow down, the risk of breaching this cap increases. Accordingly, we will continue to monitor closely and employ the limited options to minimise the likelihood of incurring a charge.

Over the next four years, the importance of timely execution of contracts will be a focus for the HRC, as well as the continued prudent management of resources as our funding reduces, as signalled in the 2024 budget announcement.

Culture of continuous improvement

Since 2020, the HRC has made good progress towards updating the suite of investment opportunities we offer annually. Having an ongoing 'system design' lens over our funding opportunities and processes helps ensure that the research we fund aligns with government goals and contributes to health and science system priorities.

For example, we have in recent years aligned our funding rounds and mechanisms with the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework, which prioritises how and why health research needs to be done in New Zealand if it's to drive high-level health outcomes and ensure maximum impact from our investment in health research. We have revised our assessment criteria for core funding rounds and introduced levers that increase the emphasis on areas of highest health need.

We have also revised our Health Delivery Research investment portfolio, aimed at strengthening research engagement among healthcare professionals and within frontline healthcare settings. The funding opportunities created within this portfolio are designed to complement the clinical research opportunities already provided through the HRC's researcher-initiated funding

rounds and capability-building rounds, with the aim of improving patient care and healthcare delivery in New Zealand.

We will continue to revise application guidelines to highlight the HRC's priorities for investment, in alignment with the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027. The guidelines aim to give clarity to researchers on how they can contribute to health system goals and add greatest value to the wider health and science ecosystem.

It is initiatives like these, and an ongoing commitment to improvement, that reinforce the HRC's place as a high-value, high-impact leader in health research, with the foresight and agility to respond to the needs of New Zealanders.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

Our commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, and fairness is evidenced with the diverse ethnicities represented at the HRC.

The HRC follows Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines, ensuring that people who possess the required skills have equal opportunity to be hired. We have also implemented measures that align with Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission's Kia Toipoto guidance, which include taking steps to advertise vacancies more widely.

We include multiple people on an interview panel and have measures to better mitigate against bias in the recruitment process. Our leadership has also been focused on closing pay gaps associated with gender or ethnicity to help attract and retain the best people in HRC roles.

Health and safety

The health and safety of staff is paramount, and we support the aim of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 2015. The HRC's Health and Safety Committee is comprised of staff members who work closely with our executive leadership team, and report back to the HRC's Council on key matters.

Section 3:

The HRC's performance framework for 2024 - 2028



Our priorities

In keeping with our aspiration for health research, all HRC investment must have a clear line of sight to improving health outcomes for all New Zealanders, with a focus on areas of highest health need and communities with the highest health needs.¹

Our research investments must contribute to achieving the goals of the health system and the Science, Innovation and Technology (SI&T) sector. The vision for the health system is timely access to

quality healthcare,² and a key focus for the science system is to harness the benefits of research and innovation to drive economic transformation.

Our priority actions

Our priority actions under each of our investment areas, from now through to 2028, are outlined in the table below. Combined, these actions will help drive improved health outcomes, advance science in New Zealand, and deliver maximum value for public funds. **Read about these actions in detail in Section 5.**

	Invest in Research skills and expertise	Invest in research, evidence, and solutions	Target research needs and opportunities
Drive research excellence, innovation and impact	We will recognise people and teams for achieving excellence, innovation and impact.	We will invest in excellent, innovative and impactful health research to improve health outcomes.	We will target investment to improve quality of healthcare and support international opportunities to improve the lives of all New Zealanders and drive economic transformation.
Focus on health need and improving health outcomes	We will develop a workforce that can engage with and, respond to, communities with highest health needs.	We will invest in research focused on areas of highest health need to improve health outcomes.	We will target research investment to support the aspirations and health needs of Māori and Pacific to improve health outcomes.
Invest in the people and capability New Zealand needs now and for the future	We will provide research development and leadership opportunities for health researchers.	We will attract and retain the best health research talent.	We will engage health professionals in research.
Add value through connection and collaboration	We will work collaboratively to support health research workforce development and retention.	We will work collaboratively to strengthen research excellence, innovation and impact.	We will work collaboratively to identify the priorities, needs and research opportunities to strengthen the health and science systems.
Support the safe and ethical conduct of research	We will provide project opportunities for early career health ethicists to support the safe and ethical conduct of health research,.	We will undertake annual reporting and re-approval of health and disability ethics committees and accredited institutional ethics committees and ensure independent monitoring of HRC-funded clinical trials.	We will provide advice on research ethics, monitoring and regulation, including new medicines and technologies.

¹ Areas of highest health need and communities with the highest health needs are identified in the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027.

² The Government Policy Statement on Health (2024-2027) outlines 5 priority areas; 5 non-communicable diseases; 5 modifiable behaviours; 5 health targets; and 5 mental health targets.

Section 4

Working within the health research sector

The Health Research Council makes a significant contribution to New Zealand's health research effort, providing leadership, coordination and connection for the research sector.

With our robust processes and large international pool of scientific expertise and reviewers, we bring efficiencies, experience and fairness in allocating funding for research that makes a difference.

Our investment helps build new knowledge and tools; develops evidence-informed public health and healthcare solutions that harness the potential of biotechnology and artificial intelligence (AI); and drives impact by bridging the gap between researchers and the next-users and providers of healthcare services.

The HRC works closely with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to implement joint initiatives and advance government goals. We also maintain a close dialogue with other national and international funders and the large and diverse research community that makes up our health research ecosystem.

Supporting ministry-led research efforts

Government ministries also invest directly in health-related research. This includes the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice and the Ministry for the Environment. MBIE also makes contestable and negotiated science investments in Crown Research Institutes (CRIs) focused on the environment, climate, food production and agriculture, all of which are also linked to health research. In addition to this, MBIE monitors and funds the Marsden Fund that focuses

on blue skies research and is administered by the Royal Society Te Apārangi.

