MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT
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June 2026 Science, Innovation & Technology Reforms webinar frequently asked questions

We received a large number of questions during the 25 June 2026 webinar. This document provides responses to the key themes raised by participants, including questions that could not be addressed during the live session.

Transition Research Fund 2027

Assessments

How will assessors be selected and appointed, and how will final funding decisions be made?

As set out in the 23 June 2026 Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice, funding decisions will be made by Research Funding New Zealand (RFNZ) within the funding settings established by the Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology. RFNZ is currently confirming the assessment process for the Transition Research Fund, including how assessors will be selected and appointed and the role of expert assessment. Further information on decision-making processes will be provided in the Call for Proposals, expected in late August 2026.

How will proposals be assessed, including how assessors will evaluate excellence, impact, and alignment with the fund's priorities?

The assessment criteria for each Transition Research Fund mechanism are set out in the Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice (23 June 2026). RFNZ is currently confirming the process for assessment. Instructions for assessors will be available alongside the Call for Proposals expected in late August.

How will Talent Development be assessed?

Proposals are assessed on their 'Impact', 'Science Excellence' and 'Talent Potential', including the applicant's research capability, future potential, and the likelihood of successfully delivering the proposed research according to the Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice, (23 June 2026). Early-career researchers may also apply through the Projects mechanism, which is available across all four pillars.

Impact and Monitoring

How are impact and high-risk, high-reward research assessed?

Impact is a core assessment criterion across all three Transition Research Fund mechanisms and is assessed alongside research excellence. As outlined in the Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice (23 June 2026), Transition Research Fund Investment Plan and Science Investment Plan, all proposals will be required to present a clear, credible, and assessable pathway to impact. This requirement applies across the full spectrum of research, including fundamental research and early-stage work, where future impacts are inherently uncertain. In such cases, applicants must articulate plausible routes through which impact could emerge over time. While impact pathways will vary in detail and specificity, proposals will only proceed if they provide a well-reasoned account of how the research could contribute to meaningful outcomes for New Zealand.

How will the outcomes and impacts of the Transition Research Fund be monitored and evaluated?

Funded projects and programmes will be subject to contractual monitoring and reporting requirements. Further guidance on reporting and monitoring will be released alongside the Call for Proposals in late August.

Caps

Will organisational caps be used in future funding opportunities?

The organisational caps published for the 2027 Transition Research Fund apply to this funding round only. No decisions have been made regarding whether organisational caps, or any other application volume control mechanisms, will be used in future funding opportunities. Future funding settings will be considered as part of the future fund design work currently being progressed by RFNZ.

How do organisational caps apply to collaborative and multi-institutional proposals?

The organisational cap applies to the research organisation submitting the proposal only (the 'lead organisation'). Each research organisation is entitled to submit proposals up to their defined organisational cap. Collaborators from other organisations can be named in the proposal but will not affect the cap of their own organisation. Applicants should refer to the Call for Proposals in August for further information on proposal requirements and eligibility. Research organisations are responsible for managing proposal submissions within their allocated cap and are expected to manage their internal selection processes in accordance with their own policies, procedures, and governance arrangements.

Why has the Transition Research Fund introduced organisational caps, and how were they determined?

Organisational caps were introduced as a demand-management mechanism for this funding round. The organisational cap is based on a formula using a rolling average of contracts based

on the last three completed funding rounds for the Marsden and Endeavour funds (excluding Endeavour 2026 Contract Extension round).

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply for the Transition Research Fund, and what participation rules apply to researchers and organisations?

The Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice (23 June 2026) sets out the full eligibility requirements, including organisational eligibility, proposal requirements, and participation rules. Applicants should refer to the Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice (23 June 2026) for complete eligibility information. RFNZ is responsible for making eligibility decisions.

Who is eligible for the Talent Development mechanism?

Eligibility, funding settings, and assessment criteria are established in the 2027 Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice, (23 June 2026) and applicants should refer to that document for the full requirements. The Talent Development mechanism is intended to develop future research leaders and specialist capability through excellent research aligned with pillar priorities. It is not limited to early-career researchers and is intended to support capability development in the Technology for Prosperity pillar, including researchers seeking to build or redirect expertise into advanced technology fields.

Can businesses, start-ups, and industry partners apply for or participate in Transition Research Fund proposals?

All organisations that meet the criteria set out in the Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice (23 June 2026) are eligible to apply. Any eligible organisation can be a subcontractor to the proposal and there is no restriction on unpaid stakeholder participation.

What types of research are eligible for the Transition Research Fund, and how should proposals align with the funding mechanisms and pillar priorities?

The Transition Research Fund supports foundational through to applied research across all disciplines, provided proposals align with one of the four pillars and one of the associated pillar priorities ('opportunities') identified in the Science Investment Plan. Proposals must be submitted under one of the three funding mechanisms: Talent Development, Projects, or Programmes. Proposals should be aligned to the mechanism that best reflects the scale and objectives of the proposed research. Applicants should refer to the Science Investment Plan, Transition Research Fund Investment Plan and Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice (23 June 2026) when determining the most appropriate pillar and funding mechanism.

