

**Research.  
Evidence.  
Action.**



# Strategy 2026-2030



**Bringing research  
to life**



Published by:  
Health Research Board  
Dublin

Copyright:  
Health Research Board 2026

ISBN: 978-1-903669-36-5

Health Research Board  
Grattan House  
67-72 Lower Mount Street  
Dublin 2  
D02 H638  
Ireland

**t** +353 1 234 5000

**e** [hrb@hrb.ie](mailto:hrb@hrb.ie)

**w** [www.hrb.ie](http://www.hrb.ie)

[www.hrbstrategy2030.ie](http://www.hrbstrategy2030.ie)

# Foreword



**Minister for Health,  
Jennifer Carroll MacNeill**

**I am delighted to welcome this new strategy from the Health Research Board (HRB) as it celebrates 40 years of bringing research to life. We are at a pivotal point for healthcare in Ireland and research plays a central role in shaping policy, practice and services.**

Every step forward in health research is a step towards better healthcare in Ireland, delivering innovation, prevention, reduced costs, enhanced productivity, and improvement in people's experiences of health and social care.

We have seen extraordinary strides in the decades since the HRB was established by my Department 40 years ago. From the development of new treatments and underpinning changes to practice, to creating pathways so that people can participate in clinical trials and delivering robust evidence to improve the way we provide care - the HRB has been pivotal in making this a reality.

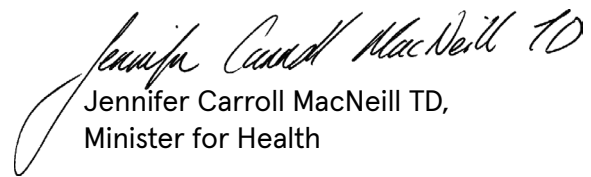
As you celebrate your milestone anniversary, I am privileged to welcome this new strategy that will guide our path forward.

Government has given a commitment to research in a wide range of areas: including improving dementia diagnostics and supports, building national emergency health preparedness, digital health and genomics, increasing the number and quality of clinical trials and focusing on evidence-based decision-making to advance equity and deliver better health and care.

This new strategy outlines an ambitious roadmap for enhancing innovative and proactive health research with the potential to support delivery across these key areas over the coming years. We need the right conditions for research and innovation to flourish, and this strategy demonstrates a clear commitment to create a thriving research ecosystem which supports the research community. This is essential because evidence shows that when research is embedded in a health service, it equips healthcare providers with the knowledge and data to enable improved outcomes for patients and the public.

Together, we will continue to ensure the patient and public voice is heard during research projects, as it is only by working together that we can deliver real-world impacts.

Through this strategy, the HRB is demonstrating what can be achieved in health research if we are ambitious, collaborative, and above all, prioritising the needs of the public, patients and carers. This approach will position us well to tackle future health challenges, inform decision-making, and deliver better health and social care for everyone.

  
Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD,  
Minister for Health



# HRB Chair statement



**Dr Tracy Cunningham**

**As the HRB marks 40 years of public service, this strategy represents our ambition and drive to strengthen healthcare on the island of Ireland – and beyond – through a dynamic health research ecosystem.**

Since the establishment of the HRB, we have supported significant advances in public health, patient care, health system innovation, and smarter policy development, remaining focused on research that improves people's lives and strengthens the health and social care system.

As an organisation, we have grown in scale and ambition. Our investments have transformed the health research landscape, increased the use of evidence for health and social care policies and enhanced people's health.

Our work has been integrated into national strategies and legislation in areas such as mental health, cancer, drugs, alcohol, gambling and e-cigarettes.

In addition, the National Research Ethics Committees under the auspices of the HRB have been responsible for a step change in clinical research delivery, as well as strengthening clinical research governance.

## **Future direction**

This new 5-year strategy is highly ambitious, developed in partnership with the Department of Health and importantly our research community, patients and the public.

As the lead funder of health research on the island of Ireland, we are determined to support a thriving and increasingly impactful health research ecosystem.

This will be demonstrated by advancing clinical trials and investing in innovative ideas, further developing health data infrastructure and deepening our collaborations at all-island, EU and international levels.

We will also deliver trusted evidence that empowers decision-making in health for economic and social benefit. The continued development of the National Research Ethics Committees is an essential component of this research effort.

### **Strong collaboration**

Collaboration has been a cornerstone of the HRB's success and will be central to delivering our mission going forward.

At a national level, partnership with people working at the coalface in health and social care – along with the public, patients and carers – will also help to ensure that the HRB strategy can be applied in policy and practice, contributing to better outcomes for our communities.

### **Respond and adapt**

The need to be agile and resilient is embedded in our strategy. The landscape is constantly changing, which will likely require adaptation of the strategy over the coming 5 years.

Artificial intelligence (AI), budget limitations, the risk of financial and geopolitical instability, increased demand for evidence-informed decisions, digital transformation, and strengthened prevention and preparedness measures all pose potential challenges but also signal significant opportunities for enhanced health research delivery.

Hence, we must regularly reevaluate the landscape and adapt accordingly within the implementation plan for this strategy.

This could result in a change of focus in our funding schemes, a requirement to deliver evidence products in shorter time frames, and expansion of our services. So, we must be flexible to change where change is required.

### **Translation to action**

Our strategy sets out clear goals, related actions and key performance indicators. Progress against these will be monitored in quarterly and annual reports to the HRB Board and the Department of Health.

I want to thank our extensive stakeholder group for their time and commitment in helping to craft this strategy. Many of their suggestions have been incorporated.

I also want to thank the Board for their insight and expert guidance and the highly knowledgeable and skilled HRB workforce for their work in developing this strategic vision. We will ensure that we continue to grow our talent and expertise to meet the needs of this new strategy.

We look forward to delivering on an impactful new 5-year strategy which focuses on excellent health research, inclusivity, trustworthy evidence in partnership with patients and the public, delivered in an ethical and well-governed manner and translated to yield health and socioeconomic impact.



Dr Tracy Cunningham  
Chair, Health Research Board





# Contents

Introduction	10
Values, vision, mission and purpose	13
<b>Strategic goals</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Goal 1</b> Create a thriving health research environment	<b>16</b>
<b>Goal 2</b> Advance Ireland's clinical trial ecosystem	<b>20</b>
<b>Goal 3</b> Generate and support evidence for policy and practice	<b>24</b>
<b>Goal 4</b> Invest in innovative research ideas	<b>28</b>
<b>Goal 5</b> Lead for impact through strategic research partnerships	<b>31</b>
<b>Corporate enablers</b>	<b>35</b>
Measuring success	37
Delivering with commitment	42

# Introduction

**When the Health Research Board (HRB) was established in 1986, it was born out of clear necessity. At the time, Ireland lagged behind many peers in research activity, health outcomes, economic performance and public policy – including in health and social support.**

Bodies like the HRB laid the groundwork for future reforms. Evidence-based approaches to policy became a foundational part of what later drove the Celtic Tiger. Economic and public policy advanced hand in hand.

## **Critical moment**

Fast forward 40 years and we operate in a very different world. Advances such as digital health and personalised medicine are driving positive change, and when delivered with appropriate safeguards, artificial intelligence can be harnessed as a force for good.

But all this is happening in the face of a critical moment for people's health and our health system.

Ireland's population is growing rapidly, and our demographic profile is shifting at pace.

We have an ageing population and a rising number of people living with disability and chronic disease such as cancer and cardiovascular disease; antimicrobial resistance and climate change pose an ever-growing threat; and health inequity persists.

Women's health, genomics and rare disease research remain underdeveloped, and people's mental health is under assault by the attention economy.

## **Action now**

Addressing the health challenges of tomorrow requires action now. To plan effectively, reliable evidence and data are essential. That is why the HRB matters now more than ever.

