

Research

Strategy 2019–2023

At a glance

Health promotion research is essential for understanding the factors that drive preventable disease and informing the design of interventions that are needed to prevent illness and promote health.

Since 2013, VicHealth has contributed more than \$31 million to a wide range of research projects, including investigator-driven and commissioned research. This includes commissioning the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to examine the current and projected risk factor burden in Victoria (VicHealth 2019), which is based on the Australian Burden of Disease Study 2015 (AIHW 2019). The study's results provide us with valuable insights for planning health promotion policy and interventions in Victoria.

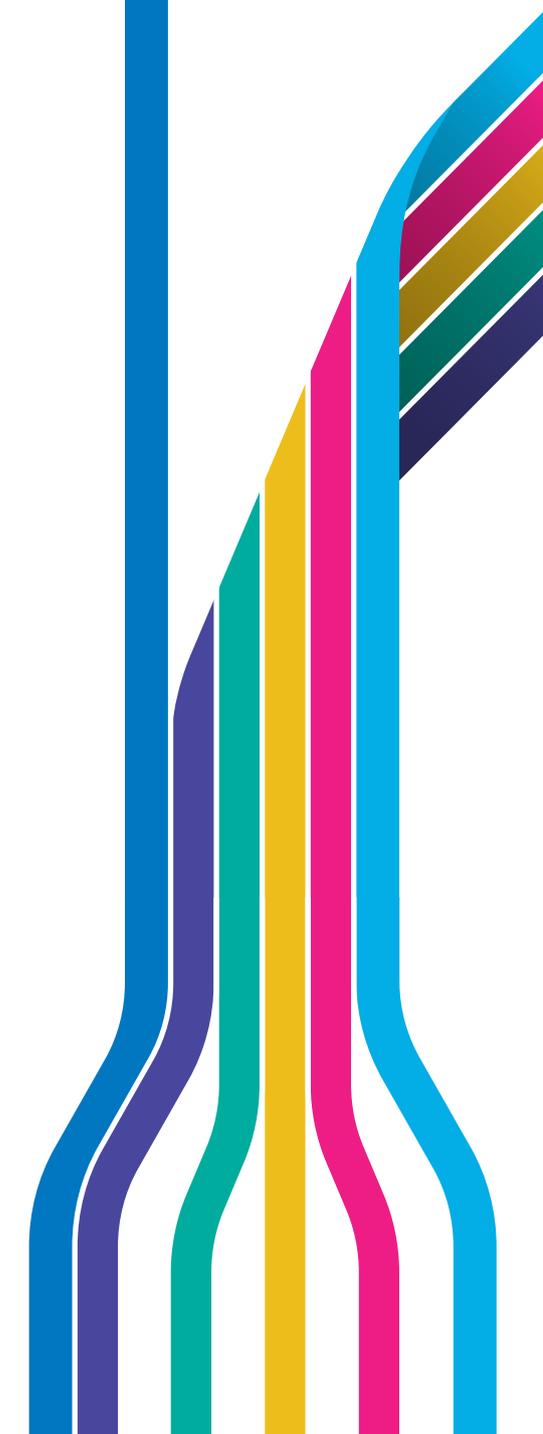
A 2018 review of our research program has led to a greater focus on impact, prioritising research projects that generate new evidence for direct application to health promotion policy and practice. Over the next four years, we will build on this approach, with a focus on:

- applying research for impact and scale
- supporting the development of research partnerships
- increasing the flow of knowledge from research to practice.

In 2013, we released our [Action Agenda for Health Promotion](#), which set our strategic direction for the 10 years to 2023. Research is one of three strategies that span all five of our strategic imperatives to improve the health of all Victorians.

Our research program funds investigator-driven research, including partnering on National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Partnership Projects and Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Projects, and our own Impact Research Grants, as well as commissioned research.

More information about our work on research from 2013 to 2019 can be found on our [website](#).



What we aim to achieve

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Applying research for impact and scale

Although research evidence describing public health problems is plentiful, research that guides implementation of policy and practice is lacking (Wolfenden et al. 2015). Supporting research that informs policy and practice is critical to maximising the effectiveness of our research program and delivering community benefit.

To strengthen the impact and scale of our research, we will:

- better orient our research grants program to support proposals that focus on outcomes with practical application
- investigate how to maximise the potential for our research grants to be scaled.

What will success look like?

More VicHealth research grants that directly inform changes to policy and practice.

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Supporting the development of research partnerships

Linking the expertise of researchers with the practical experience of health promotion practitioners in the development and delivery of research will help maximise the relevance, timeliness and application of research findings.

To foster partnerships for research, we will:

- strengthen the requirements of our research grants process so that applications require partnerships between researchers and practitioners and policymakers
- facilitate collaboration between VicHealth, researchers, policymakers and health promotion practitioners to accelerate the translation of research into practice.

What will success look like?

More VicHealth grants to partnership-based projects.

More partnerships that accelerate the translation of research findings into action.

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Increasing the flow of knowledge from research to practice

Translating knowledge into practice is a process that is dynamic and involves interaction between the context, researchers and end users of research knowledge.

To facilitate effective knowledge translation, we will:

- leverage policy and practitioner insights to focus research priorities on evidence gaps
- refine mechanisms for timely availability and use of all research outputs to support impact.

What will success look like?

Greater funding of research that fills the evidence gaps and better dissemination of research findings to enhance their impact.

Supporting Evidence

Research produces the evidence we need to understand what drives health risk factors and the social determinants of health. It also informs how we can address these to help prevent illness and promote health.

There are three main types of evidence used in public health and health promotion (Armstrong et al. 2014):

- descriptive evidence: describes a problem (such as epidemiological evidence)
- impact evidence: helps identify effective strategies to address a problem
- implementation evidence: often derived from the evaluation of interventions, and informs which strategies work best and why.

The more high-quality evidence we can generate, and the more information we have about what works, the greater our capacity to deliver successful programs and policies will be.

The research context and application of evidence are evolving locally and internationally to embrace a user-driven agenda. This change helps to identify research priorities that are relevant to user needs and that can be quickly applied (Oliver et al. 2014; Wolfenden et al. 2015).

We will continue to generate high-quality research with a greater focus on user-driven priorities through a range of mechanisms, including:

- an investigator-driven research grant program which includes partnering on NHMRC partnership grants and ARC Linkage grants, and our own Impact Research Grants
- commissioned research to inform our work or fill an identified evidence gap
- knowledge translation activities with the primary purpose of enabling application, replication or transfer of available knowledge.

References

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