

A BETTER  
START

E Tipu e Rea



# A Better Start : E Tipu e Rea

## Pathways to Impact 2019 – 2024

---

Improving the potential for all young New Zealanders

# Overview

The aim of A Better Start: E Tipu e Rea is to improve the potential for all young New Zealanders to lead a healthy and successful life. To achieve this, the Challenge is researching improved methods and tools to predict, prevent and intervene so children have a healthy weight, are successful learners and adolescents are emotionally and socially well-adjusted.

*Our goal is to produce research that facilitates research outcomes that support widespread societal improvements for children to have a healthy weight, be successful learners and emotionally and socially well-adjusted*

## Delivering impact

A key principle for the National Science Challenges is not just about delivering excellent quality research but to facilitate research outcomes to support widespread positive societal change. In order to achieve this A Better Start has embedded a cross-Challenge focus on early stakeholder engagement to map out clear pathways to impact that include: wide reach, early engagement, and modelling to scale-up interventions.

- **Wide reach**

More than half of all NZ children would potentially benefit from impacts delivered from Challenge research. Our approach of prediction, early detection and responsive intervention aims to deliver optimum returns for public investment in evidence-based policy change.

Example: In partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Challenge produced a comprehensive report as part of the Well Child Tamariki Ora Review. This report provides evidence based recommendations in 13 brief evidence reviews to inform improvements to the national programme

- **Early engagement with communities and policy makers**

The Challenge required all strategic investment proposals were encouraged to invite key community-based stakeholders interested in being part of the project team and relevant agency representatives to planning workshops. These discussions resulted in each strategic investment clearly articulating the implementation aspects with key partners as part of their research design.

Example: Plunket to help design and test parent toolkit.

- **Modelling to scale-up interventions**

Example: In tranche 1, the Resilient Teens theme developed a digital platform to engage young adolescents in a pilot programme

In tranche 1 Big Data developed a micro-simulation model. In tranche 2 the model will be expanded and used to test pilot interventions with Successful Learning and Healthy Weight Themes.

# Knowledge generators

## ***Undertaking high quality research***

*Our Challenge priorities:*

- *Co-creation*
- *Deliver impact*
- *Integrate current themes*

To prepare for the second period, we undertook further consultation on the direction of research, how to build on it and how to translate research into impact. This consultation informed the 2019-2024 strategy. The Strategy has addressed the central question of how to continue to support the aspirations of our communities and give effect to the Vision Mātauranga policy (MoRST, 2007) in our research and operations. The Challenge completed widespread engagement with scientists, stakeholders, end-users and communities at the end of 2017. We shared findings from Challenge research activities, discussed potential second period research priorities and sought to bring in new researchers and stakeholders to contribute to meeting A Better Start's objective. The process involved two major coordinated activities: consultation with scientists, stakeholders and communities, and in-depth engagement with key stakeholder organisations.

## **Co-creation**

- Ongoing and planned engagement with next and end-users
- Early input to inform feasibility, acceptability, uptake, cost to adequately prepare for implementation at scale in a real-world setting

# Knowledge dissemination

## ***Uptake of research outcomes***

- Identify target audiences
- Publications, systematic reviews, reports – contributing to the knowledge base of the science community
- Conference presentations, national meetings, professional groups
- Community groups and local stakeholders involved in research activity
- Tools and resources – next and end users

# Knowledge translation

## ***Making practical use out of research outcomes***

*Our Challenge priorities:*

- *Integrated – collaboration between researchers and decision-makers*
- *Deliver impact*
- *Integrate current themes*

Ongoing and planned engagement with next and end-users

Identify potential adopters of knowledge and change enablers

Assessment willingness and readiness to change

Build credibility and familiarity

Determine capacity to provide ongoing support

## Consultation workshops

The Directorate and science leadership team hosted seven science and stakeholder workshops around the country. The workshops included Māori and Pasifika workshops that sought specific community and cultural perspectives to science planning and delivery. The workshops were a crucial step to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement and participation through the building of trust and mutual understanding.

Through the workshops we sought to:

- Work with communities, stakeholders and end-users crucial to delivering impact. Without their involvement our important research findings are unlikely to be implemented.
- Ensure the Challenge engaged with the country's most talented researchers in our theme areas. Refreshing and extending expertise is crucial to maintain research excellence. This has led to a doubling of the number of researchers involved in the Challenge and considerable expansion of disciplines within theme teams.