Our leadership role in health research and evidence empowers decision-making in health and social care to tackle future challenges.

### **Building on our success**

To achieve this, the HRB will build on its strengths. This means not simply doing the same things again. It means remaining agile and responsive to public need and the needs of policymakers. Part of this involves maximising access to clinical trials and real-world evidence (RWE) studies across all settings in trusted, regulated and safe environments in collaboration with other stakeholders.

We will also rise to the challenge of scaling up Ireland's research workforce, collaborating with partners to create a health system where practitioners can pursue successful research careers.

Our work joining the dots to create a more integrated evidence ecosystem and expanding our services in evidence synthesis and knowledge brokering, will continue with renewed vigour.

We will work with international partners to advance the capacity to produce real-time data and evidence and establish an evidence hub focused on preparedness for emerging health threats.

We will expand national health information systems and enhance the use of data through geomapping of service provision, supporting Ireland's compliance with the European Health Data Space (EHDS) and participation in the Health Data Access Body (HDAB).

All of this work will be underpinned by a strong ethical governance framework, aligned with national and European Union (EU) standards to ensure that people's data rights are appropriately safeguarded.

### **People-centred approach**

From our earliest days, the HRB understood that progress in health and social care research and policy is best achieved through collaboration, placing people at the centre of everything we do.

The HRB pioneered public and patient involvement (PPI), making it a foundation stone of how research is conducted in Ireland. We will continue to embed a culture where research is conducted with people, not simply about them.

When the HRB was founded, William A Watts, our first chairman, said that in the long term our health system would reflect the research base underpinning it. Forty years later, that statement remains true.

As we look to the next 40 years, we commit to focusing on research that delivers impact for everyone, empowering decision-making grounded in trusted evidence in a spirit of collaboration across the island of Ireland, the EU and beyond. We look forward to shaping and empowering Ireland's inclusive health and social care research future.



# Values

Our values reflect and shape our culture and underpin everything we do.



## Impact

We are committed to making a positive impact on people's health through research and evidence for the public good.

## Inclusiveness and respect

We work collaboratively to ensure that everyone's views are heard and respected.

## Equity

We work to promote health equity and address health inequalities, including socioeconomic status, age, gender, migrant status and disability.

## Leadership

We take a leadership role to advance health and social care through research.

## Integrity

We are ethical and transparent in our work to maintain public trust.

## Innovation and agility

We embrace new challenges and opportunities and are responsive to change.

## Enthusiasm and pride

We support a culture where people are enthusiastic and take pride in their work.

## Sustainability

We actively promote sustainable practices to minimise our impact on the environment.

## Vision

Better health, informed policy, and improved care for everyone across the island of Ireland.

## Mission

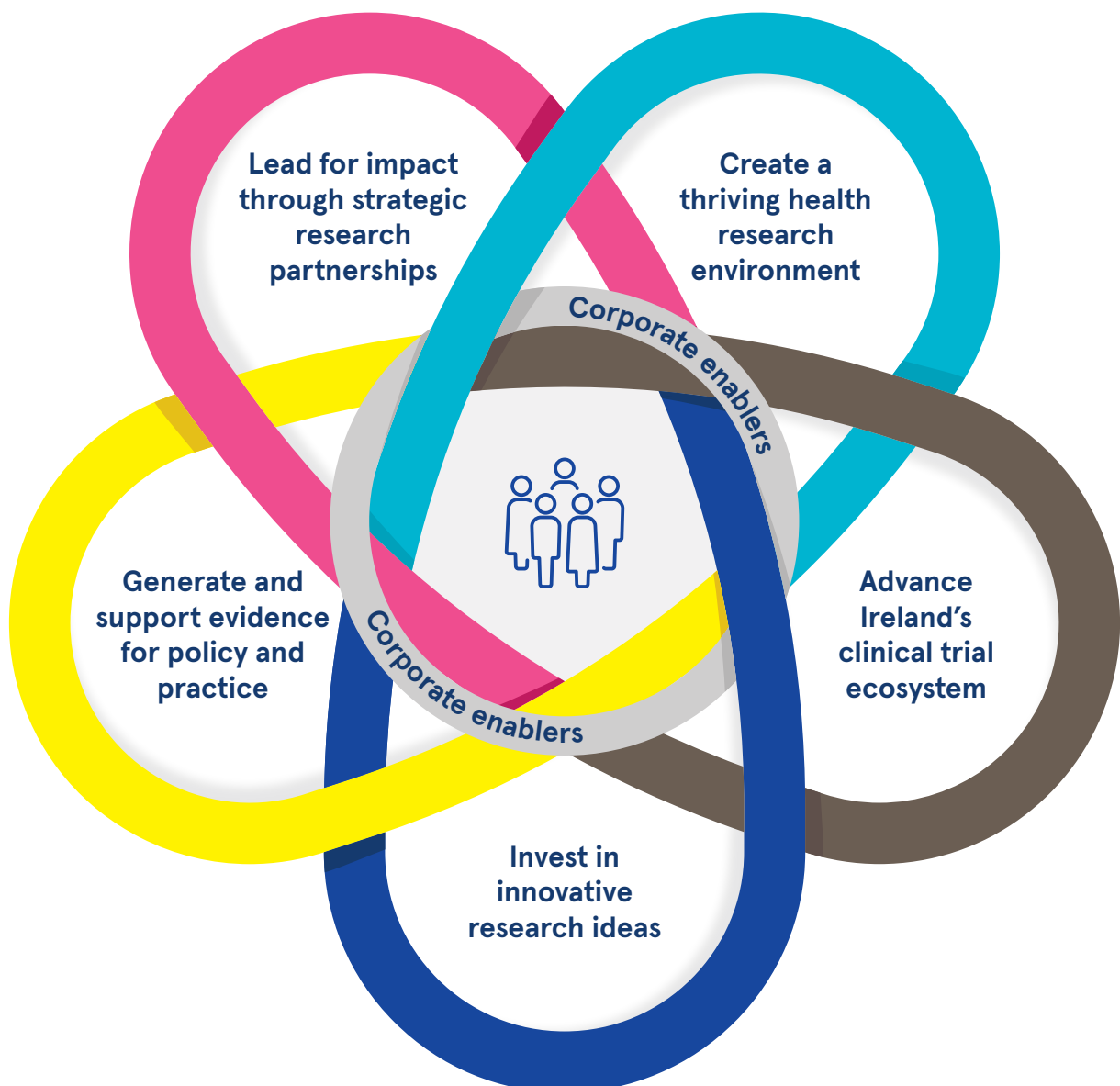
To lead national investment in health research by building capacity, supporting excellence, embedding ethics, and ensuring that high-quality evidence is translated into better policy and care.

## Purpose

To advance ethical, excellent, and equitable research that strengthens the health system and delivers real societal benefit.

## Strategic goals

To achieve our mission, activities within and across goals are closely interconnected and reinforce each other.



