



MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR THE INFECTIOUS DISEASES RESEARCH PLATFORM PLAN



2022

New Zealand Government



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Hikina Whakatutuki – Lifting to make successful

MBIE develops and delivers policy, services, advice and regulation to support economic growth and the prosperity and wellbeing of New Zealanders. MBIE combines the former Ministries of Economic Development, Science + Innovation, and the Departments of Labour, and Building and Housing.

More information

Information, examples and answers to your questions about the topics covered here can be found on our website, www.mbie.govt.nz, or by calling us free on 0800 693 778.

Disclaimer

This document is a guide only. It should not be used as a substitute for legislation or legal advice.

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Online: ISBN 978-1-99-104120-3

Published: June 2022

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FOREWORD

Tēnā koutou

Thank you for agreeing to assess the Platform Plans for the Infectious Diseases Research Platform. The primary responsibility of the Co-Host will be to coordinate the development of an Infectious Diseases Research Platform plan that meets the objectives of the Research Platform.

These guidelines detail what is involved in the assessment of Platform Plans for the Infectious Diseases Research Platform and the role that you will play in that process. Informed assessment of Platform Plans is a critical aspect of our investment process, as it forms the basis of our funding recommendations.

Panellists have been selected based on your knowledge and experience of investment processes, the policy intent of the Infectious Diseases Research Platform, and the environment in which the Platform will operate. The names of all Panellists and their affiliated organisations will be published on our website.

The experience and expertise that you bring to the investment process is greatly appreciated. Thank you for supporting our science investment processes.

INTRODUCTION

As an Assessor, you are critical in helping us identify a Platform Plan that has the greatest potential to meet the objectives of the Infectious Diseases Research Platform investment opportunity and describes the desired characteristics of the Platform Plan adequately.

The mission of the Platform is **'To ensure New Zealand has world class research capability to respond to serious infectious disease threats.'**

These guidelines detail the assessment process and the key assessment roles and responsibilities.

We recommend that you read this document in conjunction with the *A Guide to Preparing Your Platform Plan* and other relevant information on our [webpages](#) for this opportunity.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.

Email Assessment queries: SSIF.investment@mbie.govt.nz

Phone 0800 693 778 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm)

PANELLISTS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following outlines the key roles and responsibilities involved in the assessment of the Platform Plan(s) for the Infectious Diseases Research Platform.

The Co-Hosts will submit a draft Platform Plan for assessment and receive feedback and may be invited to submit a final Platform Plan for assessment.

ASSESSOR

Your role as an Assessor on the Panel is to assess both the draft and final Platform Plans and contribute to the Panel discussion. Your key responsibilities include:

- > Declaring any conflicts of interest and adhering to our confidentiality and privacy policies.
- > Reading and assessing the Platform Plans. You should use the assessment template below to record your preliminary assessments of each Platform Plan against the assessment criteria.
- > Attending Assessment Panel meetings where:
 - > panellists discuss their preliminary assessments
 - > the Chair facilitates a consensus assessment on the Platform Plan and on overall recommendations.
 - > MBIE staff record advice on the assessment results.

The Assessment Panel does not have delegated authority to make investment decisions.

PANEL CHAIR

The role of the Chair is to:

- > Identify and take appropriate action over conflicts of interest.
- > Allow time for informed discussion and equitable decision-making and mediate views if required.
- > Ensure that:
 - > the assessment criteria are followed, and
 - > the Assessment Panel reaches a consensus on the Platform Plan, a funding recommendation, and to enable feedback to the Co-Host.
- > Approve feedback to the Co-Hosts if this feedback is needed prior to a funding recommendation being made.
- > Approve a Panel Meeting Report including a funding recommendation.
- > Confidentiality and Privacy.

Confidentiality and Privacy

To ensure confidentiality, as an assessor you must:

- > Ensure the safekeeping of all Platform Plans and related documents (e.g., workbooks, notes, etc.).
- > Destroy any remaining documentation or return it to MBIE at the end of the assessment process.
- > Not use any confidential information for any purpose other than assessment.

