

Project Brief

Project No.	Project Name	Business Group	Sponsor	Business Owner	Project Manager	Date
4820	NZRI – Software as a Service	LSE	Danette Olsen	Privacy of natural persons		15/9/2025

Project Brief Purpose	This project brief seeks to continue work to deliver a New Zealand Research Information System (NZRI) that will be used to support evidence-informed policy and investments in New Zealand’s science, innovation and technology (SI&T) system. The project follows on from a previous project which attempted to build custom software to fulfil the business needs, however when completed this was found to not be fit for purpose as it was too complicated and fragile. The new approach is to use a commercial product to deliver a large amount of the data processing functionality and connect this to the website that was previously developed.				
Problem and Opportunity	The Government invests around \$1.4 billion in New Zealand’s SI&T system. This system includes a wide range of funders, research performing entities, researchers, and end users of research. Information on funding, projects, resources, and outputs within this system is captured in diverse data sets maintained by its participants and is not available from a single source. Delivering NZRI will ensure data is available in a single location, using a common data standard and in line with Government data priorities. The system will also provide transparency around how Government funds are used to support research, and how that research contributes to economic growth.				
Complexity	Med	Treasury RPA	Med	Business Impact	Med
Project Start Date	17/02/2025	Indicative Closure Date	16/11/2026	Privacy Threshold Assessment	Med

Recommendation	Decision
1. Approve The Project Brief funding of Opex \$140,915 (FY 25/26) to fund the Business Case and recover the cost of creating this Project Brief from cost centre 1318 – National Research Information System.	Approved / Not Approved
a) Note: The work to configure the commercial product that has been selected to fulfil the data processing requirements was initiated by the previous project and is in progress with vendor Digital Science using funds allocated from the \$10.1M Budget 2018 appropriation for the establishment of the New Zealand Research Information System (NZRI).	Noted / Not Noted
b) Note: That the next governance document submitted to this forum will be a Business Case to be presented on 17/11/2025.	Noted / Not Noted
c) Note: That the Opex requirements have been reviewed and funding availability confirmed by Finance	Noted / Not Noted

Project Overview (Short)
The 2016 Research, Science, and Innovation Domain Plan identified that a lack of information was available to policy makers, funders, researchers, businesses and the general public about New Zealand’s research activity. Two key actions were recommended: 1: ‘Led by MBIE, funding agencies and the research community establish a system-wide data information system for research in New Zealand, i.e. a New Zealand Research Information System with the ability to link data on researchers, their projects, outputs, funding sources and end-user collaboration.’ 2: ‘Led by MBIE, funding agencies and the research community develop a dataset of research performed in New Zealand and the results of the research – making as much of the dataset available through a public portal as possible, subject to commercial sensitivities and national security considerations.’ This project will deliver a cloud-based IT solution to support LSE in addressing these recommendations.

Strategic Alignment
NZRI contributes to the All of Government Data Investment Plan by supporting the creation of infrastructure which will enable effective data management and reuse. Internally, NZRI links to Te Ara Amiorangi outcome five, supporting a Dynamic Business Environment Fostering Innovation and International Connections. It also addresses MBIE’s Data Strategy strategic improvement area three (unified data processes and tools) by allowing standardised practice and facilitating timely and appropriate data access. NZRI is expected to deliver the following benefits across the sector: • More efficient allocation of resources – Identifying gaps or overlaps in how SI&T is resourced will enable government to direct funding to meet New Zealand’s needs while reducing fragmentation, wastage, and duplication of effort across the system. • Greater impact from our investments – Better data will show which parts of our system are functioning well, and which are not. This will allow policy to be better targeted, for example to increase investment in new technology, which will realise increased economic and commercialisation benefits for New Zealand. • Increased accessibility and transparency – NZRI will consolidate data in a single repository allowing a view of what research is being undertaken across New Zealand’s SI&T system. This will make public research more discoverable by innovative businesses, providing more opportunities for that research to be commercialised. • Effective long-term planning – Research capability and infrastructure takes years to develop. A clear picture of our current capability will strengthen system alignment and reduce fragmentation by supporting government and organisations to effectively plan to fill gaps, leverage strengths, and grow opportunities without duplicating effort.
Impact if it does not go ahead
Lack of data to inform science reforms, which are a critical component of the Going for Growth Strategy; continued inability to gain cross-sector views of how public funding is used to support science; inability to realise efficiencies and remove duplication.

