

Request for Proposals



Health Research
Council of
New Zealand
Te Kaunihera Rangahau Hauora o Aotearoa

March 2018



Health Research
Council of
New Zealand



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

2018 MSD-HRC Research Partnership

A joint research initiative funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand and Ministry of Social Development.

Overview

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) and the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) have formed a joint research initiative to support innovative research and advance the strategic objectives of both organisations. It is anticipated that this partnership will identify new approaches to case management that can be implemented within MSD's operating system to help achieve improved outcomes for people with health or disability concerns. The partnership will build on HRC investment to strengthen the use of research evidence to improve New Zealand's health and social support system.

This initiative is a component of the HRC's Partnership Programme, through which the HRC forms strategic partnerships with funders and stakeholders to develop the evidence-base in key areas of need.

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), the HRC and MSD ('the funding partners') are seeking to fund research in the following areas:

1. Projects identifying innovative approaches for case management services which facilitate enhanced employment outcomes for clients with a health condition or disability.
2. A literature review (such as a systematic review or meta-analysis) of approaches that are effective in achieving employment outcomes for people who have a health condition or disability.

The target group for this investment are people who receive a working-age benefit from MSD and have a health condition or disability. Disabled people and people with health conditions can face varied barriers to employment and can have diverse support needs. International research has revealed the significance of employment to an individual's health and wellbeing, and there is a growing understanding that many disabled people and people with health conditions can and want to work.

Applicants will need to outline how their proposal addresses the RFP and provide a clear justification for the proposed research along with a description of the team's ability to deliver the specific components of the research. Applicants will also need to provide a fully costed budget.

A total funding pool of \$1.43 million (exclusive of GST) is available for allocation. The funding partners invite applications for funding of up to **\$475,000** (fully-costed, exclusive of GST) and duration of up to **2 years**.

It is anticipated that the contracted projects will begin as soon as practicable, with funding available for an immediate start following notification of outcomes in August 2018.

Application procedure

All forms and guidelines are available via [HRC Gateway](#). The process below is outlined in more detail in the ***Application Guidelines for 2018 MSD-HRC Research RFP***. These guidelines provide full details on the application process for this RFP.

STEP 1: REGISTRATION

Applicants are required to submit a Registration via HRC Gateway (the HRC's online application system) by **1:00pm, Wednesday 4 April 2018**. This web-based form signals the intent of the applicant to submit a full application.

Once submitted, the Registration is forwarded (via HRC Gateway) to the applicant's host Research Office. The Research Office will need to approve the Registration and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices, the application will be forwarded directly (via HRC Gateway) to the HRC.

Please note that first named investigators and all other named investigators must have an HRC Gateway account, to be able to be included in an application.

STEP 2: FULL APPLICATION

Applicants are then required to complete a full application using the application form for this round (JV218-MSD-HRC), the budget form for this round (JV218-Budget) and the New Zealand Standard CV template, and submit via HRC Gateway by **1:00pm, Wednesday 2 May 2018**.

Once submitted, the full application is forwarded (via HRC Gateway) to the applicant's host Research Office. The Research Office will need to approve the full application and forward it to the HRC. For organisations without research offices, the application will be forwarded directly (via HRC Gateway) to the HRC.

A complete PDF of the full application is created by the HRC Gateway after the deadline for submission, at which time it can be printed in hard copy and sent to the HRC to arrive by **5:00pm, Friday 4 May 2018**. Refer to the ***Application Guidelines for 2018 MSD-HRC Research RFP*** for details of this process.

Applicants must meet the deadlines indicated above for their proposal to be eligible.

ASSESSMENT

Step 1: Peer review

The scientific integrity of full applications will be assessed through an external peer review process which is managed by the HRC. This involves comprehensive peer review of all applications undertaken by independent national and international experts.

Step 2: Applicant rebuttal

Applicants are given an opportunity to view the peer review reports for their application and provide a rebuttal to the comments made. This is not an opportunity to rewrite major sections of a proposal, but rather an opportunity to respond to specific reviewer comments, to answer questions raised by the reviewer, or to clarify an issue so that your proposal may be viewed as equitably as possible by the Assessing Committee.

Step 3: Assessment

An independent Assessing Committee will then assess full applications (full proposal, peer review reports and applicant rebuttal) using criteria outlined in the *Application Guidelines for 2018 MSD-HRC Research RFP*. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these criteria.

The Assessing Committee will make recommendations for funding, to be considered and approved by the HRC and Ministry of Social Development. Applicants will be informed of final funding decisions in **August 2018**.

