

Veterans' Health Advisory Panel

Stage One: Application Pack for 2017 Research Funding

Request for research proposals on veterans' health

The Veterans' Health Advisory Panel (the Panel) is seeking applications from New Zealand-based researchers (individuals or teams) interested in undertaking projects which improve the mental, physical, and social health outcomes of New Zealand veterans.

The Panel has developed *Guiding Principles for Investment (Guiding Principles)* to attract proposals that demonstrate the research goals of,—

- recognising a broad holistic view of health
- having impact in terms of policy and practice outcomes
- being relevant to New Zealand veterans, including Māori
- focusing on contemporary veterans
- where appropriate, aiming for collaborative partnerships and co-design.

The *Guiding Principles* are attached as [Appendix A](#).

The Panel welcomes any innovative research proposals that are within the scope of the *Guiding Principles*. We are particularly interested in receiving research proposals that

- address a significant need evident in the New Zealand veteran population; and/or
- utilise and compliment any available pre-collected data relating to veterans' health and wellbeing.

The focus for the 2016 funding round was addressing veterans' mental health and wellbeing. It is unlikely that research with a similar focus will be funded in the 2017 round.

Information attached

Brief information about the Panel and veterans is attached.

Two-stage process

A two stage application process is being used, requiring the researcher to submit a,—

1. Stage One: a brief 1–4 page research **project inquiry**— expected to be reviewed by the Panel in **September 2017**
2. Stage Two: a full research **project proposal**—subject to being invited to submit by the Panel – expected to be reviewed **following a September 2017 meeting**.

Please note that completion of the funding round process – from the public call for applications to contract signing – can take approximately one year.

Information on the **project inquiry** format and process is attached as **Appendix C**.

The deadline for receipt of the Stage One project inquiry proposal is **noon, Monday, 11 September 2017**.

Please send the project inquiry to the email address for the Panel Secretary, but addressed to Members, Veterans' Health Advisory Panel.

An application form is attached as **Appendix D**.

Interested parties should read all the attached information and submit on the form supplied.

Funding pool

A total funding pool of approximately \$100,000 is available in the 2017 round. This could be used to fund more than one research proposal. Research proposals over this threshold will need to clearly demonstrate the merits of an increased funding request, and/or co-funding to support the research delivery.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the application process please contact:

Tracey Rayner
Secretary
Veterans' Health Advisory Panel
email: tracey.rayner@nzdf.mil.nz
DDI: 04 495 2264

If you have any questions about veterans' data please contact:

Wing Commander Dr Paul Nealis
Chief Medical Officer
Defence Health Directorate
New Zealand Defence Force
email: paul.nealis@nzdf.mil.nz

Veterans' Health Advisory Panel

The Veterans' Health Advisory Panel (the Panel) is a statutory board established under section 254 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (the Act) and appointed by the Minister of Veterans' Affairs (the Minister).

The main functions of the Panel are to

- a) invest in health research relating to veterans by deciding how the income of the Veterans' Medical Research Trust Fund is to be applied to research grants and awards
- b) provide advice, comments, and guidelines to the Minister on matters related to veterans' health and the making of regulations.

Relevant extracts from the Panel's terms of reference are attached as **Appendix B**.

Veterans' Medical Research Trust Fund

The primary purpose of the Veterans' Medical Research Trust Fund is to improve the health status of New Zealand veterans through research. The Act states that the Panel may invest funds into any field of medicine that the Panel considers may be beneficial for veterans.

Panel membership

The members of the Panel are identified on the Veterans' Affairs website at <http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/about/boards/veterans-health-advisory-panel>

Veterans

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) comprises approximately 9,200 serving personnel across the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

There are estimated to be around 31,000 New Zealand veterans – men and women who have qualifying service in the NZDF. These veterans are aged from 19 to over 100 years old and are from diverse backgrounds, including retired people, those in civilian life, and currently-serving personnel.

Each year, approximately \$350 million is spent on supporting veterans.

The general premise on which support is provided under the Act is benevolence; the Act recognises the sacrifice that veterans make in service to their country, putting themselves in harms way for the sake of New Zealand. The importance of the sacrifice made is recognised by the provision of additional entitlements to veterans' over and above those provided to the general population.

The Act also provides support for families and dependants of veterans. These provisions recognise the sacrifices that spouses or partners, children, and dependants of the veteran themselves must make in supporting a service person: families and dependants are the people most likely to be personally affected by any sacrifices made, and losses suffered, by the veteran as a result of his or her service.

Support provided by Veterans' Affairs

Veterans' Affairs (an operational unit within NZDF) is responsible for administering services and support for veterans who have injuries or illnesses related to qualifying service.

In line with the Act, two basic categories of support and assistance are provided to eligible veterans and other claimants (spouses, partners, dependants and children) – entitlements and services.

Entitlements are the pensions and lump sum payments that are available to veterans. These include the War Disablement Pension, Disablement Pension, Weekly Income Compensation, Surviving Spouse or Partner Pension, Children's Pension, Children's Bursary and Dependant's

Pension, Veteran's Pension, Motor Vehicle Grant, Retirement Lump Sum and Funeral Expenses.

