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Page 2: Section 1: submitter contact information

Q1

Name

High-Value Nutrition National Science Challenge

Q2

Email address

hvn@auckland.ac.nz

Q3

Can MBIE publish your name and contact information with your submission?Confidentiality notice: Responding “no” to this question does not guarantee that we will not release the name and contact information your provided, if any, as we may be required to do so by law. It does mean that we will contact you if we are considering releasing submitter contact information that you have asked that we keep in confidence, and we will take your request for confidentiality into account when making a decision on whether to release it.

No

Q4

Can MBIE contact you in relation to your submission?

Yes

Page 3: Section 2: Submitter information

Q5

Are you submitting as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

Page 4: Section 2: Submitter information - individual

Q6

Are you a researcher or scientist?

Respondent skipped this question

Q7

Age

Respondent skipped this question

Q8

Gender

Respondent skipped this question

Q9

In which region do you primarily work?

Respondent skipped this question

Q10

Ethnicity

Respondent skipped this question

Page 5: Section 2: Submitter information - individual

Q11

What is your iwi affiliation?

Respondent skipped this question

Page 6: Section 2: Submitter information - individual

Q12

If you wish, please specify to which Pacific ethnicity you identify

Respondent skipped this question

Page 7: Section 2: Submitter information - individual

Q13

What type of organisation do you work for?

Respondent skipped this question

Q14

Is it a Māori-led organisation?

Respondent skipped this question

Q15

Which disciplines are most relevant to your work?

Respondent skipped this question

Q16

What best describes the use of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in your work?

Respondent skipped this question

Page 8: Section 2: Submitter information - organisation

Q17

Organisation name

High-Value Nutrition National Science Challenge

Q18

Organisation type

Other (please specify):
National Science Challenge

Q19

Is it a Māori-led organisation?

No

Q20

Where is the headquarters of the organisation?

Auckland

Q21

What best describes the use of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in your organisation?

There is some Mātauranga Māori, but it is not the main science knowledge

Page 9: Section 3: Research Priorities

Q22

Priorities design: What principles could be used to determine the scope and focus of research Priorities?(See page 27 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

We agree with the principles and direction of having national priorities as outlined in the Future Pathways paper, with the type of focus recommended as being mission-led. This should build on what has already been invested in prior investment structures and retain the momentum developed in the NSCs, the areas of focus for which still remain important in NZ.

This focus allows for an overarching mission, with the other focus types (e.g., problem solving, opportunity development and technology development) to be housed within the mission. This is being demonstrated currently within NSCs which have a wide variety of activities – short and longer term – within them. Being mission-led, NSCs have worked for the greater good and allowed for a stronger cross-discipline approach bringing together the best researchers across NZ for significant scientific advancement and uptake.

A mix of different focus types without an overarching long-term mission could lead back to fragmentation in the system; Aotearoa requires long-term programmes if national priorities are to succeed.

Mission-led programmes such as the NSCs highlight that the strategic timeframe of 10 years only just allows for enough time to start demonstrating long-term impact. The NSCs have continually developed and championed new ways of community and business engagement, and in creating cross-discipline approaches bring in the best researchers across NZ to form teams. National priorities need to be large and long enough to be able to do this to create innovation in our science system. Being one-step removed from the policy system enables experimentation, investigation of higher-risk, greater-return opportunities, and development of a portfolio approach in ways which are new to the system, as well as ensuring focus is on the betterment of Aotearoa as a whole.

The scope of national priorities will determine their size. However, one cannot assume that all organisations will pool funding to contribute to a given priority. In developing the NSCs, assumptions were made that NSCs would be able to access non-governmental organisation (NGO) and Strategic Science Investment Fund (SSIF) funding to contribute to their research – this happened to a limited extent, but not as envisaged. There has been little support at organisational levels to support the NSCs in this light. It has been down to the dedication of individual scientists to design and defend SSIF programmes that are closely aligned and benefit the NSC goals of science excellence within the context of a mission-led approach. As a result some NSCs have been under-funded and unable to fully create the impact that could have been seen with more secure funding. It is suggested, therefore, that the Government fully invest in the priorities if they are to succeed.

Q23

Priority-setting process: What principles should guide a national research Priority-setting process, and how can the process best give effect to Te Tiriti?(See pages 28-29 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Guiding principles for the priority setting process should be consultative with executive decision makers that include Māori. High-level priorities can be determined through an assessment of areas which will benefit health, the environment and the economy (each being of equal importance). This can be combined with an assessment of areas in which NZ performs at a high level in the international environment and has the capabilities to have an impact. Decision-making should be through a nationally co-ordinated council representative of relevant sectors. If high-level priority areas are determined, executive committees composed of experts in the field (including stakeholders, industry and researchers) could then refine the scope. One committee such as the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Science Board does not necessarily have the breadth of membership to truly determine appropriate scope of priorities due to the potential risk of limited diversity of thought.
Those within the science system need to have an opportunity to contribute. Without this, they may not participate in outcomes due to the lack of initial engagement. There will also be a segment of the population who have chosen not to engage. Both of these limitations can be seen by the detractors of NSCs. Having independent and transparent oversight of decision-making may reduce these risks.
Upfront investment on engagement and mission design is effective and efficient in the long-term, smoothing pathways to translation and implementation. Having active research leadership involved in strategy setting increases engagement and builds strong national networks and relationships as well as reducing institutional barriers and building effective teams.
Q2B How can this process best give effect to Te Tiriti?
Co-design of priorities and strategies will speak to a partnership approach.
As we are aware, there are limited numbers of Māori available in the RSI system, businesses, and community organisations, therefore an approach is needed to ensure balanced representative views. It may also be important to understand that a single approach may not work for each priority field.
NSCs have pioneered better approaches to addressing Vision Mātauranga and Te Tiriti, with considerable early engagement with Māori leaders, the establishment and support of Rauika Māngai, and ensuring inclusion of Māori researchers and rangatahi. There is extensive co-leadership of programmes and projects. Governance models have evolved to co-leadership models, with NSCs having co-Chairs. Co-leadership also exists at the Challenge management and project levels. Future national priorities could further develop these approaches.
Māori leaders in research and industry have expressed desire for independent research entities to be set up to enable kaupapa Māori research. In recent years, such entities have started to become more established in research, presenting an opportunity to give effect to Te Tiriti by involving them in national priority setting discussions and enabling their continued engagement in the future.

Q24

Operationalising Priorities: How should the strategy for each national research Priority be set and how do we operationalise them?(See pages 30-33 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

As per above, an executive committee of key stakeholder representatives can have oversight of a priority, to be implemented with the NSC Governance model of an independent Board that is responsible for key decisions on strategy and funding approvals. The concept of Challenge Parties was useful in the early days of the NSCs to develop ways of working between institutions, however, in the longer term there was less value and created an administrative burden.
There is a common misconception that the NSC's governance and operational model led to high amounts of funding being spent on administration. Regular reporting to MBIE has identified that Governance related costs were less than 2% annually. Having independent oversight of the Challenge by key stakeholders and experts has proven to be an effective model and future planning should not be based on unproven assumptions.
Strategy setting should be done by research experts with appropriate stakeholder consultation. NSCs have increased cross-sector involvement in science and research, and through diversity, delivered excellent and transformative research and science recognised internationally. This has been through an approach of defining focus areas and then bringing in the best teams to co-design the programme/project. These teams are a mix of early, mid-and late-career researchers who all bring valuable insights. Stakeholder engagement is also key, whether that be businesses, policy makers, NGOs or other end-users of the research.
The process of strategy development also needs to allow mātauranga Māori to sit comfortably alongside more Western scientific methods. Combining these approaches will strengthen programmes.
Leadership must have responsibility for delivery – unconstrained by organisational processes. Housing NSCs within different institutions has not created an even playing field, with different organisations applying different operating principles, including overhead rates, institutional support and lack of flexibility on administrative processes. Future national priorities should be given enough flexibility to deliver as best fits the strategy, but should not be constrained by being in a particular institution. This flexibility in a mission-led programme enables rapid and agile responses to new and complex challenges.
Within the priority there should be means for delivery through long and shorter-term projects, with administrative workloads for project teams scaled appropriately. While there is value in contestable processes, there needs to be flexibility to allow for both competitive funding of long-term, large budget and risky projects that ensure high quality proposals and continuous addition of new researchers, as well as having more consultative funding processes for smaller or less risky projects. The HVN NSC developed a model where through consultation, applicants were given early feedback on how best to submit proposals that were more likely to succeed when reviewed externally. Consultative co-design of projects has been a successful feature of NSCs – defining focus areas, bringing the best teams in to design projects with stakeholders and providing clarity on decision-making processes.
The leadership and teams must be collaborative and flexible enough to bring in or out appropriate expertise at any stage in order to address any issues or opportunities that arise over time.
There have also been large inequalities in science scrutiny between funding schemes, from unchecked to the heavily scrutinised NSCs. A more equitable science quality assessment would be beneficial.
Reporting on progress of programmes addressing national research priorities cannot be accommodated by a "one size fits all approach." The NSCs all currently report using the same templates, which may suit operational limitations of the Government but fails to capture the true impact of NSCs. Each national research priority is unique and requires appropriate reporting measures and support if it is to be properly operationalised for impact by the Government.

Page 10: Section 4: Te Tiriti, mātauranga Māori, and Māori aspirations

Q25

Engagement: How should we engage with Māori and Treaty Partners?(See page 38 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

The HVN NSC has been supportive of the establishment and work of Rauika Māngai, and endorse the recommendations made in the following documents:

- A guide to Vision Mātauranga
- Te Pūtahitanga: A Tiriti-led Science-Policy Approach for Aotearoa New Zealand.

While progress has been made across institutions, there has tended to be disjointed approaches without full integration of Vision Mātauranga across all staff, with often a small team assigned responsibility for Māori engagement, and then a lack of understanding from researchers about their role in a Tiriti-led approach. Much more education is required across the entire system. HVN also endorse the direction proposed by the Rauika Māngai rōpū in their submission to Te Ara Paerangi.

Q4 How would you like to be engaged?
NSCs have all committed to the implementation of Vision Mātauranga through leadership roles. These may be the most effective way to engage and ensure appropriate consultation in this area.

Q26

Mātauranga Māori: What are your thoughts on how to enable and protect mātauranga Māori in the research system? (See pages 38-39 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Mātauranga Māori in the research system will continue to be a core area of focus, as such it is important we enable and protect it. WAI262 plays an important part in these considerations and the system needs to ensure there is appropriate knowledge and expertise in this area to apply any regulatory and compliance changes in a practical sense.
Appropriate engagement with whānau, hapu and iwi is critical to ensure ownership of mātauranga remains in the community.

Q27

Regionally based Māori knowledge hubs: What are your thoughts on regionally based Māori knowledge hubs?(See page 39 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

There are existing Māori knowledge hubs through wānanga and hapu/iwi-based learning centres – collaboration with each region through appropriate methods will be required if this is a way forward for the research system to drive consolidation of research capacity. Care must be taken that equal consideration be given to mātauranga Māori and Western science, and opportunities given to apply both across the national priorities.

Page 11: Section 5: Funding

Q28

Core Functions: How should we decide what constitutes a core function, and how do we fund them?(See pages 44-46 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Determination of core functions flows from the national research priorities and associated strategies. It may be necessary to expand consideration of what is “core” to include, for example, innovation activities that generate future researchers and facilitate development of a knowledge-based economy. In doing so, consideration also needs to be given to the destination of future researchers to ensure retention of talent within NZ.
Databases and collections, along with upkeep and maintenance (including software), should be considered as a core function, however appropriate protections need to be in place for collections such as biobanks and taonga species. Māori data sovereignty must be a key consideration.

Q29

Establishing a base grant and base grant design: Do you think a base grant funding model will improve stability and resilience for research organisations?(See pages 46-49 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Yes

Q30

Establishing a base grant and base grant design: How should we go about designing and implementing such a funding model?(See pages 46-49 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Implementing a base grant funding model will improve stability and appear to reduce the administrative costs of research. However the primary focus has to be on science quality.
In a research organisation there will always be an overhead component – but the current effectiveness is unclear. How an effective overhead model can be developed to support science quality should be the focus. Often scientists have little say in how overheads can be applied, and organisational support services may not necessarily be driven by science quality. There needs to be a greater intersection of communication.
The current overhead model is unattractive for businesses to invest in as there appears to be little direct return on investments made in overheads. An increasing number of businesses are evaluating whether to turn to more in-house investments rather than in the public RSI system, which places even more constraints on their ability to generate outputs. The funding system needs to communicate more clearly how the model is necessary to produce the best science quality, which may be limited through solely private investments.
A base grant funding model should apply to CRIs, Universities and independent organisations. DHBs and businesses shouldn't receive this funding as they have other funding sources. There will however be great complexity in applying any base funding model, particularly in the context of other funding mechanisms such as the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF). It will be important to ensure academic institutions aren't disadvantaged in this context.
Base funding should be on an activity-based model – this would provide the most equitable level of funding. There is a need for committed funding for some key Principal Investigators and technical staff to ensure continuity on long-term areas of importance. Pooling funding across teams does not work well in practice. Base funding to support salaries of non-research staff in institutions and overall infrastructure would reduce costs of research projects. It is likely an overhead component will still be required – this should only apply to researcher salaries and not 'support staff' who should have greater support from base funding. However, how this base funding is contributing to the best science quality should be monitored to ensure effective use of funds.
There is a lack of transparency about how overheads are determined, particularly in the CRIs which all apply variable rates and models. This also contributes to competitiveness between CRIs as similar research can come with quite different costings. One system should be in place that is transparent and equitable. There should also be a limit on an overhead component on the cost of research. The number of functions paid through overheads in CRIs is varied, duplicated and not integrated. A significant number of these functions have little value in improving science quality and this can be a source of tension among scientists.
There also needs to be an appropriate pipeline of funding opportunities that allow research and innovation from early concept to commercialisation. The Marsden Fund is cited as successful in allowing for investigator-initiated research in areas that may not necessarily align to a national priority, but can lead to strong scientific breakthroughs.

Page 12: Section 6: Institutions

Q31

Institution design: How do we design collaborative, adaptive and agile research institutions that will serve current and future needs?(See pages 57-58 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

The current focus of CRIs as being a ‘company’ has led to increasing profit-seeking, e.g., royalties from plant variety rights for Plant and Food Research, or for the other CRIs in their field. It is unclear whether these revenue streams are put back into research. There is also a large amount of ‘public good’ research that remains unpublished and inaccessible to other members of the research community due to protecting any competitive advantage in receiving future funding. This can lead to redundant research activities that ultimately waste stakeholder time and funds. Sound operating principles need to be developed to ensure that public investments are indeed made for the benefit of NZ.
The NSCs have been an excellent example of breaking down institutional barriers. These principles which should underpin future national priorities will only succeed further if the priority areas are not constrained by being housed in a particular institution.
There is a lot of competition between institutions, and the lines are becoming increasingly blurred as to what is the defined scope of a CRI. The Green Paper highlights difficulties with industry being able to navigate the research system and engage with CRIs and Universities. Applying a different model such as the NSCs has shown the benefits of not being aligned to only one institution, with, for example, the High-Value Nutrition NSC being hugely successful in engaging with industry with more than 47 collaborations formed with food and beverage industry partners, 5 Universities and Wānanga, 2 CRIs, 2 CoREs and 3 independent research organisations. This has been done by working to understand stakeholder needs and then allowing them to form partnerships with those best served to meet their needs – from an impartial institutional perspective. Future national priorities should therefore be hosted by an organisation independent of their own priorities, this may be better suited to Universities, but recognising there is still significant improvement to be had in host support by these institutions.
The role of Callaghan Innovation as NZ’s innovation agency is unclear. Innovation occurs in any part of the RSI system, and so those activities would benefit from being further integrated into the science system for an end-to-end approach. The current fragmented system makes it appear inaccessible and disconnected to industry. Callaghan grants are highly competitive and not necessarily aligned to other research and science activities occurring across Aotearoa, and require further integration to maximise synergies and benefit.
In this light, we agree with the concept of fewer larger institutions creating hubs of capability versus the current CRI model, however, this should not be at the expense of Universities and independent organisations having equal access to funding. Combined governance across related institutions (CRIs) may also reduce unnecessary competition. The remit of the organisations should remain for the benefit of NZ, with linkages to Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) encouraged to ensure growth of the research workforce community for the future.

Q32

Role of institutions in workforce development: How can institutions be designed to better support capability, skill and workforce development?(See page 58 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Capability, skills and workforce development requires buy-in from institutional and industry management. In order to be done effectively it must become a part of core operations and this, in turn, necessitates dedication of resources. This can be challenging to do when both staff and funding are in short supply. With Government funding programmes tied to a clear mission, institutions could set up appropriate programmes (e.g., industrial placement programmes, paid internships, upskill programmes, etc) in coordination with key industries. Such programmes must, however, also lead to long-term prospects for the participants if a skilled workforce in NZ is to be achieved.

Q33

Better coordinated property and capital investment: How should we make decisions on large property and capital investments under a more coordinated approach?(See pages 58-59 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Greater co-ordination could allow for more streamlined investments. However a strong business lens should be placed over these; as the workforce moves towards a more hybrid working model, rarely in business are large property investments of long-term value. Priority should be given to research facilities that are adaptable to changing needs and trends. They should also consider the availability of other resources such as the Food Innovation Network facilities, which reduce the need for pilot scale production facilities in other public or private institutions.

Q34

Institution design and Te Tiriti: How do we design Tiriti-enabled institutions? (See page 59 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Refer to the Rauika Māngai submission to the Green Paper.

Q35

Knowledge exchange: How do we better support knowledge exchange and impact generation? What should be the role of research institutions in transferring knowledge into operational environments and technologies?(See pages 60-63 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

There is currently a great deal of non-commercially linked research occurring across institutions that requires substantial effort to link with a commercial partner. Impact will only occur if key stakeholders are engaged in priority and strategy setting. Major investments should have key impacts in mind from the very beginning.
By applying a model of co-funding investments with industry the High-Value Nutrition NSC has seen large successes in ensuring research will have commercial impact. Being able to leverage NSC funding has enabled many businesses, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to access the science system which was previously seen as unattainable. This sets the industry on a path of future investments in research, and the science system being able to support a wide range of industries. An additional benefit has been the ability to engage students and early career researchers and take on more translational science, aspects that wouldn't always be seen in research fully funded by industry.
There is, however, still a place for investments in research without a commercialisation partner. Having a more connected system with linked commercialisation entities could offer more opportunities to stakeholders, by identifying how research produced in different institutions may have greater combined value than one opportunity alone.
The importance of having skilled communications personnel should also be emphasised. Many of the science community are not equipped with the skills to transfer their outputs into tangible opportunities for others.
Q13B What should be the role of research institutions in transferring knowledge into operational environments and technologies?
There is significant tension between research institutions and potential end-users around intellectual property (IP) management. A network of cross-institutional commercialisation/ enterprise entities would enable some sharing of portfolios; some aspects of Callaghan Innovation could be folded into this to give greater connectivity. This could lead to greater collaboration and efficient investments in opportunities. The NSCs have demonstrated models of knowledge exchange across institutions and to stakeholders. The IP principles used by the High-Value Nutrition NSC has allowed for shared ownership and value for investors, but also ensures new developments take into consideration wider benefit to Aotearoa and access for future research.

