

Kiwi Space Activator - Key Information to Know

Objectives & design criteria

Over-arching policy objectives	Pilot scheme design criteria	Key design choices for the pilot
<p>1) accelerating the demonstration of space technologies</p> <p>2) unlocking trade and export growth opportunities for New Zealand space tech</p> <p>3) maturing national capabilities in readiness for a national space mission.</p>	<p>Strategic alignment: the programme should develop technology capabilities of interest to the New Zealand government, including supporting domestic development of a national space mission.</p> <p>Efficient: the programme should limit transaction costs for participants and the administrator.</p> <p>Time to implement: the projects should be able to be implemented quickly.</p> <p>Commercially driven: the programme should support projects with the greatest potential for commercial impact, including export and investment impact.</p> <p>Programmatic learning: the pilot scheme should provide information to support development of a larger-scale initiative.</p> <p>Additionality: the pilot scheme should address opportunities not otherwise eligible or suited to existing funding mechanisms and should not crowd out private funding.</p>	<p>Two funding rounds Two rounds maximise learning opportunities for the pilot and provides time for applications not yet ready for Round One to be refined. Enables evaluation of alternative application processes.</p> <p>Single step RfP Provides for funding targeted at immediate opportunities and limits administrative overhead for applicants</p> <p>Scope of funded activities: Flights only (round one) Expand to payload development in round two) Funding flights only places the greatest focus on near-to-market products. In some cases, the cost of a bus and not the flight will be the largest expense. Opportunity to examine effect of funding eligibility on demand between rounds.</p> <p>Co-investment requirements: 30% co-investment; cash only in round one; in-kind considered (but cash still favoured) in round two Co-investment requirements maximise commercial discipline from funded projects.</p>

		Above the minimum contribution, higher contributions will receive a more favourable rating. We will adopt a flexible approach to support a wider range of potential projects in round two.
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Key information to know

Funding availability

- There is \$1.8M available across the two rounds.
- A project can apply for a maximum of \$600K
- A minimum of \$600K will be available in each round of the Kiwi Space Activator.
- Funding is exclusive of GST.

Eligibility & participation

- Proposals must be led by New Zealand-registered entities.
- There is no limit to the number of project proposals an organisation can take part in, as long as each proposal relates to a distinct project.
- Government agencies, including those posing challenges, cannot receive funding and are not project partners.
- International partners may be involved but:
 - They cannot receive funding.
 - Their contributions may count as in-kind (Round Two) or cash co-funding (Rounds One & Two) if they are investors.
- Commercialisation outcomes must ultimately benefit a New Zealand organisation.

Scope & types of projects eligible

- The programme is designed to overcome launch-related barriers to commercialisation.
- Projects must involve launch or flight testing to qualify for funding in either round.

- Demonstrations may be on:
 - Space-based platforms, or
 - High-altitude platforms (e.g., stratospheric aircraft).
- Ground-based device development is not eligible unless it leads directly to a flight demonstration in the same project.
- Pure software products using assets already in orbit are not eligible, as the fund specifically targets the cost barrier to launch.
- Projects involving payload delivery systems or space transportation technologies are out of scope.

Funding requirements & co-funding

- Co-funding is calculated as 30% of the funding awarded.
For example: If you apply for \$600,000, you should supply at least \$180,000 in co-funding.
- In Round Two:
 - Salary costs may be accepted as in-kind contributions.
 - Activities supported are broader than in Round One.

Launch Expectations

- A project must be launch-ready and have a planned flight in the near term.
- Launch or flight must occur within 24 months of the date of the award.
- Only launch-related costs are eligible in Round One.
- Failure to complete a flight within 24 months may result in partial or full refund of funds.

Commercialisation pathway

- This is a light-touch process, appropriate to the scale of funding.
- Applications should include up to 800 words explaining how the project will lead to commercial products or sales.
- The level of private investment indicated is being used as a signal of commercial potential. You may include other information, for example relating to potential market size and share, and customer interest.
- International demand remains relevant to commercialisation potential - while the supply is coming from New Zealand, demand could be from anywhere.

Platforms and launch providers

- Applicants may choose any appropriate launch or flight provider.
- Working with in-orbit demonstration companies (e.g., NanoAvionics) is acceptable as long as the component launches within 24 months.
- Rocket Lab flights from New Zealand count as domestic; Rocket Lab launches outside New Zealand do not.
- NZSA has engaged with launch platform providers for awareness, but agreements are between applicants and providers.
- There are no specifics around the payload mass or volume, as long as it fits within the funding envelope/your organisations co-funding capacity.

Assessment factors

- All challenges are assessed equally; none are prioritised.
- The absolute funding amount requested is not part of assessment.
- Strength of co-funding is an assessment criterion.
- Projects will not be evaluated based on alignment with an unspecified future “national mission.”

Clarification on specific challenges

- For Maritime Intelligence, innovation needs may include:
 - Reduced surveillance false alarm rate
 - Increase data download rates
 - Reduce data latency
- Proposals need only address the criteria provided—there’s no requirement to map to a broader national mission.

Satellite size and mission design

- Applicants choose the size, mass, and launch provider.
- NZSA has no specific requirements for satellite size.
- No decisions have been made regarding a future national mission; the programme is intended to help build domestic capability that might inform future thinking.

Applications & future rounds

- Unsuccessful Round One applicants may apply again in Round Two.
- The Round Two application materials and any additional details will be available on MBIE's Kiwi Space Activator webpage when the call opens on 1 April 2026.
- Round Two criteria will be similar to Round One, with expanded eligible activities and acceptance of in-kind contributions.

Additional practical information

- The webinar presentation will be published on the NZ Space Agency website for public access.