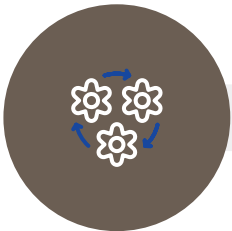
# Strategic goals

We have set out strategic objectives for 2026–2030 under five goals:



## Goal 1 Create a thriving health research environment

Creating a vibrant and future-ready environment and research workforce for health and social care



## Goal 2 Advance Ireland's clinical trial ecosystem

Building an effective and competitive clinical trials ecosystem in Ireland that delivers for patients, the healthcare system and the economy



## Goal 3 Generate and support evidence for policy and practice

Informing health policy and practice through high-quality data and evidence



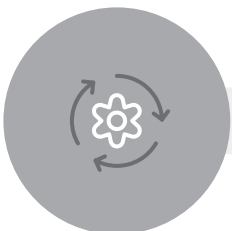
## Goal 4 Invest in innovative research ideas

Funding the best research, ideas and innovations to improve health and social care and support the economy



## Goal 5 Lead for impact through strategic research partnerships

Driving national, EU and international collaboration to tackle health challenges, promoting ethical practices in research and innovation, and enabling successful participation in EU funding programmes



## Corporate enablers

Delivering organisational and operational excellence



# Goal 1

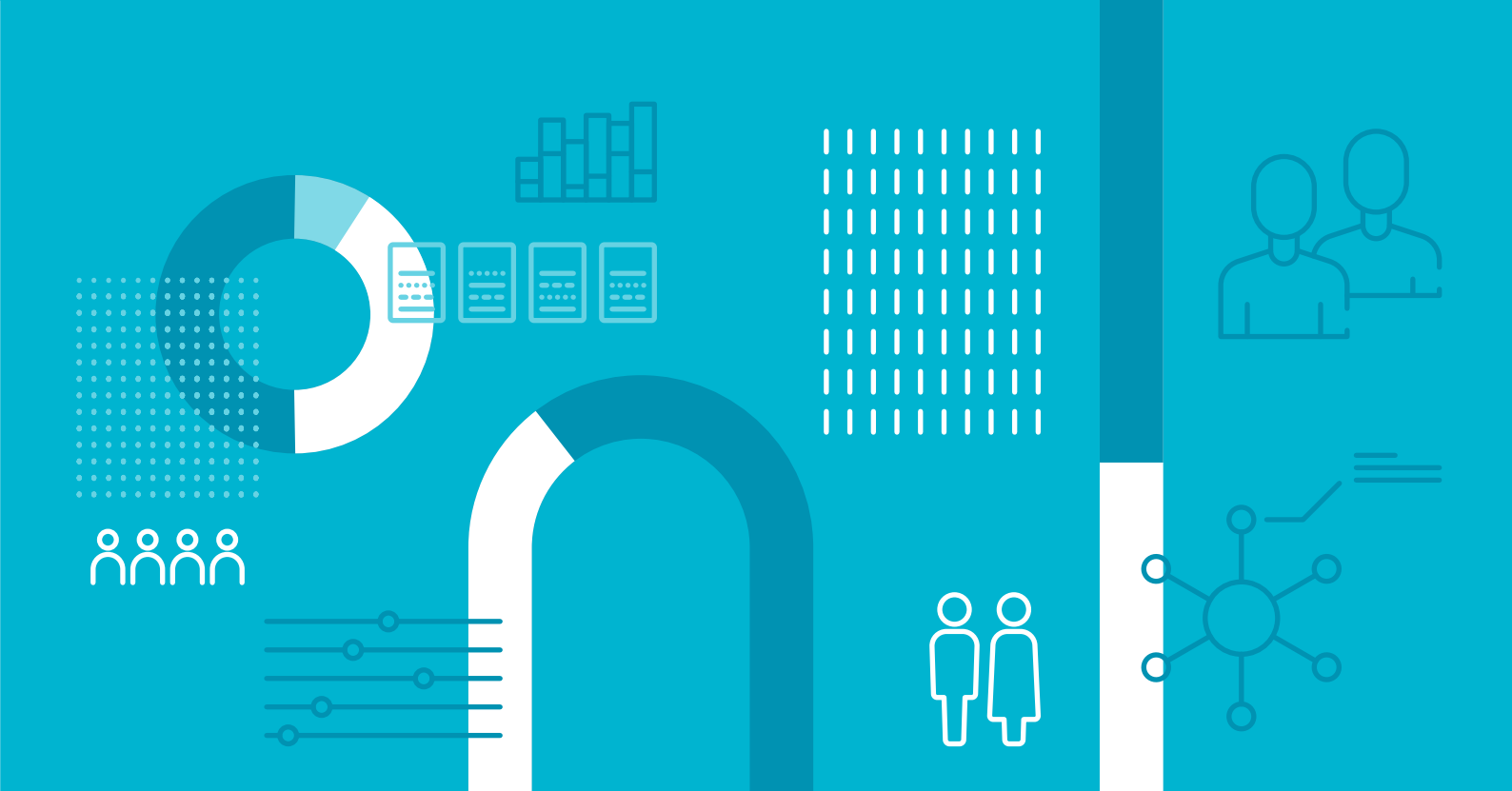
## Create a thriving health research environment

### Creating a vibrant and future-ready environment and research workforce for health and social care

Research and researchers need the right conditions in order to succeed. The HRB will lead the development and implementation of a dynamic health research and data ecosystem across the island of Ireland. We will achieve this by investing in people, skills, systems and governance, and catalysing support for infrastructure.

#### **We will build and support a strong research workforce to meet national, global and future health and social care needs by:**

- Supporting the next generation of applied health and social care researchers, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and inter-professional approaches
- Collaborating with the Health Service Executive (HSE), higher education institutions, professional training bodies and others to develop and support frameworks for a clinical academic workforce that provides opportunities for health and social care professionals at all stages of their careers to combine research training and practice
- Investing in capacity and capability building in critical areas such as biostatistics, behavioural science, implementation science, research methodology, evidence synthesis, and supporting future skills linked to digital transformation.



**We will promote and enable access to research platforms and infrastructures that will enable and enhance health and social care research and innovation by:**

- Leveraging our considerable experience to identify critical gaps and to influence larger public funders and government agencies to invest in sustainable research infrastructure and services
- Supporting the advancement and building awareness of a national Health Data Access Body (under the European Health Data Space) which will enable secure access, linkage and use of health data for research and innovation purposes
- Working with the Department of Health, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and other agencies across the island of Ireland to advance a harmonised approach to biobanking that maximises public benefit, protects donors, enables responsible access and ensures long-term sustainability
- Promoting the establishment of and use of a European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) node in Ireland, in order to provide researchers with an open and trusted multidisciplinary environment where they can publish, find and reuse data, tools and services for research and innovation.

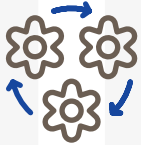
**We will drive excellence in our health research funding policies and practices and support a healthy research and innovation culture by:**

- Embedding responsible research assessment practices that promote excellence, integrity and a healthy research and innovation culture, and share our work in this area
- Supporting FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable) principles and driving open access and open data through collaboration and alignment with national and international partners
- Employing research processes and technological systems that are modern, efficient and reduce administrative burden and waste
- Working with national and international partners to influence, implement and evaluate evolving research policy agendas, such as research security and the responsible use of AI in science
- Delivering a robust evaluation programme that provides evidence on the outputs, outcomes and impacts of our work.

**We will support research conducted in Ireland to be ethical, safeguarded, and in the best interest of research participants and the public by:**

- Enabling research conducted in the public interest through implementation of regulation and data protection safeguards via the Health Research Consent Declaration Committee (HRCDC) supported by the Secretariat
- Supporting the National Research Ethics Committees (NRECs) to deliver robust national research ethics opinions for clinical research on medicines, medical devices and diagnostics, underpinned by diverse and wide-ranging expertise and experiential knowledge
- Developing agile procedures to respond to health emergencies and emerging threats, and supporting the NRECs and HRCDC to deliver accelerated national decisions on ethics and consent, in accordance with national and international guidelines
- Developing trusted, expert-driven, national best practice guidance on ethics, consent and regulations that support researchers to conduct safe and ethical research
- Ensuring transparency of the work of the HRCDC and NRECs which uphold the highest standards of research ethics, governance and data protection safeguards in the best interest of research participants and the public
- Promoting the necessity of patient and public involvement (PPI) in research ethics, consent safeguards and health research more broadly, through engagement with national organisations and PPI members of the HRCDC and NRECs.





