Ara Whaihua Call for Proposals and Scoring Guidance 2026

He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund



Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Hīkina 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.

MORE INFORMATION

Information, examples and answers to your questions about the topics covered here can be found on our website: **www.mbie.govt.nz.**

DISCLAIMER

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Ara Whaihua Call for Proposals 2026 investment round -He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund

We are inviting proposals for the He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund Ara Whaihua funding mechanism. Ara Whaihua focusses on scientific research that is ready to be implemented, rather than exploratory.

This Call for Proposals contains the same information published on our webpages. The web pages will always contain the correct and most up to date information. Any changes will get communicated by stakeholder alerts and published on the web pages. No updates will be available in PDF.

About this opportunity

Ara Whaihua invests in work programmes that focus primarily on the pathway to commercialisation and/or economic growth from excellent science. Proposals should be for a science translation activity that forms part of that pathway and will enable a future commercial and/or economic outcome.

This scheme envisages that the primary output is a key part of an impact pathway, examples of which are provided in the He Ara Whakahihiko Investment Plan.

Ara Whaihua proposals should demonstrate:

- How capability and capacity will be increased to deliver long-term impact and outcomes of SI&T relevant research.
- How better connections and networks will be created between Māori and the SI&T system, including the public sector.
- How new or enhanced SI&T translation capability will be developed for the applicant organisation.

This Call for Proposals provides you with information on how to apply to the Fund, how your application will be assessed, what happens if your application is successful, and how to contact us for assistance with the application process.

The funding available

The indicative total funding available for Ara Whaihua is up to \$2.1 million (excluding GST). Each individual contract value is \$100,000 (excluding GST) for a term of 12 months.

Project costs must be solely and directly related to the project work programme. Funding can be used to cover costs towards the work programme development, delivery, and operating costs (including travel). Capital expenditure is not funded. Co-funding is not required for this Fund.

Who can apply

Proposals must meet all eligibility criteria to proceed for further assessment and proposals that do not meet the criteria will be declined.

To be eligible for funding, proposals must:

1. Be made by a New Zealand based single legal entity that is a Māori facing organisation or Māori Research Organisation and has demonstrated expertise in creating impact from science, innovation and technology or is leveraging external science, innovation and technology expertise to produce public good.

A Māori facing organisation is defined as any organisation that has an identified Māori individual or individuals (such as an owner, stakeholder, employee, researcher, or community member) who plays a central role in shaping or delivering the research project.

A Māori Research organisation is defined as an organisation that identifies itself as Māori and has the internal capability* to carry out science, innovation and technology.

- * Internal capability being sought refers to scientific research qualification/s or equivalent demonstrated experience in the science sector.
- 2. Not be made by a Government department (as defined in Schedule 2 of the Public Service Act 2020).
- 3. Be for activities relating to the translation of existing or new science to address a known problem or identify a route to market. Projects must include a science element; projects focused solely on product development are not eligible.
- 4. Be for activities that clearly align with the funding purpose and requirements of the scheme as outlined in the He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund Investment Plan.
- 5. Not be for activities that already receive government funding.
- 6. Not include any full-time tertiary students or school students.
 - Proposals with work programme activities that are eligible for funding from the Ministry of Education, are a poor fit for the He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund.
- 7. Be for science translation activities the majority of which are to be undertaken in New Zealand, unless MBIE considers there are compelling reasons to consider the proposal.
 - If the majority of the work programme will not be carried out in New Zealand, then explain in your proposal the reasons for this and why they are compelling. If a work programme is to have significant linkages with indigenous knowledge practitioners in other countries, demonstrate how this will be of benefit to New Zealand.
- 8. Not benefit a Russian state institution (including but not limited to support for Russian military or security activity) or an organisation outside government that may be perceived as contributing to the war effort.
- 9. Be submitted in Pītau MBIE's Investment Management System and meet any applicable timing, formatting, content, or other administrative requirements.
- 10. Address one or more of the Vision Mātauranga Policy themes: Taiao, Indigenous Innovation and/or Mātauranga.

