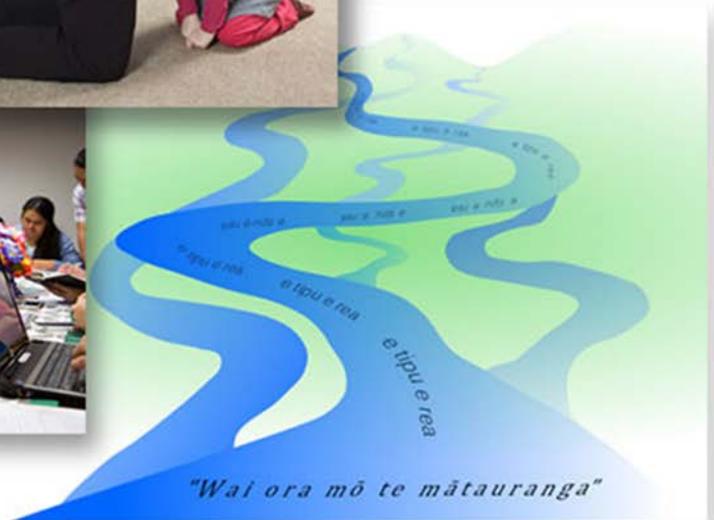


Science Advisory Panel Terms of Reference

December 2014



1. Background

The New Zealand Government has established a series of National Science Challenges to focus its investment in science on nationally significant issues. This model of mission-led research funding represents a major change in the funding model for NZ, requiring the development of a coordinated nation-wide research partnership and collaborative model dedicated to working towards achieving this mission.

A Better Start – E Tipu e Rea (ETER) has the following vision:

“For young New Zealanders to have a healthy and successful life”

Which will be accomplished through the mission:

“To predict, prevent and treat vulnerability in obesity, poor literacy and behavioural problems through research excellence that will achieve healthy, well-adjusted and well-educated children and young people.”

We aim to achieve our mission by taking both a life course and a “braided river” approach to integrate themes, research disciplines and both western and indigenous models of knowledge and practice as well as incorporating the use of digital technology into our proposed solutions.

To achieve this, there is a need for multidisciplinary research undertaken in the following themes:

- Improving child health – through early risk assessment and intervention to prevent childhood obesity
- Improving literacy in new school entrants and in poor performing adolescents
- Supporting healthy social and emotional development, enhancing emotional regulation and reducing problem behaviours including self-harm.

This Challenge is being undertaken by a national research collaboration involving the University of Auckland, the University of Canterbury, the University of Otago and NZCER, with the University of Auckland acting as the contract holder with Government and hosting the head office. The Challenge operates as a ‘*virtual centre of excellence*’ with researchers potentially drawn from across New Zealand. The collaboration has established a governance group (similar to a Board) which provides oversight of a Directorate and Science Leadership Team which acts as the Challenge management function. The Commencement Director, Professor Wayne Cutfield and two co-Directors, Professor Gail Gillon and Professor Barry Taylor, chair the Science Leadership Team and report to the Board.

As part of the governance/management structure the Challenge is seeking to set up a Science Advisory Panel (SAP) of high international standing. This panel is to provide advice to both the Board and Directorate/Science Leadership Team on matters of relevance to science merit.

This document outlines the roles and expectations for the Science Advisory Panel (SAP) for ETER.

2. Membership

The SAP shall comprise of up to 8 international preeminent researchers at any one time. These researchers are required to cover the breadth of science relevant to ETER.

Appointment to the ETER SAP shall be by the ETER Board on the recommendation of the Directorate. Once the SAP membership is confirmed, a Chair of the SAP will be appointed by the ETER Board.

Appointments shall be for a fixed term of 3 years, renewable by mutual agreement.

3. Role and Functioning of the SAP

The SAP will be asked to provide independent and robust advice to aid ETER in delivering science excellence. This advice will assist the Management and scientists fulfill their roles.

The primary point of contact between the SAP and ETER will be via the Directorate (who may Chair meetings of the SAP) but when providing independent advice to the ETER Board it will act independently through the Chair to coordinate and consolidate advice.

Any advice given by the SAP either to the Directorate and Science Leadership Team or to the ETER Board shall be transparent and available to both governance and management of ETER.

It is envisaged that the SAP shall provide advice on:

- The science strategies underpinning any research plans developed for ETER including their international positioning or relevance
- The quality of the science proposed in any research plans or proposals developed for ETER including their benchmarking against internationally comparable research
- The quality of any research performed with ETER funds against the expectations that had been set and international standards or excellence
- The opportunities for international collaborations that would enhance ETER's ability to achieve its mission and its international reputation and influence.

Other matters that may be agreed from time to time that are relevant to the quality assurance of science within ETER.

4. Processes

ETER will likely be funded in three tranches – an commencement phase in which detailed research plans are developed followed by two investment phases in which research is funded and monitored. The timeframes for these phases are :

Commencement Phase: until the end of March 2015

First funding period: 2015 to 2019

Second funding Period: 2019 to 2024

The SAP will be involved in a range of processes over these time periods:

Commencement:

During the commencement phase, the SAP will be asked to review the initial proposals to inform the refinement, validation and finalization session. These proposals will be available to the SAP **from Monday 9 February with a short turnaround of 7 days** (ie. no later than 16 February). Given this the SAP will be asked to provide independent critique against a structured set of science assessment criteria. The SAP will not have the opportunity to meet and consider as a group.

In February / March, the SAP will then be asked to review the draft research plan prior to submission to the government agency for its assessment. The SAP will be asked to

provide independent critique against the same structured set of science assessment criteria as well as comment on the overall science strategy international positioning of the programme. Once again, the SAP will not have the opportunity to meet and consider as a group.

First Funding Period

Once the research funding is approved it is envisaged the SAP will be involved in yearly or biennially review process by distance and a likely to involve a site visit towards the end of the first term (approximately 2019). If possible this will be arranged to coincide with an annual ETER Science Symposium and SAP members may be asked to contribute to the symposium as well as review the research underway within ETER.

A major review will be conducted of ETER towards the end of the first funding period in preparation of seeking an extension for the final funding period. The SAP or members of the SAP may be asked to contribute to this review.

In addition to these annual processes there may be times in which the SAP or members of the SAP are asked to provide input or advice to some aspect of the ETER science processes on an ad hoc basis – however, these will kept to a minimum and the SAP shall have the right to decline if they are not able to assist on each occasion.

5. Obligations

Members of the SAP will be required to hold all materials provided by ETER in confidence and treat all information gathered in their role as confidential until otherwise published.

Members should provide free, frank and expert advice at all times. While not a decision making group the advice from the SAP will be influential and members should note any potential conflicts of interest when giving advice.

Members will be expected to promote the ETER Challenge in appropriate international fora where relevant and to facilitate any international research collaborations in a collegial way.

6. Expenses

ETER will arrange or pay for actual travel and accommodation expenses on ETER business when approved in advance by the Director, but not for SAP member's time. Preference will be given to ETER making such arrangements but where this isn't convenient then reimbursement of costs will be made on presentation of receipts or equivalent.

7. Agreement to this Terms of Reference

Members of the SAP are appointed for an initial term of three years from January 2015 to January 2018 subject to agreeing to this Terms of Reference :

I agree to serving on A Better Start – E Tipu e Rea under the arrangements and expectations outlined in this terms of reference:

Signed by:

Date