### In-depth engagement

The Directorate met with key stakeholders critical to widespread delivery and impact of research to seek their input on relevance, innovation and potential for scaling. These key stakeholders include the Iwi Chairs Whānau Ora group; Ngāti Whātua kī Orākei; Ngāi Tūāhuriri (Ngāi Tahu); the Ministry of Health's Child Health Advisor and Emerging Health Technology Group, the Ministry of Education

early education, school achievement, the Virtual Health Information Network, the Ministry of Education's Christchurch community projects leader; Plunket Chief Strategy and Performance Officer and Plunket National Advisor Policy and Advocacy, the Children's Commissioner, Kids First Kindergarten CEO; Le Va, Te Rau Matatini, Youthline Manukau Head of Science and Principal of One Tree Hill and Tamaki, Tangaroa and Papakura Colleges, Principals in the Christchurch Linwood Community of Learning, (Kāhui Ako) and Principals of the Waitemata Kāhui Ako in Auckland; Christchurch Pasifika Advisory Group; Christchurch Child Health Community practitioners; Hawkes Bay stakeholder community (Ngāti Kahungunu, Decile 1-10 primary school principals, Decile 1 early childhood education centres, Hawkes Bay District Health Board Child Health team, Hawkes Bay Community Fitness Board) and many others.

From the consultation process the Challenge summarised the following areas of feedback:

- **Culturally responsive:** Giving effect to Vision Mātaraunga further enhances our themes and has guided the development of research capability within the teams and the co-creation and co-design of research with stakeholders and communities. We have developed management guidelines to measure co-creation of funded projects and included a Vision Mātauranga assessment framework as part of the evaluation of research projects. There was a strong call for a Māori and Pasifika-led research investment. The Strategy 2019-2024 outlines a key initiative in this space.
- **Strengths-based approach:** A recurring point made by stakeholders, notably Māori and Pasifika is to avoid deficit thinking, labelling and framing. Using conventional health and education terminology is alienating and disengaging for these communities. We have re-titled the three major themes Healthy Weight (previously obesity), Successful Learning (previously literacy) and Resilient Teens (previously adolescent mental health) to lead strengths-based thinking and process throughout the Challenge.
- **A child is a member of a whānau and a community:** A common refrain at our seven consultation workshops was that child-focused research must be more inclusive. Any interventions that focus on a child may have a positive effect on the whānau and community in which they live that we should recognise and measure. While our 10-year performance indicators focus on children, the benefits of intervention may be substantively larger and should be measured.
- **Themes:** This is one of our Challenge priorities for the second period and is discussed in detail later in this section (entitled 2019-2024 Priorities in Approach).

Our Future Strategy has been developed with this feedback in mind.



# Sustainability

Our stakeholders endorsed the three health, learning and well-being themes as significant and of continuing relevance. The consensus was that they should continue into the next phase (Figure 1). This was further informed by a Challenge-commissioned independent analysis of New Zealand's aligned research landscape across the three theme areas that found only a small quantum of HRC-funded research was aligned to the Challenge research focus on prediction, detection and early intervention in our three themes.

Therefore our focus in the prediction and prevention space offers the greatest impact to addressing these national-scale issues. The analysis of aligned research has also enabled the Challenge to have confidence that it has consulted with or interacts with the key aligned research teams and organisations nationally. With significant momentum on a clear research pathway, changing themes or research priorities at this mid-point would prevent delivery of our performance indicators. Consultation endorsed the need for A Better Start's 2019-2024 Strategy to build on the research pathway created in the first period.