Project Objectives		
Item #	Title	Description
1	Develop a new database and reporting solution for LSE’s science investment insights, research and data operation	Engage a specialised vendor to configure an off the shelf product, and integrate into an end-to-end solution by following MBIE’s Systems Development Lifecycle
2	As-built solution conforms to agreed business and architecture acceptance criteria	The system fulfils the business objectives with infrastructure and security that is scalable and durable
3	Solution maintains historical data	To integrate historical data provided by the largest research funders
4	Solution is handed over to BAU for ongoing support and maintenance	Deliver the support model around the technical solution

Funding Information		FY 24/25	FY 25/26	FY 26/27	FY 27/28	FY 28/29	Total	
A	Approved Investment Planning Bid	Capex						
		Opex	301,868	1,456,948	1,482,699*		3,241,515	
B	Indicative Funding requested in this Submission	Capex						
		Opex		140,915			140,915	
C	Indicative Ongoing Operating Costs					700,000	700,000	
D	Depreciation							
E	Capital Charge							
F	Estimated Whole of Life Cost (A + C)		301,868	1,456,948	1,482,699	0	700,000	3,941,515

* Notes from Finance Business Partner:
1.) FY 26/27 - 10% contingency has been added in FY 26/27 - \$295k
2.) FY 26/27 - including agreed payments for Elements subscription & Ingestion and support services for Year 3, which covers between June 2027 and May 2028 but to be fully paid in June 2027 (i.e. end of FY 26/27).

Funding Source: Capex	Funding Source: Opex	Associated Memo Account	FIC Approval Needed?
N/A	Source: Science System Investment and Performance Cost centre: 1318	N/A	No

Key Risks			
Theme	Description	Treatment & Controls	Rating
Data	External data providers are not ready or non-compliant	To keep engaged with the funders and develop a support model for organisations to support them in providing the data. Data training sessions are underway, and regular sessions are being scheduled to allow for information sharing and support.	M
Data	Data quality issues limit functionality and reduce benefits	MOU with data providers. System controls. Independent data validation tool	M
Solution	Solution does not satisfy wider strategic goals	Re-align project to enterprise or domain roadmap	M
Operations	Solution relies on a small number of key skilled resources to operate effectively	Avoid reliance on single person to operate. Ensure sufficient documentation and training.	M

Constraints		
Description	Treatment	Impact
Limitations of out of the box functionality	Customisation where configuration is not possible	Enhanced support required Need to keep in sync with standard software solution releases
Budget limited by appropriation in a given financial year	Determine MVP. Avoid gold-plating. Spend reported to PSG at least monthly.	Need to maintain a prioritised backlog based on business value
Final SOW milestone is a Pilot launch with a sub-set of data providers	Determine if this meets goals of the project and confirm plan for onboarding remaining data providers will rest outside of the project	Benefits from improved data accessibility and reporting not fully realised if there is a limited data set

Delivery Approach and Methodology	
This initiative forms part of the NZRIS business programme, and is included in the Corporate and Policy portfolio. It will follow MBIE’s project delivery framework, procurement, Systems Development Life Cycle and Operational Readiness processes. A project manager will be appointed and a project steering group will be created with members from LSE and CDSS. Vendors will be engaged where capability gaps exist, and internal resources will be sought for domain expertise, in particular architecture, data, website and testing. The delivery will leverage the feasibility study and proof of concept completed as part of project 3325 NZRIS (Bespoke solution).	
Resource Requirements (To develop Business Case)	
Required resourcing for the business case is for approximately three months and will utilise: • 75% FTE Project Manager [CDSS] for project start up, initiation, planning, tracking and reporting • 75% FTE Business Analyst [CDSS] for requirements gap analysis and solution design support • 50% FTE Solution Architect [CDSS] for high level solution design and design governance • 20% FTE Procurement and Commercial support, Stack Manager, Project Co-Ordinator [CDSS] • 20% FTE Team Leader, Insights, Research and Data [LSE] • 10% FTE Senior Insights Specialist [LSE] • 10% FTE Associated Senior Insights Specialist [LSE]	
High-level Procurement Approach	
For the Custodian Application the project has a procurement exemption under Rule 14.9.c.i. Only one supplier was selected (Digital Science) due to their global expertise in the research field and wide user base in NZ. For the public facing components, Deviate will continue to be engaged to make the necessary modifications to the website built during project 3325. The website will continue to be hosted on Silverstripe Cloud under the existing marketplace agreement.	
Business Change Summary (Impact on culture, systems, policy, processes and people) within LSE	
• Change in MBIE internal processes to support NZRIS (including maintenance and change management processes) • Changes to form and contracts for reporting requirements • Additional business processes for funders to provide information • Business process to push and pull data • Will impact how funding gets tracked across the sector	

