

The ON TRACK Network

Research Prioritisation Project



Improving the health of mothers and babies in New Zealand through effective clinical trials research

Multicentre clinical trials in maternal and perinatal health provide the most effective platform to answer clinically important research questions that lead to improved health for mothers and babies. The efficiency and cost-effectiveness of clinical trials research is significantly enhanced by well organised and co-ordinated clinical trials networks. New Zealand researchers in maternal and perinatal health have an excellent reputation in leading and contributing to internationally recognised multicentre clinical trials that have changed clinical practice, with much of the work to date being facilitated by the bi-national Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Interdisciplinary Maternal and Perinatal Collaborative Trials (IMPACT) Network. There is increasing recognition of the need for, and importance of, engagement beyond researchers to maximise the potential of clinical trials research to impact on health outcomes.

To enable this wider engagement with a more specific focus on the needs and health of New Zealand the **ON TRACK Network** was established in 2016. This **New Zealand-wide multidisciplinary maternal and perinatal clinical trials network** sits under the umbrella of the Perinatal Society of New Zealand and works alongside the IMPACT Network.

The vision of the ON TRACK Network is to see an effective self-improving maternal and perinatal healthcare system in New Zealand, where all maternity centres and disciplines perceive clinical trials research as a core component of service provision and who engage in high quality multicentre clinical trials research accordingly, to achieve greater equity, health outcomes, and quality of life for women and babies nationwide. The Network has established Site Network Leaders in 18 of the 20 district health boards in New Zealand. Network activities support three strategic pillars across New Zealand;

- **Maternal and perinatal health research prioritisation.**
- Establishment and effective integration of multicentre clinical trials in maternal and perinatal health at all sites providing maternity and newborn care.
- Appropriate and timely dissemination and implementation of research findings into maternity and newborn clinical practice.