## Goal 2

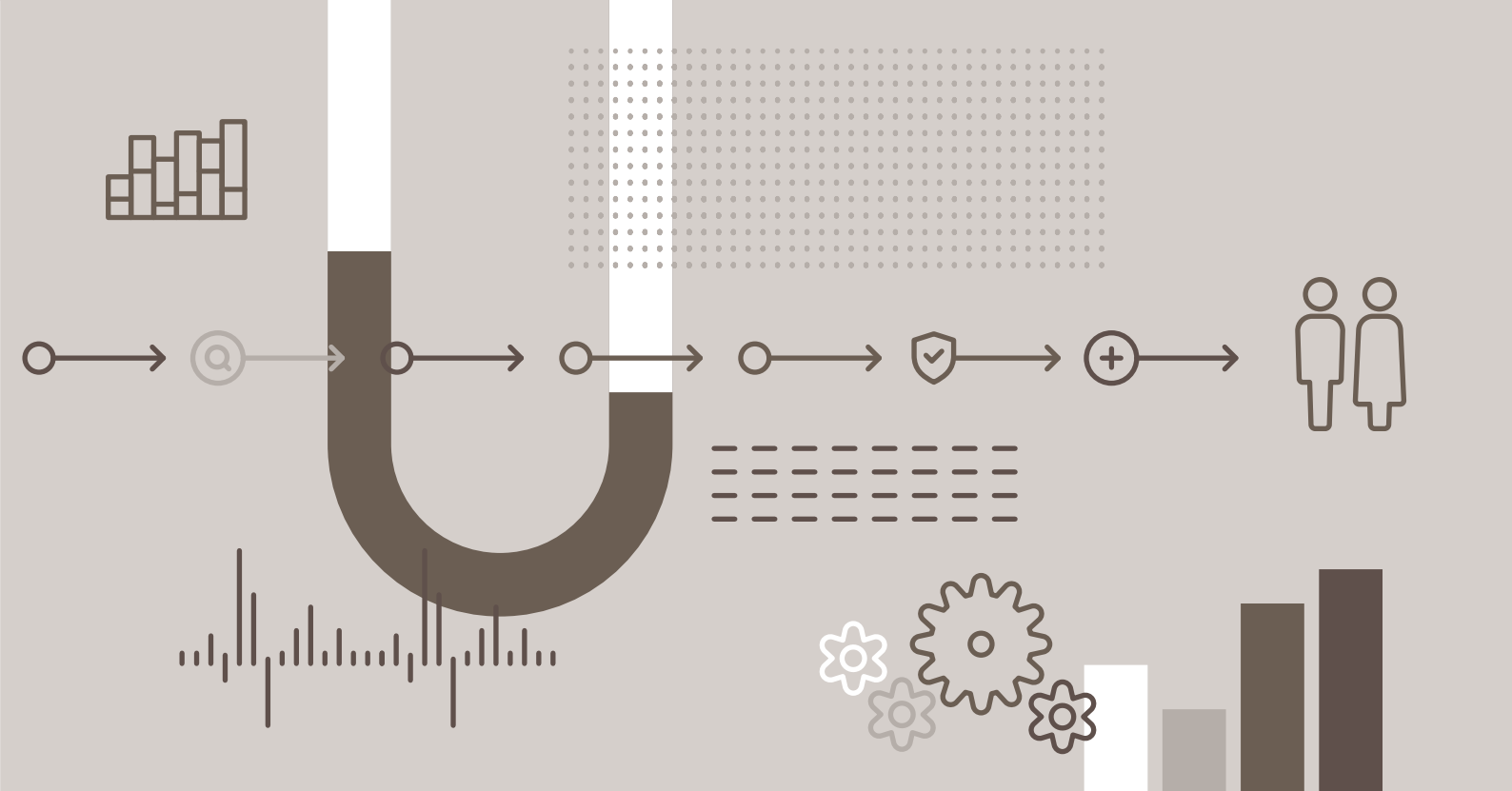
# Advance Ireland's clinical trial ecosystem

### **Building an effective and competitive clinical trials ecosystem in Ireland that delivers for patients, the healthcare system and the economy**

Ireland has a strong foundation in clinical research, with a distributed network of clinical research facilities, excellent academic investigators and globally competitive life sciences and medtech-industries. We will work with others to support both investigator-led and commercial clinical trials and RWE studies across all healthcare settings to maximise people's access to trials in trusted, regulated and safe environments.

#### **We will work with partners to create a competitive, agile and responsive clinical trials ecosystem that delivers for patients, the healthcare system and the economy by:**

- Engaging with the Department of Health and other agencies under the auspices of the Clinical Trials Advisory Council (CTAC) to co-invest in a coordinated network of trials delivery units that will increase the number of both commercial and investigator-led clinical trials and the number of people who can access trials in Ireland



- Enhancing the capabilities and capacity of practitioners and researchers to design, conduct, oversee and report on the full spectrum of investigator-initiated trial types required to deliver safe, more effective and more equitable care across acute, primary, public health and community settings
- Investing in methodological research, training and advisory capacity so that innovative, robust and inclusive trial designs underpin the way trials are conducted, embracing innovations such as data-enabled trials and decentralised trials
- Working with the CTAC to support the establishment of a national portal for metrics and a dashboard reporting system for clinical trials, so that key performance indicators are consistent across the ecosystem and information on trials can be accessed by patients and the public.

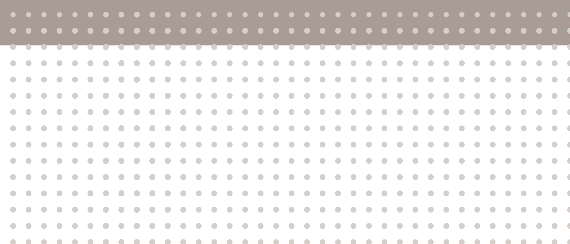
**We will increase the number and quality of clinical trials available to patients in Ireland by:**

- Increasing funding for high-quality investigator-initiated trials across a range of types and settings
- Supporting the advancement of high-quality, multicentre trials through research networks in priority areas
- Working with European and international partners to fund multinational investigator-initiated trials

- Advancing clinical trial participation and standards through active involvement in the European Clinical Research Infrastructure Network (ECRIN)
- Promoting policies and practices that reduce research waste, improve trial informativeness, enhance transparent and timely reporting, and enable PPI and diversity and inclusion in trials
- Promoting a pre-submission consultation service to support the research community in navigating the submission requirements for national ethics opinions and consent declarations decisions that will drive quality and efficiency for research studies commencing in Ireland
- Continuing our leadership and activities at European level by contributing to the Accelerating Clinical Trials in the EU (ACT EU) initiative and the EU4Health programme Joint Actions to support the implementation of the Clinical Trials Regulations and the Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS) for an effective clinical trials system nationally and across the EU.

**We will advance a robust, transparent and dynamic national research ethics review system for regulated clinical research areas by:**

- Enabling the delivery of a single national ethics opinion for regulated clinical research through the work of the National Office and the NRECs it supports, and ensuring streamlined efficiencies with the consent declaration process of the HRCDC as required
- Working with the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) to deliver trusted, coordinated national decisions for clinical research on medicines, medical devices and diagnostics within the prescribed EU-regulated timelines
- Developing and implementing agile and efficient national research ethics assessment operations in response to new EU Regulations; the Biotech Act and Simplification Regulations for medical and *in vitro* diagnostic devices
- Developing a framework to deliver a coordinated national assessment for multi-country studies that combine medicines, medical devices and diagnostics in collaboration with the HPRA and the NRECs.





