

Charities Services' research strategy and plan 2020 – 2023



CONTEXT

Charities Services has a statutory function to “stimulate and promote research into any matter relating to charities” (section 10(k) Charities Act 2005).

The publicly-accessible online Charities Register contains a wealth of information about over 27,000 currently registered charities in Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as a large number of charities that have

been deregistered. Searches can be undertaken for information about individual charities, and about the charitable sector as a whole. Making this data available to researchers and members of the public that have an interest in the charitable sector has been, and will continue to be, the main way we give effect to our statutory research function.

OUTCOME: Improving the quality of the data and information on the Charities Register

OVER 2020-2023 WE PLAN TO:

- Review the annual return form to help ensure that the information collected is relevant, the form is easy to complete, and the help text is useful. We will consult representatives of the charitable sector, and those with an interest in the information on the Charities Register, as part of the review process.
- Provide more guidance for charities on calculating their volunteers' contributions, and the value of collecting and reporting this information.
- Undertake a targeted data validation process, to ensure that the figures reported in certain annual returns (and therefore included in the advanced search function on the register) are consistent with the figures reported in the financial statements submitted. This could, for instance, include checking all Tier 1 and 2 annual returns, and/or annual returns and financial statements that are reviewed as part of the compliance check process (which checks for compliance with the reporting standards).
- Explore possible improvements to data quality through Piki Kōtuku, our IT project.

OUTCOME: Improving access to the data and information on the Charities Register

OVER 2020-2023 WE PLAN TO:

- Produce and publish on our website regular snapshots of data from the Charities Register:
 - Quarterly data for Charities Registration Board
 - Volunteer data for National Volunteer Week
 - Annual snapshot of sector data from our Annual Review reports
- Produce a new guide on using the Charities Register advanced search function.
- Promote the webinar on how to find information about registered charities on the register.
- Compile a series of short “how to” video clips exploring what information is available on the Charities Register and how it can be accessed.
- Explore possible improvements to data visualisation through the Piki Kōtuku project.

OUTCOME: Collaborating and supporting research into the charitable sector

OVER 2020-2023 WE PLAN TO:

- Promote research opportunities through our communications channels (e.g. social media and newsletters), for example by inviting registered charities to participate in appropriate research conducted by third parties.
- Conduct public trust and confidence pulse survey in 2021 (and possibly 2023).
- Following discussions with stakeholders (including representatives of the charitable sector) about what they would like to know about the charitable sector, undertake and publish more in-depth analysis of the information on the Charities Register. This could involve combining tax and Charities Register data to show a richer picture of the scale, scope and contribution of the charitable sector in Aotearoa, covering:
 - The make-up of the sector
 - How many charities are active/inactive
 - What activities the sector is involved in
 - The size of charities (based, for example, on income)
 - Areas of operation (regionally, nationally and internationally)
 - Volunteers and employees in New Zealand's charities
 - The reasons why charities deregister
- Participate in research groups, such as the AUT Accounting for Social Impact Research Group.