Key Dates Summary

Action	Date
Registration due (via HRC Gateway)	1pm, 4 April 2018
Full application due (via HRC Gateway)	1pm, 2 May 2018
Full application hard-copies due	5pm, 4 May 2018
External peer review (managed by the HRC)	May/June 2018
Applicant rebuttal opens	8am, 19 June 2018
Applicant rebuttal due	1pm, 26 June 2018
Applicants notified of outcome	August 2018

Background

CLIENTS WITH COMPLEX BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

MSD's supports and services are supporting many clients into work and enabling them to come off a benefit. Analysis shows this is working effectively for job seekers who have been on a benefit for less than a year, and most sole parents. However, these services are not having the same impact for those clients with more complex barriers to employment, including disabled people, people with health conditions and people with limited educational levels or skills. Many of these clients remain far removed from the labour market despite the fact that many want to work and have a lot to offer to employers.

There are a wide range of factors that contribute to the development of health conditions and disabilities and act as barriers to employment, including:

- Growing up in poverty as a child and continuing to live in poverty
- Living in poor housing
- Poor access to health and support services

The Health and Social Sectors are always looking for new ways to work collaboratively to identify new and innovative approaches to support individuals with a health condition or disability into employment, to improve their health outcomes, independence and overall wellbeing in the long-term.

CLIENTS WITH A HEALTH CONDITION OR DISABILITY

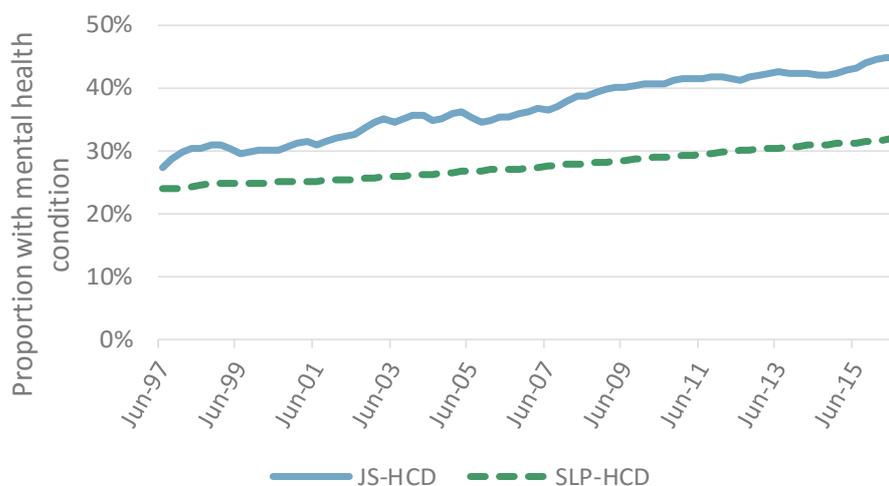
MSD is focusing on developing more effective service interventions for clients with a health condition or disability. We know that people within this cohort have strengths and skills to bring to the workforce, and that many of them want to work. In addition, analysis shows that many of these clients could move into sustainable employment with the right supports. On the other hand, without targeted supports many can be at risk of remaining far removed from the labour market, resulting in poor economic and social outcomes in the long-term, which international research has found is generally harmful to health.

CLIENTS WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

MSD and HRC are seeking research that identifies evidence-based case management services which facilitate improved employment and health outcomes for people with any kind of health condition or disability. Given the growing representation of mental health service users in the health and welfare systems, however, this research should have a strong focus on mental health.

Mental health conditions are the most common type of primary health condition for MSD clients receiving a health-related benefit. Mental health conditions make up 45 per cent of primary incapacities for clients receiving Jobseeker Support - Health Condition or Disability (JS-HCD) and 35 per cent of primary incapacities for clients receiving Supported Living Payment (SLP). Moreover, the proportion of clients with a mental health condition has been growing substantially in recent decades (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Proportion of clients with a mental health incapacity as their primary incapacity



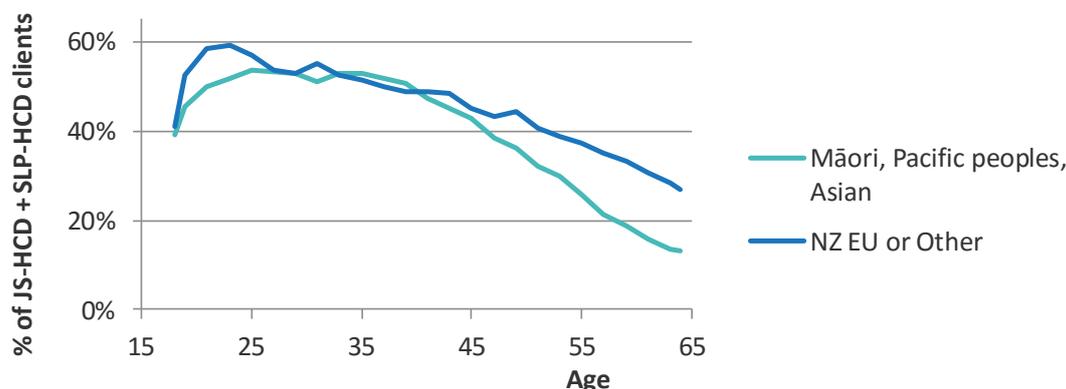
Stress and depression represent a significant proportion (41 per cent) of JS-HCD clients with a mental health condition, whereas bipolar disorder and schizophrenia represent a larger proportion of the SLP-HCD cohort (47 per cent).

