

# Vision Mātauranga review process for research commissioning

March 2020

## Introduction

The Healthier Lives' 2019-2024 research strategy identifies "Enacting Treaty partnership and Vision Mātauranga" as one of three foundational cross-cutting principles to guide all research activities. To support its mission-led research commissioning, Healthier Lives created a new robust, efficient and flexible process to embed Vision Mātauranga in research design at a formative stage.

### Former approach

Healthier Lives formerly assessed the Vision Mātauranga potential of a research proposal as an extension of the standard process of written scientific peer review, through the addition of a specific focus on Vision Mātauranga and inclusion of at least one Māori reviewer.

There were several limitations to this approach:

- It took place after most of the research design was completed and was therefore reactive. If changes in the research design were needed, it placed additional, un-resourced work on applicants and stakeholders and adversely affected Challenge timelines for getting new research underway.
- It placed a burden on a small pool of potential reviewers.
- A single reviewer with expertise in Vision Mātauranga might be unable to provide informed feedback on all aspects of a multi-disciplinary research proposal.

### New approach

National Science Challenges have been charged with developing innovative approaches to funding research. Processes involving collaborative and the exchange of ideas from multiple sources are well suited to support innovation. Healthier Lives therefore introduced a flexible, collaborative Vision Mātauranga review process that provides formative guidance and contributes to the development (rather than the revision) of research design. It involves the following steps:

#### **Step 1: Appointment of a Vision Mātauranga review panel**

A Vision Mātauranga (VM) review panel of 3-4 people is appointed to undertake the review of a specific investment stream. Panel members are selected to ensure a spread of topic knowledge and experience in relevant policy/provider/community contexts. They receive a briefing about the intent of the investment stream and relevant investment processes. The Challenge provides secretariat support to coordinate meetings, take notes of meetings, communicate findings to research applicants, and respond to panel members requests. The same VM panel is involved at each of the steps below to ensure continuity of advice. Its meetings can be held online or in person.

## **Step 2: Early draft outline of proposed research**

The research team is invited to submit an early draft outline of their research proposal. This brief outline (no more than a few pages) should contain enough detail to inform a discussion about the Vision Mātauranga and Māori engagement implications of the proposed research.

## **Step 3: Initial review of draft outline by Vision Mātauranga panel**

The research proposal is forwarded to the VM review panel in advance of a scheduled panel meeting. Panel members are not required to provide written feedback on the proposal – feedback is given through discussion at the meeting and recorded by a designated notetaker. However, panel members may submit their views in writing to assist the notetaker if they wish.

The meeting involves panel members presenting their personal reviews of the proposal, discussing options for improving its Vision Mātauranga and Māori engagement components, and deciding whether further review is required at the next stage of proposal development.

The notetaker produces draft notes of the meeting, including recommendations/advice for the research team and an indication of whether further review is required. The draft notes and recommendations/advice are sent to the panel for checking, amendment (if required) and approval.

## **Step 4: Panel report forwarded to applicant.**

The panel's approved recommendations/advice is forwarded to the applicant as soon as practicable to inform the development of a full proposal.

## **Step 5: Full proposal forwarded to Vision Mātauranga panel (if required)**

If further VM review was deemed necessary at step 3 above, the full proposal (once received) is sent to the VM review panel. At this point, the proposal is also sent out for traditional science review.

The VM review panel is reconvened to decide:

- Has the panel's advice been followed or alternative approaches justified?
- Are there any newly apparent opportunities for improving the application?
- Is further review required?

The panel may choose to invite the applicant to attend all or part of this meeting. Face-to-face discussion can be helpful for mutual understanding.

Following the meeting, written feedback (coordinated by the designated notetaker and approved by the panel) is sent to the applicant. Ideally, this feedback is sent at the same time as feedback from the science review process so that they can be considered together at the next step.

## **Step 6: Applicant response to feedback**

The applicant is invited to respond to the VM review panel's feedback, and their response is forwarded to the panel.

**Step 7: Panel guidance to Challenge**

If required, the panel is reconvened to discuss whether the remaining issues have been addressed sufficiently to make the application fundable as written. A written summary of this meeting and its recommendations is prepared by the notetaker and approved by panel members prior to further distribution. (The panel may choose to complete this step via email.)

The final recommendation from the panel and the applicant's response to it is included, alongside the outcomes of the science review, in the documentation considered by those making the funding decision.

**Step 8: Publication of research approach**

If a decision is taken to invest in the proposed research, details of the funded project's approach to Vision Mātauranga and Māori engagement is published on the Challenge website or within other resources as a learning resource for other research development.