The HRC has traditionally worked with ministries and government agencies to address cross-sectoral issues by pooling resources and partnering to invest in areas of immediate evidence need. For example, we ran a funding initiative with Pharmac focused on improving access to medicines, and we worked with the Cancer Control Agency (Te Aho o Te Kahu) to drive fairer cancer outcomes. Working with the Ministry of Health, we co-funded development of the Enhancing Aotearoa Clinical Trials Report which will inform efforts to establish a sustainable, nationally coordinated clinical trials enterprise in New Zealand.

The HRC maintains relationships with the health-related CRIs; and every year we support the Royal Society Te Apārangi to present the annual Research Honours awards.

Supporting Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora

We engage with Health New Zealand to increase the quality and quantity of research in the health system. Through our health delivery research investment portfolio, we provide targeted opportunities that enable more health professionals to become part of the research workforce.

Strengthening the clinical research environment is a key component of a thriving health research sector and a priority of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017-2027. Clinical trials are considered a core part of a high-performing learning health system, and key to ensuring high-quality evidence underpins health services and practices. HRC funding is an important contributor to clinical trials in New Zealand, and we welcome working with Health

New Zealand on increasing access and participation in trials, to ensure benefits are more evenly shared among New Zealanders.

Through closer collaboration with lead health agencies, the HRC can make a significant contribution to health system goals and identify where we can further give effect to the Government Policy Statement on Health (2024-2027) and wider government priorities.

Supporting tertiary education research providers

Tertiary education organisations are the main providers of health research in New Zealand, accounting for most of the research supported by the HRC. Tertiary education organisations also host nationally significant resources and infrastructure, such as the New Zealand Brain Bank.

Alongside the contestable funding they receive from the HRC for their research initiatives, tertiary education organisations receive funding from the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), which also funds the Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs). The HRC maintains links with CoREs.

Supporting independent research organisations

Independent Research Organisations (IROs) undertake nationally significant research that contributes to health practice and outcomes in New Zealand. The HRC currently supports three Independent Research Organisations (IROs) whose work covers clinical management, clinical trial translation and implementation, through to Māori-led research into public health, health services and policy. This dedicated funding provides stability for IROs to grow capacity and capability in areas that deliver to the HRC's research priorities.

Research by non-government organisations

There are annual contributions to health research from non-government organisations including Cure Kids, Breast Cancer New Zealand, the Heart Foundation, Cancer Society, Neurological Foundation, and medical research foundations. Many of these organisations have worked in partnership with the HRC.

Section 5:

Implementing government strategies

The Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act came into force on 1 July 2022, and requires health services to protect, promote, and improve the health of all New Zealanders, and work towards eliminating health disparities. The HRC gives effect to government priorities and strives to support a range of wider health policies and strategies designed to improve health outcomes in New Zealand.

Meeting our minister's expectations

In their Letter of Expectations to the HRC for 2024/2025, our ministers asked us to prioritise efforts and resources in areas where we can add the most value, with an emphasis on building strong collaborative relationships and working closely with health system leads to help ensure research supports key priorities and areas of need.

In partnership with the Ministry of Health and MBIE, the HRC will continue to progress work on the New Zealand Health Research Strategy, ensuring a strong collaborative relationship that will enhance the Science, Innovation and Technology (SI&T) system and advance the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of New Zealanders.

The HRC also has an important role to play in attracting and supporting health professionals to take part in research, and embedding a culture of research in the health system. We will continue providing pathways for developing research capacity and capability within the health workforce of the future.

Below are a range of government strategies that will guide our work over the next four years.

Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027

Alongside the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022, the Government Policy Statement on Health sets the government's priorities for improving health outcomes for all New Zealanders, including those with the highest need. This includes Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled people, women, and those living in rural communities, while ensuring services are appropriate for diverse groups of New Zealanders such as other ethnic communities and rainbow populations.

The Minister of Health has the overarching vision of achieving timely access to quality healthcare. This includes both mental and physical health. The HRC will contribute to the priorities outlined in the GPS, which includes the following:

- **Access:** Ensuring that every person, regardless of where they live in New Zealand, has equitable access to the healthcare services they need.
- **Timeliness:** Ensuring that people can access the healthcare and services they need, when they need it in a prompt and efficient way.
- **Quality:** Ensuring that healthcare and services delivered in New Zealand are safe, easy to navigate, understandable and welcoming to users, and are continuously improving.
- **Workforce (critical enabler for improving health services):** Having a skilled and culturally capable workforce who are accessible, responsive, and supported to deliver safe and effective healthcare.

To reinforce the focus on access and timeliness, the government has reinstated health and mental health and addiction targets which are a mechanism for measuring health system performance and accountability. The five health targets are:

- **Faster cancer treatment** – 90% of patients to receive cancer management within 31 days of the decision to treat.
- **Improved immunisation for children** – 95% of children to be fully immunised at 24 months of age.
- **Shorter stays in emergency departments (EDs)** – 95% of patients to be admitted, discharged or transferred from an ED within six hours.
- **Shorter wait times for first specialist assessment** – 95% of patients to wait less than four months for a first specialist assessment.
- **Shorter wait times for treatment** – 95% of patients to wait less than four months for elective treatment.

The five mental health and addiction targets are:

- **Faster access to specialist mental health and addiction services** – 80% of people accessing specialist mental health and addiction services are seen within three weeks.
- **Faster access to primary mental health and addiction services** – 80% of people accessing primary mental health and addiction services through the Access and Choice programme are seen within one week.
- **Shorter mental health and addiction-related stays in emergency departments** – 95% of mental health and addiction-related emergency department presentations are admitted, discharged, or transferred from an emergency department within six hours.
- **Increased mental health and addiction workforce development** – train 500 mental health and addiction professionals each year.
- **Strengthened focus on prevention and early intervention** – 25% of mental health

and addiction investment is allocated towards prevention and early intervention.

The Government is particularly focused on accelerating action to address five non-communicable diseases: **cancer, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, diabetes and poor mental health**. Together, these conditions account for around 80 percent of deaths from non-communicable diseases in New Zealand and considerable health loss experienced by New Zealanders. Another key goal is to improve prevention by addressing five modifiable risk factors: **alcohol, tobacco, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and adverse social and environmental factors**.