The growing proportion of clients with a mental health condition is reflective of the fact that poor mental health tends to affect younger clients. In the 2015/16 New Zealand Health Survey, one in five respondents aged 15-34 who reported receiving a benefit in the last year had experienced psychological distress in the four weeks prior to the survey. One in three had been told by a doctor they have a mood disorder, and one in five had been told they had an anxiety disorder. These rates are around three times higher than those for young people not getting a benefit.

Young people who come onto benefit with mild or moderate mental health conditions often have poor longer-term outcomes (e.g. social isolation, poor physical and mental well-being, low labour market attachment, risk of increased offending, difficult social relationships). Given the increasing proportion of young people with mental health conditions, it is important to ensure that there are effective services available that intervene early, to address conditions before they get worse. In addition, an increased understanding within government of the relationship between employment and health has meant that there is a growing interest in improving access to integrated health and employment services for people with a mental health condition.

Figure 2 shows how the incidence of mental health issues varies by age and ethnicity. It shows that half of MSD clients who are under 35 and receive a health-related benefit have a mental health condition, whereas less than a third of the older clients have a mental health condition. The relative incidence is particularly low for older people with Māori, Pacific peoples or Asian ethnicity.

Figure 2: Proportion of HCD clients (JS and SLP combined) with a mental health condition, by age and ethnicity



Many clients within this segment are likely to receive a benefit for the rest of their lives. Depending on the nature and severity of each individual’s health condition or disability, this may be what is best for a number of them. Evidence has shown, however, that there is also a number of clients in this segment who are able and want to work and whose health and overall wellbeing would improve in employment.

The growing proportion of MSD clients with a mental health condition shows us that there is a lot we have to learn in order to provide the right supports for these clients to help them take steps towards employment and improved health. By addressing this trend through the development of targeted services informed by robust research, it is likely we could have a positive impact on this population’s overall health and wellbeing by supporting them to employment. This will also inform the approach we take in developing targeted services for other groups of New Zealanders who are currently far from the labour market.

Research Project Requirements

RESEARCH APPROACH

Applicants will need to outline how their proposal addresses the scope of the RFP and provide a clear justification for the proposed approach along with a description of the research team’s ability to deliver the specific components of the research. Applicants will also need to provide a fully costed budget.

Researchers are strongly encouraged to work in collaboration with social support providers, health and disability support workers and other research providers, for example, to increase the likelihood for effective knowledge transfer. It would be beneficial for researchers to engage or work directly with people who have lived experience of health conditions or disabilities while undertaking this work.

Researchers must demonstrate an approach that aligns to MSD’s priorities in improving clients’ employment and health outcomes. Applicants must demonstrate their ability to apply appropriate methodologies including data and literature analysis, while conducting research that captures the voice of the client to provide advice on the development of services that can be delivered within MSD’s operating environment.

This research initiative will run concurrently to the Mental Health Inquiry established by the New Zealand Government in January 2018 and the upcoming OECD report on employment and mental health services jointly commissioned by MSD and the Ministry

of Health. Research funded through this RFP should complement, rather than duplicate, the work of these two large projects and deliver on the objective of identifying innovative and evidence-based case management services.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of research funded through this RFP are:

- To fund value-added high-quality research that prioritises the wellbeing of MSD clients and aligns with MSD's functions as set out in legislation.
- To promote and engender a culture of scientific excellence, relevance and value-added innovation in MSD in order to facilitate the best outcomes for clients with a health condition or disability.
- To ensure meaningful multidisciplinary engagement and partnership (supporting collaboration between teams that can contribute to the goals of this funding initiative).
- To identify, attract and develop the best people to conduct high-quality research that meets the scope of the initiative.

RESEARCH SCOPE

The focus of the RFP is on projects identifying innovative approaches for MSD case management services which facilitate enhanced employment outcomes. The target group for this investment are working age MSD clients who have a health condition or disability.

The funding partners are also seeking proposals to conduct a literature review (such as a systematic review or meta-analysis) of approaches that are effective in achieving employment outcomes for people who have a health condition or disability.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Clear and coherently written applications are essential in allowing the assessing committee to effectively read and assess applications submitted to this funding opportunity.