How does the Transition Research Fund support foundational and investigator-led research?

Proposals may range from foundational to applied research and will be assessed relative to the nature, maturity, and timeframe of the work. For foundational research, this includes consideration of longer-term or foundational impact.

Can a proposal align to more than one pillar?

Proposals must identify a primary pillar and align with at least one opportunity within that pillar. Applicants may also describe how their research contributes to opportunities in other pillars where relevant. Cross-disciplinary and cross-pillar research is encouraged, but one primary pillar must be selected for assessment purposes. The pillar opportunities relate to outcomes that in no way restrict the scope of science discipline or stage of research maturity that may be applied to address the opportunity.

Funding and operations

How much funding is available and how long do investments run?

Funding amounts and durations are set out in the 2027 Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice (23 June 2026).

- Talent Development awards are two years in duration with a total contract value of $0.5 million (excluding GST).
- Projects are three years in duration with a total contract value of $1.5 million (excluding GST).
- Programmes are five years in duration with a minimum contract value of $1 million per annum (excluding GST).

The Transition Research Fund will invest up to $84.8 million per year across the three mechanisms.

When will the Fund open and what are the key dates?

Indicative key dates for each Transition Research Fund mechanism are available on the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment website - Transition Research Fund 2027 and remain subject to change. The Call for Proposals is expected to be released in late August 2026, with funding decisions to be made in 2027. Applicants should refer to the Transition Research Fund webpage for the latest timing information.

When will application guidance and templates be available?

Detailed application guidance, proposal templates, and supporting documentation are expected to be released with the Calls for Proposals in late August 2026.

How are funding decisions made for the Transition Research Fund?

As set out in the 23 June 2026 Gazette Notice for the Transition Research Fund 2027, RFNZ will make funding decisions in accordance with the Fund's eligibility and assessment criteria. RFNZ will apply a structured portfolio approach to ensure that investment decisions across

the 2027 Transition Research Fund are robust, balanced, and aligned with strategic priorities described in the Science Investment Plan and the Transition Research Fund Investment Plan.

Pillar Investment Plans/Pillar Advisory Groups

How were the Pillar Advisory Groups established, and how do they determine priorities within each Pillar?

The Research Funding New Zealand Ministerial Advisory Group established four Pillar Advisory Groups. They were established to support it in developing advice to the Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology on Pillar Investment Plans for each of the four pillars in the Science Investment Plan.

The Pillar Advisory Groups will assist RFNZ to develop these Plans, providing input from industry and other research users, as well as specific scientific and technical expertise relevant to each pillar.

RFNZ expects the current Pillar Advisory Groups will be in operation until the Pillar Investment Plans are published, scheduled for September 2026.

The Pillar Advisory Group members can be found here: https://www.mbie.govt.nz/science-and-technology/science-and-innovation/refocusing-the-science-innovation-and-technology-system/research-funding-new-zealand

How can researchers and stakeholders engage with the development of Pillar Investment Plans, given concerns about limited consultation?

RFNZ is not undertaking broad public consultation. Instead, it will engage through the Pillar Advisory Groups comprising scientific, industry and end-user experts, who will help sense-check and socialise draft plans through targeted engagements.

Future state/policy

What is the role of mātauranga Māori and Māori research within the pillar framework, including how investment priorities will be set and how Māori participation and decision-making will be supported?

Mātauranga Māori adds distinctive value to New Zealand's science, innovation and technology system, and ongoing design work will clarify how it is applied, protected, and invested in - guided by Vision Mātauranga, to strengthen innovation, stewardship, and long-term wellbeing outcomes.

The Transition Research Fund will have regard to Vision Mātauranga across all mechanisms, where applicable. This includes recognising and supporting:

- Māori knowledge, people, and resources
- Māori led and Māori benefitting research

- partnerships that strengthen Māori research capability and outcomes.

How will the future system support and retain research talent, including early- and mid-career researchers?

RFNZ is currently considering future fund design as part of their work programme, including support for researchers at different stages of their career.

What is the role of the New Zealand Institute for Advanced Technology (NZIAT) within the system, and how will it relate to RFNZ funding and investment processes?

The NZIAT board will administer strategic investments and funding processes and platforms in advanced technologies in line with the directions in the Science Investment Plan and the associated Technology for Prosperity Pillar Investment Plan currently under development. RFNZ will also invest in advanced technologies in line with the opportunities identified in the Science Investment Plan and Technology for Prosperity Pillar Investment Plan. NZIAT and RFNZ have independent but complementary roles to ensure investments are coordinated to meet the goals of the Technology for Prosperity Pillar.

What is happening with the Health Research Council?

The Health Research Council (HRC) will be disestablished, and its functions will be transferred to either RFNZ, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, or the Ministry of Health.

The HRC operates under the Health Research Council Act 1990, and disestablishment requires legislative change. The HRC will continue to run funding rounds until disestablished. Detailed planning is underway to ensure contracts, ethics processes, and advisory functions continue uninterrupted through the transition.