In support of all of the above, the HRC will fund research to provide quality evidence that directly:

- informs improved and timely access to quality healthcare.
- focuses on highest health need and communities with highest health needs by reducing the burden of significant non-communicable diseases, reducing exposures to modifiable risk factors, thus improving health outcomes.
- supports progress on reaching the health and mental health and addiction targets.
- progresses the goals of the health and science systems by supporting research on biotechnology, AI in healthcare, public health interventions, and the development of innovative diagnostics, treatments and models of care that provide better health outcomes, cost-savings in the delivery of care, and economic returns on investment.
- achieves health gains and delivers maximum value for the New Zealand public's investment in health research, by working collaboratively to address the wider determinants of health.
- builds the skills and capability New Zealand needs by supporting a culturally capable workforce, providing for equitable development of clinician researchers with the skills to embed

research and research findings into practice, and enabling more health professionals to become part of the health research workforce.

New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017 – 2027 (NZHRS)

The HRC's work is informed by the New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017-2027 that sets out the government's guiding principles, strategic priorities and actions towards building a world-leading health and innovation system that, through excellent research, improves the health and wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

The HRC has worked with the Ministry of Health and MBIE to jointly implement this strategy, and as part of this we launched the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework in 2019. This is the benchmark for how and why health research needs to be done in New Zealand (see below and Appendix 2).

We will continue working with ministries to refresh and progress the New Zealand Health Research Strategy, accounting for new health system structures and emerging priorities for both the health and science sector, including the need to harness the potential of biotechnology, artificial intelligence (AI) and commercialisation.

The New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework*

The HRC's funding opportunities and investment processes are strongly aligned with the enduring strategic signals contained in the New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework.

The framework consists of four 'health research domains' made up of research and infrastructure aims that have been identified as areas of critical inquiry. It also sets five 'health research attributes' that are intended to change the way that research is designed, conducted and funded, so that all government-funded health research advances priorities for New Zealand. The attributes ensure that we fund research that is needed in New

Zealand and that unfair differences in health needs and outcomes are addressed.

In conjunction with the Government Policy Statement on Health, this framework continues to guide our work.

*See Appendix 2.

He Korowai Oranga and Whakamaua: Māori Health Action Plan 2020-2025

He Korowai Oranga is New Zealand's Māori Health Strategy and guides the health and disability sector to achieve healthy futures for Māori. 'Whakamaua: Māori Health Action Plan 2020-2025' is the implementation plan for He Korowai Oranga. It sets the government's direction for Māori health advancement over the next five years, guided by four high-level outcomes and underpinned by objectives and priority areas with tangible actions that can be implemented to achieve pae ora for Māori.

In 2022, the HRC and Ministry of Health jointly funded an independent research team to track the implementation and progress of the Whakamaua Māori Health Action Plan. In addition to the internal evaluation of the plan by the ministry, the research team's assessment will directly inform implementation, progress, and direction of Whakamaua from now through to 2025, and identify gaps that need to be filled along the way.

MBIE Vision Mātauranga

The Vision Mātauranga mission is to unlock the innovation potential of Māori knowledge, resources and expertise to assist New Zealanders to create a better future. The policy is supported by the Vision Mātauranga Capability Fund (VMCF) and accompanying Te Pūnaha Hihiko VMCF Investment Plan, designed to strengthen capability, capacity, skills and networks between Māori and the science, innovation and technology system.

The Vision Mātauranga strategy has helped shape the HRC's approach to advancing Māori health research aspirations since 2007. We provide dedicated funding for research that addresses Māori health needs and issues, which includes community-led funding as it is critical for communities and iwi-Māori to have input into the focus, design and implementation of research.

MBIE Diversity in Science Statement

This Statement recognises that diversity is vital for our science system to realise its full potential and ensure New Zealand captures the very best talent to support the highest-quality research. The HRC supports the statement with a focus on diversity among our staff, committees, and the research teams we fund. We also use diversity metrics in our analytics and reporting.

Supporting Science, Innovation and Technology (SI&T) priorities

The HRC supports SI&T priorities by fuelling the innovation pipeline. The HRC will maintain its support for targeted, basic, and applied research with the potential to generate new and beneficial discoveries that boost the economy and power a thriving, collaborative health innovation ecosystem.

These investments create value for New Zealand by generating new knowledge and tools, and creating high-value, knowledge-based jobs that contribute to economic goals; they develop a highly skilled health research workforce that can use new and emerging technologies for health gains and leverage additional resources through international collaboration. These investments help build a healthier population, reducing the financial burden of ill-health; and lead to solutions that improve the efficiency of the health system and generate commercial revenue.



Section 6:

Priority actions for 2024 - 2028

Focus area 1: Investing in research skills and expertise

We invest in the people who deliver excellent health research and develop the capability NZ needs, now and for the future.

What is needed and why it matters

Under the HRC Act 1990, we have a statutory responsibility to foster the recruitment, education, training, and retention of the health research workforce. For over three decades, HRC investment has supported the skills needed in biomedical, clinical, public health, kaupapa Māori, Pacific, and health delivery research, not only building research capability in academia but also in healthcare settings, and within communities.

Building and retaining critical research capability within our shores can ensure New Zealand is prepared for current and emerging health threats, and has the skills to address uniquely local issues as well as global health challenges. Our support for researchers at different stages of their careers is instrumental in developing subject-area experts, and in building the foundations for a robust and world-class Science, Innovation and Technology system.

As a result of targeted efforts to engage health professionals and clinicians in research, more than 40% of HRC workforce positions are now held by practicing clinicians, and 48% held by those with clinical training. To ensure research has the best chance of translation and uptake, we will continue to provide research pathways for those on the frontline of health services delivery, developing research skills and embedding research in the places that healthcare is delivered.

In line with the Government Policy Statement on Health (GPS) and the New Zealand Health Research Strategy, the HRC is committed to improving health for populations with high health needs and poorer health outcomes. The HRC's longstanding support for Māori and Pacific health research has helped build a research workforce that can specifically respond to the needs and aspirations of these communities.