## Goal 3

# Generate and support evidence for policy and practice

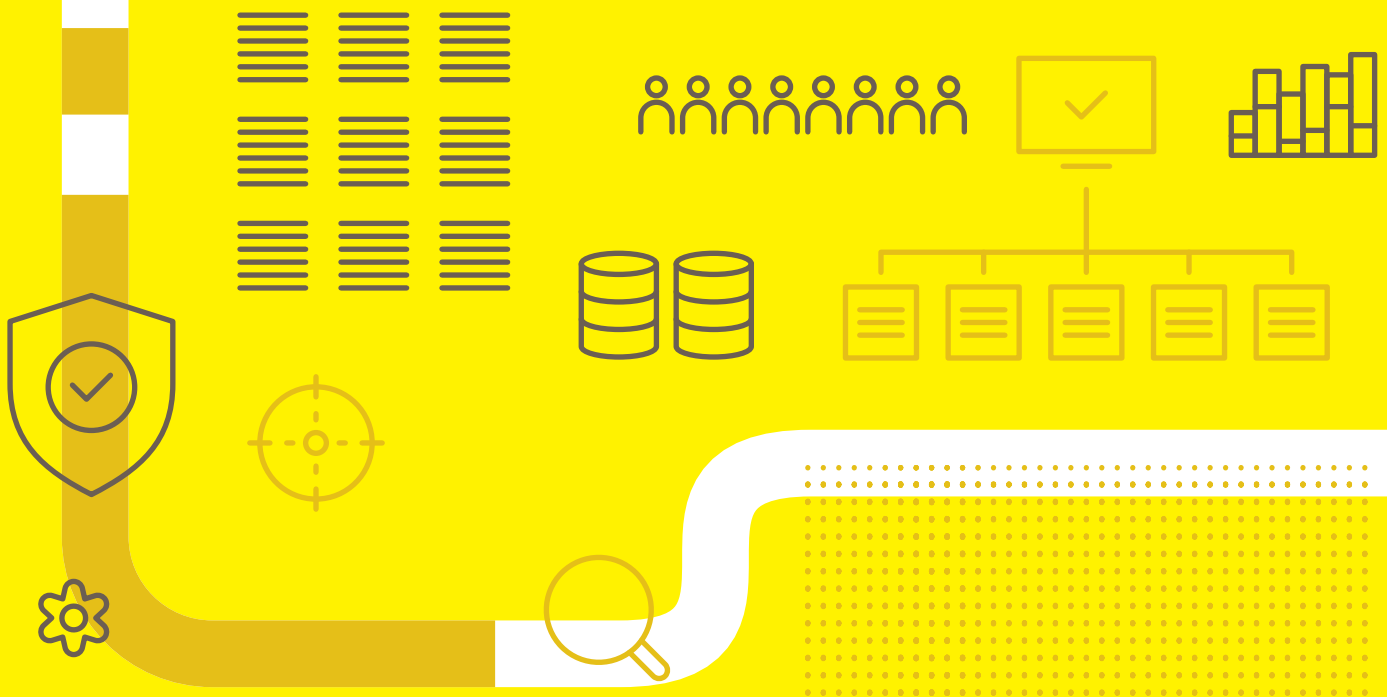


### Informing health and social care policy and practice through high-quality data and evidence

The HRB will fund research and conduct data analysis and evidence synthesis that generates trusted evidence to underpin health and social care policy, service planning, and frontline care. We will drive innovative approaches to co-produce, translate, and disseminate data, research and evidence empowering decision-making in policy and practice.

#### **We will enhance our health information infrastructure to support health and social care policy, service planning and practice in mental health, disability, and drugs and alcohol by:**

- Expanding the HRB's national health information systems' specialist areas of mental health, disability, and drugs and alcohol and associated research activity in collaboration with our key stakeholders, in order to ensure that they are used as evidence to support national strategy, policy, and service planning in these areas
- Investing in innovative statistical techniques and data visualisation, including geomapping and AI, in order to improve the usability of national health information systems to inform and support health and social care research, policy and practice



- Supporting a standards-based approach to information management and data quality so as to ensure that the HRB is a trusted voice in the provision of key health information, including its discoverability via a national health dataset catalogue
- Establishing the HRB as a trusted data holder as part of the EHDS, with the technical capability for secure processing to enable access to and linkage of data for secondary research purposes and for policy and practice
- Working with the Department of Health, the HSE and others to support the digitisation of data in community-based health and social care services and to promote their research potential in relation to *Digital for Care: A Digital Health Framework for Ireland 2024-2030*.

**We will ensure that HRB evidence informs health and social care policy and practice within a coordinated evidence ecosystem by:**

- Providing a dedicated evidence centre with a knowledge brokering and research synthesis team, national drugs library, and alcohol and drugs research programme, in order to provide tailored evidence products and services to key stakeholders
- Supporting, strengthening and connecting the evidence synthesis community on the island of Ireland via Evidence Synthesis Ireland and raising awareness of evidence synthesis among the public, health and social care practitioners and policy-makers

- Building skills in commissioning, interpreting and applying different types of evidence and knowledge brokering
- Investing in evidence synthesis methods and budgetary/economic impact analysis to inform the development of prioritised national clinical guidelines and other evidence products
- Establishing an Evidence Synthesis Hub to develop and use new methods to support relevant and timely synthesised research evidence from across the evidence ecosystem for decision-makers during preparedness and response phases for emerging public health threats
- Working in partnership with international funders and networks to advance the safe and responsible use of AI-enabled tools and open data systems that support evidence synthesis, including living evidence syntheses.

**We will fund high-quality research that delivers robust, relevant, timely, accessible and actionable evidence in areas prioritised by policy-makers by:**

- Working with the Department of Health to solicit, fund and manage projects through the Evidence for Policy Research Programme or other mechanisms as required
- Exploring collaboration and co-funding opportunities with the HSE and other partners, in order to support service-driven and implementation-oriented research
- Prioritising and supporting research (with the associated capacity building) that can inform and guide the evaluation of the transformation goals set out in Sláintecare, such as universal healthcare; shifting care to primary and community settings; improved access and quality; reduced waiting lists; workforce reform; and accelerating digital health
- Convening a national mirror group in health services, systems and policy research to input into research topics for the Transforming Health and Care Systems partnership and to support the transfer of findings into policy and practice
- Promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and whole-of-government approaches to evidence-for-policy initiatives and data linkage, in order to include those that span human, animal and environmental health.



**Recognising the two-way relationship between research and policy, we will promote and facilitate engagement between researchers and decision-makers to bridge the research-policy gap by:**

- Building awareness of the policy-making process among researchers and providing guidance on how to apply it to their research
- Providing supports to policy-makers to identify and prioritise evidence gaps and to translate these into research questions
- Building capacity in critical appraisal skills among decision-makers in health and social care in order to enable them to assess the trustworthiness, quality and relevance of evidence used in decision-making in particular contexts
- Facilitating and supporting innovative knowledge brokerage activities between the policy-making community and evidence producers to build long-term connections and relationships and to optimise the translation and adoption of evidence
- Ensuring that the voices, experiences and values of the public, patients, charities and civil society organisations are considered alongside scientific evidence.



## Goal 4

# Invest in innovative research ideas

### Funding the best research, ideas and innovations

As the lead health research funder in Ireland, the HRB supports the best research, ideas and innovations to improve health and social care, and to strengthen the healthcare system. With a focus on excellence and relevance, we will fund a combination of 'bottom-up' and themed calls that increase the number of novel breakthroughs with potential to have a meaningful impact on people's health outcomes. We are committed to the co-creation of research with people, patients, carers and communities who have lived experience.