Note that some mātauranga Māori will not align with the Vision Mātauranga Policy Mātauranga theme for the purposes of this fund**.

- ** The following ANZSRC Field of Research (FoR) codes are not aligned, and are instead expected to be funded through other agencies:
- 4507 Te ahurea, reo me te hītori o te Māori (Māori culture, language and history)
- 4508 Mātauranga Māori (Māori education)
- 4511 Ngā tāngata, te porihanga me ngā hapori o te Māori (Māori peoples, society and community)

The Vision Mātauranga Policy Hauora/Health theme is not supported by this fund as this theme is addressed through funding administered by the Health Research Council. Research proposals can include some hauora/health and remain eligible, as long as the majority*** of the proposal's outcomes address one or more of the three eligible themes.

*** At least 50% of eligible FoR codes must address one or more of the eligible themes.

The application, assessment, and decisionmaking process

These steps outline the process from application to assessment and decision making:

- 1. Applicant submits a proposal.
- 2. MBIE reviews applications to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.
- 3. Up to 10 MBIE officials with subject matter expertise relevant to this investment will complete an internal assessment of each proposal across each of the four assessment criteria detailed in Ara Whaihua Assessment and Scoring Guidance 2026 and the Vision Mātauranga policy. Assessments will be recorded internally.
- 4. Proposals that score a "4" or higher across each of the four assessment criteria (the funding threshold) will proceed to the next stage. Proposals that score a "3" or under will be considered below the threshold for funding and will be recommended as not fundable to the Deputy Secretary, Labour, Science and Enterprise, who is the decision-maker.
- 5. If 21 or fewer proposals meet the threshold, all proposals that scored a "4" or higher across each of the four assessment criteria will be recommended for investment.
- 6. If 22 or more proposals meet the threshold, a ballot system will be used to randomly select 21 proposals to be recommended for investment.
- 7. MBIE's Deputy Secretary, Labour, Science and Enterprise makes the final investment decision based on MBIE's recommendations.
- 8. Ineligible applicants are notified.
- 9. Applicants that scored a "3" or less against the assessment criteria and did not proceed are notified.
- 10. If applicable, applicants that scored a "4" or higher against the assessment criteria but were not selected in the ballot are notified.
- 11. Successful applicants are notified.

Ballot process

Why we are using a selection ballot system

If we receive 22 or more eligible proposals that meet the funding threshold, we will use a ballot system to select proposals for recommendation for funding.

All eligible proposals that meet the funding threshold will go into the ballot. The ballot process helps us manage operational costs and is a transparent selection method which treats all proposals that meet the funding threshold fairly and doesn't discriminate against applicants in any way.

The ballot system is not a new system and is widely used internationally.

How the ballot system works

MBIE will use a <u>Microsoft Excel function</u> to randomly select the 21 eligible proposals to be recommended for investment. MBIE will use an excel spreadsheet that uses a Random Array (RANDARRAY) function. This function assigns a random number between 1 and n (where n is the number of eligible applications) to each application.

The programme will then select the first 21 applications generated by the RANDARRAY function for investment recommendation. The programme will be run on 30 October 2025 by the General Manager Science Investment and Performance.

Key dates

Activity	Date
Information webinar (<u>register here</u>)	25 June 2025
Proposal submission period	20 August 2025 until 12 noon, 8 October 2025
MBIE checks all proposals against the eligibility criteria	Mid-October 2025
MBIE assesses eligible proposals	Late October 2025
If applicable MBIE will use the ballot system if we receive 22 or more eligible proposals meeting the funding threshold	30 October 2025
Ineligible, unsuccessful and successful applicants notified	Early December 2025
Investment funding decisions announced	December 2025
Contracting period	December 2025 - January 2026
Contracts commence	1 February 2026

Dates are subject to change. If they change, we'll let you know by email or by stakeholder alert. You can also subscribe to our <u>Alert e-newsletter</u>.