To contribute to a health system that delivers for all New Zealanders, we will continue to address barriers so research careers in New Zealand are more accessible, meaningful and sustainable. Over the next four years, we will continue to develop talent and maintain a health research workforce that is representative of the communities we serve.

As a small remote country, it is vital that New Zealand researchers are connected to the international health research effort and can gain access to international expertise and resources. International collaborations raise the profile of New Zealand health research in the global arena, contribute to global research efforts, provide a forum for sharing best practice, maximise research impact and return on investment, and enable New Zealand to be early adopters of the latest international evidence.

What we will do

The strategic intentions and priority actions outlined below will guide our work in this focus area:

Drive health research excellence, innovation and impact: Recognise people and teams for achieving excellence, innovation and impact.

The HRC celebrates health research excellence with three prestigious medals presented annually at the Royal Society Te Apārangi Research Honours ceremony. We will continue to incentivise high-quality, high-impact research with these awards, which have seen New Zealand's outstanding scientists recognised for their contributions to health.

We will also champion world-leading research through the development of an International Research Strategy. The HRC plays a pivotal role in facilitating international opportunities for New Zealand researchers to build partnerships and contribute to the global research effort. Currently, 59% of HRC contracts include at least one international collaboration - with 15 different countries represented. International research opportunities and collaborations help strengthen local research skills, knowledge and expertise on globally important issues, building on our research community's existing high international standing, reputation, and credibility.

Focus on health need: Develop the workforce who can engage with, and respond to, communities with highest health need.

We will continue supporting Māori health researchers to build the skills and expertise needed to meet the health needs and aspirations of Māori. The HRC will provide opportunities for launching research careers, such as Master's and PhD scholarships, as well as fund rangahau hauora training and development outside of academia, enabling local leadership, collaboration and innovation to meet needs and improve health outcomes. Through postdoctoral fellowships, we will support Māori researchers to move into leadership roles in their chosen field of research.

Maintaining a Pacific health research workforce that represents Pacific-centric values remains a critical enabler for better health outcomes for Pacific peoples. Currently, 8.5% of the HRC's lead investigators identify as Pacific, and through a range of funding opportunities across the career spectrum, we will continue to build leaders who can effectively respond to Pacific health needs and aspirations. Working across agencies to identify research needs and opportunities, the HRC will continue to support improved health outcomes from a population-needs-based focus and address barriers that hinder or prevent access to, and engagement in, research by under-represented researchers and communities.

Invest in the people and capability New Zealand needs, now, and for the future: Provide research leadership opportunities for early to mid-career health researchers.

Recruiting and retaining future leaders to address health challenges and create innovations for New Zealand remains a key objective for the HRC. We will provide funding opportunities for emerging researchers and future leaders, enabling them to undertake quality research that builds new evidence and knowledge in their field. The HRC recently increased the value of Emerging Researcher First Grants, to support more substantial research and to retain researchers at this critical point in their research training.

We will continue to support 'co-led' research – a change we introduced to foster development and contribute to succession planning. Early and mid-career researchers who have not previously held a project grant are encouraged to 'co-lead' a project in combination with a mentor or experienced researcher, which creates learning opportunities and results in research teams of exceptional strength, involving transdisciplinary work.

Add value through connection and collaboration: Work collaboratively to support health research workforce development and retention:

The HRC will work collaboratively with government health agencies to enhance the efficiency and performance of the health research sector, and to deliver health gains for New Zealand. We will implement funding mechanisms that foster and build research talent and expertise, so New Zealand has the critical health research skills and capability we need.

Support the safe and ethical conduct of health research: Provide project opportunities for early career health ethicists:

Through the work of our ethics, monitoring and regulation committees, the HRC plays a pivotal role in ensuring New Zealand health research is ethical and safe. To help build skills and expertise in this area, we provide opportunities for students to undertake Ethics Summer Studentships. These awards enable students to train with a research team during their summer break, focusing on ethical challenges.

The HRC ensures all researchers are aware of their ethical responsibilities and comply with best practice. We also share ethics articles and updates with the HRC research community.



Our performance measures

Strategic Intentions (Priority Actions)	Intended Outcomes	Our target for 2028	How we will measure our progress	Baseline
Science, Innovation and Technology benefits:				
Invest in the people and capability New Zealand needs now and for the future: Provide research leadership opportunities for early to mid-career health researchers.	New Zealand has a highly skilled, innovative, culturally capable and sustainable health research workforce, who are well supported to meet local, global and future health needs.	We will maintain or increase our support for early and mid-career researchers to “co-lead” major grant types, to foster development and contribute to succession planning.	Report annually the percentage of co-lead positions supported on new Projects or Programmes that are held by early- to mid-career researchers (who held a PhD for ≤10 years at time of application).	In 2023, 20% of funded Projects and Programmes included co-lead positions for researchers who had held a PhD for ≤10 years.
Drive health research excellence, innovation and impact: Recognise people and teams for achieving excellence, innovation and impact.	High-quality, high-impact and innovative health research produces transformational change, generating information and technological advances that bring health, social and economic benefits for New Zealand.	By 2026, launch at least one new medal to recognise people who have generated benefits from health research for New Zealand, to complement our existing suite of medals.	Report on new medals developed and awarded.	New activity.

Focus area 2: Investing in research, evidence and solutions

We invest in the best ideas and innovations proposed by researchers, focused on improving health outcomes.

What is needed and why it matters

Health outcomes and quality of life is improved by high-quality, high-impact health research. In funding the best investigator-initiated research, the HRC must ensure research has a clear line of sight to improved health and/or health system outcomes, such as improving timely access to quality healthcare.

For research to have the best chance of making a difference, it needs to flow seamlessly between research providers and real-world settings. The HRC is committed to accelerating innovation and impact by strengthening collaboration, connectivity and knowledge exchange between research providers, health agencies and end-users. To help power advances in health, we will continue to emphasise and incentivise a pathway to impact, right from the outset when research is designed, planned, and submitted for funding.

All HRC-funded research must demonstrate impact, for the shorter or longer term. As a funding assessment requirement, the HRC's 'impact' criterion is a strong lever for shaping and driving health outcomes and supporting the science system's innovation goals.

To support health system targets and priorities, the HRC must support quality research focused on the top five non-communicable diseases and modifiable behaviours and research that informs the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of health practices. Investment in research that addresses the affordability of treatments, preventative strategies, and early intervention for disease and the wider determinants of health will likely have an impact on the timeliness, accessibility and quality of outcomes and lead to health system and economic gains.

In response to signals from the SI&T sector, the HRC is poised to contribute to evidence-based, cost-effective healthcare solutions that harness the potential of biotechnology and artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare. HRC funding is critical to supporting the health innovation pipeline through ideas and discoveries that may lead to the commercialisation of research, and economic benefits for New Zealand.

The HRC remains committed to biomedical, clinical, public health and health services research which forms the backbone of scientific knowledge and can lead to transformative change. To pursue ground-breaking health gains is to invest in the full pipeline of research and to nurture the knowledge, methods and innovations generated by New Zealand's health researchers and in conjunction with their communities. Researchers from these disciplines should plan to maximise the interim benefits of their research, such as developing new workforce capabilities, intellectual property or forging international connections.

What we will do

The below strategic intentions and priority actions will guide our work in this focus area:

Drive health research excellence, innovation and impact: Invest in excellent, innovative and impactful health research to improve health outcomes.

As well as guiding investigators to effectively respond to health needs and desired outcomes, the HRC will continue to support a broad portfolio of research across all disciplines to generate new knowledge and fuel discoveries with both shorter-term and longer-term health gains. We will ensure ideas with transformative potential get off the ground, including discovery research with less predictable outcomes, which looks at solving health problems in new and novel ways.

Simultaneously, we will look at strengthening levers for maximising the benefits of research, ensuring all applicants demonstrate a clear line of sight to the impacts of their work, which will be determined by the scope and sphere of their research discipline.

The HRC is committed to an ongoing programme of continuous improvement. We will aim to ensure that our funding opportunities and processes are accessible, effective, efficient and responsive to priorities, while simultaneously reducing applicant burden and compliance. This is important for the overall cohesion and sustainability of the Science, Innovation and Technology (SI&T) system and core to our leadership role in providing a strong, connected, and stable environment for health research for New Zealand.

Focus on health need: Invest in research focused on areas of highest health need and improving health outcomes.

The Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027 sets expectations for improvements to health services over the next three years, while also signalling a shift towards prevention and early intervention and bringing care closer to home. HRC-funded research will have potential to support the key areas for driving health improvements built around timeliness, access, and quality. We will fund studies that contribute to access, consistency, and continuity of care for all New Zealanders, and we'll support critical enablers, such as the digital tools and technologies needed to improve infrastructure in the health system.

We will support progress on reaching the health targets for faster cancer care, improved immunisation, shorter Emergency Department stays, and shorter wait times for specialists. Our funding will also focus on reducing the burden of the top five non-communicable diseases of cancer, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, diabetes and poor mental health and addressing the five modifiable risk factors of modifiable risk factors of alcohol, tobacco, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and adverse social and environmental conditions.

Invest in the people and capability New Zealand needs now and for the future: Attract and retain the best health research talent:

The HRC will support the ideas and discoveries of New Zealand's best researchers, whose projects can make significant contributions to health. Our funding will help develop a highly skilled health research workforce who can use new and emerging technologies and leverage additional resources through international collaboration.

Add value through connection and collaboration: Work collaboratively to strengthen research excellence, innovation and impact.

The HRC will work collaboratively across the health and science systems to collectively contribute to health and economic gains and deliver maximum value for the public's investment in health research. We will also continue to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Health and Health New Zealand to ensure HRC research adds value to the wider health system and to identify where we are able to further give effect to health targets, the Government Policy Statement on Health, and wider government priorities.

Together with MBIE and the Ministry of Health, we will progress the goals of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy (NZHRS), which will inform continued improvements to our funding rounds and processes and strengthen the Science, Innovation and Technology sector.

The HRC's International Research Strategy will also inform our investment choices and opportunities for collaboration. The strategy will support broader implementation of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy, which recognises the importance of connecting internationally to advance best practice and increase the value of health research.

In addition to this, we will continue to contribute to sector-wide data initiatives, such as the New Zealand Research Information System (NZRIS), which seeks to capture the outputs and outcomes of research funding.

Support the safe and ethical conduct of health research: Undertake approval of health and disability ethics committees and independent monitoring of HRC-funded clinical trials.

We will continue to run a robust funding process that prioritises quality and continuous improvement at the centre of all it does.

Through the work of our Ethics Committee and other advisory committees, we will continue to make a strong contribution to the ethics and regulatory frameworks in New Zealand. The HRC Ethics Committee is responsible for approving all health and disability and institutional ethics committees in New Zealand, and our Data Monitoring Core Committee provides objective, independent monitoring of HRC-funded clinical trials.