Official Information Act 1982

Platform Plans and their assessments are confidential. Note however that we are subject to the Official Information Act 1982 therefore information relating to an assessment may be released if we are requested to do so under the Act.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

MBIE follows a rigorous process to maintain the credibility of investment decisions and to assure Co-Hosts that their Platform Plans are fairly and reasonably appraised. All conflicts of interest must be declared to MBIE.

If you identify a direct conflict with a Co-Host, you must decline the assignment. If you identify an indirect conflict, email us at SSIF.investment@mbie.govt.nz with the details for further discussion before accepting or declining the assignment.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED A CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

Conflicts of interest may occur on two levels: direct and indirect.

- > A direct conflict of interest would be deemed if you are:
 - > directly involved with a Platform Plan (as a participant, manager, mentor, or partner) or you have a close personal relationship with the Co-Host, for example, family members, or
 - > a collaborator or in some other way involved with a Co-Host's Platform Plan.
- > An indirect conflict of interest would be deemed if you:
 - > are employed by an organisation involved in a Platform Plan but you are not part of the Co-Host's Platform Plan
 - > have a personal and/or professional relationship with one of the Co-Hosts, for example, an acquaintance
 - > have or had involvement with a Platform Plan that is in direct competition with a Platform Plan being assessed or where the impacts proposed by a Platform Plan under discussion may compete with your personal business interests.

HANDLING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DURING THE ASSESSMENT PANEL MEETING

If there is a **direct conflict** of interest with a Platform Plan about to be discussed during the Panel meeting, declare the conflict to the Assessment Panel Chair. You will be required to leave the room during the ensuing assessment discussion.

The actions required for a declared **indirect conflict** of interest is the discretion of the Chair; this could be to:

- > leave the room
- > stay but remain silent unless asked to respond to a direct question
- > contribute to the assessment of the Platform Plan.

Should the Chair declare a conflict of interest with a Platform Plan, a Deputy Chair will be appointed for the ensuing assessment discussion.

All conflict-of-interest declarations and resulting assessor actions during the Panel meeting will be recorded.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Below are the key dates and an overview of the assessment process for both the draft Platform Plan and if invited, the final Platform Plan.

KEY DATES

DATES	KEY ACTIVITIES
15 June 2022	Draft Platform Plan submission. Draft Platform Plan sent to Assessment Panel, 1 week before Panel Meeting
By 24 June 2022	Draft Platform Plan assessment by Assessment Panel, and feedback developed.
1 July 2022	Feedback to Draft Platform Plan given to Platform Host. Draft Platform Plan sent to external assessment advisors for comment, as needed. Feedback to be used in final Platform Plan assessment.
15 July 2022	Final Platform Plan submission. Final Platform Plan sent to Assessment Panel, 1 week before Panel Meeting.
By 22 July 2022	Final Platform Plan assessment by Assessment Panel. Funding recommendation made, along with contracting condition recommendations.
29 July 2022	Assessment feedback to Platform Host, including contracting outcome from Deputy Secretary Labour, Science and Enterprise, MBIE.
August 2022	Contract negotiated and signed.
September 2022	Full contract starts.

All dates are NZ Standard Time. All dates are indicative. Any change to key dates will be notified via an e-mail to nominated contacts of the Co-Hosts.

TIME COMMITMENT

We envisage your involvement in the assessment process to be as follows.

UP TO	TO
1 hour	Read through these guidelines and background documents
7 hours per Platform Plan	Read your assigned Platform Plan, assign scores and comments
1 hour per Panel meeting	Attend the Assessment Panel meetings in Wellington, New Zealand or online

HOW AND WHEN PLATFORM PLANS ARE ASSIGNED

From 15 June 2022 we will provide the draft Platform Plan by email.

If the Co-Hosts are invited to submit a final Platform Plan this will be emailed to you from 15 July 2022.

HOW AND WHEN ASSESSMENTS ARE RECORDED

You will record your preliminary assessment using the scoring grid below. This must occur on or before each Panel meeting. Bring your written notes on the assessment of each of the draft and Final Platform Plans to the Panel meetings.

