

Talent Development Call for Proposals and Scoring Guidance

Transition Research Fund 2027 Investment Round





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

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.

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Talent Development Call for Proposals – Transition Research Fund 2027 Investment Round

We are inviting proposals for the Transition Research Fund 2027 Talent Development mechanism. The focus is on emerging and future talent and specialist capability through excellent research that has the potential to deliver benefits for New Zealand and aligns with the priorities of the Technology for Prosperity Pillar.

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 the Transition Research Fund 2027

The Transition Research Fund 2027 (TRF2027) is a new contestable fund established to support the transition to New Zealand's future science, innovation and technology investment system. It provides up to \$84.8 million (excluding GST) in annual funding distributed across 3 investment mechanisms: Talent Development, Projects and Programmes. TRF2027 aims to advance excellence, capability, and continuity across the research system during a period of change, supporting high quality foundational and applied research, across all disciplines aligned with National Pillar Priorities. TRF2027 is intended to operate as a single funding round and will apply to funding decisions announced in 2027.

TRF2027 operates within the strategic direction set by the Science Investment Plan. The Pillar Investment Plans sets out the priorities for each pillar. The Gazette Notice requires Research Funding New Zealand (RFNZ) to consider the Transition Research Fund Investment Plan 2027, Science Investment Plan, and Pillar Investment Plans when portfolio balancing for TRF2027. Applicants should read these documents together when developing their proposals.

The RFNZ Board will make funding decisions in accordance with the applicable Gazette Notices. MBIE will administer the application, assessment and contracting processes

About the Talent Development mechanism

Talent Development is one of the 3 investment mechanisms available through TRF2027. It provides 2-year funding to develop future research leaders and specialist capability through excellent research that has the potential to deliver benefits for New Zealand and is aligned with the priorities of the Technology for Prosperity Pillar.

As clearly signalled in the Science Investment Plan, a clear focus is shifting resources to the Technology for Prosperity Pillar. To build the requisite capability to support the growth of science in this pillar - for the 2027 round – the sole focus of the Talent Development mechanism will be on emerging and future talent in the Technology for Prosperity Pillar. Any researcher developing

technology that could benefit primary, environment or health can apply into the Technology for Prosperity Pillar.

While a focus of this mechanism is on developing early career researchers, they can also lead or contribute to proposals for any mechanism.

The Talent Development mechanism aims to:

- Develop emerging and future leaders aligned to national priorities who can conceive, lead and scale the next generation of research.
- Develop specialist capability in new areas, particularly in advanced technology and aligned to national priorities.
- Support early career researchers and other potential future research leaders looking to pivot into a new research area that is a priority for New Zealand.

This Call for Proposals provides you with information on how to apply to the Talent Development mechanism of TRF2027, including 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 Key resources section contains links to all documents and web pages referenced throughout this Call for Proposals.

The funding available

The Talent Development mechanism for TRF2027 is fully aligned to the Technology for Prosperity Pillar, with indicative annual investment (portfolio target) of up to \$12.3 million (excluding GST).

The Talent Development mechanism is expected to fund 40 to 50 contracts with a duration of 2-years and a total contract value of \$0.5 million (excluding GST).

Achieving portfolio targets

Portfolio targets are in place to help TRF2027 achieve its objectives, set the long-term direction and contribute to the pillar investment targets published in the Science Investment Plan.

The portfolio targets are:

- Underpinned by a fixed maximum total investment available within each pillar.
- Flexible, so that the Board has ability to change the proportion invested in each mechanism, depending on the number and quality of proposals received.
- Expressed in terms of the annual, not total, contract value.

or the Project and Talent Development mechanisms, RFNZ will consider the mix of investments between the mechanisms within the Technology for Prosperity Pillar.

Who can apply

For proposals to be eligible under the Talent Development mechanism, they must:

- a. be made under an investment mechanism specified in the:
[2027 Transition Research Fund\(external link\) — Gazette Notice](#)
- b. align to one of the pillars, and to one of the pillar priorities listed as opportunities, as outlined in the Science Investment Plan
- c. be made by an applicant who is not in material breach of any Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) science funding contract and who does not have any outstanding remedial actions associated with any termination of any MBIE science funding contract
- d. be submitted in Pītau (MBIE's Investment Management System) and meet any applicable timing, formatting, content, or other administrative requirements set by MBIE
- e. not name a person as Principal Investigator for a Talent Development proposal who is named as Principal Investigator on another Talent Development proposal submitted for the 2027 Transition Research Fund Talent Development mechanism
- f. be made by a New Zealand-based Research Organisation or a New Zealand-based legal entity representing a New Zealand-based Research Organisation
- g. be designed so that the new knowledge created is broadly disseminated for public benefit outside of the Research Organisation or legal entity that represents the Research Organisation
- h. not be made by:
 - i. an entity listed in any of the parts of Schedule 2 of the Public Service Act 2020
 - ii. a local authority as defined in section 5 of the Local Government Act 2002
 - iii. the New Zealand Police
 - iv. New Zealand Defence Force or
 - v. the Parliamentary Counsel Office
- i. be for research, science or technology, or related activities, the majority of which are to be undertaken in New Zealand, unless the Board considers that there are compelling reasons to consider the proposal, despite the amount of research, science or technology or related activities being proposed to be undertaken overseas
- j. 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
- k. advise that the proposed funding recipient will, and the Board must be of the view that it can, adhere to the terms and conditions of funding set out in an investment contract determined by the Board
- l. not be for activities already funded from another external source
- m. come within the total organisational funding Cap that applies to the proposal
- n. not include out-of-scope research outcomes related to defence that amount to 50% or more of the proposal's outcomes.

Note: eligibility clause (e): The same Principal Investigator cannot be named on more than one Talent Development application.

Organisational caps

Each organisation has a maximum number of proposals it may submit. Organisations may register more proposals than this limit, but the number of proposals submitted must not exceed the organisation's published cap on the [Transition Research Fund 2027 web pages](#).

Registrations

To provide flexibility in the selection of proposals, organisations may submit registrations up to 120% of their published organisational cap, rounded up to the next whole number. If an organisation exceeds this limit, MBIE will retain registrations based on submission timestamp order, beginning with the earliest submitted registrations, until the permitted number is reached. Registrations above the limit will not progress.

If you wish to withdraw registrations that are no longer required, please do this before 16 December 2026 and follow these instructions:

- Draft registrations: If a registration is still in Draft status, it can be cancelled directly in Pītau by the applicant.
- Submitted registrations: If a registration has already been submitted to MBIE, email us and advise which registration(s) you would like to withdraw.

Proposals

Organisations may submit no more proposals than their published organisational cap. If an organisation exceeds its cap after the proposal submission period, MBIE will accept proposals in submission timestamp order, beginning with the earliest submitted proposals, until the cap is reached. Proposals above the cap will not be considered.

If you wish to withdraw proposals that are no longer required, please do this before 3 February 2027 and follow these instructions:

- Draft proposals: Can be cancelled directly in Pītau by the applicant.
- Submitted proposals: If a proposal has already been submitted to MBIE, email us and advise which proposal(s) you would like to withdraw.

Key dates

Activity	Date
Applicant information webinar	15 October 2026
Panel Members published	Early November 2026
Registration period	18 November 2026 to 12 noon, 16 December 2026
Proposal submission period	18 November 2026 to 12 noon, 3 February 2027
Initial eligibility assessment of proposals	March 2027
RFNZ consider initial eligibility assessments and decide on those proposals that will be assessed	March 2027
Ineligible applicants notified	March 2027
Progressing proposals are assessed by members of the College of Assessors	April/May 2027

RFNZ consider proposals and decide on those progressing to the Panel meeting	Early July 2027
Applicants of proposals not progressing to the Panel meeting are notified	July 2027
Panel meetings held	August 2027
RFNZ makes final funding decisions	28 October 2027
Applicants are notified of final funding decisions (under embargo) before funding decisions are announced	Early November 2027
Funding decisions announced	Early November 2027
Unsuccessful applicants are provided feedback	Late November 2027
Contracts begin	1 March 2028

Dates are subject to change. If they change, we'll let you know by email or by stakeholder alert. You can also subscribe to Alerts [Science and Innovation updates](#).

Applicant information webinar

Join us for a webinar for the Talent Development mechanism on 15 October 2026 including live Q&As. The webinar will provide everything you need to know about applying to the Talent Development mechanism of the TRF2027 investment round.

[Register here](#)

The recording of the webinar presentation will be published on this page before the end of November 2026.

Key resources

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read the following documents before developing a proposal. These documents provide the strategic context, eligibility requirements and assessment expectations that will be considered during the assessment and funding decision process.