Our performance measures

Strategic Intentions (Priority Actions)	Intended Outcomes	Our target for 2028	How we will measure our progress	Baseline
Science, Innovation and Technology benefits:				
Focus on health need and improving health outcomes: <i>Invest in research focused on areas of highest health need.</i>	High-quality, high-impact and innovative health research effectively addresses our highest health needs, improving health and wellbeing outcomes, especially for those with highest health needs.	At least 50% of our investment through major grant types will be in research to address our highest health needs.	Percentage of researcher-initiated Projects or Programmes that address an area of highest health need or focus on areas of prevention or translation, as identified in the Government Policy Statement on Health.	In 2023, 69% of researcher-initiated Projects or Programmes addressed an area of high health need as identified in the Government Policy Statement on Health.
Drive health research excellence, innovation and impact: <i>Invest in excellent, innovative and impactful health research to improve health outcomes.</i>	High-quality, high-impact and innovative health research produces transformational change, generating information and technological advances that bring health and economic benefits for New Zealand.	We will capture and increase the profile of innovative research outputs and outcomes funded through HRC grants.	Profile annually innovative outputs of HRC research, including (but not limited to) those that harness the benefits of biotechnology (using MBIE/ OECD definition of innovation).	HRC researchers reported 142 “innovative” research outputs in 2023 - 2024, that were new or improved products, processes or services.
Add value through connection and collaboration: <i>Work collaboratively to strengthen research excellence, innovation and impact.</i>	Research is coordinated, cross-sectoral, transdisciplinary and well connected internationally, increasing the potential for health gains, preparedness for future health challenges and our ability to capture health and economic returns for New Zealand.	We will refine our funding mechanisms and assessment processes to maximise potential for excellent, innovative and impactful research, based on results of stakeholder surveys and consultation and collaboration with national and international research funders.	We will report on changes to funding mechanisms and assessment processes, and key themes emerging from stakeholder surveys.	Our system design work programme is in place to identify and make continuous improvements to our funding mechanisms and processes. Our most recent refinements were made to application guidelines, to highlight the HRC’s priorities for investment ³ . A pilot survey for Assessing Committee members will commence for 2025 funding rounds, to help inform our improvements.

Strategic Intentions (Priority Actions)	Intended Outcomes	Our target for 2028	How we will measure our progress	Baseline
Health system benefits:				
Support the safe and ethical conduct of health research: <i>Undertake annual reporting and re-approval of health and disability ethics committees and accredited institutional ethics committees.</i>	Through the work of our monitoring and regulation committees, health research underpinning new medicines, interventions and health services in New Zealand is ethical and safe.	We will establish and maintain a community of practice for members of Ethics Committees in New Zealand, to share knowledge and better support the safe and ethical conduct of health research.	Number of new quarterly Ethics Committee ‘drop in sessions’ or other engagements convened by HRC to build relationships and discuss issues committees are facing.	HRC convenes an annual meeting of Ethics Committees in New Zealand and has identified potential to increase engagement in between meetings.

3 Found at: <https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz/> (See announcement 7 August 2024).

Focus area 3: Targeting research needs and opportunities

We invest in priority health issues and opportunities through targeted investment mechanisms, often in partnership with stakeholders and communities.

What is needed and why it matters

The Government Policy Statement on Health calls for a much stronger focus on coordination and collaboration to meet health needs, and to address the wider determinants of health that contribute to poorer health outcomes. It's imperative that the HRC works in tandem with others to ensure research efforts are coordinated, not duplicated; and that due to working with the right agencies, research outcomes have the best chance of translation and uptake.

The HRC has a central role in initiating and managing collaborative research opportunities designed to address priority health issues. Through targeted investment mechanisms in strategically important areas, the HRC can have the most direct influence on meeting the goals of both the health and science systems. In partnership with other agencies, we have previously addressed issues such as safe paracetamol use in children; differences in cancer outcomes; improving injury prevention in older Māori; reducing work-related health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression; and improving access to medicines. In 2024, we will develop a research opportunity focused on AI in healthcare, to support a key priority identified in the HRC's Letter of Expectations.

To successfully drive improvements in the access, timeliness and quality of healthcare, we will work closely with Health New Zealand to build a coordinated view of research activity across the health system and be more responsive to high health needs. The HRC's Health Delivery Research funding opportunities are designed to strengthen research skills within healthcare settings, with the aim of directly informing policy, practice and services.

With targeted funding for populations with high health needs, the HRC also brings research closer to communities. Consistent with the Government's Policy Statement for Health, support for Māori-led health research helps ensure that the needs and aspirations of Māori are appropriately addressed, and health and wellbeing outcomes improve.

The HRC invests in the health needs and aspirations of Pacific peoples to address unfair differences in health outcomes. In deciding where scarce health research resources are directed, there are benefits in empowering communities to engage with research as the most effective means of improving health outcomes and providing effective healthcare. To enable this, it's important our research processes are accessible and inviting to communities who want to build the skills and connections to engage in research.

Finally, if and when health threats arise in New Zealand, the HRC must be able to act quickly and ensure evidence-based solutions can assist with a rapid nationwide response. The HRC is well-placed to mobilise and harness the research expertise that's been built, fostered and sustained through our research skills-focused investment over many years, and direct this capability towards specific health issues when needed. As the past few years have demonstrated, the research sector must always be ready to respond to emerging health threats, some urgent and unforeseen, as we did with COVID-19, the Canterbury earthquakes, the Havelock North campylobacter outbreak, and the H1N1 virus. Our investment in developing and sustaining excellent researchers will ensure New Zealand has subject-area experts ready to guide and advise us, when we need them most.

What we will do

The below strategic intentions and priority actions will guide our work in this focus area:

Drive health research excellence, innovation and impact: Target investment to increase access, timeliness and quality of healthcare.

As the health sector undergoes significant change, we will contribute to embedding a culture of continuous learning and improvement in the health system. The health delivery research projects we fund will focus on health and health system needs, contributing to health gains and system-level improvements.

In 2024, the HRC will develop a request for proposals (RFP) to investigate the potential role of AI in strengthening the health system. The potential for AI to support clinical decision-making is significant; however, there are issues to consider in terms of the effective, ethical, and safe implementation of AI in healthcare. This targeted initiative provides an opportunity to support research focused on the risks and benefits of AI, and data to support the safety and quality of its application at the point of implementation in the health system.

Focus on health need: Target investment in research focused on the health aspirations and needs of Māori, and the health aspirations and needs of Pacific peoples.

The Government Policy Statement on Health outlines priorities for populations with high health needs. This includes the priority populations identified in the Pae Ora Act (Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled people, women and people living in rural communities), among other groups including some ethnic communities, rainbow populations and children who have been in state care, for example.

The HRC's targeted funding for Rangahau Hauora Māori is designed to identify and support Māori-led solutions and indigenous knowledge systems in achieving improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Māori. Improving access to appropriate quality healthcare for Māori will go a long way to lifting overall health outcomes in New Zealand and towards achieving health targets and priorities.