Information webinar

A webinar and Q&A session will be held for applicants on Wednesday 25 June 2025. We will provide everything you need to know about the 2026 Investment Round for both the Rangapū Rangahau and Ara Whaihua funding mechanisms.

The first hour is a webinar presentation followed by an hour for Q&A.

Register for He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund (HAWCF) information webinar — Zoom

Key documents and content

When developing your application, we encourage you to consult the following key reference documents:

The <u>He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund Investment Plan</u> for the fund investment objectives and outcomes

The He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund web page

The Vision Mātauranga policy

See the Ara Whaihua Call for Proposals web pages for:

- Ara Whaihua Proposal Template 2026: He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund
- Assessment and Scoring Guidance Ara Whaihua 2026: He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund
- Ara Whaihua Combined Progress and Final Reporting Template 2026: He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund
- Ara Whaihua Contract Template 2026: He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund

Application process

Applicants are required to complete their Ara Whaihua proposals in <u>Pītau</u> our Investment Management System a secure online portal. To help you prepare your proposal we've provided a proposal template.

- 1. Proposals are entered and submitted in Pītau. To access Pītau you will first need a RealMe account.
- 2. If you do not have a Pītau login, contact your Research Office to get one, or if you don't have a Research Office you can request access. Before developing your proposal, you are encouraged to consider the eligibility criteria, the assessment criteria, and the terms and conditions relating to this Call for Proposals.
- 3. The proposal template provides guidance on how to prepare your proposal and the information you are required to provide. We recommend you use the proposal template provided to draft the required information in a word processer of your choice and then when ready to submit, copy and paste the necessary segments into the appropriate Pītau fields and upload your supporting documentation where directed.
- 4. MBIE staff will be able to assist you with accessing Pītau and providing guidance about how to go about entering content.
- 5. The information in your proposal is used for assessment and forms the basis of the contract for successful projects.
- 6. Proposals submitted in te reo Māori are welcomed. The assessment of proposals may take place in English. Applicants may choose to provide a translation of their proposal or rely on MBIE to commission a translation without further recourse to the Applicant. The choice of language will not influence assessment outcomes. Translations must be upload into Pītau, and any translations must be consistent with the original te reo Māori version.

Additional support

Moko Kauri Consultants are available to support all applicants throughout the application process. For more information or to get in touch with Moko Kauri Consultants email info@mokokauri.co.nz

The assessment criteria

MBIE officials will assess proposals on each of the criteria (below) and score them from 1 (low quality) to 7 (high quality). See Appendix A on page 12 for the scoring grids.

Excellence

The Fund seeks excellence by developing, retaining, and attracting talented people and organisations through undertaking high quality scientific research, and innovation solutions relevant to science, innovation and technology.

Leveraging Excellent Science (15%)

Key Question: To what extent does the activity build on or leverage excellent science to support commercialisation and/or economic outcomes?

When assessing this question, Assessors will consider:

- Does the activity leverage existing scientific research, capability, networks, and relationships?
- Will the activity go beyond 'business as usual' for the organisations involved, for example by building on excellent science?

Ability to Deliver (35%)

Key Question: What is the likelihood that the outputs of the proposed project will be achieved?

When assessing this question, Assessors will consider:

- Are all involved parties and the work programme appropriately resourced and supported, including management and facilities?
- Will the plan for carrying out the proposed work programme achieve the intended outcomes?
- How does the calibre, experience, and skills of the team relate to the subject area(s) proposed for the work programme?
- Have challenges to delivery been identified and mitigated?
- Does the team have the appropriate mandate to conduct this work?

Impact

The Fund seeks impact through programmes of work that explore the ways in which scientific research and its development and commercial application can benefit whānau, communities, the Māori economy and New Zealand.

Outcomes from Science, Innovation and Technology Translation (25%)

Key Question: What are the impact pathways of the project and expected benefits to the applicant organisation?