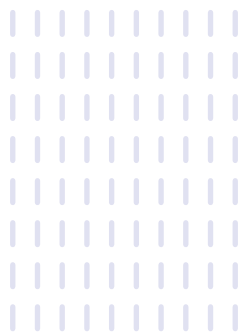
#### We will support innovative, investigator-led research by:

- Funding the best ideas and innovations proposed by researchers, including methodological innovations, in order to unlock novel ideas and pursue novel findings or solutions that themed calls can miss
- Implementing initiatives to promote and leverage the use of secondary data, AI and big data analytics to enhance research and innovation in health and social care
- Exploring initiatives that advance world-leading genomics research that is integrated with clinical genomics services and accelerates diagnosis and improves patient outcomes
- Embracing collaborations with national and international funders that enable larger and more ambitious projects and/or bridge gaps across funders and the research continuum from discovery to practice (and back again).



**We will support health research in themed areas focused on delivering policy/ service impact by:**

- Expanding our investments with other partners, including the Department of Health, HSE and health research charities to advance excellent and innovative research directed towards national and global priorities
- Working with government departments and agencies across government to ensure a joined-up and scaled responsive 'One Health' approach to research and evidence
- Working with researchers, policy-makers, charities, community groups and the public to support research that addresses the wider determinants of health and advances equity and inclusion
- Supporting collaborative research networks to coalesce around important problems to exchange information, advance research, and accelerate findings into policy and practice settings.





**We will involve the public, patients, carers, and communities across all of our funded activities by:**

- Embedding PPI as a core requirement across all of our programmes
- Continuing to play a leadership role in advancing innovative PPI activity and the infrastructure that makes it meaningful and impactful
- Strengthening our partnerships with people with lived experience, carers, patient and community groups, and seldom-heard groups, in order to ensure that their voices are heard throughout the entire research life cycle from co-production to adoption and uptake
- Including PPI contributors on review panels and governance groups
- Supporting inclusive methods and providing funding to researchers to promote and disseminate their research in plain language summaries
- Evaluating and publishing the impact of our PPI activities.



## Goal 5

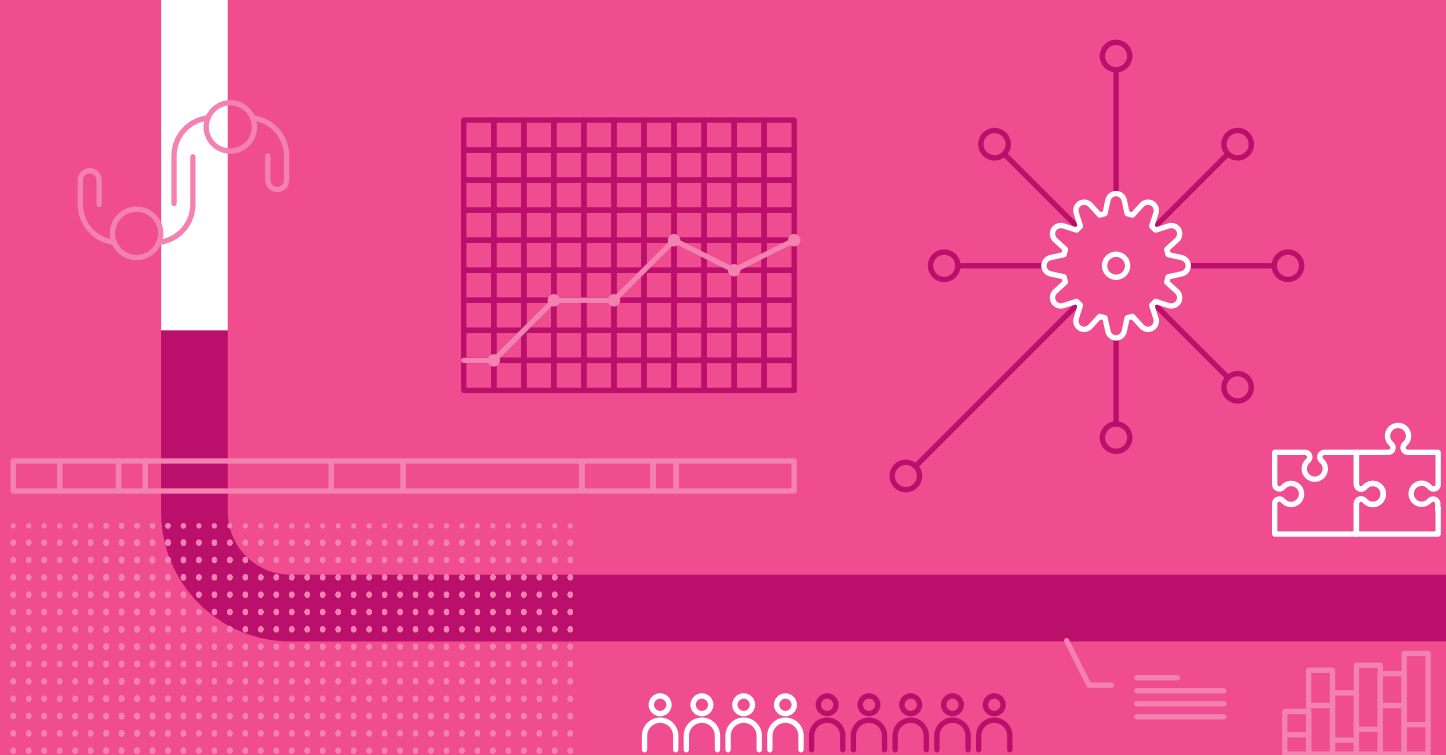
# Lead for impact through strategic research partnerships

### Driving national, EU and international collaboration to tackle health challenges, promoting ethical practices in research and innovation and enabling successful participation in EU funding programmes

The HRB collaborates nationally and globally to influence policy and tackle shared health and social care challenges that transcend borders. We will take a 'whole island' approach in shaping a more integrated, strategic and impactful health research landscape. We will contribute to national policy development and shape an agile research environment that is responsive to current and emerging needs.

#### **We will work with government partners to drive a globally competitive research and innovation ecosystem in Ireland by:**

- Working with government departments and agencies to support the delivery of shared goals and to drive key agendas in *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy*
- Ensuring that our investments contribute to the advancement of wider government objectives, for example, those included in the *Programme for Government 2025: Securing Ireland's Future*, the *National Development Plan (NDP) 2005-2035* and the *Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity*
- Supporting the development of life sciences strategy in Ireland and working with others such as Research Ireland, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, InterTradeIreland and other agencies to unlock the full potential for patients, the healthcare system and the economy



- Collaborating with the Department of Health and other government agencies to explore the development of an effective and agile national research ethics system for non-regulated and multi-site research, and research areas of national strategic importance, through the advancement of the NREC Bill 2019
- Working with the Department of Health, the Data Protection Commission and other stakeholders to review the Health Research Regulations and other applicable legislative frameworks in order to ensure suitability and future-readiness for researchers, patients and the public.

**We will drive all-island collaboration in health research and innovation by:**

- Working with funders in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to advance an all-island approach to research and innovation, with tangible benefits for patients, communities and healthcare delivery systems
- Exploring opportunities with partners in the UK research and innovation system to progress targeted and impactful investments in health research.

**We will support the Irish health research community, policy-makers and service delivery counterparts to compete in EU funding programmes by:**

- Continuing to perform the national delegate role for health within the Horizon Europe programme, working as part of the National Support Network and with delegates from other EU Member States to influence work programmes for health research within the wider Horizon Europe research agenda

- Creating awareness and providing support to the Irish research community to participate in the Horizon Europe funding programme, through the National Contact Point role
- Raising awareness and providing support to policy-makers, service delivery counterparts and researchers to participate in the EU4Health Programme, through the National Focal Point role.