As well as supporting Māori health research in institutional and clinical settings, we will increase research participation at a grassroots level as outlined in the Government Policy Statement on Health. Māori health research is often driven by communities, so we will provide support for iwi and community groups to undertake research that addresses self-identified issues and opportunities.

We will continue to invest in Pacific health research to contribute to improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Pacific peoples.

With ongoing improvements to our funding processes, policies and opportunities, we also aim to reduce barriers to participation in research, making our systems and funding more accessible to other priority population groups⁴, such as disabled people, women, people living in rural communities, Asian and other ethnic communities, people from refugee-backgrounds, children and young people who are, or have been, in state care, people who are homeless and rainbow populations.

Invest in the people and capability New Zealand needs now and for the future: Engage health professionals in research.

Through a range of health delivery research opportunities, the HRC will bring together health researchers and health professionals, to build cross-sectoral experience and insights and make meaningful contributions to health outcomes in priority areas.

⁴ The Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027 identifies priority population groups as Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled people, women, people living in rural communities, some ethnic communities, people from refugee-backgrounds, children and young people who are, or have been, in state care, people who are homeless and rainbow populations.

In addition to this, the HRC's investment in independent research organisations will support nationally significant health research capability which brings long-term benefits to health, the economy, environment, and society. Through dedicated funding, we will support this critical capability and expertise.

Add value through connection and collaboration: Work collaboratively to identify priorities, needs and research opportunities to strengthen the health and science systems.

We will work with agencies to ensure HRC's funding addresses priority issues, adds value to the health and science systems, and is positioned for impact – thanks to direct engagement with the agencies that can use and apply the research outcomes to improve policy, practice and service provision.

Our International Research Strategy will help support broader implementation of the New Zealand Health Research Strategy, which recognises the importance of connecting and collaborating internationally. The strategy will enhance the many vital connections and contributions the HRC already makes to international forums to advance best practice, and to increase the value of health research.

Support the safe and ethical conduct of health research: Provide advice on research ethics, monitoring and regulation, including new medicines and technologies.

The use of gene technology has been identified by the government as potentially beneficial in healthcare and other sectors, which has led to new rules around its use. It will now be easier to research, develop and manufacture innovative therapies in New Zealand, such as using a patient's own cells to help fight cancer.

As part of the HRC's role, our Gene Technology Advisory Committee assesses the scientific merit of studies to transfer genes from one species to another and makes recommendations to the Director-General of Health. Through the work of this committee and our Standing Committee on Therapeutic Trials, which assesses applications involving clinical trials for the use of new medicines, the HRC will make recommendations on the safety and efficacy of research proposals, in line with updated practices and regulations.

Through our communication channels, the HRC will also continue to share updated ethics developments and articles of note with the research community.

Our performance measures

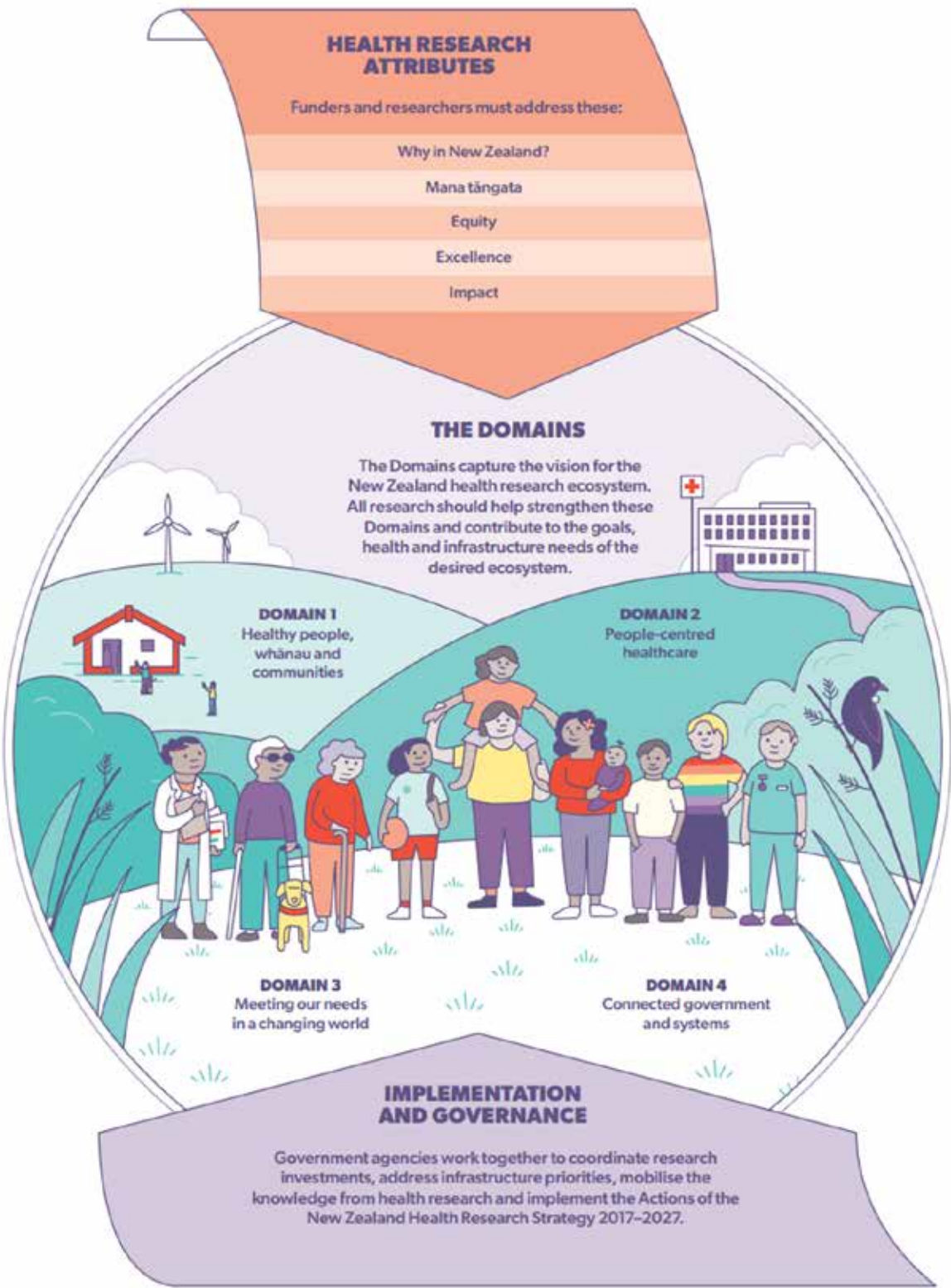
Strategic Intentions (Priority Actions)	Intended Outcomes	Our target for 2028	How we will measure our progress	Baseline
Science, Innovation and Technology benefits:				
Support the safe and ethical conduct of health research: Provide advice on research ethics, monitoring and regulation, including new medicines and technologies.	Research harnessing new technologies and innovations is undertaken safely and ethically in New Zealand.	By 2028, we will review and update the Terms of Reference for HRC's Gene Technology Advisory Committee (GTAC).	We will report when the update to existing GTAC Terms of Reference ⁵ is published.	New activity.
Health system benefits:				
Add value through connection and collaboration: Work collaboratively to identify priorities, needs and research opportunities to strengthen the health and science systems.	Through collaboration, partnership and targeted investment, research is responsive to health needs and priorities and research evidence and solutions are effectively translated and implemented by the next and end-users of the health system.	By 2027, we will strengthen our investment in health delivery research to better reflect current health sector needs and priorities, identified through collaborative work with Health New Zealand and Ministry of Health.	The objectives for HRC's investment in Health Delivery Research are currently defined in an Investment Signal ⁶ . We will report when the Investment Signal has been updated and published.	New activity.
Invest in the people and capability New Zealand needs now and for the future: Engage health professionals in research.	Alongside health researchers, health professionals are a core part of the research workforce, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and expertise to embed research into healthcare.	At least 30% of workforce positions funded through major grant types will be held by those trained as health practitioners.	Percentage of workforce positions on active contracts for major investigator-initiated grant types (each with total value ≥\$150,000) held by individuals who have trained as health practitioners.	In 2023, 45% of workforce positions on active contracts for major grant types were held by individuals trained as health practitioners.
Drive health research excellence, innovation and impact: Target investment to increase access, timeliness and quality of healthcare.	Quality evidence underpins quality healthcare, while innovative solutions improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the health system.	By 2028, we expect to see an increase in benefits from healthcare delivery research reported per year, to reflect improvements made to our health delivery investment in 2020.	Profile research outputs reported annually that are relevant to access, timeliness and quality of health services, such as number of new or improved clinical guidelines, technologies, interventions, policies or processes.	From 2020-2022, 204 healthcare delivery research outputs were reported across our investment, including 26 from Health Delivery Projects.