When assessing this question, Assessors will consider:

- Does the proposal describe the expected post contract impact pathways of this activity?
- Do the expected benefits align with the aspirations of the applicant organisation?
- Will the project develop new or enhanced science, innovation and technology (SI&T) translation capability in the applicant organisation?

Science, Innovation & Technology Benefits and Vision Mātauranga (25%)

Key Question: How will the increased translation capability and capacity benefit the science, innovation and technology (SI&T) sector, and to what extent does the project support the Vision Mātauranga policy?

When assessing this question, Assessors will consider:

- Will the project increase science translation capability and networks between Māori and the SI&T system to deliver benefit to New Zealand?
- How does the project address the Vision Mātauranga theme(s) selected?

Funding decisions

MBIE's Deputy Secretary, Labour, Science and Enterprise will make the final investment decision based on recommendations from MBIE's report, and may:

- set pre-contractual conditions which must be met before the investment is contracted
- set special conditions in addition to the general terms and conditions set out in the Fund's Funding Contract
- vary the contract title (in consultation with the applicant)
- vary the Public Statement (in consultation with the applicant)
- vary the proposed term of the project
- vary the funding allocated from that proposed
- require the proposed project plan be negotiated to MBIE's satisfaction to reflect the changed funding
- consider prior performance in MBIE funded science contracts. Where an applicant is recommended to
 be funded but has an outstanding reporting requirement, or unmet contractual obligations, at the
 time of contracting, we may withhold the funding contract until such a time as previous contracting
 obligations are fulfilled. Please note that the new contract start date could be delayed where earlier
 contractual obligations are unfulfilled.

We will advise the proposal's Application Administrator of the funding decisions in December 2025. The successful applicants will be published on our He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund webpages and announced via a press release, or announced by the Ministers for Science, Innovation and Technology and Māori Development.

The contracting process

Successful applicants will enter into a Funding Contract with us (subject to any pre-contractual conditions being met).

This agreement must be signed and returned to us within 1 month.

The terms and conditions of the Ara Whaihua Contract Template 2026: He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund will apply to the provision of funding agreed between us and the contracting organisation. By submitting a proposal, you are agreeing to the terms and conditions of the Ara Whaihua Contract Template 2026: He Ara Whakahihiko Capability Fund. This contract template is available on our Ara Whaihua Call for Proposals web page in the Key documents and content section.

Payment

The contract holder must manage the funding to ensure delivery of the contracted work programme and adhere to any reporting requirements. Subject to specific contract conditions, MBIE funding will be provided as follows:

- 50% at the start of the work programme
- 50% at the mid-point (after submission of a progress report to our satisfaction).

Reporting and monitoring

Successful applicants will be required to submit a progress report and a final report in Pītau. These reports will be evaluated by MBIE. See the combined progress and final reporting template in the key documents section.

Progress report

The progress report should include information on the status and progress towards delivering on the work programme as contracted. This is due one month after the mid-point of the work programme (31 August 2026) and covers the period 1 February 2026 to 31 July 2026.

Final report

The final report should also include information on:

- the status and progress towards delivering on the Deliverables and Tasks as contracted
- key achievements
- emerging risks and what is being done to address them
- public statement
- an assessment of whether the work programme has or will lead to further science, innovation and technology opportunities, the project's success in building science translation capability, and the effectiveness of the overall work programme.

Final reports are due one month after the end date of the work programme (28 February 2027) and covers the period 1 February 2026 – 31 January 2027.

Contact us

Application queries: HAWCF@mbie.govt.nz

Pītau queries: imssupport@mbie.govt.nz

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

You can also subscribe to our Alert e-newsletter.