A framework to prioritise maternal and perinatal health research in New Zealand

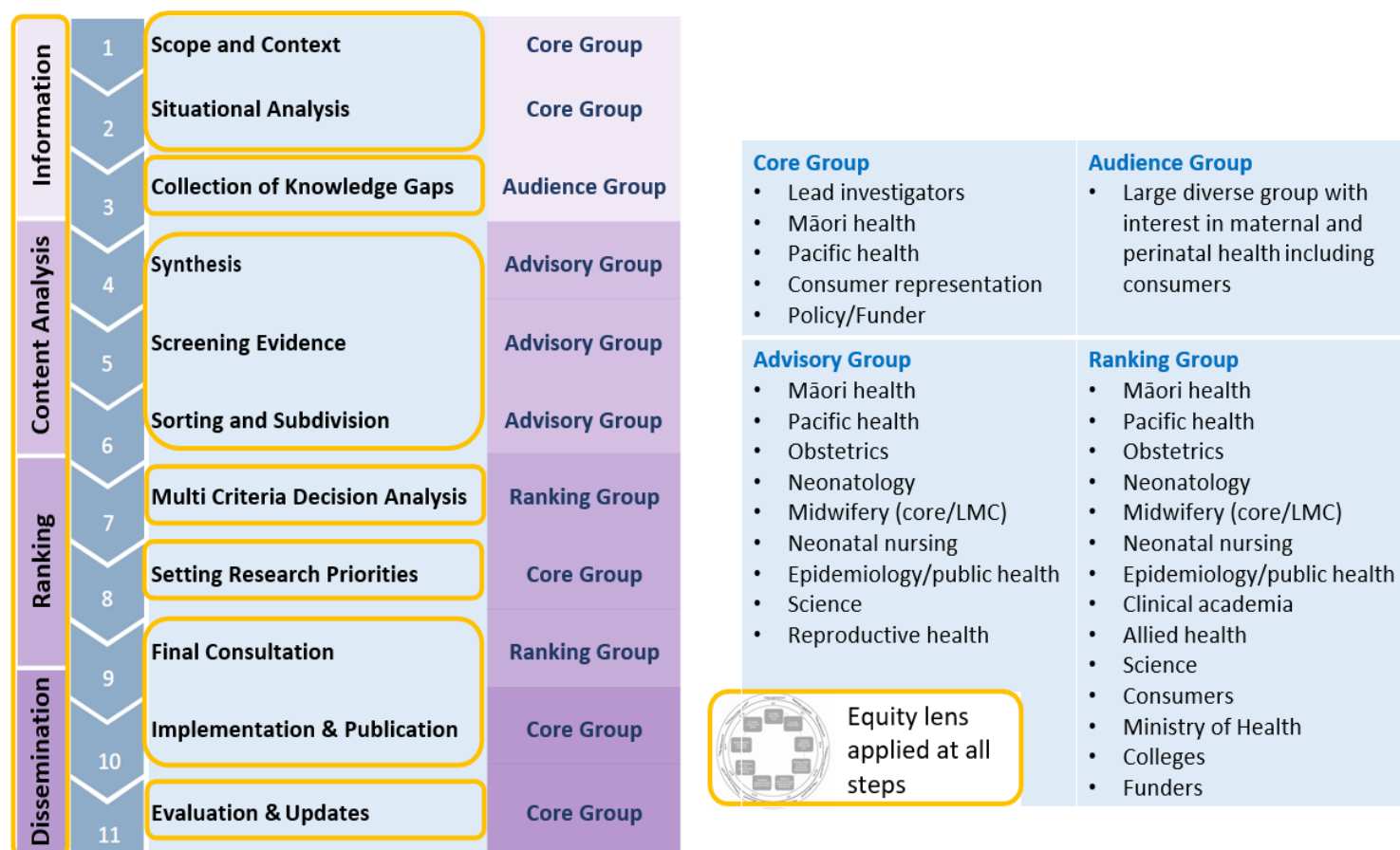
Research prioritisation ensures the most efficient use of resources with research targeted to the health and healthcare needs of a specific population. Over recent decades systematic approaches to research prioritisation have been developed; including methodologies of the Council of Health Research for Development, Delphi studies, Essential National Health Research, 3D Combined Approach Matrix, Child Health Nutrition Research Initiative and the James Lind Alliance. Within New Zealand in 2019, the Health Research Council published 'The New Zealand Health Research Prioritisation Framework' to provide high-level strategic guidance for developing research priorities within the health sector.

To support Pillar One of the ON TRACK Network, these established research priority-setting methods have informed the development of a research prioritisation framework that reflects the unique social, geographic and healthcare context of New Zealand and aims to be robust, transparent, systematic and equitable. Within the framework particular emphasis is made on the need to operate in partnership

with Māori, and to apply an equity lens and include the voice of women and whānau (consumers) in all stages of the research prioritisation process.

The ON TRACK Network Research Prioritisation Framework (Figure 1) will identify knowledge gaps through on-line surveys and face-to-face hui and meetings. Content analysis will validate knowledge gaps and formulate these into appropriate research questions. Research questions will be sorted into themes before being ranked against defined and weighted criteria to generate a hierarchy of research priorities. These will be made publicly available to direct future clinical trials research activities, including those supported through the Network, and to guide funders and policy-makers.

Figure 1. The ON TRACK Network Research Prioritisation Framework



Developed by Mossinger, Crowther, Harding and Groom, 2019

Four groups will contribute to the Framework (Figure 1). The **Core Group** will be senior team members who will provide oversight and steer the project. The **Audience Group** will be a large and diverse group of individuals with interest in maternal and perinatal health including women and whānau (consumers), clinicians, other healthcare providers, researchers, funders, policy-makers and other stakeholders. The **Advisory Group** will be invited individuals with skills to provide technical expertise for content analysis (10-20 individuals). The **Ranking Group** will be invited individuals with appropriate clinical and/or research experience (40-60 individuals).

By establishing research priorities using a systematic and transparent Research Prioritisation Framework tailored to maternal and perinatal health and healthcare in New Zealand we can enable future clinical trials research and research resources to be directed to provide maximum benefit to the future health and wellbeing of mothers and babies in New Zealand.