Services include treatment, social and vocational rehabilitation, reimbursement of travel costs associated with treatment and rehabilitation and support for independent living.

Veterans' Affairs also provides case management services – assigning specialised Case Managers to work with veterans to assess their needs and ensure they receive support. Case Managers also work with the children and partners of Viet Nam veterans to enable them to access short-term counselling to assist them with any mental health issues arising from their fathers/husband/partners service in Viet Nam. It also provides advice related to veteran's care, entitlements and recognition, and fosters relationships between the Government and representative veterans' organisations.

Further information about the support provided to veterans and their families can be located on the Veterans' Affairs website at www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz.

APPENDIX A

Guiding Principles for Investment

What sort of research will we consider?

1. Take a broad holistic view of health research, including the physical and mental health and wellbeing, and social outcomes of veterans and/or their families

- Health is more than the absence of disease, and includes physical and mental health and wellbeing, and social outcomes (such as employment outcomes and family wellbeing).

2. Focus on research that aims to benefit the health of veterans and/or their families by informing policy and practice

- Research should have the potential to have a meaningful impact on policy or practice.
- A knowledge translation strategy should be included in any funding proposal.

3. Focus on contemporary veterans (from the 1990 Gulf War onwards)

- Substantial research has already been carried out on earlier cohorts of veterans. A focus on contemporary veterans (from the 1990 Gulf War onwards) will help to identify emerging health risks.
- Research projects could include the whole contemporary cohort or particular deployments or sub-sets of the cohort.

4. Focus on issues relevant to New Zealand

- There are many opportunities for New Zealand to learn from research conducted with veterans in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia; we do not wish to replicate existing research.

- A focus on issues that are relevant to New Zealand will help to achieve real and meaningful policy and practice results for New Zealand veterans.
- Consulting with the key policy agencies that work with veterans (such as Veterans' Affairs and NZDF) prior to making funding decisions will help the Panel to ensure that investment will achieve maximum policy and practice results for New Zealand veterans.

What are we looking for?

5. Work collaboratively with other agencies, including Veterans' Affairs and the New Zealand Defence Force, to help ensure the relevance of research, optimise research design, leverage funding, and maximise the benefit for veterans

- A co-design approach to research, which identifies how research outcomes will have an impact on New Zealand veterans, will help to ensure the relevance of any research conducted.
- Research partnerships are encouraged, and where appropriate may be jointly funded (for example by making use of the Partnership Funding administered by the Health Research Council) to leverage the use of trust funds for maximum impact.

6. Build on existing research infrastructure and capability, including the Statistics NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI)

- The IDI combines key administrative and survey data from across the public sector into a single anonymised dataset. It is an important tool for evidence-based policy evaluation and research in New Zealand.
- A key factor in assessing research proposals will be that the results of any funded research can be fed back into the IDI.

7. Align with the principles set out in the New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017–2027

- The New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017–2027 sets out a vision that, by 2027, New Zealand will have a world-leading health research and innovation system. There are four guiding principles for the system: research excellence, transparency, partnership with Māori, and collaboration for impact. Given its over-arching strategy, research should align with the principles of the strategy.¹

What process will we follow?

8. Compliance with Government procurement guidelines will be a paramount consideration when making investment decisions

- Government procurement guidelines set standards for procurement for all bodies operating in the state sector who enter into contracts using public or government funding.
- Compliance with these guidelines will be a matter of course when entering into contracts for research.
- The flexibility of the guidelines means they can be applied in a way that is suitable to the circumstances.

¹ The strategy was published on 22 June 2017 and is available as a PDF on the Ministry of Health website at <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/new-zealand-health-research-strategy-2017-2027-summary-submissions-and-consultation>.

APPENDIX B

Relevant extracts from the Panel's Terms of reference

Background

1. The Veterans' Health Advisory Panel (the Panel) is a statutory body established under section 254 of the Veterans' Support Act 2014. The Panel is appointed by and provides advice, comment and guidelines to the Minister of Veterans' Affairs (the Minister), as well as making decisions on the grants and awards for medical research. The Panel had important statutory roles in the regulation making process prior to the commencement of the Act and was established following Royal Assent pursuant to section 2(1A).

Functions

2. The Panel's statutory functions are to:
 - a. Provide advice and guidelines to the Minister on:
 - i. assessing the relationship between qualifying operational service and impairment for the purpose of assessing eligibility to entitlements;
 - ii. the impacts of service on veterans' health;
 - iii. monitoring veterans' health;
 - iv. injuries or illnesses for which it should be presumed that deterioration after a veteran has left service is not service-related; and
 - v. the assessment and determination of claims by Veterans' Affairs New Zealand (Veterans' Affairs) and medical assessors.
 - b. Provide comment to the Minister on a report of any review undertaken by Veterans' Affairs of the statements of principle determined by the Australian Repatriation Medical Authority under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (Cth). The purpose of the reviews by Veterans' Affairs is to assess

which statements of principle should be applied in New Zealand pursuant to sections 22, 23 and 24 of the Act.