Appendix A: Scoring grids

Excellence scoring grid

	SCORE & KEYWORDS						
Leveraging Excellent Science (15%)	(Low quality)	2	6	4	6	6	7 (High quality)
Key Question : To what extent does the activity build on or leverage excellent science to support commercialisation and/or economic outcomes?	None	Vague Unclear Unlikely Dubious Little relevance	Limited Minimum -acceptable level Uncertainty Lacks detail	Acceptable Sufficient Adequate Suitable	Significant Clear Multiple High level Robust	Certain Enduring Effective Comprehensive Strong Experience	Excellent Exemplary Detailed Impressive
 When assessing this question, Assessors will consider: Does the activity leverage existing scientific research, capability, networks, and relationships? Will the activity go beyond 'business as usual' for the organisations involved, for example by building on excellent science? 	No relevant information has been provided in the proposal. For example, the proposal does not leverage or build on science.	The information provided in the proposal is unclear or not supported. For example, plans to leverage science are vague or unlikely, and the science described is of substandard quality	Some useful information is provided, however significant gaps and lack of detail remain. For example, plans to leverage science have been outlined but there is some uncertainty about their feasibility, and the science described is of minimum quality.	Solid information is provided, however there is room for further information and evidence to improve the proposal. For example, plans to leverage science are adequate and the science described is of acceptable quality.	Clear, succinct information is provided, delivering a solid proposal with relevant evidence. For example, plans to leverage science are well outlined and robust, and the science described is of good quality.	Significant information is provided and is backed up by relevant and effective evidence. For example, it is certain that science will be leveraged and the plans are comprehensive, and the science described is of very good quality.	The proposal is exemplary, excellent, comprehensive, and well explained and detailed in all respects. For example, science will be leveraged and built on, and the outcome will provide a stepchange. The science described is of excellent quality.
Ability to Deliver (35%)	A	2	8	SCORE & KEYWORDS	6	6	A
Key Question: What is the likelihood that the outputs of the proposed project will be achieved?	(Low quality) None Insufficient Not relevant No information Missing	Vague Unclear Unlikely Dubious Little relevance	Limited Minimum -acceptable level Uncertainty Lacks detail	Acceptable Sufficient Adequate Suitable	Significant Clear Multiple High level Robust	Certain Enduring Effective Comprehensive Strong Experience	(High quality) Excellent Exemplary Detailed Impressive
 When assessing this question, Assessors will consider: Are all involved parties and the work programme appropriately resourced and supported, including management and facilities? Will the plan for carrying out the proposed work programme achieve the intended outcomes? How does the calibre, experience, and skills of the team relate to the subject area(s) proposed for the work programme? Have challenges to delivery been identified and mitigated? Does the team have the appropriate mandate to conduct this work? 	No relevant information has been provided. For example, there is no information about the work programme. Significant challenges in the project have not been identified or addressed. Team information is absent, and/or team science translation capability is missing.	The information provided is unclear or not supported. For example, work programme details are missing or unclear. There are challenges in the project that have not been identified or addressed. Team information is vague, and/or team science translation capability is substandard.	Some useful information is provided, however significant gaps and lack of detail remain. For example, minimum work programme details are provided. There is some uncertainty around challenges and mitigations. Team information is minimal, and/or team science translation capability is limited.	Solid information is provided, however there's room for further information and evidence. For example, work programme details are sufficient but further explanation could be provided. Identification of challenges and mitigations are adequate. Team information is sufficient, and/or team science translation capability is acceptable.	Clear, succinct information is provided, with relevant evidence. For example, the work programme is well developed. Key challenges and mitigations are clearly identified. Team information is good, and/or team science translation capability is evident.	Significant information is provided and backed up by relevant and effective evidence. For example, the project plan is comprehensive and addresses challenges well. Team information is very good, and/or team science translation capability is strong.	The proposal is exemplary and detailed in all respects. For example, the work programme is impressive and will clearly achieve its intended outcomes. Identification of challenges and mitigation is excellent. Team information is excellent, and/or team science translation capability is exemplary.