A research proposal will need to provide information on:

- How the research project represents excellent science, is properly scoped and clearly achievable within the specified timeframe (it is important that research proposals are realistically able to be completed in the 24-month timeframe).
- How the research activity is linked to potential outcomes for people with health or disability concerns.
- The appropriateness, soundness and rigour of the study methodology and design, while allowing for solutions to be developed in a flexible manner.
- The potential for knowledge transfer and the processes or steps in place that would support uptake of research findings. This includes how the research team might engage key stakeholders such as representatives from the social support sector in the implementation of any change that may be recommended in response to the research findings.
- The mix of expertise within the research team. This may include seeking research design and method expertise, the involvement of researchers with extensive social support experience, and/or collaborating with service providers, health and disability support workers and consumers, for example.

- The consideration of health equity issues and the specific health needs of Māori and Pacific people within the context of the research topic, and the recognition of different cultural perspectives on ill-health and wellness.

BUDGET

A total funding pool of approximately \$1.43 million (exclusive of GST) is available for allocation. The funding partners invite applications for funding of up to **\$475,000** (fully-costed, exclusive of GST) and duration of up to **2 years**.

Funding will be available for an immediate start for the research project following notification of outcomes in August 2018. Please carefully consider the project start date included in the application, as applicants will be held to what they have proposed. Applicants should take into account the timeframe for obtaining ethical approval (if appropriate) and should ensure that this doesn't delay the start of the research project.

Applicants should note that if competing proposals are equal in terms of their scientific value, the funding partners will consider best value for money offered by each proposal.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Research contracts for this partnership initiative will be tailored specifically to meet the needs of the funding partners and allow for review of the research at key milestones or annually.

Actual deliverables will be confirmed with the selected providers; however, deliverables must include the following elements:

- A final deliverable report detailing results, key findings and recommendations of the complete programme of research. The report will also be required to include an outline of any planned implementation activities, including the processes or steps that will support uptake of the research findings.

The research provider may also be required to provide verbal presentations to the funding partners on research progress and/or findings.

In addition to research deliverables, **six-monthly** progress reports will also be required for the project. These reports detail progress of the project and highlight any risks to its progress. The research provider will complete and submit their progress reports via the HRC's online reporting system.

An **HRC end of contract** report is also required upon completion of the research activity.

RESEARCH TEAM AND ENGAGEMENT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Applicants responding to this RFP will have experience in undertaking health research, a strong academic record and a diverse range of skills that enables them to effectively work with research stakeholders.

It is expected that the composition of research teams developing applications in response to this RFP will reflect the focus of the initiative and that teams will work within an appropriate governance structure.

The funding partners are strongly supportive of collaborative approaches to this research initiative. This should include cross-sectoral collaboration in the composition of the research team, to include expertise from a range of backgrounds, disciplines and research institutions.

All applications submitted in response to this RFP should provide clear details of how research teams will engage key stakeholders in the social support sector at the different

stages of the research project, particularly around communication and implementation of the results of the research.

DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Dissemination of the research findings nationally will be an important component of the research project. Applications should incorporate the most appropriate methods for communication of research results to a broad range of stakeholders (including the funding partners).

The research providers will be expected to ensure that all information is tailored to the needs of the intended audience, so that research findings can be of maximum utility. It is also expected that the quality of the research will be reflected through publication in international, peer-reviewed journals.

General Notes

DECISION ADVICE

No legal obligations will arise between the funding partners and applicants for this Request for Proposals until such time as the HRC enters into a contract with the successful applicant.

PRIVACY PROVISIONS

In the event that an application is successful, the HRC reserves the right to release applicants' names, details of the host institution/company, contact details (work phone, fax or email), contract title and funding awarded for public interest purposes and to meet the statutory requirements of the Health Research Council of New Zealand Act 1990.

HRC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

This RFP is a component of the HRC's Partnership Programme, through which the HRC forms strategic partnerships with funders and stakeholders to target resources towards developing the evidence-base in key areas of need and strengthen the links between policy and practice. This collaborative approach to research ensures that stakeholders obtain the answers to pressing questions, but split the cost with multiple interested parties. The HRC's processes ensure that the track record of the research team, the scientific merit and the design and methods of the proposal will deliver the highest quality of evidence. Only limited funds are available to launch these co-operative research initiatives and the opportunities are strictly prioritised.

MAILING ADDRESS

Printed hard copies of applications should be sent to the Health Research Council's office as shown below:

<i>Mailing Address:</i> Health Research Council of New Zealand PO Box 5541, Wellesley Street AUCKLAND <i>Attn: Scott Aitken</i>	<i>Physical/Courier Address:</i> Health Research Council of New Zealand Level 3, 110 Stanley Street AUCKLAND <i>Attn: Scott Aitken</i>
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ENQUIRIES

All enquiries related to this Request for Proposals should be directed to Scott Aitken, Research Investment Manager, Research Partnerships (09 282 4135 or saitken@hrc.govt.nz).