5 Gene Technology Advisory Committee terms of reference | Health Research Council of New Zealand (hrc.govt.nz)
6 https://gateway.hrc.govt.nz/funding/downloads/2024_Health_Delivery_Research_Investment_Signal.pdf

Appendix 1: The HRC's reporting requirements

Forward-looking	Performance-based
<p>The Statement of Intent signals our intentions for the next four years and medium-term measures of performance (produced every three years and required under the Crown Entities Act 2004)</p>	<p>The Annual Report outlines our performance in the previous year; details our progress on performance measures; and includes our financial statements (required annually under the Crown Entities Act 2004)</p>
<p>The HRC's three-yearly Investment Plan, provides details of HRC funding opportunities for the next three years to send stable signals to the research community (required by MBIE)</p>	<p>Six-monthly and quarterly financial reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six-monthly and quarterly financial reports: • These include exceptions-based six-monthly reports against the SPE and the Crown Funding Agreement/Output Agreement, as well as quarterly financial reports against the SPE and the Crown Funding Agreement/ Output Agreement with the Ministry of Health and MBIE
<p>The Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) contains forecast performance for the next year and financial information (required annually under the 2013 amendments to the Crown Entities Act 2004)</p>	<p>The Investment Impact Report demonstrates the impact that HRC investment has had and provides advice on increasing the impact of future investments (required every three years to inform budget bids by the Ministry of Health and MBIE)</p>

Appendix 2: New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework



Appendix 3:

The HRC's functions under the Health Research Council Act 1990

- a. To advise the Minister* on national health research policy.
- b. To administer funds granted to the Council for the purpose of implementing national health research policy.
- c. To negotiate, once every three years, the bulk funding allocations that may be made to the Council by the Government for the funding of health research.
- d. To foster the recruitment, education, training, and retention of those engaged in health research in New Zealand.
- e. To initiate and support health research.
- f. To encourage initiatives into health research by soliciting research proposals and applications, particularly in areas considered by the Council to have a high priority.
- g. To consult, for the purpose of establishing priorities in relation to health research, with:
 - (i) the Minister of Health
 - (ii) the Ministry of Health
 - (iii) District Health Boards
 - (iv) other persons who fund or produce research, whether in the public sector or the private sector
 - (v) persons who have knowledge of health issues from the consumer perspective.
- h. To promote and disseminate the results of health research in ways that will be most effective in encouraging their contribution to health science, health policy, and healthcare delivery.
- i. To advertise actively for applications for grants to support proposals or personal awards in relation to health research.
- j. To appoint the members of the Biomedical Research Committee, the Public Health Research Committee, the Māori Health Committee and the Ethics Committee.
- k. To ensure the development and application of appropriate assessment standards by committees or subcommittees that assess health research proposals.
- l. To administer any additional funds that may be made available to the Council from either public or private sources for the support of health research.

**The Act was written when the Minister of Health both owned, and managed the funding for, the HRC.*



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Published by the Health Research Council of New Zealand

PO Box 5541, Victoria Street West, Auckland 1142, New Zealand
Telephone: 09 303 5200
Email: info@hrc.govt.nz

This document is available on the Health Research Council of New Zealand
Website: <https://www.hrc.govt.nz>