Impact scoring grid

Outcomes from Science, Innovation	SCORE & KEYWORDS								
and Technology Translation (25%) Key Question: What are the impact pathways of the project and expected benefits to the	(Low quality) None Insufficient Not relevant No information	Vague Unclear Unlikely Dubious	Limited Minimum - acceptable level	Acceptable Sufficient Adequate Suitable	Significant Clear Multiple High level	Certain Enduring Effective Comprehensive	(High quality) Excellent Exemplary Detailed Impressive		
 applicant organisation? When assessing this question, Assessors will consider: Does the proposal describe the expected post contract impact pathways of this activity? Do the expected benefits align with the aspirations of the applicant organisation? Will the project develop new or enhanced science, innovation and technology (SI&T) translation capability in the applicant organisation? 	No relevant information has been provided. For example, insufficient information is provided, or no benefits to the applicant organisation and future impact pathways will be achieved.	The information provided is unclear or not supported. For example, benefits to the applicant organisation and future impact pathways are unclear or unlikely.	Some useful information is provided, however significant gaps and lack of detail remain. For example, benefits to the applicant organisation and future impact pathways are uncertain or limited.	Solid information is provided, however there is room for further information and evidence to improve the proposal. For example, benefits to the applicant organisation and future impact pathways are adequate.	Clear, succinct information is provided, delivering a solid proposal with relevant evidence. For example, the work programme will deliver clear benefits to the applicant organisation and future impact pathways.	Comprehensive information is provided. The proposal may deliver enduring impacts and is backed up by relevant and effective evidence. For example, benefits to the applicant organisation and future impact pathways are certain	Excellent information in provided, delivering an exemplary proposal. A high level of confidence/ certainty exists that this propose will successfully delive on its outcomes. For example, benefits the applicant organisation and futur impact pathways are substantial and will result in a step-change		
Science, Innovation & Technology Benefits and Vision Mātauranga (25%)	(Low quality)	2 Vague	DRDS Significant	and will be enduring. 6 Certain	(High quality)				
Key Question: How will the increased translation capability and capacity benefit the science, innovation and technology (SI&T) sector, and to what extent does the project support the Vision Mātauranga policy?	Insufficient Not relevant No information Missing	Unclear Unlikely Dubious Little relevance	Limited Minimum - acceptable level Uncertainty Lacks detail	Acceptable Sufficient Adequate Suitable	Significant Clear Multiple High level Robust	Enduring Effective Comprehensive Strong Experience	Exemplary Detailed Impressive		
 When assessing this question, Assessors will consider: Will the project increase science translation capability and networks between Māori and the SI&T system to deliver benefit to New Zealand? How does the project address the Vision Mātauranga theme(s) selected? 	No relevant information has been provided in the proposal. For example, there is insufficient information to assess the feasibility, or the project does not deliver increased translation capability/capacity beyond the applicant and Vision Mātauranga outcomes.	The information provided in the proposal is unclear or not supported. For example, the work programme is unlikely to deliver increased translation capability/capacit y beyond the applicant and Vision Mātauranga outcomes.	Some useful information is provided, however significant gaps and lack of detail remain. For example, the work programme will deliver limited increased translation capability/capacity beyond the applicant and Vision Mātauranga outcomes.	Solid information is provided, however there is room for further information and evidence to improve the proposal. For example, the work programme will deliver adequate increased translation capability/capacity beyond the applicant and Vision Mātauranga outcomes.	Clear, succinct information is provided, delivering a solid proposal with relevant evidence. For example, the work programme will deliver clear increased translation capability/capacity beyond the applicant and Vision Matauranga outcomes.	Comprehensive information is provided. The proposal may deliver enduring impacts and is backed up by relevant and effective evidence. For example, the work programme is certain to deliver increased translation capability/capacity beyond the applicant and Vision Mātauranga outcomes.	Excellent information provided, delivering at exemplary proposal. A high level of confidence/ certainty exists that this propos will successfully delive on its outcomes. For example, the work programme will delive significant increased translation capability/capacity beyond the applicant and excellent Vision Mātauranga outcomes that are substantial ar represent a stepchange.		