**We will embed international collaboration as a core strategic priority to accelerate and scale research, to build capacity and to tackle shared goals or challenges by:**

- Participating in and supporting Ireland’s involvement in flagship health-related EU partnerships to advance strategic research and innovation agendas in key areas such as rare diseases, transforming health and care systems, pandemic preparedness, and ‘One Health’
- Continuing the HRB’s role as the National Focal Point for the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) and its annual contract, supporting research into drug use and related harms, developing an early warning system to prepare for the threat of new and re-emerging psychoactive natural or synthetic drugs in collaboration with other EU Member States
- Pursuing opportunities with international partners where collaborations can advance priority research areas, promote reciprocal capacity building and deliver equity and impact
- Recognising and exploring opportunities to partner for advancement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, World Health Organization (WHO) resolutions and other international frameworks, and to ensure coordinated impact.

**We will work with our national and EU partners to drive harmonised, best ethical and data protection practices for regulated research, and all health and social care sectors by:**

- Implementing harmonised EU regulations nationally, for a predictable and effective national ethics system for research on medicines, medical devices and diagnostics, by working with EU Member States and through our participation on MedEthicsEU, and other EU coordination groups
- Working collaboratively with European bodies such as the European Network for Research Ethics Committees and National Ethics Councils to develop and share best ethics practices and knowledge across all sectors, beyond health research
- Collaborating with HSE Research and Development, the wider research ethics committee system and other networks in Ireland to harmonise and share best ethical practices, including health data protection safeguards.





# Corporate enablers

Organisational and operational excellence, including in governance, communications, human resources (HR), financial management and information and communication technology (ICT), are critical to the successful delivery and implementation of our strategy.

Over the next 5 years we will take the following organisational actions to transform, change, maintain and continuously improve our activities and services.

## **We will communicate with impact by:**

- Increasing awareness of the work of the HRB, its impact, influence, and uniqueness
- Maintaining our position as a credible source of health research, data, and evidence
- Enhancing communications infrastructure to support messaging
- Equipping staff to communicate with impact.

## **We will create a positive organisational culture and ensure that people have the skills and development opportunities to deliver on business needs by:**

- Delivering an effective and proactive recruitment, selection, retention, and workforce planning process, embedding a culture of equality, diversity, inclusion, and supporting professional behaviour in all aspects of the HRB's work
- Delivering a learning and development programme to maximise our people's ability and performance
- Developing and delivering a robust health and well-being framework
- Delivering facilities and environmental sustainability initiatives in line with regulations and business needs.

**We will ensure that timely and accurate financial information is available to deliver value for money and optimise decision-making by:**

- Providing accurate and timely financial information to all stakeholders
- Supporting effective and sustainable procurement and contract management
- Managing grant and non-grant income and expenditure to ensure compliance with legislation, regulations, and guidelines
- Working with other funders and funding recipients to ensure robust oversight to continually improve the financial control environment.

**We will ensure innovative and cyber-secure ICT by:**

- Delivering a responsive ICT service
- Implementing and maintaining leading-edge cybersecurity practices and solutions
- Executing strategic use of cloud computing
- Maintaining best-in-class IT infrastructure and expert data management processes
- Implementing AI solutions to optimise processes, enhance decision-making, and drive innovation
- Introducing technological innovations that support the organisation.

**We will maintain robust governance structures and processes by:**

- Adhering to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and all relevant legislation
- Embedding responsive and effective processes for data governance, including requirements under data protection, freedom of information and parliamentary questions
- Delivering an effective risk management framework, AI management framework, and internal audit programme
- Supporting the development, tracking and reporting of organisational performance.



## Measuring success

Over the course of the strategy, we will continually monitor and evaluate progress against our goals using a defined suite of key performance indicators (KPIs). These KPIs were selected based on four main criteria: their relevance to the Board and external reporting, the ability to set baselines and targets, the degree of HRB control or influence, and data feasibility.

As part of strategy implementation, we will develop an operationalisation framework for KPIs which will establish baseline values and set performance targets where appropriate. To contextualise performance, we will seek to benchmark our indicators against comparable national and international organisations where such benchmarking is feasible and meaningful. While a larger set of internal indicators will be used for tracking ongoing strategy delivery, reporting for the following high-level KPIs will follow a cadence agreed with the HRB Board.

The KPIs are presented in the table below, organised by goal and strategic objective, and accompanied by a rationale explaining why each indicator has been selected. Some KPIs span all five goals and are presented as crosscutters.

Goal	Strategic objective	Key performance indicator	Rationale for inclusion
<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Create a thriving health research environment</b></p>	<p>We will build and support a strong research workforce to meet national, global and future health and social care needs</p>	<p><b>1.1</b> Percentage and type of health and social care researchers who, 2 years after completion of their HRB grant, are still research active</p> <p><b>1.2</b> Percentage of HRB-funded fellows who progress to clinical-academic posts or protected academic roles</p>	<p>A strong indicator of sustained capacity of the research workforce supported by HRB investment</p> <p>Tracks career progression of HRB-funded fellows and is an important indicator of capacity of the system to support a clinical academic workforce</p>
	<p>We will drive excellence in our health research funding policies and practices and support a healthy research and innovation culture</p>	<p><b>1.3</b> Percentage of HRB-supported peer-reviewed publications published over a rolling 5-year period that are open access</p>	<p>The indicator links strongly to the HRB’s efforts to support FAIR data principles and open data and is in line with the HRB’s open access policy</p>
	<p>We will support research conducted in Ireland to be ethical, safeguarded, and in the best interest of research participants and the public</p>	<p><b>1.4</b> Number of national research ethics opinions and consent declarations issued expediently, coordinated across the diverse NREC and HRCDC membership, with adherence to regulatory and standard operating procedures (SOPS timelines)</p>	<p>Demonstrates timeliness and volume of outputs of the National Office and Secretariat</p>

Goal	Strategic objective	Key performance indicator	Rationale for inclusion
<b>2</b> Advance Ireland's clinical trials ecosystem	We will increase the number and quality of clinical trials available to patients in Ireland	<b>2.1</b> Number of patients and participants enrolled in high-quality clinical trials in Ireland  (disaggregated by commercial trials and investigator-led clinical trials)	An increase in this indicator over time will represent an increase in access to clinical trials for the ultimate beneficiary - patients and participants
	<hr/>		
<b>3</b> Generate and support evidence for policy and practice	We will enhance our health information infrastructure to support health and social care policy, service planning and practice in mental health, disability, and drugs and alcohol	<b>3.1</b> Percentage of users of National Health Information System (NHIS) databases who rate their value of the data and resultant products as high or very high	Measures value and utility of NHIS databases and products as perceived by key users
	We will ensure that HRB evidence informs health and social care policy and practice within a coordinated evidence ecosystem	<b>3.2</b> Progress in evidence synthesis delivery and capacity, measured by adherence to timelines and growth in individuals trained in planning, delivering and using evidence syntheses	Measures improvements in the timeliness of evidence synthesis delivery and the growth of skills needed to produce and apply evidence
<b>4</b> Invest in innovative research ideas	We will support innovative, investigator-led research	<b>4.1</b> Percentage of HRB-funded publications published over a rolling 5-year period with a field citation ratio of $\geq 1$	Measures quality of peer-reviewed publications through a field-normalised metric
	We will support health research in themed areas focused on delivering policy/ service impact	<b>4.2</b> Percentage of HRB funding approved annually that is themed or targeted	This indicator is a strong measure of alignment of funded research with national and global priorities