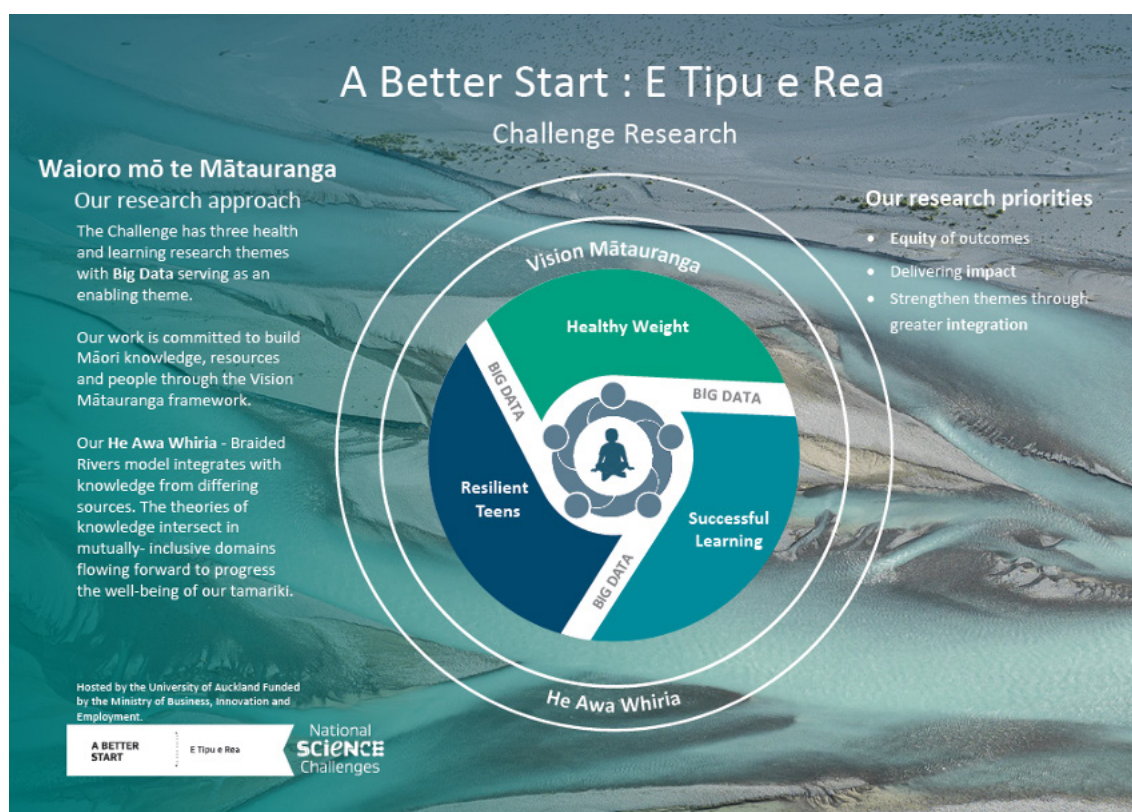


Figure 1: A Better Start: E Tipu e Rea Challenge Research

The importance of these three themes is reflected in government initiatives and position papers in recent years and within new strategies. The Ministry of Health have recognised childhood obesity as a major health problem and established a Childhood Obesity Plan (2015) that included a national referral pathway via the B4 School Check for 4 to 5 year-old children who are overweight or obese. A recent report from the Education Review Office (ERO, 2018) on primary schools in New Zealand noted that raising expectations of our children's early literacy success in Years 1 and 2 at school was a critical area to be addressed. More effective assessment and interventions in Year 1 will help to meet this need. In these areas Challenge researchers have complementary research priorities that focus on early detection and prevention and early intervention.

A recent report from the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor entitled *Improving the Transition: Reducing Social and Psychological Morbidity During Adolescence* (2011) raised concerns about mental health issues in the period when young people move from childhood to adulthood. The platform of research advanced within our Resilient Teens theme directly addresses the importance of early detection and management of youth mental health problems as highlighted in the Chief Science Advisor's report. By bringing together the outcomes of the extensive consultation and engagement, the Directorate and theme leaders reviewed the research approach and focus for research in the second period of the mission. The Challenge's Board Science Advisory Panel, Kāhui, Pasifika advisory group and supported the approach to form the strategy and all endorse this strategy.

### Assembling research expertise

We are also building momentum in assembling the best minds and research expertise in our field through expansion of our expert scientists in our research teams as well as through collaborative opportunities nationally and internationally. In Section 4 we outline the depth of expertise across our teams and how senior researchers are mentoring and supporting the development of emerging and future researchers, particularly encouraging teams to focus on growing the pool of Māori and Pasifika research expertise through scholarships and stipends.



# A Better Start Strategy 2019-2024

## Challenge approach and research priorities

The iterative and rigorous consultation and engagement process ensures our Strategy 2019-2024 leverages on the learnings and outcomes from the first research period, and responds to new perspectives arising from close engagement with the research sector communities and public sector and NGO policy advisers. The process has triggered a refresh in research teams and in our Science Advisory Panel.

Our Strategy 2019-2024 outlines three cross-Challenge priorities: equity, impact, and strengthening our research themes through more integration. To reinforce and braid together current research the Challenge has two cross-cutting research priorities for the second period of its mission – Sleep and Life Course. Big Data remains an important enabling theme across all research activity. Our work is committed to support the achievement of the potential of Māori knowledge, resources and people through the Vision Mātauranga framework. Our He Awa Whiria - Braided Rivers model guides how we integrate knowledge from differing sources so they intersect in mutually-inclusive domains flowing forward to progress the well-being of our tamariki.

# Pathways to impact



A BETTER  
START

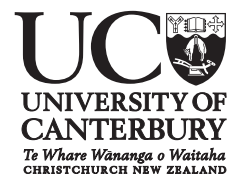
E Tipu e Rea

National  
**science**  
Challenges

**Hosted by the Liggins Institute at the University of Auckland**



**LIGGINS**  
INSTITUTE



Funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment



A BETTER  
START

E Tipu e Rea

National  
**Science**  
Challenges