

ACC Research and Development (R&D) Strategy

1 Strategy linkages

- 1.1 The development of an overarching strategic plan provides an opportunity to realign R&D investment with the strategic direction. The proposed R&D Strategy is one of a set of strategies to ensure that ACC adapts to the circumstances and challenges of a changing New Zealand and international environment. The strategies are interdependent and taken together provide ACC with the building blocks to achieve its strategic priorities.

2 R&D within ACC

- 2.1 The functions and activities that fall within the scope of R&D reflect an organisation that develops through innovation. They include:
- horizon scanning, forecasting and modelling
 - research
 - service and product development, trials and pilots
 - evaluation of programmes and policies.
- 2.2 Horizon scanning, forecasting and modelling are the tools used to identify and understand current and emerging trends, and patterns of injury incidence.
- 2.3 Research includes all the mechanisms to synthesise knowledge (new and existing), and provide the evidence base to support effective decision making.
- 2.4 Service and product development, trials and pilots are the processes through which evidence based decisions are translated into practice, thus ensuring ACC is able to deliver services that will improve outcomes for claimants and levy payers.
- 2.5 The role of evaluation is to monitor and improve programmes, processes and policies. A carefully constructed programme of evaluation focuses on the areas of greatest opportunity and/or risk, and contributes to the development of outcome focused interventions that are integrated into service delivery.

3 Purpose and aims of the R&D Strategy

- 3.1 R&D is undertaken to future proof the ACC Scheme. Future proofing is about anticipating the future so that ACC can maximise opportunities and minimise risks. Thus, R&D investment will be oriented to the realisation of ACC's new strategic priorities going forward.

- 3.2 The R&D Strategy is informed by ACC’s current understanding of its scheme drivers including: factors that influence rates of injury (such as population demographics, injury prevention initiatives, and aspects of the social and economic environment); factors affecting entry to the scheme after injury (such as ethnicity, geography, financial barriers and legislation); and factors that affect exit from the scheme (such as effective treatment and rehabilitation and work availability). R&D aims to refine and extend ACC’s knowledge of injury causation and prevention, and of effective treatment and rehabilitation, so that interventions can be directed to realise ACC’s strategic vision – ***“freedom from injury and its consequences for all New Zealanders”***.
- 3.3 The R&D Strategy will provide a clear framework to communicate the basis of ACC investment to both internal and external stakeholders. In particular the Strategy aims to:
- align R&D investment with the organisation’s strategic priorities (EMPOWER) and other organisational strategies
 - position ACC for the future by bridging the gap between the issues of today and tomorrow
 - improve co-ordination of R&D initiatives to ensure a flow of evidence from research and evaluation to inform the design of policy and programme innovation and development
 - provide a platform for engagement with the R&D sector, including funding bodies, researchers and service providers
 - provide guidance and clarity about how ACC invests and what it invests in.

4 Principles

- 4.1 There are six key principles that underpin the operation of the R&D Strategy. They are:
1. R&D investment is driven by ACC’s seven strategic priorities – the value of R&D will be determined by its ability to help ACC achieve its strategic priorities
 2. R&D will create an iterative link between evidence and practice – R&D will facilitate the transfer of knowledge to and from policy, research, service development and product development
 3. the level of risk and opportunity will influence the nature of investment – ACC will systematically prioritise its R&D investment
 4. a balance will be kept between short-term imperatives and medium and longer term priorities – many of ACC’s future challenges are already present, so R&D investment will address short-term needs in the context of long-term goals
 5. ethical frameworks will guide research and evaluation – ACC will be ethical in its research and development methodologies and its interactions with the sector
 6. the value of the R&D investment is leveraged through smart engagement – ACC will seek to engage with the R&D sector in a sustainable way that produces maximum value in the longer term.

5 Key Challenges

5.1 R&D investment will focus on key challenges to the sustainability of the scheme. The three key challenges currently identified are:

- the population we serve is changing – this will change who needs the scheme and how it is funded
- the changing social, economic and legislative environment generates complex issues that will require cross-sectorial responses
- new knowledge and technologies challenge ACC's effectiveness and efficiency.

The Changing Population

5.2 ***(a) The changing size and composition of the total population, and sub-groups.***

Key focus: The impacts of demographic changes on the sustainability of the scheme.

Key issues arising from the changing population:

- the pattern of injury will change with an ageing population, and is expected to increase demand for cover and change the entitlements load on different scheme accounts
- changes to the levy payer bases will affect the structure and balance of the scheme accounts
- the greater impact of co-morbidities for injury outcomes
- the implications of ageing for disabled population sub-groups
- the implications of greater cultural diversity and changing ethnic composition for all aspects of scheme and service delivery and injury prevention
- the need to ensure access to services across a geographically dispersed population.

5.2 ***(b) The changing workforce.***

Key focus: The changing nature of work and the burden of occupational illness and injury.

Key issues arising from the changing workforce:

- the impact on the scheme of changes to the nature of work such as hours worked, industries, locations, task content and technologies
- the need to develop new approaches to injury prevention in a continuously changing work environment
- emerging changes to the patterns of occupational injury and illness including definitions of injury, emerging diseases and populations at risk.

Social, economic and legislative change

5.3 **Key focus:** Responding to issues that emerge in the overlap areas between the health, disability and social sectors.

Key Issues arising from social, economic and legislative change:

- influencing trends stemming from the social, economic and health environment including alcohol and drug misuse, road and water safety, family violence, suicide prevention, physical activity and diet
- changing customer aspirations and expectations such as: public demand for new technologies versus evidence of effectiveness, and trends in supported independence
- preparing for the impact of emergencies, such as earthquake, pandemic or tsunami
- implications for the scheme of possible legislative change - for example, potential changes to the definition of injury.

Knowledge and technology

5.4 **Key focus:** What will achieve better outcomes for Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation and Treatment, Scheme and Operations?

Key issues arising from new knowledge and technology:

- establishing what works for injury prevention, rehabilitation and treatment, including factors that influence the effectiveness of interventions in specific contexts and population groups
- establishing the evidence for decision making around new technologies and programmes
- exploring the opportunities for new delivery mechanisms such as telemedicine and internet-based interventions.

5.5 To inform investment choices around each of these challenges, five questions need to be asked:

1. what do we already know?
2. where do we obtain expert knowledge?
3. what can we support others to do?
4. what must we do/purchase ourselves?
5. what must we do with the results?

5.6 The implementation plan will apply this probing approach to help prioritise and maximise R&D investment.

6 Implications

- 6.1 In order to achieve the goals of the R&D Strategy, ACC needs to address activities at three levels: the way it signals its priorities and interests to the R&D sector; the way it invests and does business with others in the sector; and the way it organises and coordinates R&D internally.

How ACC signals its priorities

- 6.2 ACC needs to find ways to articulate its position so that the R&D sector understands its priorities and interests and is encouraged to develop resources and capabilities that align with ACC's needs. In this way more value can be obtained from the wide R&D network, both nationally and internationally.

The R&D Strategy requires that ACC:

- identifies and strengthens key relationships with funding and service agencies with which ACC shares common goals and challenges so that, wherever appropriate, ACC R&D investment can leverage the investment made by other agencies
- communicate ACC's R&D goals clearly so that the sector can develop capability and capacity to respond to ACC's future needs
- actively engages with the stakeholder network to ensure communication and collaboration between researchers, funders and providers to strengthen the value of the network for all stakeholders
- engages in health and social forums to share our learning with, and learn from, other stakeholders
- disseminates ACC's research and evaluation findings so that they add to the body of evidence across the whole R&D sector.

The ways ACC invests in R&D

- 6.3 ACC will plan to become a more valuable partner within the sector by using a carefully structured and well-managed investment approach. By refining the way it does business with the R&D Sector, ACC can gain more influence and leverage greater value from its investments. The nature of ACC's sector engagement will vary depending on the specific R&D goals, and the capability and resources of funding bodies, research organisations and provider networks to contribute to specific activities.

The R&D Strategy requires that ACC:

- selects the right partners for financial and in-kind investments in R&D initiatives that are clearly directed towards goals of mutual benefit

- operates through a mix of commissioning approaches that serves ACC needs, such as core capability contracts, competitive tenders and direct purchasing and subscription arrangements
- invests in multi-year research, evaluation and development programmes with the potential to incorporate a cluster of linked projects
- establishes processes to support excellence in investment through independent ethical review, good governance and quality assurance
- establishes processes that ensure R&D in ACC can withstand robust critical review and benchmarking against international standards
- collaborates in cross-sectorial and international projects to enhance data quality and standardise data collection in ways that improve the transferability of knowledge.

Internal management of R&D

- 6.4 If the Strategy is to achieve its stated aims, the internal organisation of R&D activities must be managed in order to build ownership of R&D initiatives. The Strategy will align resources, expertise and processes to deliver against a well structured work programme.

The R&D Strategy requires that ACC:

- centralises research and evaluation and strengthens internal linkages to better co-ordinate R&D activities
- aligns resources, capabilities and information with other ACC strategies to consolidate the value gained from shared expertise and systems
- maintains and develops capacity to design and implement methodologically robust research, development and evaluation programmes
- ensures that the findings of R&D inform, in an iterative way, the development of policy, services and products
- translates evidence into practice through policy, service and product development, purchasing guidelines and decision support tools
- introduces effective horizon scanning, modelling and forecasting to inform the prioritisation of ACC's future R&D investment
- purchases or otherwise accesses horizon scanning and expert reviews of new clinical tools and health technologies that support the ACC **'fast-follower'** position
- improves the quality of scheme data and its suitability for monitoring injury trends and outcomes.