ASSESSMENT PANEL MEETINGS

The Assessment Panel will likely meet twice. The first Panel meeting will be 24 June 2022 to assess the draft Platform Plan. The purpose of these meetings is to:

- > Discuss preliminary assessments and supporting comments.
- > Reach a consensus assessment, agree on feedback, and whether to invite the Co-hosts to submit a final Platform Plan.
- > Record the assessment and feedback.
- > The assessment and feedback are sent to the Co-hosts in a report.

MBIE, with advice from Assessment Panel Members, may seek advice from external technical experts as part of the assessment process if needed. If necessary, this advice could be sought following the draft Platform Plan assessment, and then used in the final Platform Plan assessment.

If the Co-Host is invited to submit a final Platform Plan the Panel will meet by 22 July 2022. Meetings will be held in Wellington or online. The purpose of these meetings is to:

- > Discuss preliminary assessments and supporting comments.
- > Reach a consensus assessment, agree on a recommendation for funding, and any contract conditions.

The Panel's discussions and moderation may take into account any additional information gathered during the assessment process. Further details on this meeting will be sent to you closer to the time.

The Assessment Panel does not have delegated authority to make investment decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUNDING DECISIONS

Informed by the Panel Chair's funding recommendation, MBIE's Deputy Secretary, Labour, Science and Enterprise will make the final investment decisions.

PERFORMING ASSESSMENTS

Use the following procedure to assess the draft and final Platform Plan.

THE ASSESSMENT STEPS

1. **Read and understand the investment objectives, principles, and research themes (outlined below) and the assessment criteria and guide on page 11 of this document.**

2. **Identify potential conflicts of interest.**

If you deem a conflict of interest exists (see page 5 for details) then discuss it with the Chair, who will advise the appropriate action.

3. **Read the Platform Plan and note your assessment and comments in the table on page 11.**

Only assess the information presented in the Platform Plan. The Co-Hosts are obliged to present the relevant information. If a Platform Plan has obvious gaps, reflect this in your assessment and detail the significant issues in your comments.

Independently score the Platform Plan using the assessment criteria (see page 11 for details).

For each criterion, choose an assessment description of either: 'Excellent', 'Good but some gaps', or 'Insufficient' which reflects how well you consider the Platform Plan meets this criterion in the context of this investment opportunity.

Ensure that your comments are accurate, professional, honest, and correlate to the Investment objectives and principles set out in this document. Do not include names and be mindful that if requested to do so, they may be made available under the Official Information Act 1982.

Exercise your knowledge, judgement, and expertise to reach clear and soundly based assessments that are fair, objective, and evidence based.

4. **Participate in any Assessment Panel meetings.**

5. **Securely destroy (or return to us) all Platform Plans and supporting documentation when the assessment process is complete.**

ABOUT THE INFECTIOUS DISEASES RESEARCH PLATFORM

The Infectious Diseases Research Platform aims to:

- > Build and coordinate domestic research capability in infectious diseases.
- > Continue to address COVID-19 and other serious infectious diseases in New Zealand.
- > Improve preparedness for future pandemics.
- > Support New Zealand's Health Research Strategy and infectious disease research priorities of key stakeholders and Māori as Treaty partners.
- > Link with international research.

The Platform will ensure New Zealand has world-class research capability acting together to maintain and build our preparedness for future infectious disease outbreaks.

The Platform will help fulfil the Government's Treaty of Waitangi/Tiriti o Waitangi (Tiriti) obligations, and address health inequities. The research will be interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, collaborative, and world-class.

INVESTMENT OBJECTIVES

This investment should:

- > Deliver an integrated research programme in partnership with researchers, clinicians, Māori, and New Zealand Pacific Peoples.
- > Demonstrate research excellence that builds New Zealand's capability in infectious disease research and research translation.
- > Contribute to international research through collaborations in infectious disease research.
- > Contribute to strengthened collaboration between researchers, clinicians, health agencies, Māori, and New Zealand Pacific Peoples.
- > Contribute to improving health outcomes and increasing equity of health outcomes.
- > Contribute to significantly lifting New Zealand's infectious disease response and management capability.
- > Contribute to addressing key gaps and creating an agile and integrated research and response system.
- > Contribute to increasing New Zealand's preparedness and readiness for infectious disease outbreaks.