High-level Project Scope (Target Outcomes)	
In Scope	Out of Scope
A unified, cloud-based research information system that enables evidence-informed policy and investment decisions across New Zealand’s Science, Innovation & Technology (SI&T) system	Data integration with other MBIE systems (eg Pitau, FMIS)
Centralised data from multiple funders, research entities, and projects into a single repository using a common data standard	Data warehousing
Improved transparency of how government funding is used and how it contributes to economic growth	Data provider upload portal
Enhanced accessibility of publicly funded research to businesses and the public via a public-facing portal	Inter-agency data integration
Supports government strategic planning by providing a consolidated view of research capability and infrastructure, enabling better alignment and reduced duplication	

High-level Project Deliverables		Date
1	NZRIS Custodian Database (based on Symplectics Elements)	30/5/2026
2	Data ingestion and validation engine	30/5/2026
3	Public-facing portal/website providing reports and analysis on science funding.	31/8/2026

Milestones (To approval of the Business Case only)		Date
1	Procurement plan exemption approved by business owner and procurements practice manager [Completed]	4/04/2025
2	SOW approved by CE [Completed]	26/05/2025
3	Project brief approved by DGB	15/09/2025
4	Business case submission ready for stakeholder endorsements (Deadline)	24/10/2025
5	Endorsed business case submitted to PMO (Deadline)	2/10/2025
6	Business case approved at DGB	17/11/2025

Template V4.4 June 2025

Dependencies		
Description	Impact	Date Needed
Business requirements specification signed off	An approved requirements specification for the end-to-end solution is required to complete the solution design	30/09/2025
Elements and front-end vendor documentation	A full set of product documentation is required from vendors for the solution design	30/09/2025
Elements technical environments stood up (SOW M1)	Required for solution design	30/9/2025

Benefits (Between 1 – 3 Maximum)				
#	Type	Benefit Name	Description	Target Measure & Date
1	Non-Monetary Efficiency	Information held publicly online	Enhance the impact of research by making information held on government funded research publicly available online	Estimated amount of public funding data covered 60% 15/12/2027
2	Non-Monetary Efficiency	Consolidated view of research information	Improved understanding of New Zealand’s research and science system by creating a consolidated view of research information for government funded research	Number of NZRIS download, grants reported, website hits, number of data providers 15/12/2027

Reference Documentation (M=Mandatory)	Mako Link
Governance Group ToR (M)	178013820
Finance Project Workbook (M)	174730775
Treasury Risk Profile Assessment (M)	178208939
Project Initiation Document (optional in Start-up Stage)	153641930
Benefits Map (M)	178481123
Business Change Impact Assessment (M)	178340267
Privacy Threshold Assessment (M)	178352156
Stakeholder Analysis and Register (M)	178339169
Resource Management Plan (M)	174730775
Other (e.g. Architecture Forum Approval)	Requirements specification (Draft): 81098271
	Procurements plan (Approved): 171712848
	Procurements memo and SOW (Approved): 174851246
	Lessons learned from previous project: 113776310
	3325 NZRIS Technology Project Closure Report: 174286297

Endorser / Reviewer	Endorsed?	Endorser / Reviewer	Endorsed?
All endorsements received (table exported from Confluence) 17913758Z	Yes	Project Steering Group (PSG minutes) 178960190	Yes
Project Sponsor: Danette Olsen	Yes	PMO Quality, Benefits & Assurance	Yes
Business Owner:	Yes	Business Strategy Alignment:	Yes
Cost Centre owner (if different from above) : as business owner	N/A	Technology Strategy Alignment:	Yes
Finance Business Partner:	Yes	Portfolio Delivery Manager:	Yes
Procurement & Commercial:	Yes	Digital Operations:	Yes