



**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

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

# 2026 Health Delivery Research Investment Signal

---

Understanding the scope  
and intent of the HRC's  
investment in health  
delivery research for 2026

Discovering a healthier tomorrow

## HRC objectives for investment

Health delivery research investment supports research that will directly contribute to improved healthcare delivery by informing decisions or changes to policy, practice or systems in the New Zealand health and disability sector.

## Health research priorities

New Zealand's investment in health research must contribute to achieving the goals of the health system and the science, innovation and technology system.<sup>1</sup> The HRC is the principal government funder of health research.

For the health system, the Government is committed to improving health outcomes by providing New Zealanders with timely access to high-quality health services.<sup>2</sup> A key focus for the science system is to harness the benefits of research and innovation to drive economic transformation. The Government wants to ensure that the research it funds is progressing its priorities, and that they have a clear pathway to translate new ideas into successful commercial enterprise.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is important for researchers and research organisations to identify how research to be funded by the HRC will add value, deliver impact and contribute to these goals and wider system performance.

## HRC health delivery research investment

All HRC investment must have a clear line of sight to improving health and/or economic outcomes for all New Zealanders.

HRC-funded research must meet the following requirements:

1. Research must be focused on health and improving health outcomes and/or the health system, where health outcomes are defined as:
  - a. absence or reduction of disease, symptoms or morbidity, and/or
  - b. timely access to quality healthcare, for all New Zealanders, including strengthening prevention of disease and injury, earlier diagnosis, earlier patient-specific (precision) intervention, and new and improved models of care, or medicines, treatments and cures, and/or
  - c. longer life expectancy, and/or
  - d. improved quality of life.
2. Research into the causes of ill health, or the determinants of health (e.g., environmental, socio-economic, cultural, and behavioural factors) must demonstrate a pathway to improvements in health outcomes and/or the health system (as defined above).
3. The research proposal provides an evidence base when describing areas of high health need and population groups with high health need.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, applications to the HRC health delivery research investment stream must:

4. have described the potential to directly inform decisions or changes to **health delivery** policy, practice or systems in New Zealand within the next 3-5 years,<sup>5</sup> and
5. be conducted in a **healthcare delivery setting**,<sup>6</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> [Letters of expectations for health statutory entities | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

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

<sup>3</sup> [Going For Growth | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#)

<sup>4</sup> [CO \(24\) 5: Needs-based Service Provision | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> **Health delivery** can include the delivery of healthcare, such as through prevention, detection, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, care and/or support, at all levels (i.e. primary through to tertiary and community-based care), and at a local, regional and/or national level in New Zealand, acknowledging that international connections can support this.

<sup>6</sup> A **healthcare delivery setting** is the physical, virtual, or community-based environment where health services are provided to improve, promote, and protect the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

6. have a clear connection to a **healthcare need**,<sup>7</sup> and
7. include **practicing clinicians** and/or health policymakers in the research team.<sup>8</sup>

Applications submitted to the health delivery investment stream that do not meet these requirements will be considered out-of-scope and therefore withdrawn and not eligible for funding.

The following research areas are commonly within the scope of health delivery, acknowledging that research may relate to more than one. Kaupapa Māori approaches to research are supported across all these disciplines.

- **Health services**  
Research to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health professionals and the healthcare system, investigating equity and timeliness of access to healthcare, and the quality and cost of healthcare to improve the health of individuals and populations.
- **Health economics**  
Research into economic aspects of healthcare delivery, including the value of healthcare systems, interventions (prevention and treatment), and user experiences.
- **Health technology**  
Research on innovations (technologies, tools and devices) where these are likely to impact clinical practice, healthcare service provision or health systems. Please note that the technology itself is not in scope for funding.
- **Clinical (later stages)**  
Clinical trials of new or existing clinical interventions focused on informing immediate changes to healthcare delivery for the intended health benefit of the New Zealand population (including results that can be applied in multiple regions or settings) and where study protocols and/or interventions have been adapted to New Zealand populations or conditions. For example, comparative effectiveness trials.
- **Implementation science**  
Research on methods and strategies (including evaluation) to promote the uptake of viable health research findings in policy, practice or systems to improve the quality and effectiveness of healthcare. Looking at what works, for whom, and in which circumstances, and identifying areas for potential (accessible and equitable) adaptation and scale-up.
- **Behavioural science**  
Interventions designed to address behavioural barriers around accessing healthcare and adhering to recommended treatments.

Before applying to any funding round, refer to the application guidelines for further guidance on the eligibility criteria and what is in and out of scope for the specific round. Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria or involve out-of-scope research activities will be withdrawn.

Council makes final decisions on funding, informed by the assessing committee recommendations. Their decisions take into account the quality and scientific rigour of the application (the key assessment criteria) as well as the HRC's priorities for health research and the balance of the HRC investment portfolio.

---

<sup>7</sup> **Healthcare needs** are expected to be identified with involvement of health delivery sector leadership or meaningful end-user involvement and substantiated by evidence of a gap in knowledge. As such, end-user engagement is expected, comprising consumer, clinical, health provider, health policy, support worker, community or population collaboration and/or partnership from the outset of the research proposal and throughout the research process.

<sup>8</sup> A **practicing clinician** provides clinical services in any setting under a formal work arrangement and is eligible to undertake clinical practice in New Zealand either under the Health Practitioners Competence Act 2003, through a current registration with the relevant responsible authority, or as a current member of Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand.