

Coming of Age

**Social science research and its
contribution to wealth and well-being
in New Zealand, 2006–2016**

**Report of the Social Sciences' Reference Group
to the Ministry of Research Science and
Technology**

April 2005

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Executive summary

The Social Sciences Reference Group (SSRG) first reported in 2001 on how social research can better inform social policy advice. The group was reconvened to review action since 2001, and to recommend ways of further improving the social sciences contribution to New Zealand's social, economic, environmental and cultural goals.

The potential contribution of social sciences research to New Zealand's wealth and wellbeing is considerable. While international collaboration is essential, New Zealand also needs to enhance the knowledge of its own culture and changing social structures in order to inform debate and the development of effective policy. Within the policy environment, 'Managing for Outcomes' and evidence-based policy emphasise the need for supporting research and evaluation.

The social sciences research and evaluation community is diverse and shows evidence of high quality research activity. Indigenous research and scholarship is providing international leadership in indigenous research and evaluation methodologies.

A significant proportion of the social sciences research funding base is through government agencies (\$40-60 million) and tertiary education (\$50-120 million). Social sciences research funding through public good funding agencies¹ is estimated at between \$13.0 million to \$19.1 million (representing approximately 2.3% to 3.0% of science system funding). Estimates vary as to the indirect attribution of social research within other science outputs, and are unlikely to exceed \$18 million.

Considerable progress has been made since 2001, including the positive gains from formation of the Social Policy, Evaluation and Research interdepartmental committee (SPEaR) and the Building Research Capability in the Social Sciences (BRCSS) initiative in the tertiary sector. There is now a biannual Social Policy Research and Evaluation Conference.

The SSRG identified some gaps and potential risks to the current state and future development of New Zealand's social sciences research and evaluation capability. These include:

- The diverse social science community and the lack of a 'front door' for government and other sector liaison;
- The embryonic state of interdisciplinary research in which the social sciences play a full role in conjunction with the physical sciences;

¹ Comprising the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, the Marsden Fund administered by the Royal Society and the Health Research Council.

- The limited investment for investigator initiated research, needed to underpin a strong social sciences research sector;
- The need to strengthen the policy and research/evaluation interface;
- Inconsistent adoption of true cost funding, particularly in government department contracts;
- Limited growth in capability especially in Maori, Pacific and evaluation; and
- The need to place greater emphasis on strategic planning for research and dissemination reducing the over reliance on short term projects.

The SSRG considers that the following new initiatives and improvements to current practice will provide a firmer foundation for the future of the social sciences contribution to the wealth and wellbeing of New Zealand.

New Initiatives

- Funding the establishment of an Academy of Social Sciences to act as a *'front door' to the social science and evaluation communities* across government, tertiary and private researcher communities, to enhance cohesion and improve quality;
- Establishing and fund a new output for social science contributions to *inter-disciplinary research*; and
- Increasing funding for *strategic research* and flexibility to accommodate *investigator-led research*.

Improvements to current practice

- Encourage stronger intra and inter departmental links between research and policy, the development of research strategies and longer term research and evaluation programmes;
- Ensure recognition within the implementation of the Performance Based Research Fund of the importance of New Zealand oriented applied and strategic social sciences research and evaluation;
- Encourage the adoption of policies within departments to fund research on a full cost basis;
- Encourage the development of transparent and appropriate disbursement policies for overheads and PBRF income within tertiary education institutions;
- Explore a mechanism to provide for capability investment in the wider social sciences community similar to the science system 'Capability Fund';
- Extend secondments between the tertiary and government sectors;

- Explore ways to build evaluation capability;
- Enhance the evaluation of social science components of broader research bids; and
- Encourage greater involvement of tertiary sector and private research practitioners in CDRP research.

The SSRG considers that the above actions will go a considerable way to addressing current gaps and potential risks and provide a firmer foundation for the contribution of social sciences in New Zealand. It also recommends that the reference group reconvene in 2009 to review action taken.

PART 1: ADDING VALUE TODAY

Background

The Social Sciences Reference Group (SSRG) was convened initially in 2001 and its report *Connections, Resources and Capacities: How Social Research Can Better Inform Social Policy Advice* (2001) provided input to a Whole of Government project *Improving the Knowledge Base for Social Policy*.

The SSRG was reconvened in 2004 to review recent action and to make recommendations on priorities and issues affecting social sciences contribution.

The Ministry of Research, Science and Technology (MoRST) reconvened the SSRG to review the action taken on the 2001 recommendations (Appendix 2) and to make recommendations on current priorities and issues affecting social sciences' contribution to policy. The reference group met three times between September and November 2004. The report draws upon the insights and experience of members of the reference group, who are listed in Appendix 1.

Significant progress has been achieved since the 2001 report across New Zealand's social sciences. For example:

Since 2001 significant progress has been achieved.

- Within central government, the Social Policy Evaluation and Research (SPEaR) interdepartmental committee has been set up and is charged with improving the coordination and quality of social research and evaluation, and the linking of research with social policy priorities and decision-making;
- The SPEaR linkages programme has been established encouraging high profile international researchers to collaborate with New Zealand researchers;
- The Ministry of Social Development convenes a bi-annual Social Policy Research & Evaluation Conference;
- In the tertiary sector, the Building Research Capacity in the Social Sciences (BRCSS) has been formed and funded to promote and foster excellence, quality and relevance in social sciences primarily through social sciences education in the tertiary sector;
- Within science funding agencies, better coordination between the Health Research Council and the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology has been established;
- Funding has been allocated through the Royal Society for a web-based on-line social sciences research journal, expected to be operational by June 2005. This is in addition to the existing Social Policy Journal of New Zealand;
- The social science statistics programme, and the social report have been initiated by Statistics NZ and the Ministry of Social Development;

With some enhancements, the next decade will undoubtedly see a 'coming of age' of social sciences in New Zealand.

- There is increasing recognition of the need for research to support policy, e.g. Increasing the Knowledge Base, and the Family Commission research programme; and
- Social sciences are increasingly contributing to economic and environmental sectors beyond the social policy.

With some enhancements, the next decade will undoubtedly see a 'coming of age' of social sciences in New Zealand and the flowering of its role as part of the knowledge and creativity process rather than simply the source of explanations on why or how things went wrong.

The contribution of social sciences

The Commission on the Social Sciences (2003) in Britain has suggested that the 21st century will be 'the social sciences' century'. The rationale behind this is that science and technology have underpinned material improvements in people's quality of life. The big issues for the present and into the future are mostly about how human beings and societies interact, how they conduct their affairs and how they capitalise on diversity in society.

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Utility of the social sciences

The social sciences are the subject of many different views and expectations. A broad interpretation of expectations of the social sciences is that they:

- understand social issues and their influence on economic, environmental and cultural issues to enhance wellbeing and wealth;
- contribute to addressing 'big societal issues' through leading and participating in inter, multi and cross disciplinary work;
- contribute knowledge central to innovation, and to the successful development and implementation of new products, services or institutions and knowledge management and dissemination;
- demonstrate research excellence through theoretical insights, and methodological approaches, including rigor applied to qualitative and quantitative investigation;
- provide an independent critical commentary, inform a more civilised, globally aware and tolerant nation and communities, and foster constructive debate about values;
- have utility in policy making by helping to determine what works and why, and what type of policy initiatives are likely to be the most effective; and
- contribute effectively to policy and service delivery, by providing insights from social science research which are accessible to policy makers who, in turn, understand the value of social sciences in providing evidence for advice on why, how, and under what conditions policies are likely to work or not work.

Areas in which the SSRG considers the social sciences can and do make key contributions are discussed below.

The social sciences contribute to NZ's wealth and wellbeing

Wealth and wellbeing

The social sciences have a dual role: to contribute to both the wealth of New Zealand and our peoples; and to enhance our quality of life. They have a major contribution in decision-making about what will make a difference to our collective and individual wealth and wellbeing. Social sciences knowledge creates wealth through connecting science and technology with potential to satisfy major social need, as well as knowledge of pathways out of disadvantage and the likely negative impacts of particular circumstances.

New knowledge and understanding of New Zealand and the major challenges facing us

New Zealand is unique. While the international body of social science research and evaluation can contribute to our understanding of social dynamics in general, it cannot elucidate the conditions or potentialities of New Zealanders and their society. Understanding those dynamics is the primary concern of social science research and evaluation in New Zealand. This unique knowledge helps us to understand and maximise our potential across diverse and interlinked social dimensions - our peoples, cultures, values, connections, and social structures. It offers insights on the unique combination and interchange between social, economic, environmental and cultural conditions in New Zealand to inform who we are, and what we want to achieve. This knowledge embraces the similarities and diversity of our human experience and how we engage at the global, national, local and individual levels. It also integrates international thinking into the New Zealand context.

In New Zealand the social sciences contribute to our understanding about: how to build all kinds of capital - social economic, environmental and cultural; the conditions of creativity and innovation; and the impacts of physical, biological and medical scientific advances on society.

The value of Mātauranga Māori contributions to research, science and technology is increasingly being recognised.

Indigenous knowledge is an increasingly important aspect of research, science and technology systems around the world. Many indigenous communities want to restore their traditional knowledge bases and use these as an important dimension for their ongoing development as well as contributing to national development. In the New Zealand context the value of Mātauranga Māori is being recognised, as is its contribution to research, science and technology.

International comparative and collaborative research

Social sciences benefit from and contribute to the body of theoretical and conceptual knowledge, research methodologies and frameworks in the social sciences. Comparative and

collaborative research offers the opportunity to place New Zealand specific research within the international context, both contributing to and learning from international experience and expertise.

Multidisciplinary science

As the frontiers of knowledge become inter and multidisciplinary, it is likely that more innovative and ground-breaking research will occur at the collaborative interfaces between disciplines.

The 'big issues' confronting society are almost always cross-cutting and span the physical sciences, engineering and new technologies, medicine and the social sciences. As the frontiers of knowledge become more inter and multidisciplinary, it is likely that more innovative and ground breaking research will occur at the collaborative interfaces between disciplines. The linear model of basic science, inventions leading to new technologies and then social acceptability, has long been rethought. Social sciences need to be involved from the outset to maximise the advantage to be gained from investment in science to achieve wider social and economic goals. Within science and technological innovation, the social ends to which technology might be directed are as important as the technology itself.

Evidence base for policy debate and choices

Social sciences research and evaluation helps build a knowledge base about future challenges and opportunities that face New Zealand. For example, our changing demography influences sustainable policy choices across the social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions. Social science research and evaluation helps raise public awareness and shapes policy discussion and choices, as well as providing evidence to inform decision making at all levels. The dialogue between the independent social sciences research community, civil society and government is important in contemporary democratic societies.

The social sciences have an important role in examining, questioning, challenging and informing public debate on matters of public concern.

The social sciences have an important role in examining, questioning, challenging and informing public debate on matters of public concern. They identify and challenge underlying assumptions and beliefs, in order to enlarge our understanding of ourselves, and to help guide and shape our policy choices. To some extent, they have a role as 'expert witnesses' within the democratic conversation about policy formation and accountability.

By adding theoretical insight combined with rigorous empirical investigation to offer explanatory analysis, social research and evaluation contributes to improving the quality of evidence underlying the formation and assessment of government policy and strategies.

Indicators of wellbeing status and outcome achievement

Indicators of social wellbeing offer insights into New Zealand's comparative international position on a range of social dimensions. Social indicators can be linked with economic, cultural and environmental indicators to monitor changes such as the interaction between social and cultural capital. For example, data on workforce participation rates and workplace productivity

Social sciences research informs the selection of status and outcome indicators.

enables greater understanding about progress on sustainable economic and social outcomes.

Social sciences research informs the selection of status and outcome indicators. Policy evaluation provides knowledge about what will, and will not work, and identifies the theories of change underlying policy development and implementation.

Underpinning knowledge to inform key Government strategies

Social sciences contribute ongoing research and evaluation across government's key strategies to improve sustainable wealth and wellbeing. The major strategies to which social sciences can contribute include:

Social sciences contribute to major government strategies.

- Sustainable Development for New Zealand, contributing knowledge about the interrelationships and impacts across the social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions and the likely effectiveness of particular interventions;
- Growing an Innovative New Zealand (Growth and Innovation Framework): knowledge of social and innovation conditions and skills which contribute to economic development and which enable wealth creation; and
- Opportunity for all New Zealanders, underpinning social research knowledge which informs policies and strategies to achieve and sustain improvements in social wellbeing, reducing disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity.

Appendix 3 provides some examples of research which shows the direct contribution social sciences make to social and economic outcomes at an individual, community and national level.

Social Sciences Research in New Zealand Today

Social sciences research community

PBRF quality scores for academic social sciences are significantly above the sector-wide average. Formal measures of quality are not available for researchers and evaluators employed in or contracted by government agencies.

The social science sector has considerable strength and quality which contributes to international and New Zealand social sciences knowledge and helps improve life in New Zealand. The sector is paradigmatically and methodologically diverse, encompassing a range of disciplines each with their own methods and theoretical traditions.

The majority of social science researchers in New Zealand are in academia. Estimates of the number of social scientists in academia range from 1300 to 1600.

central government social departments employ an estimated 350 – 500 in house researchers and evaluators (with some possible blurring between policy advisor and researcher roles especially in smaller departments). The majority of practising evaluators are either located within government agencies or operate as private independent contractors. There are no estimates available for social researchers and evaluators employed in local government, private sector companies and independent research agencies.

Quality of social sciences research and evaluation

Recent evaluations carried out of individuals within the tertiary institutions via the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) and of funding agencies, such as the Marsden Fund have provided some indications of the quality of academic researchers. An analysis of the PBRF found that the academic social sciences received a quality score significantly above the sector-wide average. However, many areas in social sciences which scored highly did not have a New Zealand specific focus, for example, psychology.

Formal measures of quality are not available for researchers and evaluators employed in or contracted by government agencies. SPEaR is currently developing a set of best practice guidelines as a means of influencing the quality of research and evaluation undertaken by departments.

Indigenous research and evaluation

Māori scholarship has been proactive in promoting and developing Mātauranga Māori. Māori research and evaluation meets an urgent demand in national and international research environments by creating the means by which individuals and collectives can identify their own research and evaluation agendas and move towards constructive social change.

MoRST's work around *Vision Mātauranga: Supporting Māori Relevant Innovation and Research* and engaging the innovation potential of people and knowledge is commended. MoRST is currently developing a policy framework intended to guide Māori

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relevant research investment within Vote RS&T. The aim of this work is to unlock the innovation potential of Māori relevant research and assist New Zealanders to create a better future. Implementation of the framework will begin from July 2005.

Established and Diverse Funding Base

Social science research and evaluation in New Zealand is largely funded by public monies channelled through a variety of different funding mechanisms. These include:

Social departments fund approximately \$40 - \$60 million of social research and evaluation

- government agencies' operational funding including in-house and commissioned research and evaluation: approximately \$40-\$60 million per year;
- tertiary education funding of research-led teaching in universities:\$50-120 million per year (depending on how broad the definition of social science is used);
- funding through Vote Research Science and Technology which includes public good funding administered through the Foundation for Research Science and Technology's (FRST) social output:\$6.6 million per year;
- social sciences bids from the Cross Departmental Research Pool: of \$2-4m per year;
- approximated social science related research through the Health Research Council: between \$1-4 million per year; and
- the Marsden Fund:\$4.5 million per year.

In the context of this report, approximately 2.3% – 3.0% of Vote: Research, Science and Technology supports social science

Within Vote RS&T in 2004 (total \$621.0 million), approximately 8.74% or \$54.326 million was attributed to the social goal. However, the major proportion of the social goal (\$47.734 million) is for health research administered through the Health Research Council primarily for health biomedical and clinical research, with a small proportion of public health research relevant to social science. The remaining \$6.592 million or 12.1% of the social goal is administered through the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. This currently represents 1.4% of the total funds administered by FRST. In addition, contributing to the Knowledge Goal in 2004, of the total the Marsden Fund (\$34.289) social sciences research investments were \$4.5 million (13% of total Marsden funding).

Some social science activity is undertaken within other outputs. Estimates vary as to the value of this source of funding, but it could be as high as \$18 million.

Therefore, in the context of this report, Vote: Research, Science and Technology support for social sciences ranges from 2.3% to 3.0%. We recognise that much social science activity is undertaken within other outputs, for example, through Māori knowledge, and economic and environmental research. Estimates vary as to the direct attribution of social research and evaluation within other outputs. It could be as high as \$18 million.

Within central government, estimates of social science activity are less precise as they are generally incorporated within the policy advice output class and are not separately identifiable. SPEaR, through its 'mapping' exercise, has estimated the size of research

and evaluation expenditure (undertaken either in-house or through contracted research and evaluation) within social agencies to be approximately \$40 – 60 million (depending on what direct and indirect factors are included) – education being the largest contributor, followed by health and social development.

Input into policy development

Social science and evaluation has been most effective where policy makers understand the significance that research and evaluation can offer to formulating policy choices.

Social science research and evaluation is generally most effective in policy settings where end-users have developed a culture of evidence-based practice, where policy makers understand the significance that research and evaluation can offer to formulating policy choices and to enhancing the quality of policy decision-making. Acknowledging this dimension has led to an increased involvement of social sciences in research programmes in environmental and new technologies policy areas in New Zealand.

Within central government departments, Managing for Outcomes is shaping a longer term view of what policy is needed to positively influence outcomes, as well as clarifying the mechanisms through which research and evaluation conclusions can influence policy making.

Greater emphasis is being placed on the interdepartmental impacts on joint outcomes. Cross departmental coordination mechanisms are beginning to help shape evaluation and research priorities, make connections with other research disciplines to add new knowledge and insights, and identify the wider utility of research undertaken by individual departments.

A 2003 State Service Commission/Treasury report, *Doing the Right Things and Doing Them Right: Improving Evaluative Activity in the New Zealand State Sector*, investigated those initiatives which are required to enhance the evaluation environment and encourage more effective evaluation in the State sector and made recommendations to grow a culture of inquiry, improve coordination and prioritisation, and develop capability.

Recent Developments

SPEaR Initiatives

SPEaR is important in the central government social sciences infrastructure, and continues to make a major contribution.

The SSRG commends the SPEaR initiatives noting that SPEaR is important in the central government social sciences infrastructure, and continues to make a major contribution. Achievements include:

Best practice guidelines in research and evaluation are being developed in four areas: projects involving Māori, Pacific peoples, contracting, and applying ethics.

Linking researchers to policy making through a programme of scholarships, fellowships, exchanges and grants, academic linkages and secondments as a way of improving connections and refreshing intellectual capital and building to address skill shortages in social policy research and evaluation. Some exchanges between government departments and universities

have occurred. Awards are made in five categories: Research Methods Workshop Grants, Postgraduate Scholarships, Visiting Speaker series, Social Policy Research Awards, and Visiting Research Fellowships. Projects must show a clear link to the work of relevant government departments.

Social Policy Research and Evaluation Conference was first held in Wellington in April 2003, on 'evidence based policy and practice in the social sector' and the second was held in November 2004 on 'What Works?' The conferences brought together the policy, provider, research and evaluation communities, along with a variety of end-user organisations and communities.

SPEaR website launched in 2003, acts as a clearing house for the exchange of information on completed research and evaluation projects and events with the aim of contributing towards greater co-operation and collaboration. The reference group commends this development and suggests that this be further utilised to include all research underway and opportunities to utilise web based work processes, and shared workspaces.

BRCSS initiative

BRCSS was established in 2004 and is charged with building social science research capacity in the tertiary community.

More recently, the BRCSS (Building Research Capacity in the Social Sciences) initiative was established. This is focussed on building capability within the tertiary community and is funded by the Tertiary Education Commission. From 2004, there is new funding for postgraduate scholarships and internships within tertiary institutions, and a fund of \$250K pa to be used primarily to develop multi-institution research teams and proposals. BRCSS funding will be used to develop research capability through mentoring new and emerging researchers to develop their skills as well as encouraging new research teams and topics.

The BRCSS network, which is made up of researchers in the tertiary education sector and one private provider, aims to improve the research capacity of the social sciences by building capacity within the tertiary social sector (a larger pool of more highly skilled social sciences graduates and researchers), lift the relevance of social sciences to the development and implementation of policy (align research more closely with the needs of users) and increase the depth of the tertiary social sciences sector (building critical mass around areas aligned with government goals).

Building capacity will include: increasing numbers of future researchers, development opportunities for emerging researchers (especially Māori, Pacific and New Settler researchers), improving knowledge and skills of researchers, encouraging research teams, and the sector as a whole. BRCSS capacity building activities include: capital expenditure, networking, developing people and developing theory and methodology. BRCCS funding will be for research projects which involve collaboration within four key areas:

- new wealth creation and distribution systems in a globalised context;
- social justice and development;

- transmission of wealth/knowledge in a context of demographic change; and
- sustainability of diverse households, communities and settlements).

Social Statistics

Considerable progress has been made on the development of a social statistics programme aimed at improving the co-ordination of official social statistics to establish a coherent picture of social issues and change. Work on the programme has included the identification of the enduring information needs for social research and policy, including sector-specific and cross-sectoral information needs.

The work also included options to address unmet information needs, bearing in mind the aim to develop a programme where the different collections can link together as part of an integrated whole. The programme is progressively being implemented.

Taken together, the above developments both reflect and have set a new pathway in which social sciences research is seen as an important part of building and sustaining a knowledge society in New Zealand.

PART 2: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS: SUSTAINING THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The good progress that has been made to facilitate an effective contribution by the social sciences to our national wealth and wellbeing will need to be sustained.

Broadly, action needs to be taken to make sure that the uptake of social science contributions is not limited or inhibited. In particular, it is imperative that:

Action needs to be taken to make sure that the uptake of social science contributions is not limited or inhibited. The SSRG has identified seven opportunities for improvement.

- The demand for social research and evaluation inputs is met by quality, credible research and evaluation;
- Social science research and evaluation contributes to, and is taken up, across all the sectors in which it can make a contribution; and
- Social research and evaluation funding, resource allocation and contracting sustains research and evaluation capacity and practice that contributes to New Zealand's knowledge, rather than simply informational requirements.

For the current momentum to be sustained, some emergent issues and ongoing problems need to be addressed. A regular review, such as the one this Reference Group provides, is a useful and important means of measuring progress. We consider that a four yearly review of progress made is warranted given the breath of issues that need to be addressed.

Seven opportunities for improvement

The SSRG has identified seven opportunities for improvement:

1. Creating a 'Front door' for social science
2. Enhancing Interdisciplinary research and evaluation
3. Balancing the investment between investigator initiated and government directed research and evaluation
4. Improving the policy / research and evaluation interface
5. True cost funding
6. Sustaining and enhancing capability and capacity
7. Emphasising research and evaluation planning, and better dissemination and access to research findings and data.

These are discussed below.

‘Front door’ to social sciences community

Why it is needed

Promoting and sustaining excellence in the social sciences requires commitment from all the key players in the sector. The diverse social science research community provides New Zealand with a broad pool of social science research and evaluation talent. Given an opportunity to create a greater sense of cohesion in the social research and evaluation sector, there is a potential to build enhanced efficiencies and collaboration.

Many other western countries have autonomous social science agencies

In the UK, Australia, Canada and the United States there are autonomous social science agencies providing a ‘front door’ to the sector. These agencies:

- promote excellence in and encourage the advancement of the social sciences;
- encourage collaboration in order to promote interdisciplinary approaches;
- represent the interests of the social sciences to government (at both political and administrative levels), to research, teaching and funding bodies and agencies, and to private sector companies and public sector agencies, including local government; and
- comment, as appropriate, on national needs and priorities in the social sciences and promoting international scholarly cooperation.

Other sciences in New Zealand have CRIs. Because social sciences do not currently have a representative body they do not have a strong or highly visible presence within New Zealand’s science system.

Within the New Zealand science system, such ‘public good’ roles are part of the role of Crown Research Institutes. These agencies also provide collective input to the wider science system agenda, e.g. through stakeholder/advocacy organisations such as the Association of Crown Research Institutes. Because there is no equivalent social sciences representative body the social sciences do not have a strong or highly visible presence within New Zealand’s science system.

Because of the absence of a social science CRI and with multiple funders operating project-based funding arrangements, there are few large specialised social science teams and none that can act as a conduit for coordination across the social science community. The SSRG is not advocating the formation of a separate structure to undertake social research and evaluation. It does strongly support the need for greater collective coordination and capability enhancement mechanisms which assist in building critical mass, which support and sustain excellence, and which facilitate the development of the longer term research agenda, providing a link across social science communities and to funders and end users.

There is a need for an organisation which connects social science expertise and networks. The current void in such interaction limits,

There is a need for an organisation, which connects social science expertise and networks such as a Social Science Research Academy.

amongst other things, the ability of the social sciences research community to coordinate and engage in priority setting on future research and evaluation needs.

Social Science Research Academy

This SSRG strongly recommends the formation of a Social Science Research Academy (SSRA) to strengthen the infrastructure, relationships, planning and culture in social science research and evaluation and practice. As well as a front door for end users, the Academy would:

- contribute to building and sustaining social science researcher/evaluator critical mass and capability;
- create and strengthen active networks between social science research and evaluation practitioners;
- facilitate and foster collaboration; and
- support consultations on the social sciences research and evaluation agenda.

The SSRG envisages an Academy which is at arms length from government, an autonomous organisation, comprised of membership from social science scholars and research and evaluation practitioners across the tertiary, central and local government and private sectors and charged with encouraging the advancement of knowledge and practice in social science research and evaluation.

The SSRG has identified the following functions and roles of an Academy of Social Sciences

The Academy would be an advocate for the social science sector, act as 'front door' to the sector, help coordinate and promote interdisciplinary approaches, disseminate information about the role of social science, promote quality and excellence in practice and build capability across the sectors.

1. Be an advocate for Social Sciences and Evaluation Communities by:

- encouraging the advancement of social sciences research and evaluation in New Zealand;
- fostering excellence and improve research practices;
- representing the interests of the social sciences to government at political and administrative levels, to other research, evaluation and discipline-based societies, to teaching and funding bodies and agencies; and
- assisting in strengthening the role of social sciences in the development of policy.

2. Provide a 'front door' for the social science sector by:

- providing advice to government and other public bodies on questions affecting research and evaluation and scholarship in the social sciences;
- commenting, where appropriate, on national needs and priorities in social science research and evaluation; and

- encouraging connectedness between New Zealand social science researchers and evaluators with other international social sciences coordinating mechanisms.
- 3 Provide multi-disciplinary coordination** by supporting and encouraging research and evaluation and disciplinary societies to collaborate, where appropriate, in order to promote interdisciplinary approaches involving the social sciences.
 - 4 Communicate with the public and end users** by promoting an understanding of social science research and evaluation and disseminating information about social scientists, the social sciences and what they seek to achieve to the public, end users, and to educational and training institutions.
 - 5 Build capability** by identifying opportunities to build capability across the sectors.
 - 6 Improve quality** by providing a practice and quality-based accreditation system for social science research and evaluation practitioners.

Appendix 4– provides further detail in terms of the activities that would be undertaken by the Academy.

Summary of action required to create a ‘front door’ to the social sciences community

The SSRG suggests that an Academy of Social Sciences be established in New Zealand. This Academy would build cohesion and enhance efficiencies and collaboration. The Academy’s function would be to develop and sustain research practitioner identity, cohesion, interface and excellence, and to strengthen collaboration and excellence amongst research practitioners across government, tertiary and private sectors. Start up funding is needed to establish an autonomous Academy of Social Sciences.

Enhancing interdisciplinary research and evaluation

An inter-disciplinary research and evaluation output would facilitate an effective contribution by the social sciences to emerging cross-cutting policy issues such as sustainable development.

Social research contributes to understanding the dynamics and issues related to such questions as the drivers of sectoral productivity, generating environmental well being and the development and take-up of new technologies. In recent years, the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) and the Health Research Council have encouraged stronger recognition by researchers of the importance of understanding social and economic relationships in a range of science sectors.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that social science research and evaluation is hampered by:

- a narrow view of the nature of social research and the contribution it can make;
- marginalisation of social science in non-social sectors;
- loss of core capability and poor research methods; and
- a tendency to focus on 'problem' oriented research in the social and economic sectors.

For social sciences to effectively contribute to interdisciplinary policy research and evaluation, without undermining excellence in core social science research and evaluation, the SSRG advocates the establishment of an interdisciplinary research and evaluation funding stream. This would support relevant cross-cutting policy issues, such as sustainable development, which have a significant social sciences input.

Contribution to non-social sciences sectors

The nature and contribution of social research to environment, biophysical, industry and production sector research is both poorly understood and under-valued by science researchers and research users.

Support for science and innovation is dependent, in large part, upon understanding the connections between society and science. The creation of knowledge and innovation is primarily a social dynamic. The SSRG considers that the nature and contribution of social research to environment, biophysical, industry and production sector research, is both poorly understood and under-valued by science researchers and research users. This is evidenced in the social science research component often being:

- treated as an 'add-on' in the development of research proposals leading to poor integration and frequently, inadequate approaches to key social and economic dynamics;
- an under-costed component within research proposals – the social science component is typically viewed as low cost because of the limited equipment and fixed assets needed to undertake such research. This fails to recognise the cost of skilled labour required in social research, not only in the analytical phase of the research but also in the collection of empirical data, whether that collection be through quantitative or qualitative methods;
- dispensable when funding is constrained in environment, biophysical, industry and production research proposals; and

- developed and implemented by researchers with no social science discipline grounding with consequent implications for the quality of the research but also the sustainability of the social science knowledge in the sector.

Careful management of the social science components within non-social sciences research will ensure that a balance is maintained between sustaining core social science research capability and providing social science contributions to other research

Careful management of the social science components within non-social sciences research will ensure that a balance is maintained between sustaining core social science research capability and providing social science contributions to other research. Currently, the balance is skewed against maintaining core social science research, with a potential long-term detrimental impact on capability.

Research bids increasingly require an economic and social justification. Often such justifications are poorly constructed, and lack transparency in defining, integrating and measuring the economic and social outcomes of the research. The evaluation of these is poor with those on reference panels not necessarily accessing expertise to establish whether claims in bids are realistic or not. There is a need to strengthen the assessment and evaluation of such bids, to ensure that social science contributions are more transparent, and that these components are adequately reported in progress reports.

Appropriate social sciences expertise should be involved when assessing interdisciplinary research bids.

FRST has a quality control function in relation to the social sciences component of collaborative research within non-social research outputs. The SSRG stresses the importance of the social and economic aspects of non-social research and suggests that FRST ensure that interdisciplinary bids include the involvement of appropriate social sciences expertise when assessing and evaluating these bids.

Contribution in the social and economic sectors

Research is to often constructed around narrowly defined social or organisational analysis that has short term or highly specific relevance.

Within the social and economic sectors, there continues to be a strong inclination to reduce social science research and evaluation to what could broadly be termed social or organisational ‘problem’ research and evaluation. Indeed, frequently social or organisational problem research is seen as synonymous with ‘relevant’ research and evaluation. Research constructed around narrowly defined social or organisational problems often only generates data and analysis that has short term or highly specific relevance. Social problem research and evaluation generally favours short-term and applied thinking, rather than the on-going dynamics that impact on and drive social and economic life. Problem oriented research and evaluation in a policy context often has a focus on deficits and welfare issues rather than on the underlying dynamics of social and economic conditions.

The ‘problem’ oriented perspective, which is especially apparent in policy-related research, tends to focus much of the funding of the social research effort onto a particularly narrow range of issues and approaches. However, social research and evaluation can provide knowledge and understanding across all the public policy and market sectors including economic and regional development,

education, migration, housing, energy, commerce, labour and justice.

Cross Departmental Research Pool

The Cross Departmental Research Pool (CDRP) is an important mechanism (between \$3-5m per annum) for facilitating cross-governmental research and in facilitating cross-disciplinary research contributions to policy. The extent to which it has achieved this and how it has contributed to excellence in research, facilitated collaboration, and developed research capability was being formally evaluated as this report was being prepared. CDRP objectives are to:

- fund high quality cross- departmental research which will support advancement of Government's strategic policy priorities;
- catalyse new relationships and capabilities within and between departments so that, over time, departments take responsibility for investment in longer-term high quality research;
- develop a portfolio of research activity divided between smaller short-term projects; and
- catalyse new relationships and capabilities, and multi-year large scale projects to provide key building blocks for government's decision making.

The forthcoming evaluation of the CDRP needs to assess impact on capability development, collaborative research activity and linkages between departments, contracting with universities and the private sector.

The intention of the CDRP was not just to fund government departments to work together, but also to allow non-governmental researchers to work with departments. The SSRG suggests that the evaluation of the CDRP currently being framed, consider where research capability has been drawn from (i.e. government, university, private) to understand the extent to which CDRP has contributed to capability development and has generated collaborative research activity and linkages within and between departments, as well as with universities and the private sector.

Another issue in relation to the cross-departmental pool is the lack of transparency in the bid writing, assessment and commissioning process. This does not enable best scoping of research questions to take place, nor the best use of the research resources within New Zealand.

The CDRP is heavily dependent upon departments scoping cross-departmental research issues, and its effectiveness may be limited by difficulties in developing cross-departmental research programmes impacting on the commissioning of research. It is anticipated that the *Managing for Outcomes* approach will greatly assist in identifying joint outcomes and joint departmental policy contributions.

Summary of actions required to enhance interdisciplinary research and evaluation

Interdisciplinary research and evaluation would be enhanced if a new funding stream were established for social science contributions to cross-disciplinary research. This would broaden and deepen the contributions of social sciences to multi disciplinary research.

Action is also needed to strengthen the assessment and evaluation of interdisciplinary research bids so that the social science contributions are more transparent, and more fully integrated into interdisciplinary research proposals.

The effectiveness of the CDRP needs to be assessed. This pool is an important mechanism for facilitating cross-governmental research and cross-disciplinary research contributions to policy. Greater involvement of tertiary sector and private research practitioners with departments in CDRP research would strengthen interdisciplinary research and deepen collaboration.

Balancing investigator initiated research and applied research and evaluation

Broadly there are two dimensions to social science research: first, strategic and applied research programmes including policy-and-practice-focussed research that increases uptake and application of new knowledge; and second, investigator-initiated research that contributes underpinning knowledge to the social, economic, environmental and cultural goals.

The SSRG strongly advocates an increased investment in longer term, investigator-initiated research programmes to underpin the knowledge base contributing to social, economic, environmental and cultural goals.

Sustain underpinning and long term policy relevant research and evaluation

The SSRG strongly advocates an increased investment in longer term research programmes which include the Research, Science and Technology social output class. There is a need to support fundamental and basic social science research which recognises emerging national needs and which broadens and deepens the base of underpinning social science research in New Zealand.

At present social science research activity inclines towards shorter term project based-research, mostly applied, and increasingly evaluative in nature.

Apart from tertiary researcher initiated research, social science research in New Zealand is largely funded on a project basis and as such is subject to a high degree of contestability, instability and volatility. Funding policies within tertiary institutions are increasingly linking research activity with externally funded projects. While Government departments receive relatively stable operational funding for policy advice, including research, most research activity is project based (either in-house or contracted to universities and independent researchers). Funding agencies also fund individual projects on a contestable basis. In total, social science funding systems incline towards shorter term project based-research, mostly applied, and are increasingly evaluative in nature. Although evaluative research is growing, there is currently no place for gaining longer term funding for strategic evaluation effort. Current funding arrangements for evaluation within government departments are not suited to longer term, strategic research or evaluation programmes. Specific funding for evaluation is available only through Budget bids attached to new projects or new initiatives.

None of the current social science funding pools provides funding for evaluation, and this greatly affects the ability to build capacity in evaluation in New Zealand.

Apart from tertiary funded social science, the largest investment in social science is within central government departments. SPEaR's mapping of departmental research and evaluation activity indicates that departmental research and evaluation is overwhelmingly applied research (increasingly evaluation research or evaluation) with some, but limited activity in long term strategic research. This has a considerable impact on the balance between strategic and applied research and evaluation.

Within central government, there is a need to consider long run research and evaluation to support future policy requirements.

Aligning research and evaluation strategies and programmes with government's medium-long term strategies for social development would be beneficial.

Within departments, relatively stable operational funding could offer the opportunity to invest in longer run multi-year research and evaluation programmes. However, this would need to be supported by stronger coordination and planning than currently exists. Aligning research and evaluation strategies and programmes with government's medium-long term strategies for social development would be beneficial, and fit well with the *Managing for Outcomes* focus expected of government agencies.

The SSRG suggests that it is important that the core social policy agencies strengthen coordination and planning to develop multi-year, long term research and evaluation programmes. This would lead to a reduction in the transaction and compliance costs associated with commissioning research and evaluation, limiting losses to core capability, and encourage continuity and sustain provider capacity and quality.

Investigator initiated research relative to New Zealand's needs and capability

Social science research is broader than social policy research and excellent social policy research relies upon a vibrant social science research and evaluation sector which provides a skilled pool of researchers, a range of theoretical and methodological approaches, and independent long-term research. Therefore, it is important that a range and diversity of funding approaches exist, including funding sources for investigator- initiated public good research.

Research programmes that address fundamental social and economic dynamics within and across sectors generate sustained platforms of research, evaluation, empirical evidence and analytic expertise. These are necessary to underpin the development of credible, cost-effective, well-founded and timely responses to immediate, short-term issues and problems within policy sectors. In our view such long-term programmes will increase capacity in order to meet the demand for social problem research and evaluation programmes. Establishing those strategic platforms requires that public good research funding includes a broad long-term view as well as funding research and evaluation with policy relevance which can be drawn upon for the immediate applied and operational imperatives of government agencies.

At present investigator-initiated social science researchers can access the Marsden Fund, but since 2002 only 7% of applicants have been funded. There are no places where investigator-initiated evaluation researchers might seek funding.

The Marsden Fund is one of the few places where investigator-initiated social science research projects are currently funded. However, there is no place where investigator initiated evaluation might seek funding. There have been some increases in the levels of Marsden funding since 2002, and these have flowed through proportionally to social research. Only 7% of proposals were funded in 2004, however, and many more of the proposals were considered worthy of funding. In 2005 social science research bids have remained at similar levels while other discipline bids have fallen.

Planning for a balanced public funded strategic and applied research and evaluation portfolio

Research priority setting exercises play an important role in identifying and plugging important gaps in research knowledge and in targeting areas of policy interest. However, these need to ensure that there is still a place for curiosity-driven research of strategic value, as new insights and innovations often depend upon this.

There must be a balance of investment between long term, strategic and applied social sciences research. At present there is a bias towards applied and operational research.

It is also important that, in establishing research target outcomes, the balance of investment between operational/applied research and evaluation, and strategic research and evaluation is considered. This requires a consultative mechanism to seek the views of the wider social sciences community, as well as government policy interests, as a more explicit acknowledgement of the importance of investigator initiated research and evaluation and policy initiated research and evaluation.

The SSRG suggests there is a need to establish a fourth objective within the FRST social research portfolio to accommodate quality researcher-initiated research. A 'front door' organisation, such as the Academy of Social Sciences proposed in this report, could be an appropriate organisation to provide input on such an objective.

The reference group stresses the importance of a balance of investment in both strategic and applied social sciences research. Currently, FRST's three target outcomes (children and young people participating and succeeding, improving labour market participation, and positive ageing) have the potential to narrow the scope and strategic orientation of social research. This may run the risk of not recognising investigator-initiated research of strategic value, and potentially diverting public good research funds more into the operational applied research. Government departments have an applied research focus to inform near term policy and service delivery issues. Very few departments have a longer-term strategic research interest.

Summary of actions required to increase investment in strategic and investigator initiated research

Providing ample scope for cutting-edge research ideas and new knowledge to emerge from the social science base has the potential to provide tomorrow's ideas of important benefit to our society and economy. Strategic and investigator initiated research would be increased if more funding were available for longer term underpinning research within Vote: Research, Science and Technology. The introduction of a flexible and broad objective within the FRST social research output, would encourage investment in quality investigator-led research.

There is also a need to develop research priorities that are informed by a long term scanning process to guide investment decisions on short, medium and long term research and the balance between strategic and applied research; in consultation with the wider research community.

Policy / research and evaluation interface

A mutual understanding between researchers, evaluators and research and evaluation users about the nature of research and evaluation, including the opportunities and limitations of research and evaluation in addressing significant policy issues and debates, would result in an improvement in the utility of research and evaluation in policy making.

Good quality policy decision-making is supported by good quality cross-disciplinary research and evaluation, enabling informed decisions about issues and impacts.

The SSRG is familiar with the policy makers' demand for research and evaluation that is to provide information *when it is needed and to apply knowledge flexibly to novel situations*. This requires the establishment, development and maintenance of on-going platforms of social sciences research, together with an 'evidence aware' and 'evidence informed' policy culture. When precise answers are not available, policy makers need researchers and evaluators to act as experts and use their expertise and experience to provide informed advice. Equally, researchers and evaluators need to have a good understanding of the precise evidence or knowledge needs of policy makers. This relies on a strong and sustainable underpinning research and evaluation base contributing collective knowledge across disciplines, as well as good communication linking relevant research and evaluation to the policy issues as they present themselves. Good quality policy decision-making is supported by good quality cross-disciplinary research and evaluation, enabling informed decisions about issues and impacts.

Understanding the nature of social science research and evaluation enquiry and what constitutes credible research and evaluation is important to maintaining policy decision makers' confidence in the quality and utility of research and evaluation.

The effective use of research and evaluation findings requires both researchers, evaluators and research users to have a better appreciation of the differences as well as the synergies between undertaking research and evaluation and policy development; and the differing imperatives (particularly in relation to timeframes, the scope of problem definition, and the language of reporting) on policy advisors and researchers and evaluators respectively.

Researchers, evaluators, and the policy community need increased understanding and skills if there is to be a real improvement in the utility of research and evaluation in policy making.

Researcher, evaluator and policy communities need a clear understanding of the relationship between research evaluation and policy, and the utility and limitations of research as a tool.

Within the *policy* community, understanding is increasingly focussed on how evidence helps in policy formation and implementation, and of the contribution social sciences make including:

- establishing the evidence-base for policies, programmes and projects;
- clarifying the nature of policy and practice problems;
- clarifying the logic of policy/practice solutions;

- understanding citizens' needs, attitudes and expectations;
- improving the planning and implementation of policy and practice;
- evaluating the likely and actual impact of policies, programmes and projects; and
- evaluating how, why and under what conditions and for whom policies, programmes and projects work or do not work.

For *research and evaluation users*, this means:

- improving research interpretation skills;
- developing better skills in differentiating policy and research and evaluation questions;
- becoming more realistic about the resources needed to establish and undertake research and evaluation; and
- acquiring a better understanding of the limitations of research and evaluation in the provision of policy and operational solutions.

Researchers and evaluators require better skills in:

- communicating and contextualising research and evaluation problems in relation to users' policy and operational issues;
- appreciating the constraints and conditions under which end users commission and use research and evaluation; and
- being realistic about the extent to which research-based information can provide solutions to particular policy or operational questions.

Social science research and evaluation findings are almost inevitably contingent, time-bound and probability based.

SPEaR has an important role in fostering cross departmental connections between policy and research, and in promoting the importance of research knowledge in underpinning policy and practice and in providing an evidential base for decisions. A key focus for SPEaR has been to improve good practices within the government social research community. The SSRG strongly supports SPEaR's ongoing role in assuring the relevance and integration of research with policy and in proving the value of the connection between improvements to the knowledge base and policy making and decision making. This integration largely occurs at senior leadership levels in organisations. It is therefore important that SPEaR engage with senior managers, particularly when coordinating social policy knowledge needs and addressing knowledge gaps.

Senior managers need to engage with SPEaR when coordinating social policy needs and addressing knowledge gaps

Knowing 'what works' through evaluation

Within government agencies evaluation is increasingly being seen as an important knowledge building and generating activity. Guidelines on how government agencies can use evaluative activities to improve management decisions in the Managing for

Outcomes environment is set out in the 2003 report *Learning from Evaluative Activity: Enhancing Performance through Outcomes-focused Management*. Key points include:

- Identifying evaluative activity as essential for government agencies, which involves a whole of agency commitment to gathering data, processing results, building evidence bases, and using new knowledge to improve decisions and interventions;
- All departments having evaluative strategies and departments engaged in joint activities are expected to develop joint evaluation plans;
- Focusing on 'big' areas where there is uncertainty about what works and how evaluative work can generate useful information; focusing effort on the strategic and operational priorities of an agency, its sector, and the Government;
- Focusing on major interventions where audit, monitoring and evaluation are cost effective, and where reducing uncertainty about delivery and results can benefit New Zealanders; and
- Reporting on planned evaluative activities in Statements of Intent, report major findings in annual reports and on websites and using the results to influence what is done.

It is important therefore to build capability to meet evaluation research needs.

Policy oriented researchers

The movement to evidence-based policy, practices, products and services has placed demands on sufficiently qualified social scientists able to supply research in the areas of most need, and provide the complex evidential and analytic skills involved in undertaking research and evaluation. The SSRG notes that at present there are deficits in the number of social scientists able to meet these demands with the result that relatively inexperienced social scientists or non-social scientists are involved in undertaking social research and evaluation with consequent problems concerning the quality of research and evaluation. At the same time, experienced research and evaluation practitioners are being deployed from sustained research activities to research and evaluation directed at short-term questions primarily related to information gathering.

Within departments, social research and evaluation capacity is 'patchy' at best, with some parts of the sector strong and vibrant and others with very limited capacity, either to undertake research and evaluation or to contract for research. Across the government social science research and evaluation community, the numbers of experienced researchers are limited. However, some departments have, over the last several years, recruited new graduates. It is critical that these emerging researchers and evaluators are retained to grow the depth of research and evaluation capability. It is therefore important to maintain a focus on training and mentoring. In addition, this reference group suggests that there is

There is a shortage of appropriately qualified social scientists and researchers able to meet current research demands.

a greater need for coordination / facilitation in bringing kaupapa Māori research and evaluation and Pacific Peoples research and evaluation into the broader social sciences research and evaluation environment.

Other than departmental in-house researchers and evaluators (mostly in the Ministries of Social Development and Education, with smaller units in Labour and Justice), most policy oriented research is undertaken through contracts with independent researchers, or linked to policy relevant tertiary research. Within the tertiary sector, the evidence from the analysis of the PBRF scores in the social sciences has shown that generally, the newer disciplinary areas (including some of those with greatest relevance for policy oriented research) and those with a higher concentration of practice or applied based researchers performed less well. However, in the reference group's view, the nature of the PBRF process was biased against this group. The PBRF does have potential to affect social sciences research (particularly in applied research and evaluation) which can inform NZ social policy.

PBRF recognition and influence on New Zealand policy-oriented research and evaluation

PBRF potentially discriminates against researchers who specialise in New Zealand applied research projects.

There is some concern that the PBRF may distort the nature of academic research in New Zealand and reduce the incentive for New Zealand specific social science research and evaluation concerning Māori, Pacific, applied and cross disciplinary issues. This is because the actual implementation of the PBRF quality scores for academics discriminate against researchers who specialise in New Zealand applied research projects², and favours those whose work is accepted by journals of high international standing. These tend to be concentrated in America and generally focus on the discipline issues.

The incentives to carry out research that can be published in prestigious overseas journals have serious consequences for New Zealand oriented research, including Maori and Pacific research.

A more likely outlet for New Zealand applied research and evaluation, especially on New Zealand or Pacific social sciences is publication within the Asia Pacific region of applied research and evaluation, especially on New Zealand or Pacific issues. These journals are not necessarily rated as highly as overseas ones, with a subsequent impact on PBRF funding of social sciences.

There is already anecdotal evidence that senior staff have given up doing academic research on New Zealand (in favour of either 'international' research questions or paid consultancy work) and junior staff are being strongly encouraged to concentrate on research that will be of interest to Northern Hemisphere audiences (the readership of the 'well-respected journals'). Moreover, it is of considerable concern that these journal rankings are in narrowly defined discipline areas with the cross-disciplinary and applied research journals appearing well down the list.

² see Chapter 5 of the Web Research Phase 1 Evaluation, for example, paragraphs 658, 669, 674, 675, 716 and 717.

Within the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) literature, there is a recognition that this may have serious consequences for Māori and Pacific research. The SSRG notes also the potential conflict with the TEC goals to develop Māori and Pacific research capability and improve linkages with relevant communities. The SSRG considers that there are potentially serious implications for all New Zealand-oriented research and especially for policy-oriented social science research and evaluation, which can be avoided by appropriate adherence to the written guidelines. We recommend specific information regarding these issues be disseminated to chairs of panels prior to the next PBRF assessment round.

There are a range of issues which affect the credibility of social science research and evaluation. These need to be recognised and managed.

Research and evaluation credibility

Research and evaluation credibility and quality is critical in the uptake-of social science research and evaluation findings and the value it adds to policy formation. Because social sciences operate at the heart of how human beings and societies interact and this understanding is critical to public debate and policy-making at all levels, there are specific issues that social sciences (more so than other sciences) confront. These include:

- Vulnerability to allegations of poor research quality or credibility by users and commissioning agencies where research and evaluation findings do not align with user views or interests. Consequently, at times, the quality of research and evaluation is questioned simply because the research evidence is not palatable.
- Poor user understanding of the disciplinary, paradigmatic and methodological diversity of social sciences to adequately assess and evaluate social science research proposals and research findings. The uncertainty that may be generated among users by the diversity of social science research and evaluation can also be exacerbated by the critical nature of social science disciplines.
- The critical nature of social sciences. Social sciences are made up of what might be referred to as the 'questioning' disciplines. That questioning extends to social scientists frequently taking a critical approach to the interpretation of research and evaluation findings generated out of other disciplines and within the social sciences. Those critiques can be interpreted by users, who are unaware of the nature of social science activity, as reflecting problems of research quality when in fact they are critiques not about quality but on-going debates embedded in epistemological and ontological differences.
- Experiences of poor quality social sciences research and evaluation. Social science research and evaluation is provided by an array of providers working in different institutional and organisational settings or working independently. Other than the usual contractual mechanisms between users commissioning research and evaluation and research and

evaluation providers and some formal processes around ethical practices in some circumstances, the field is largely unregulated and there are few professional associations that provide quality assurance mechanisms. In addition, as noted below, there are some contracting, funding and pricing practices in commissioning research and evaluation that encourage poor quality research provision and evaluation or which inhibit the delivery of good quality social sciences research and evaluation.

Summary of actions needed to strengthen the research/policy interface

Strong processes linking research and policy strategy formation are required to assist in identifying issues requiring social research and evaluation advice.

An increased technical understanding of research by the policy community would result in improving the utility of research and evaluation in policy making.

Stronger intra and interdepartmental links between research and evaluation and policy priority strategies (including funding for multi-year research and evaluation programmes), would provide better evidence based policy and practice.

A wider appreciation of best practice, including case studies demonstrating how research and evaluation have impacted on policy advice and decision-making, as well as training and the sharing of best practice, would build evidence-based policy and outcome capability.

Finally, if academics are not to be disadvantaged in applied research, there is a need for better recognition for New Zealand oriented applied social science within the Performance Based Research Fund.

Funding policies and the effect on capability

Full cost funding to support and maintain capability

Full cost funding would increase the long-term viability of research capability

The SSRG suggests that government agencies contracting research and evaluation adopt a policy of full cost funding of contracted research and evaluation, which includes transparency of the overhead component. Principles for full cost funding were developed in 2003 in consultation with the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee, the Tertiary Education Commission and research purchase agents. The Minister of Research, Science and Technology agreed to the use of those principles in the research, science and technology sector. Departments were encouraged to follow those principles in contracting with research providers in the tertiary education sector. Not applying full cost funding in research contracting reduces the long-term viability of university research capability and means that other funding sources e.g. through Vote Education, subsidises departmental research contracts.

Departmental contracted research is highly variable in costing research activity, particularly when contracting research from a variety of external providers. Most attempt to push down price, funding mostly on a marginal cost basis, or specifying a cap on specific projects which does not allow for full cost funding. Because a significant proportion of social research and evaluation is contracted through government departments, marginal cost funding has an adverse impact on the research and evaluation workforce. Marginal costing affects the viability of research groups to support trained research staff and invest in comprehensive career development to sustain a highly skilled social research and evaluation workforce in New Zealand. This situation is of concern in sustaining quality research and evaluation capability for current and future research and evaluation activity.

The SSRG is aware that SPEaR is undertaking work on contracting with constituent departments and encourages SPEaR to provide strong leadership on research contracting principles, including pricing.

Tertiary research funding allocative methods

Greater transparency of an overhead and PBRF income allocation policy within universities will help research and evaluation communities plan for sustaining capability.

Tertiary institutions allocate overhead funds for research and evaluation activity within universities which are used to support research infrastructure and capability. Within universities there are differing policies and different levels of transparency in the costing and allocation of overheads associated with research and evaluation activities. These can impact upon maintaining capability levels particularly in supporting and sustaining capability for early career researchers. The SSRG encourages greater transparency of an overhead allocation policy within universities so that specific research and evaluation communities are able to plan for sustaining capability.

A second source of tertiary funding which can be allocated to research and evaluation groups to support research and

evaluation infrastructure and capability is PBRF income. Similarly, transparent and appropriate allocative policies, which develop and sustain social science research and evaluation are required in relation to PBRF income.

Summary of action required to implement transparent and fair funding policies

Costing policies have a direct impact on the capacity to develop or erode social science capability and its potential to fully contribute in years to come. PBRF criteria, full cost funding and fair apportionment of overheads all affect the ability to support and sustain research infrastructure and capability.

‘Full cost’ funding policies for research commissioned by departments would recognise the impact of pricing practices on long run capability and quality.

Similarly transparent and appropriate PBRF and overhead disbursement policies in tertiary institutions, including funding allocation models would recognise the true costs of training social science researchers. These costs include increased human resource costs for research data collection (distinct from capital equipment investment in the physical sciences).

Tertiary institutions also need policy statements, which promote and fully cost stable research programmes and sustain capability in the social sciences.

Capability and capacity

There are long run capability issues across the wider social science community that must be addressed to sustain social science research and evaluation over the medium to long term.

The SSRG notes that there are considerable long run capability issues to be addressed across the wider social science community and that there is a clear need to sustain the social science research and evaluation sector over the medium to long term. A concerted investment in capability through a range of mechanisms and across the social science sectors is required.

These include consideration of the impact that current funding, pricing, contracting and resourcing arrangements have on building capability and in providing careers for researchers and evaluators including:

- The ability to provide a sustained career path through quality programmes of policy relevant research and evaluation which can add to the long term knowledge base and provide sound empirical and analytic platforms to address immediate and short-term policy questions.
- The ability to recruit and retain early and mid-career researchers and evaluators to active research and evaluation positions and to mentor them with experienced social research practitioners. Within central government, although there has been expanded employment (particularly in the Ministry of Social Development), there are still limited numbers of experienced social research and evaluation practitioners to provide practice guidance. Over the medium term, the age profile of the social sciences in tertiary institutions suggests that mentors in the tertiary sector will also be scarce.
- Ensuring that 'new entrant' researchers and evaluators can engage in research within a professional environment that provides quality research and evaluation activity in which they can develop research and evaluation techniques, substantive knowledge in a particular sector and appropriate standards of research and evaluation management and behaviour.

Not being able to provide the above conditions will negatively impact on the sustained provision of adequate levels of credible and skilled research and evaluation. In building longer term sustainable capability across the broader social science research and evaluation sector, there is currently no formal mechanism, approach or funding in government departments, to ensure capability levels are maintained or strengthened. This gives rise to long term capability risks, particularly in providing quality social science research and evaluation to ensure that there is new knowledge and support for policy making.

The BRCSS initiative to build research capability within tertiary social sciences is promising. There is a need to focus on long term, as well as short term outcomes.

Building capability through the tertiary sector

The SSRG commends the BRCSS initiative as one means of addressing these issues in the tertiary sector over the short term. Recognising the range of disciplines social sciences encompass and the diversity of methodological practice, BRCSS is a unique social science response to the creation of Centres of Research

Excellence in tertiary science. The BRCSS role to support and sustain world class excellence in building research capability within tertiary social sciences is promising. The SSRG welcomes the impact that BRCSS will have not only in the tertiary sector but also in terms of a wider influence on social science practice. However, the SSRG also note the short term nature of the BRCSS initiative, and its focus in one sector (tertiary) of the social science community, albeit with a potential to influence wider social science practice.

Training and development opportunities for evaluation in the tertiary sector need to be developed, coordinated and supported.

The SSRG notes also that training and development opportunities for evaluation in the tertiary sector are not well developed, coordinated or supported. Potentially BRCSS could encompass the needs and requirements for building and supporting a strong evaluation capacity in New Zealand, and in particular the role the tertiary sector might play in this.

The reference group acknowledges that while some secondments have occurred between government departments and universities, facilitating more of these, perhaps through a collaboration between BRCSS and SPEaR, would encourage better connections and understandings between research and policy as well as a means of refreshing intellectual capital.

Tertiary education in the social sciences is required to maintain a supply of graduates to enter the social science research workforce. Currently this sector is under funded, given the human resource intensive nature of social research (being funded at the equivalent of Arts) and is therefore inhibited in its ability to train adequately for research and evaluation potential.

Sustaining capability in the wider social sciences

The effects of a slow decline of investment in sustaining capability in the social sciences may result in an inability to retain emerging and experienced researchers with consequent impacts on capacity and quality.

The need to sustain capability in the social sciences is particularly acute given the proportion of the science system which relies on short-term contestable contracts along with research and evaluation activity which is undertaken through departmental social sciences research and evaluation contracts which are not full cost funded. This compares with other science system funded research activity which has higher proportions of full cost funding and an historical investment in major research centres including Crown Research Institutes. The effects of a slow decline of investment in sustaining capability in the social sciences may not be immediately apparent but will likely result in an inability to retain emerging and experienced researchers with consequent impacts on capacity and quality.

Recognising the need to maintain capability levels, science system funding provides for specific funds for Crown Research Institutes to maintain capability, or non-specific output funding (NSOF). The Health Research Council (HRC) has three major programmes designed to build a trained health research workforce for New Zealand: with priorities in Māori health research, Pacific health research and supporting a prestigious advanced post-doctoral award. For Māori and Pacific graduates the HRC offers career

development scholarships and fellowships which support postgraduate research training from Masters to post-doctoral level. The Marsden Fund also provides a 'fast start' programme for emerging researchers.

The SSRG suggests that MORST consider a mechanism similar to the 'Capability Fund' to ensure long run capability.

Few equivalent mechanisms exist to support the maintenance of social science capability either through full cost funding or through the capability fund (non specific output fund). The SSRG suggests that MORST consider establishing a funding mechanism similar to the 'Capability Fund' to support capability investment in the social sciences. This would ensure that the social sciences were not unduly disadvantaged *vis a vis* other national 'public good' research activities.

Of particular concern is the ability to provide adequate funding and research and evaluation pathways for Māori and Pacific researchers and evaluators, from the completion of higher degree through to ensuring that there are skilled research and evaluation managers able to lead major projects or research centres. Investment initiatives such as *Bright Futures* could usefully be further extended to support social sciences capability building, including Māori and Pacific research and evaluation capability.

Māori researchers

There are opportunities for research funders to consider the best ways to encourage and sustain the best practice in Māori research in order to identify where further investment needs to be made.

The formation of Nga Pae o te Maramatanga, the National Institute of Research Excellence for Māori Development and Advancement, along with increasing Maturanga Māori research activity in wananga and universities, is developing a base of Māori research from which the wider sciences can learn. There are opportunities for research funders to consider the best ways to encourage and sustain the best practice in Māori research in order to identify where further investment needs to be made.

The BRCS initiative could be usefully employed to support collaborative exercises bringing together established, researchers, scholars, practitioners and graduates that promote a range of mixed outcomes and outputs for Māori researchers and communities. Internships need to be revisited as they are a vital link in grounding theory and practice.

Pacific researchers

Building capacity to provide a Pacific research perspective is a priority within the social research community.

New Zealand has a very limited capacity in terms of researchers who are able to operate in both Pacific indigenous knowledge and Western research methodologies. In addition, there is also limited capacity amongst Western researchers to contribute to Pacific relevant social research and evaluation. Building capacity to provide a Pacific research perspective is a priority within the social research community. The Health Research Council, BRCS and SPEaR have programmes to nurture and sustain Pacific research capacity and to bring the expertise, learning, approaches and knowledge into the broader social research environment.

The first Pacific Research and Evaluation series of symposia and fono held in late 2004, attended by more than 250 Pacific

researchers, evaluators, service providers, central and local government people and associated colleagues, was a considerable milestone towards fostering and building capacity.

New Settlers

The increased cultural diversity of immigration flows since changes to immigration policy in the late 1980s has significantly increased the demand for policy-relevant research and researchers from these communities. This demand encompasses refugee communities through to immigrants who have arrived as a result of skilled and entrepreneurial categories. There are considerable challenges associated with these communities, including post-traumatic issues, capturing the human and economic potential of immigrants through to issues of host community and organisational responses to cultural diversity. As a country which encourages immigration, social science expertise and research play a critical role in ensuring successful policy outcomes. The challenge is to recruit and train new settler researchers to contribute to research and policy. At this point, there is limited capability associated with these communities. BRCSS is currently working on standards and targets for building capability amongst 'new settler' researchers.

There is limited research and evaluation capability within new settler communities.

Evaluation expertise

Evaluation research plays a crucial role in terms of understanding and developing and implementing appropriate and effective social policies and social services, and this is increasing in the *Managing for Outcomes* funding environment. Therefore, attention needs to be given to ensuring that evaluation research capacity and capability matches these requirements. Many of the concerns raised about research capacity and capability are similar for evaluation expertise. In the current environment, evaluation activity is mainly funded through government operational funding and some with CDRP funding.

Many of the concerns raised about research capacity and capability are similar for evaluation expertise.

However, quality implications are evident in poorly targeted evaluation resources, a lack of independence in making evaluation judgements and the patchy use of evaluation findings to inform policy, service delivery, or broad government strategy and budget decision-making.

The main causes of problems have been described as relating to:

- a variable culture of inquiry and variable commitment to use findings of evaluation activity to inform decisions within government agencies;
- limited capability on the part of policy and programme managers on when and what evaluation can offer and how to use the findings;
- limited skills within and outside State sector to conduct high quality evaluation activity; and

- poorly coordinated and prioritised evaluative effort in and between agencies.

Extensive recommendations were made to address these causes in the 2003 report *Learning from Evaluative Activity: Enhancing Performance through Outcomes-focused Management*, including a recommendation to review progress in December 2005.

The SSRG supports the above conclusions and looks forward to the review of progress to be undertaken by December 2005.

Summary of actions needed to enhance capability and capacity

Sustaining capability in the social sciences is influenced by funding policies, the number of experienced researchers and evaluators to provide practice guidance, and the ability to provide sustained career paths. Providing secondments, scholarships and fellowships, particularly for Māori and Pacific researchers, assists in strengthening capability for the long term.

The science system 'Capability Fund' is a useful mechanism for providing investment, and this could be extended to the social sciences.

The programme of 'both-way' secondments between staff in academia and those in government departments could also be extended to foster greater mutual understanding and transfer of knowledge; and the tertiary sector needs to take initiatives to support building evaluation capability.

Action is required to develop the capacity of the Maori research community. There are opportunities for research funders to encourage best practice in Maori research, and to invest in Maori research centres and wananga. The application of indigenous knowledge / matauranga Māori to social research would develop a base of Maori research for the wider sciences to learn from. Ways need to be found that are broader than the SPEaR best practice focus, to bring kaupapa Māori research and evaluation into the broader social sciences research and evaluation practice.

There would also be benefits from monitoring the BRCSS initiative as a potential model for further collaboration and capacity development of the social sciences within Tertiary Education Organisations.

Targeted eligibility for social sciences in the New Zealand Science and Technology Post Doctoral Fellowships and the Tūāpapa Pūtaiao Maori Fellowships would promote social sciences human capital. A social research and evaluation apprenticeship system similar to Bright Futures enterprise scholarships, with priority to Māori and Pacific researchers, would help increase capacity for these key research communities.

Research and evaluation planning and dissemination

Currently, there is no mechanism at a system wide level to identify long term social science research and evaluation needs and which engages the research community in priority setting processes.

Effective leadership is needed in formulating research and evaluation strategies, which clearly define the future knowledge, policy research and evaluation needs of New Zealand. Research strategies are defined through a range of mechanisms from the Tertiary Education Strategy, Research funding agencies including the Foundation for Research Science and Technology and the Health Research Council, research strategies guided by major Government strategies, and departmental research strategies. The SSRG considers that there are further opportunities available which would result in improvements in research planning and coordination, both within and between government departments and with the wider social sciences research sector. Clearer research and evaluation intentions assist in system wide planning, not only in relation to the balance between strategic and applied research, but also within departments between applied research and evaluation.

System wide priority setting

Currently, there is no mechanism at a system wide level which operates to identify long term social science research and evaluation needs and engage in various research and evaluation funders priority setting processes. Nor is there a forum, such as those in Britain and Australia and in other jurisdictions, which can act as a conduit for consultation and collaboration across the wider social science research and evaluation community.

Transparent, coordinated strategies and mechanisms within and between departments

The SSRG reiterates the importance of the research and evaluation strategy development within departments, not only as a means of providing greater transparency and clarity between research and evaluation contractors and providers, but also to enable wider longer term strategy and capability planning to occur. It is important that a 'whole of government' approach is taken to identify the core departmental research and evaluation priorities which might underpin Government's key social strategies and across a wider range of government agencies than tends to currently occur.

It is important that a 'whole of government' approach is taken to identify the core departmental research and evaluation priorities which underpin Government's key social strategies

Strategies such as Sustainable Development and Opportunity for All provide good platforms within which to build supporting research and evaluation plans. Managing for Outcomes, both within departments and across departments through shared outcomes, provides the opportunity for departmental chief executives and officials to develop longer term research and evaluation programmes and strategies. Coordinating frameworks, within and across social sector departments, currently exist, including Managing for Outcomes and SPEaR's coordination role as a means to linking strategies and research and evaluation priorities. For the coordinating frameworks to be effective requires

the involvement of senior managers to ensure connections are coherent and flexible in meeting the needs of users and in adapting and responding to emerging issues and challenges.

In a more coordinated planning environment, the incentives would be higher for research and evaluation providers, notably universities and independent providers, to develop core expertise and a stronger base for delivering planned research and evaluation to a high standard, as well as being able to respond rapidly to emerging issues and needs.

Most social science research and evaluation activity within departments is operationally focused policy research. Inefficiencies in planning and contracting mean that value of research investment is not optimised because of a lack of a long term, coordinated approach in ensuring future knowledge requirements or in sustaining research and evaluation capability and capacity which might underpin policy related research and evaluation. There is an urgent need for government ministries/agencies which commission social science research and evaluation to engage with the research and evaluation sector and agree on administrative policies and processes to address:

- long term plans for policy oriented research and evaluation;
- professional contracting practices and ethics protocols;
- quality and competency concerns;
- full cost pricing practices; and
- evaluation of research.

SPEaR has a role to engage with departments across the social policy sector. For SPEaR to be most effective it needs not only to be responsive to research and evaluation practitioners but also to perform a strong leadership role at a strategic level through active and sustained advocacy with departmental leaders and senior managers to link research and evaluation with strategy. At an operational level, SPEaR has been successful in developing good research and evaluation practice and has good research and evaluation manager and practitioner level involvement.

Capture, saving and disseminating research data and findings

The life blood of research is ready and efficient access to information including statistical, administrative and research data sets, open access publications of journals, theses, conference proceedings etc. Such information is increasingly, in digital form, which places greater emphasis on systems to find, capture and distribute information to make optimal use of public funded research results and associated data.

New Zealand is a small society which has only limited resources that can be directed to generating an evidential platform for policy and other purposes. It is imperative, then, that we make the most efficient and effective use of our social research and evaluation efforts through the optimal use of New Zealand data bases as well

as research and evaluation generated data sets and of research and evaluation results.

Too often research and evaluation activities are unknown to other users and researchers, either through the failure of researchers or end-users to disseminate research findings or through restrictions in data sharing. This is particularly apparent, but not unique, in commissioned applied research and evaluation. This can generate:

- duplication of effort and research and evaluation activities. Efficiencies could be made in relation to the multiple use and re-analysis of data, the development and application of methods and research and evaluation instruments;
- a failure to build on and extend the current knowledge and information platform; and
- missed opportunities to multiply use and re-analyse existing data in response to new research and evaluation questions.

The importance of data saving and sharing to support the infrastructural base of science is an issue currently being considered by MoRST, including issues such as policy settings, infrastructural prerequisites, custodianship and cost of datasets, who has them and maintains them, how they can be shared more effectively, how independent social researchers and evaluators might access them, how to prepare datasets and research and evaluation findings for internet sharing.

The Statistics New Zealand initiative to create an Official Statistics Research and Data Archive Centre will significantly enhance access by researchers to tier one statistical data resources. There remains the issue of data capture, saving and sharing of research and evaluation data other than statistical data. Many data sets held by departments have multiple research and evaluation uses. The availability of such data, and the data sets created to support governmental research and evaluation is an issue that is of international interest. For example, the ability of New Zealand social researchers and evaluators to collaborate with international researchers in comparative research is limited by the ability to know about, access and transport publicly funded research data and findings.

Within the social sciences, SPEaR has convened a subcommittee to advance cross-sectoral and cross-agency research data saving and sharing. This committee, includes key government agencies, academics, and purchase agents. We commend SPEaR in its efforts to assist departments in creating systems and processes which will enable greater accessibility to government held data and research and evaluation findings, particularly through electronic means. We see this work as a precursor to extending such systems, via funding agencies, to the wider social science research community.

Summary of actions needed to improve research planning and dissemination

Planning

Strong leadership and good planning are needed at several levels: connecting individual research projects to policy initiatives; connecting departmental research strategies to policy outcomes; and connecting cross agency strategies. Stronger mechanisms are needed to ensure complementarity and connectedness within and between sectors, not only to avoid potential gaps and overlaps, but to maximise the public funded social science effort.

There needs to be greater opportunities for the wider social science sector to engage in priority setting.

SPEaR could enhance planning by increased coordination of an 'all-of-government' approach to interdepartmental research and evaluation strategies and research programmes which support major Government strategies, contribute to joint outcomes, and identify complementarities and gaps in research activity, both in the short and long term.

Research planning within departments, including identifying research needs and connections with policy planning, and the most appropriate sources for research, could be strengthened.

Data saving and dissemination

The promotion of data saving and sharing of public funded research would enhance the utility of social science research and evaluation activity. Departments need to strengthen information management policies, providing leadership within their respective sectors to share public funded research and associated data.

Web-based technology is an effective mechanism for dissemination. Information on social sciences research and evaluation, including research strategies, research in-progress and completed, can be shared across social science sectors.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The social sciences focus is on the 'big societal issues' to deliver benefits for New Zealand's wealth and wellbeing. Its contribution is broad and multifaceted providing: New Zealand specific knowledge; indicators of wellbeing and outcome achievement; underpinning knowledge to inform strategies; providing an evidence base for policy debate and choices; policy evaluation on the success of policy interventions; participation in multidisciplinary research, and involvement in international comparative and collaborative research.

The reference group has nine key recommendations and supporting actions for nominated agencies. Collectively these form a coherent agenda which have interdependent impacts across the issues raised in this report. These actions strengthen the contribution the social sciences make including providing underpinning research to key government strategies such as Opportunity for All, and the Sustainable Programme of Action.

1 Establish an Academy of Social Sciences

New Zealand has a broad and diverse pool of social sciences research and evaluation talent. There is potential to improve research practice, provide a greater sense of cohesion and build enhanced efficiencies and collaboration.

1a Facilitate the establishment of an Academy of Social Sciences to develop and sustain research practitioner identity, cohesion, interface and excellence, and to strengthen collaboration and excellence amongst research practitioners across government, tertiary and private sectors. (MoRST);

2 Create a new funding stream for cross disciplinary research

Many of the large challenges in research are 'cross cutting' and at the interfaces between the separate research disciplines. The social sciences can contribute significant knowledge to the physical and natural sciences and technology communities. The reference group sees the need to:

2a Establish a new funding stream for social science contributions to cross -disciplinary research to broaden and deepen the contributions of social sciences to multi disciplinary research; (MoRST);

2b Enhance the assessment, monitoring and evaluation of social science input in cross disciplinary research proposals; (FRST);

3 Increase investment in strategic and investigator initiated research

Providing ample scope for cutting-edge research ideas and new knowledge to emerge from the social science base has the potential to provide tomorrow's leading ideas of benefit to our society and economy. To do this the reference group strongly supports ways which:

3a Increase funding for longer term investigator-initiated research within Vote: Research, Science and Technology (MoRST);

3b Establish an additional objective within the social research output class that is sufficiently flexible and broad to accommodate quality investigator led research. (FRST);

4 Strengthen the Research / Policy Interface

The ability to access and mine knowledge from the research base is vital to quality policy, the analysis for opportunities and risk avoidance and for policy implementation. The reference group reiterates that stronger processes are needed to link research and policy strategy and which assist in providing research to underpin cross government strategies. It suggests that there is opportunity to give effect to the following actions by applying them to strategies such as Opportunity for All and the Sustainable Development Programme of Action:

4a Strengthen leadership (in collaboration with departmental senior managers), that fosters policy community skills including good technical understanding of research so as to behave as 'intelligent customers' for social science research and evaluation input into evidence-based policy. (SPEaR / Departmental chief executives / SSC policy managers network);

4b Strengthen intra and interdepartmental links between research and evaluation and policy priorities and strategies, including funding for multi-year research and evaluation programmes to provide better evidence based policy and practice. (SPEaR and Treasury);

4c Consider the inclusion of cross departmental evaluation within the CDRP objectives (MoRST);

4d Encourage greater involvement of tertiary and private research practitioners in CDRP research proposals. (SPEaR/ FRST);

4e Identify and document best practice case studies to demonstrate how research and evaluation have impacted on policy advice and decision making (SPEaR);

4f Promote training and sharing of best practice to build evidence-based policy and outcome evaluation capability including, developing communities of practice. (SPEaR / BRCCS);

4g Provide for better recognition for New Zealand oriented applied social science within the Performance Based Research Fund; so as not to disadvantage academics engaged primarily in applied research (TEC);

5 Implement transparent and fair funding policies

Funding policies, such as the way overheads are allocated, can strongly influence whether the capability is developed or eroded in the social sciences. PBRF criteria, full cost funding and fair apportionment of overheads all affect the ability to support and sustain research infrastructure and capability.

5a Invite departments to adopt 'full cost' funding policies in contracts unless there is good reason for different treatment. (SPEaR/MoRST/Treasury);

5b Develop transparent and appropriate PBRF and overhead disbursement policies in tertiary institutions, and which include funding allocation models, which recognise the true costs of training social science researchers, such as intensive and increased human resource costs (distinct from capital equipment investment in the physical sciences). (MoE/TEC and NZVCC);

5c Invite tertiary institutions to develop policies which promote, and fully cost, stable research programmes and sustain capability in the social sciences. (MoE / TEC/ and NZVCC);

6 Enhance Capability and Capacity

Sustaining capability in the social sciences is influenced by funding policies as noted above, the availability of experienced researchers and evaluators to provide practice guidance and the ability to provide sustained career paths. The reference group suggests that concerted action is taken to address long run capability risks. These include the need to:

6a Explore a mechanism similar to the science system 'Capability Fund' to provide for capability investment in the social sciences (MoRST);

6b Extend the programme of 'both-way' secondments between staff in academia and those in government departments to foster greater mutual understanding and transfer of knowledge (SPEaR and BRCSS);

6c Explore how the tertiary sector can support building evaluation capability (BRCSS/TEC);

6d Develop, sustain and invest in best practice research conducted in Māori communities, Māori research centres and wananga, and including the application of indigenous knowledge / matakā Māori to social research. (MoRST/FRST)

6e Consider and implement ways to bring kaupapa Māori and Pacific Peoples' research and evaluation into the broader social sciences research and evaluation practice – broader than the SPEaR best practices focus (BRCSS/SPEaR).

6f Monitor the BRCSS initiative as a potential model for further collaboration and capacity development of the social sciences within Tertiary Education Organisations (TEC);

6g Promote social sciences human capital through targeted eligibility in the New Zealand Science and Technology Post Doctoral Fellowships; and the Tūāpapa Pūtaiao Maori Fellowships (MoRST/FRST);

6h Establish a social research and evaluation apprenticeship system similar to Bright Futures enterprise scholarships, with priority to Māori and Pacific researchers; (TEC)

7 Improve Research Planning

Improvements are needed to research planning at several levels – connecting individual research projects to policy initiatives, connecting departmental research strategies to policy outcomes, connecting cross agency strategies. The reference group supports stronger mechanisms to ensure complementarity and connectedness within and between sectors, not only to avoid potential gaps and overlaps, but to maximise the public funded social science effort.

7a Engage the wider social science sector in; long term scanning and priority setting to guide decisions on short, medium and long term research, and in identifying the balance between strategic and applied research. (The establishment of an Academy of Social Sciences would assist in providing a ‘front door’ to the social sciences) (MoRST/FRST).

7b Invite SPEaR to strengthen its commitment to leadership and coordination of an ‘all-of-government’ approach to interdepartmental research and evaluation strategies and research programmes, involve research in the formation and implementation of major Government strategies (such as Opportunity for All), contribute to joint outcomes, and identify complementarities and gaps in research activity, both in the short and long term. (SPEaR)

7c Strengthen research planning within departments, including identifying research needs and connections with policy planning, and the most appropriate sources for research activities either through in-house or contracted research programmes and projects (SPEaR / departmental chief executives).

8 Promote Policies and Systems for Research Data Saving and Sharing

The life blood of research is ready and efficient access to information including statistical, administrative and research data sets, open access publications of journals, theses, conference proceedings etc. Such information is increasingly in digital form, which places greater emphasis on systems to find, capture and distribute information to make optimal use of public funded research results and associated data.

8a Promote policy within the science system for data saving and sharing of public funded research (MoRST / FRST/HRC)

8b Facilitate, reinforce and strengthen information management policies within departments on data saving and sharing practices to support sharing of public funded research and associated data, unless there is good reason to withhold, so that the research community is able to discover, access and utilise existing research data and research findings. (SSC e-government / SPEaR/ MoRST)

8c Enable, through web based technology, the ability to access, link, collate and disseminate data and information of value to social science research and evaluation – including proposed, in-progress and completed research across social science sectors. (SPEaR/ BRCSS and, if agreed, Academy of Social Sciences).

9 Sustain progress in contribution of the social sciences

The reference group considers the above recommendations will provide a significant step in improving and sustaining the contribution the social sciences are able to make to wealth and wellbeing in New Zealand. To ensure progress is sustained, a review in three years is suggested.

9a invite the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology to reconvene the social science reference group by 2009, to review progress on implementing the recommendations and to provide further advice on sustaining a strong and viable social sciences contribution to New Zealand's wealth and wellbeing.

Members of the Social Science Reference Group

Chair: Professor Sally Casswell

Members: Malcolm Menzies
Tracey McIntosh
Kate McKegg
Simon Milne
Caroline Saunders
Kay Saville-Smith
Paul Spoonley
Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese

APPENDIX 2

Review of progress since the Social Sciences Reference Group 2001 Report – *Connections, Resources and Capacities*

Recommendations in the 2001 report	Action
<p>R1. We commend the initiative of the Ministry of Social Development for an annual social policy research conference in 2001/02.</p> <p>R1a. We recommend to the Minister for Social Services and Employment that holding an annual social policy conference and other research brokerage activities, be a regular part of the oversight of the social policy sector by the Ministry of Social Development.</p> <p>R1b. These activities should have, as part of their planning, consideration of key knowledge needs for social policy and a shared social policy research agenda. Participants should include those concerned with the development and implementation of social policy, funders and research providers.</p>	<p>First conference postponed from 2002 to April 2003. First conference in Wellington based on 'evidence based policy and practice in the social sector'. 800 attendees. Second conference held in November 2004 with similar attendance.</p> <p>Conference is now to be held bi-annually.</p>
<p>R2. We recommend that government social policy departments consider programmes of academic linkages and secondments as a way of improving connections and refreshing intellectual capital.</p> <p>R2a. We invite the Ministry of Social Development, as convener of the Strategic Social Policy Senior Officials Group, to encourage this type of activity within departments.</p> <p>R2b. We invite the Research Committee of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee to report to the Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary Education) and the Minister for Research, Science and Technology on:</p> <p>a) What needs to be done to support exchanges of people between universities and government departments.</p> <p>b) The mechanisms for ensuring that policy-relevant research is treated for career and promotion purposes on a par with other work.</p> <p>c) How universities can respond to the need of social policy agencies for graduates with project management, quantitative and evaluation skills, and</p>	<p>2) SPEAR Linkages programme, established in 2003, includes a series of scholarships, fellowships, exchanges and grants to address skill shortages in social policy research and evaluation. Objectives of the Linkages programme is to build knowledge and capacity to inform social policy, enhance cross-department social policy work, and build capability for delivering cost-effective development, delivery, or evaluation of social policy.</p> <p>2a) Exchanges and secondments between universities and government departments have not occurred as often as was envisaged, due in part to the high costs associated with these.</p> <p>2ba) Different mechanisms may be needed to improve connections and refresh intellectual capital.</p>

<p>d) The means by which universities might better employ research project managers and/or information brokers to both monitor research grants more effectively and disseminate research findings more appropriately.</p>	
<p>R3. The reference group invites the Minister of Research, Science and Technology to consider building into the Royal Society of New Zealand purchase agreement the following:</p> <p>a) Delivery of an independent, peer-reviewed, high quality journal with a charter to publish social sciences material relevant to social policy.</p> <p>b) A brokerage role for the Social sciences Committee of the Royal Society of New Zealand, which involves this Committee encouraging professional social sciences conferences to include policy relevant streams.</p>	<p>R3a Funding has been allocated for a web-based on line social sciences journal, expected to be operational by June 2005.</p> <p>The Royal Society Social Sciences Committee has organised workshops around the BRCCS process</p>
<p>R4. We invite the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology to continue its Secretariat support for the Web-based discussion list: 'NZ Social sciences' beyond the life of the reference group.</p>	<p>The formation of SPEaR and BRCCS has provided an avenue for the social science community to engage.</p>
<p>R5. We recommend to the Minister of Research, Science and Technology increase funding for the Vote Research, Science and Technology social research output class (current value: \$4.337 million). We favour a tender for strategic social policy research, with a process and size of tender relative to the likely transaction costs.</p> <p>R5a. We recommend to the Minister of Research, Science and Technology:</p> <p>a) Increase funding of the Vote Research, Science and Technology Departmental Contestable Research Pool, to achieve development and enhancement of research networks and linkages between departments and providers.</p> <p>b) Amending the 2001/02 Departmental Contestable Research Pool 'Principles for Determining Support' in the Ministerial Terms of Reference to reflect this additional focus.</p>	<p>The social research output class for 04/05 is currently \$6.592.</p> <p>FRST has implemented a template or model for tender submissions. Social science tenders are aligned with other FRST tendering processes.</p> <p>No increased funding to CDRP. An evaluation of the CDRP is currently being undertaken.</p> <p>Need to consider FRST assessment of social research component of other bids</p>
<p>R6. We recommend that the Ministry for Research, Science and Technology explore with social policy-relevant departments and research providers the feasibility, utility and possible content of a Code of Best Practice in contracting for research.</p>	<p>SPEaR is developing Best Practice Guidelines for social policy research and evaluation undertaken/commissioned by government agencies. Aim is to improve the quality of practice across the sector. Guidelines to be in four areas: projects involving Māori, projects involving Pacific peoples, contracting, applying ethics.</p>

<p>R7. We recommend that the Associate Minister for Education (Tertiary Education) ensure that the mechanism for tertiary education funding helps build critical masses of social sciences researchers and rewards networks and policy-relevant research. This could be included as a quality indicator in funding linked to research performance.</p>	<p>The Tertiary Education Commission provided funding for the Building Research Capability in the Social Sciences in 2004</p> <p>Issues re PBRF are identified in this report.</p>
<p>R8 We recommend that in whatever funding mechanisms chosen by government in response to the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission that</p> <p>a)the methods of determining why, and how much, funding is directed to social sciences is transparent</p> <p>b)new cost categories reflect the true costs of improved training for social scientists.</p>	<p>These issues are addressed in this report</p>
<p>R9. We recommend to social policy departments that they investigate innovative and creative ways to address data issues; in particular, how to strengthen contacts between departments and university-based researchers which build up postgraduate students' interest and skill in analysing existing datasets for policy-related research.</p>	<p>There have been major developments on data issues including the establishment of the NZ Statistics Official Statistics Research and Data Archive Centre (OSRDAC) as a central repository for key data sets.</p> <p>MoRST and SPEaR have initiated work on data saving and sharing.</p>
<p>R10. We invite the Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary Education) to, in agreeing to selection criteria for all proposed CoEs, ensure that policy relevance complement excellence of international peer review.</p>	<p>BRCSS has a policy focus to promote quality and relevance in social science research in both its investment in new research teams and developing early career research capability.</p>

Examples of social science research contributions to social and economic outcomes

Some examples of research which demonstrate the direct contribution social sciences make to social and economic outcomes at an individual, community and NZ wide level are provided below.

- The South Auckland Education research study undertaken by academics, educators and researchers called “Picking up the Pace” has potentially changed the lives of children from low decile areas who were expected to be underachievers. It identified innovative interventions involving communities, educators, researchers, and the Ministry of Education. The research had the result in substantially lifting the reading and writing achievement of new entrants. The social and economic outcomes resulting from the research are far reaching.
- The New Zealand Poverty Measurement project funded by FRST began in 1992 enhanced the understanding of the concept of poverty and along with further government initiated research on living standards provided an evidence base for policy changes incorporated in the Working for Families initiative.
- Research initiated by Alison Jones of the University of Auckland, partly through a Marsden grant, looked at how teachers are regulating their physical contact behaviour with young children in response to the widespread social anxiety about sexual abuse of children. This has highlighted the significance and impacts on teachers and young children of child safety policies and practices in schools and early childhood centres.
- Two recent evaluations of current approaches to community restorative justice processes in Rotorua and Wanganui elicited further information about the effectiveness of current approaches and will inform future development and implementation of improvement processes. Both evaluations pointed to the need to develop strategies to secure optimal crime prevention benefits and results for the two main objectives (often not easily reconciled) of securing reductions in re-offending, while enhancing and maintaining the clear benefits that are being obtained for victims. Securing these objectives will be a major challenge for the partnership between policy developers and service providers.

Academy of Social Science Research: functions, roles and activities

Functions	Roles	Activities
Advocate for Social Sciences and Evaluation Communities	<p>Encourage the advancement of social sciences research and evaluation in New Zealand.</p> <p>Represent, with other research, evaluation and discipline-based societies, the interests of the social sciences within government, at political and administrative levels, research and evaluation, teaching and funding bodies and agencies, and private sector companies and public sector agencies, including local government.</p> <p>Assist in strengthening the role of social sciences in the development of policy.</p>	<p>Provide a constituency for social sciences and evaluation</p> <p>Meet with other bodies and groups in Science to discuss matters of strategic interest and to exchange views</p> <p>Contribute to planning for the biannual social policy research and evaluation conference</p> <p>From time to time investigate issues of concern to the social sciences and evaluation community</p>
Front door	<p>Provide advice to Government and other public bodies on questions affecting research and evaluation and scholarship in the social sciences.</p> <p>Comment, where appropriate, on national needs and priorities in social science research and evaluation</p> <p>Encourage connectedness between New Zealand social science researchers and evaluators with other international social sciences coordinating mechanisms.</p>	<p>Act as a conduit for the social science and evaluation communities and engage with agencies on issues of concern to the social sciences and evaluation communities</p> <p>Provide a forum for exchange of ideas and views within the social science and evaluation communities</p> <p>Maintain connections with international agencies with similar roles</p>
Coordination	<p>Support and encourage research and evaluation and disciplinary societies to collaborate, where appropriate, in order to promote interdisciplinary approaches involving the social sciences.</p>	<p>Share insights and knowledge to assist in dealing with common stakeholders</p> <p>Liaise with other agencies and networks such as SPEaR, BRCSS, Royal Society etc</p>

Functions	Roles	Activities
Communications	Promote public and end user understanding of social science research and evaluation and to disseminate information about social scientists, the social sciences and what they seek to achieve to the general public, to end users and to educational and training institutions.	Develop strong linkages to promote understanding of social sciences contributions
Capability	Identify opportunities to build capability across the sectors	Convey social science capability concerns to be communicated to relevant agencies for action Liaise with MoRST on how capability funding might apply to the social sciences
Improving quality	Provide a practice and quality-based accreditation system for social science research and evaluation practitioners.	Facilitate workshops Share best practice in areas of concern

Abbreviations used in this report

BRCSS	Building Research Capacity in the Social Sciences
CDRP	Cross Department Research Pool
CRI	Crown Research Institute
FRST	Foundation for Research Science and Technology
HRC	Health Research Council
MoRST	Ministry of Research Science and Technology
NSOF	Non Specific Output Funding
PBRF	Performance-Based Research Fund
SPEaR	Social Policy Evaluation and Research
SSRG	Social Sciences Research Group
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
Vote: RS&T	Vote: Research, Science and Technology