Page 13: Section 7: Research workforce

Q36

Workforce and research Priorities: How should we include workforce considerations in the design of national research Priorities?(See pages 69-70 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

If the national research priorities are designed to be medium to long-term, there need to be mechanisms to allow researchers to participate at different stages, bringing in appropriate expertise as required. This should be researchers at all career stages and also allow for tactical investments to act quickly on market or consumer insights. The ability to do so will link closely to funding mechanisms, with some longer-term base funding confirmed for key experts, and flexibility to start new projects within the priorities over time.
Workforce considerations should also include development pipelines reaching as far back as secondary schools. This presents not only an opportunity to identify and nurture future talent, but to rectify imbalances in the current workforce (e.g., absence of Māori experts in certain fields) with positive societal knock-on effects.
Succession planning has not always been a focus of the CRIs, some of which now have an ageing workforce. More consideration needs to be given to succession planning, and to reducing competitiveness between institutions allowing for secondment, work placements or other opportunities between institutions that will best enable delivery of national priorities.
As well as developing the researcher workforce, there needs to be consideration on how they are best supported. Often researchers are given leadership roles for which they have little experience and become side-tracked by the administrative burden. The model of a working Directorate in the NSCs has shown that appropriate leadership can ensure researchers can focus on their work. The same applies to our Māori RSI workforce that needs greater support to enable focus on research activities without being seconded to deal with cultural matters, a role that may not always sit comfortably. Roles within the national priorities which specifically focus on mātauranga Māori and Te Tiriti would be of great benefit.

Q37

Base grant and workforce: What impact would a base grant have on the research workforce?(See pages 70-71 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

A base grant would provide more stability to the workforce, but runs the risk of creating a stagnant community. If base funding is applied, key performance measures must be in place for organisations and individuals so that there is continuous improvement in performance. Base grants could be proportional to activity and quality of outputs, or other grants received and reflect productivity and impact; i.e., those scientists receiving more grants would over time transition to more base funding in order to secure key talent. In addition, base grant funding needs to include mechanisms to allow for multiple generations to benefit. However with base funding there is a risk that workforce saturation is achieved quickly, leaving early career researchers out of opportunities – and likely to export their talent to NZ's competitors.
There must also be a reality check on how many scientists NZ can fund. Base funding could be a path for early career researchers, but they must also be able to experience the realities of being able to secure competitive funding. It is recognised the CRIs have high staffing levels (non-science and science) with decreasing focus on science and increasing levels of management of science, this can lead to loss of flexibility and slow innovation.
The international workforce must also be considered. With NZ's small population there is always going to be value in global connectivity. The incentive for researchers to gain overseas experience and form networks mustn't be diminished by secure at-home base funding.

Q38

Better designed funding mechanisms: How do we design new funding mechanisms that strongly focus on workforce outcomes? (See page 72 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Having national priorities will in turn support workforce development – as long as they have the ability and flexibility to utilise funding according to need. National programmes such as the NSCs have shown different pathways to early career researchers/ students who have then taken placements in other institutions or the private sector.
The Pūhoro STEMM Academy has been enormously successful and is an exemplar in increasing participation of Māori rangatahi in STEMM – through further education and as a career pathway. The success of this has been underpinned by the support of the NSCs (especially High-Value Nutrition and Our Land and Water), this gave them the impetus to grow and become an independent organisation led by Māori, for Māori. Close attention should be paid to this initiative and lessons learned on how to engage the future workforce at an early stage.
Funding mechanisms that focus on workforce outcomes need to be well informed from the start and throughout their lifetime in order to prevent an extraordinary mismatch between supply and demand of highly skilled personnel. Such a mismatch would only further fuel the export of NZ-grown talent to its competitors.

Page 14: Section 8: Research infrastructure

Q39

Funding research infrastructure: How do we support sustainable, efficient and enabling investment in research infrastructure?(See pages 77-78 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Research infrastructure should be aligned to national priorities. However, as national priorities shift over time this will necessitate shifts in infrastructure and its management, requiring periodic reviews of infrastructure needs, ensuring the key framework pieces are in place (i.e., research spaces, etc) while allowing for a model that is highly flexible but does not rely on Government staff for operational management.
There are key areas of infrastructure that would benefit from more coordination and investment. These include data management and biobanking. If national priorities are created, there should be up-front investment to ensure the appropriate collection, management, storage and governance of data and biobank samples for the long term. The High-Value Nutrition NSC has worked with the Centre for e-Research at the University of Auckland to create processes and standard operating procedures for how data is collected and managed across multiple sites to ensure it will still be available with appropriate governance once the funding ends. More national coordination of such initiatives would create greater efficiencies and opportunities across the country.