PRINCIPLES CUTTING ACROSS ALL AREAS OF THIS PLATFORM

The principles of the platform are to:

- > Foster connection, create inter-disciplinary world-class research and create a pipeline of research capability.
- > Help fulfil the Government's Tiriti obligations.
- > Embrace novel approaches that are in addition to current capability and outputs.
- > Span research horizons: generating new ideas, develop emerging ideas, and leverage proven ideas.
- > Create a pipeline of new ideas and opportunities to inform public health, clinical policy, and practice.
- > Focus on major research questions in priority areas at the frontier of the fight against infectious diseases.
- > Focus on transformative outcomes, which may involve high-risk/high-return research.
- > Contribute to growing an integrated research and response system and not duplicate existing capability.

RESEARCH THEMES

The research has two broad themes, spanning public health, social, and biomedical sciences.

Theme 1

Improved prevention and control of infectious diseases. This would be achieved through research in understanding:

- > Determinants, transmission, and risk factors.
- > Preparedness, public health, and social measures to prevent and control infection.
- > Vaccine research, development, and delivery.

Theme 2

Improved management of and response to infectious diseases. This would be achieved through research:

- > To develop and use a wide range of diagnostics including genomics.
- > In surveillance and outbreak investigation and control.
- > To develop and deliver therapeutics.

MEETING THE NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF MĀORI

The Platform will help fulfil the needs and aspirations of Māori, and the Government's Tiriti obligations, through:

- > The Platform co-creating an integrated research programme in partnership with Māori, including Māori researchers and communities, coordinated by the Platform Host.
- > Research seeking to increase equity of health outcomes, and specifically address infectious diseases that affect Māori communities disproportionately.
- > Research programmes expected to include Māori researchers, as well as provide opportunities to develop a diverse set of early-career researchers.
- > Potential providers required to demonstrate how they propose to incorporate Te Ao Māori in the research, delivery of the proposed outreach, and impact.
- > The Vision Mātauranga policy and objectives being incorporated into the assessment criteria (this guides the incorporation of science and innovation potential of Māori knowledge, resources, and people).

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All sections in the Platform Plan’s template must be adequately addressed.

The assessment panel will assess the Platform Plan (in both draft and final) against these five criteria:

- > The extent to which the Platform Plan meets the investment objectives of the Infectious Diseases Research Platform.
- > The extent to which the Platform Plan meets the principles for the Platform.
- > Whether the proposed priorities in the Platform Plan are within the research themes outlined under Our expectations of the Platform Plan.
- > The robustness of the process to develop those priorities.
- > The extent to which the Platform Plan demonstrates that the Platform will help meet the needs and aspirations of Māori and are aligned with the Vision Mātauranga policy.

Each of the criteria will be scored either:

- > Excellent
- > Good but some gaps
- > Insufficient.

Provide a supporting comment for each score.

When completing your assessments, exercise your knowledge, judgement, and expertise to reach assessments that are sound, fair, objective, and evidence based.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES RESEARCH PLATFORM PLAN SCORING GRID			
Criteria	Excellent	Good but some gaps	Insufficient
The extent to which the Platform Plan meets the investment objectives of the Infectious Diseases Research Platform.	Score: Comment:		
The extent to which the Platform Plan meets the principles for the Platform.	Score: Comment:		
Whether the proposed priorities in the Platform Plan are within the research themes outlined under Our expectations of the Plan.	Score: Comment:		
The robustness of the process to develop those priorities.	Score: Comment:		
The extent to which the Platform Plan demonstrates that the Platform will help meet the needs and aspirations of Māori and are aligned with the Vision Mātauranga policy.	Score: Comment:		



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