Goal	Strategic objective	Key performance indicator	Rationale for inclusion
<p data-bbox="153 416 220 479">5</p> <p data-bbox="153 506 320 725">Lead for impact through strategic research partnerships</p>	<p data-bbox="376 412 652 703">We will support the Irish health research community, policy-makers and service delivery counterparts to compete in EU funding programmes</p>	<p data-bbox="676 412 1023 629">5.1 Competitive success rates in applications for EU health research funding maintained through influencing agendas and providing expert support</p>	<p data-bbox="1062 412 1418 591">Success rates of applicants from Ireland for EU health research funding is a strong indicator of the impact of HRB expert support</p>
	<p data-bbox="376 786 652 1151">We will embed international collaboration as a core strategic priority to accelerate and scale research, in order to build capacity and tackle shared goals or challenges</p>	<p data-bbox="676 786 986 891">5.2 Increase in co-investment from EU and international partners</p>	<p data-bbox="1062 786 1398 891">Indicates strengthened international partnerships and influence</p>
	<p data-bbox="376 1234 652 1599">We will work with our national and EU partners to drive harmonised, best ethical and data protection practices for regulated research, and all health and social care sectors</p>	<p data-bbox="676 1234 1034 1525">5.3 Number and type of national and EU engagements with National Office and Secretariat leadership, in order to advance efficient regulatory frameworks for best ethical and safeguarding standards</p>	<p data-bbox="1062 1234 1366 1375">Measures leadership provided by the HRB to advance ethical and safeguarding standards.</p>

Goal	Strategic objective	Key performance indicator	Rationale for inclusion
Crosscutter	Crosscutter	C.1 Additional monies leveraged by the HRB from external sources per €1 HRB investment	Strong indicator of added value of the HRB investment
		C.2 High level of public and patient involvement (PPI) integrated into HRB activities. (Composite indicator)	Measures level of PPI integration in key HRB activities including grant funding, consent and ethics committees and NHIS working groups.
		C.3 Number of instances, measured annually, of HRB-supported research outputs used to inform legislation, policy, and practice improvement	Measures real-world impact of HRB-funded and delivered research

Alongside the KPIs, we will include illustrative evidence demonstrating the HRB’s contribution to health service delivery and patient outcomes. We will also undertake periodic targeted stakeholder ‘check ins’ (via feedback mechanisms such as surveys and consultations) at key points in the strategy period. This will enable us to gauge evolving sectoral needs and the perceived impact of our organisational activities and engagement as part of our KPI monitoring and evaluation framework.

We commit to reviewing our KPIs on an ongoing basis in order to ensure continued relevance to key elements of the strategy and to reflect emerging priorities.

## Delivering with commitment

As we look to the next 5 years, the HRB reaffirms its commitment to delivering ethical, excellent and equitable research that strengthens health and social care and serves the public good across the island of Ireland, the EU and internationally.

Our work will continue to be grounded in values of integrity, inclusivity, accountability, and transparency, showing leadership and embracing innovation to ensure that our activities have a positive impact on people's health.

We will apply best practice corporate governance and responsible stewardship of public investment. We will also promote sustainable practices across our operations to minimise environmental impact.

Our implementation of this strategy – and all our activity – will be subject to monitoring, evaluation and reporting. There will be a mid-point review of the strategy to ensure we adapt to changing circumstances.

Inclusion will remain central to our purpose. We will work to reduce health inequalities linked to socioeconomic status, gender, age, migrant status, disability and other determinants. And we will deepen public and patient involvement so that research reflects lived experience and delivers real world impact.

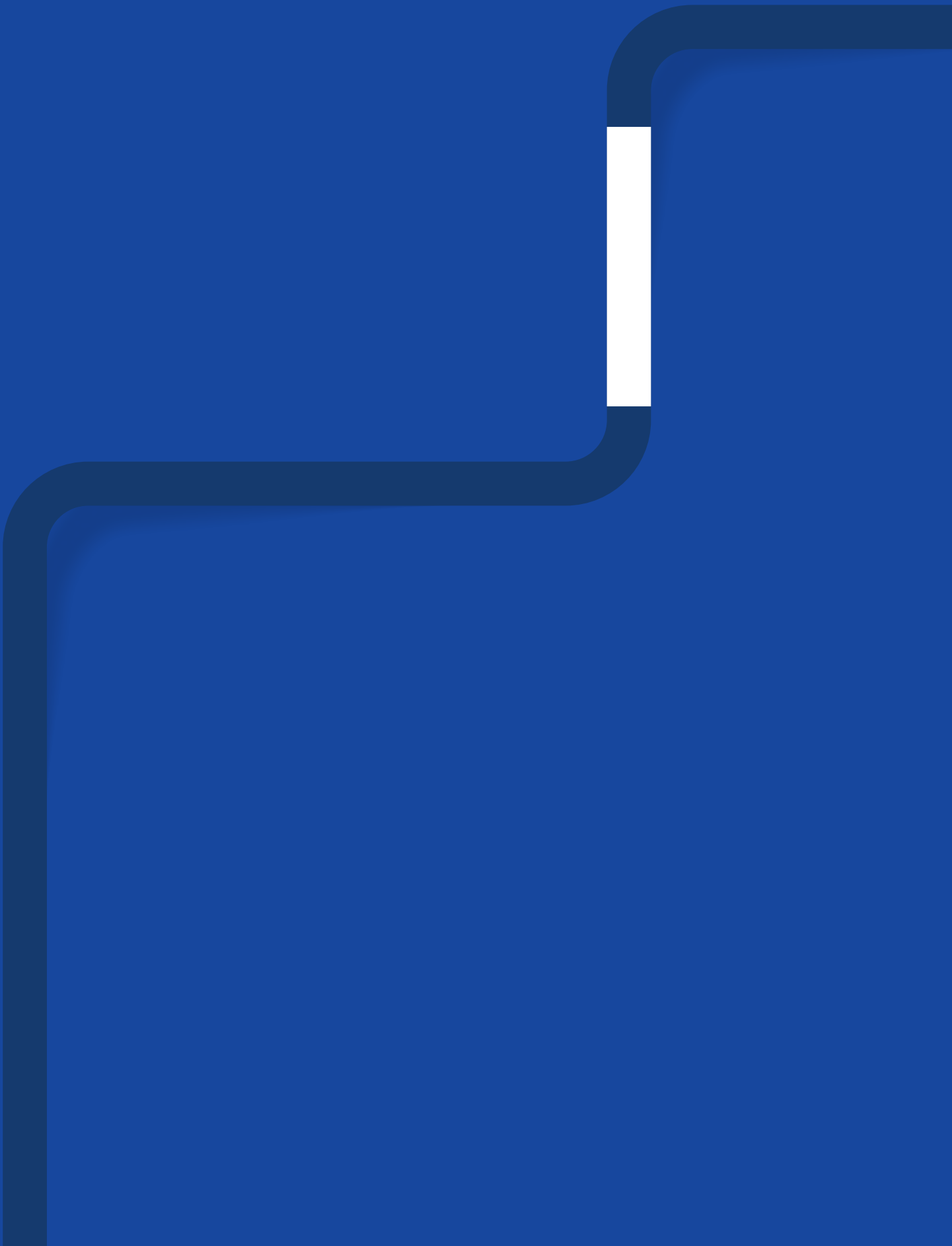
Building on the significant progress to date, we will further advance research governance, while upholding the highest standards of data protection with best ethical practice underpinning all our activities.


Collaboration is at the heart of this strategy. We will work closely with health and social care practitioners, policy-makers, patients, carers, communities and civil society so that research responds to frontline needs and informs better decisions.

We will expand partnerships across the island of Ireland, deepen engagement with EU structures and funding programmes, and strengthen international collaborations so that Ireland both benefits from, and contributes to, global scientific progress.

In a rapidly changing world, we commit to agility, innovation and preparedness – building real-time evidence capacity, modern data systems and a resilient research workforce capable of responding to emerging challenges.

Working together to achieve the objectives of the HRB Strategy 2026–2030, we will bring research to life.





Health Research Board  
Grattan House  
67-72 Lower Mount Street  
Dublin 2  
D02 H638  
Ireland

**t** +353 1 234 5000

**e** [hrb@hrb.ie](mailto:hrb@hrb.ie)

**w** [www.hrb.ie](http://www.hrb.ie)

 [www.hrbstrategy2030.ie](http://www.hrbstrategy2030.ie)