- c. Advise the Minister on conditions that are to be treated, in the absence of evidence to the contrary in the particular circumstance of the claim, as being linked to specific exposure or specific events occurring during qualifying operational service after consulting any person or organisation the Panel considers to be representative of the interests of persons likely to be substantially affected by the proposed regulations pursuant to section 21(1).
 - d. Advise the Minister on organs that should be accepted as paired organs pursuant to section 20.
 - e. Decide how the income of the Veterans' Medical Research Trust Fund is to be applied for grants and awards.
 - f. Carry out any other functions the Minister requires that are consistent with this Act and any other enactment.
3. The Board may determine its own procedure, subject to any provision of the Act or any regulation made under the Act.

Composition of the Panel

4. The Panel will consist of a maximum of 10 members, of whom three will be *ex officio* members. Veterans' Affairs and the Chief of Defence Force are each to nominate an *ex officio* member who is a medical practitioner, while the Veterans' Advisory Board is to nominate an *ex officio* member as its representative.
5. Panel members will be appointed by the Minister on the basis of their expertise, qualifications and knowledge relevant to the mandate of the Panel. Non *ex officio* members will be appointed to the Panel in their own right and will not be representative of any individual or organisation.
6. The membership of the Panel should include, but not be limited to, the following areas:

- a. health expertise and knowledge;
- b. health research experience and expertise;
- c. knowledge of veteran issues; and
- d. military background.

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Terms and conditions of appointment

8. Members of the Panel, other than *ex officio* members, are appointed by the Minister for a term of up to three years. Due to initial appointments being likely to be made in the pre-election period, these appointments will be of a temporary nature, with terms expiring on 1 March 15. Members may be reappointed by the Minister.
9. A member may resign at any time by written notice to the Minister.
10. The Minister may, by notice in writing to a member, remove the member from office for misconduct, inability to perform the functions of office, or neglect of duty.

Chairperson and deputy chairperson

11. The Minister will appoint a chairperson and deputy chairperson from among the members. ...

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Duties and responsibilities...

14. As an independent statutory body, the Panel operates in an effective and efficient way within the parameters of its functions as set out in these terms of reference.
15. The Panel is required to act independently in providing advice, guidelines and comment to the Minister and in making decisions.

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Decision making

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20. Advice will be provided to the Minister in writing.

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APPENDIX C

Project Inquiry Format and Process

Format

A. Coversheet

Principal & Associate Investigators, including background and experience

Provide contact details (names, address, phone numbers, email) for the Principal and Associate researcher(s).

Briefly outline the background and experience of the researchers involved in the research project. Include relevant qualifications, general research area, experience in fields of study, and their role in this research.

Information on independent referees will be sought at Stage Two. The Panel reserves the right to use other referees.

B. Main project proposal

1. Research title and project proposal

Provide a clear project title and brief description of the intended research, along with a brief outline of previous research on this topic, and how this study differs from that work.

2. Questions / aims /objectives of the research

Outline the research question/s, the aims and objectives of the research, and the involvement of other organisations, either as funders, supervisors, or as groups with interested in the research.

NB: Please do not list Dr Paul Nealis as a party to the research where his involvement has been to discuss with you the availability and access to veteran data. Advise only that contact has been made with him and the nature of that contact.

3. Impact of the research to veterans' health

Outline how this research will assist in generating knowledge on New Zealand veterans that will lead to their improved mental, and/or physical, and/or social health outcomes.

4. Addressing *Guiding Principles for Investment*

Briefly outline how the project proposal addresses each of the *Guiding Principles for Investment*.

5. Research methods

Briefly outline the intended research design and the population of the study. This should include the procedures you intend to use to obtain the data and how you intend to analyse the data to meet the aims and answer the research question/s.

6. Main outcome measure/s

Briefly outline the main outcome measures/standard(s) against which the results of the research will be determined and assessed/evaluated.

7. Funding sought and project duration

Briefly outline the total project budget (excluding GST) and funding requirements for the project, the details of any funding being sought for this project from other research funders, and the expected total duration of the project and funding.

Process

Assessment of applications

Project inquiry applications will be assessed using the following criteria

- relevance of the proposed research
- fit with the *Guiding Principles for Investment*
- overall feasibility of the project proposal
- experience and competence of the research team.

Applicants may be asked to provide additional information to support applications, especially where matters are unclear.

All applicants will be informed in writing of whether or not the application has been successful (reasons for decline will not be given).

Successful Stage One inquiry proposals

Successful Stage One inquiry proposals will be invited to submit a fuller Stage Two **project proposal**.

At this time the level of funding the Panel is prepared to commit from the fund will be advised if the Panel has sufficient information to do so.

Stage Two project proposals

Guidelines on what a **fuller project proposal** should contain will be provided along with the Stage Two invitation to submit.

Stage Two applicants may be asked to provide additional written information to support applications and/or appear before the Panel to present and discuss the research proposal.

Once a research proposal has been approved, the Panel will require a research funding contract to be agreed and signed before any payments are made.