- [Transition Research Fund 2027](#)
Gives an overview of the objectives of TRF2027 and how the 3 funding mechanisms fit together.
- [Science Investment Plan 2026–2036](#)
New Zealand's national strategic priorities for science and research investment, alongside a long-term investment profile.
- [Pillar Investment Plans 2026-2031](#)
Medium-term strategies for each of the 4 science and innovation pillars that translate the high-level priorities in the Science Investment Plan 2026-2036 into specific investment objectives, funding approaches, and expected outcomes. They describe what each pillar is expected to

achieve, how funding will be allocated to deliver government priorities, and the measures that will be used to track success.

- [Transition Research Fund Investment Plan 2027](#)

Provides the purpose and scope of TRF2027, including the objectives of each mechanism and the Government's investment signals and priorities for TRF2027.

- [2027 Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice: published 14 May 2026](#)
- [2027 Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice: published 23 June 2026](#)
- [Amendment—2027 Transition Research Fund Gazette Notice: published 5 October 2026](#)

The Gazette Notices set the rules for TRF2027, explaining what TRF2027 aims to achieve, how funding is allocated, who can apply, and how proposals will be assessed.

- [Vision Mātauranga policy](#)
- [Talent Development Assessment and Scoring Guidance - 2027 Investment Round](#)
- [Talent Development Registration template](#)
- [Talent Development Proposal template](#)
- [Transition Research Fund Contract template](#)
- [Pītau](#)

Trusted Research Guidance

Please familiarise yourself with the Trusted Research Guidance for Institutions and Researchers. Applicants should consider whether their proposed research may involve sensitive technologies or other trusted research risks and how these risks could be managed. While this is not assessed during proposal assessment, MBIE undertakes a sensitive technologies risk assessment for all proposals that progress to the Panel meeting. Any required risk mitigations will normally be incorporated into the funding contract for successful proposals.

[Trusted Research Guidance](#)

How to apply

Applications to the Talent Development mechanism must be completed and submitted through [Pītau](#), MBIE's secure online Investment Management System. The application process has 2 stages: registration followed by proposal. You must submit a registration by the registration deadline to be able to submit a proposal.

Before starting your application, review the Key resources listed above and ensure that you have access to Pītau.

The templates are provided to help you draft your registrations and proposals before submitting in Pītau.

As an applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that:

- your registration and proposal are complete
- all required supporting information has been provided
- the application is submitted before the relevant deadline.

Accessing Pītau

If you already have a Pītau account, you can access the system using the link in the Key resources section.

If you do not have a Pītau login:

- contact your Research Office to request access; or
- if your organisation does not have a Research Office, request access directly from [MBIE](#).

MBIE can assist with accessing Pītau and provide guidance on entering and submitting your application. MBIE cannot advise you on the merits of your proposal.

Registration

The registration stage provides MBIE early notice of expected proposals. This helps the planning for the assessment process. Registrations are not assessed and do not affect funding decisions. Only applicants who submit a registration may continue submitting a proposal.

After registration, applicants may refine the scope, team composition and research approach before submitting their proposal, provided it remains broadly consistent with the registration.

Proposal

The proposal is the application that will be assessed for funding. Applicants should address all assessment criteria and provide sufficient information for Assessors and Panel Members to evaluate the programme's Impact, Science Excellence and Talent Potential.

If your proposal is successful, this information will also form the basis of your funding contract.

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID iD)

Applicants are encouraged to provide their ORCID iD as part of their proposal, especially Principal Investigators and Key Researchers. An ORCID iD is a unique, persistent digital identifier that distinguishes individual researchers and helps connect them accurately with their research activities, contributions and outputs.

Providing an ORCID iD is recommended but not mandatory. Applicants who do not provide an ORCID iD will not be disadvantaged, and its inclusion will not influence the eligibility or assessment of the proposal.

Artificial Intelligence

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools presents an opportunity to assist researchers in the crafting of proposals, but this may raise issues around authorship and intellectual property including copyright. Content produced by AI may be based on the intellectual property of others or may also be factually incorrect. MBIE advises applicants to use caution in relation to the use of AI tools in developing their proposals. All applicants will be required to sign a proposal declaration on the portal to confirm that they take full responsibility for the content of the proposal, the suitability and validity of cited sources and originality of content, and to confirm that your proposal does not contain false or misleading information.

Conflicts of Interest

Applicants must declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest involving Assessors, RFNZ members, and Panel members. Conflicts may be direct or indirect.

Before completing the Conflicts of Interest section of your registration or proposal, review the published lists of [College of Assessors members](#), [RFNZ members](#), and Panel members published on the [Call for Proposals web page](#).

What is considered a conflict of interest

A direct conflict of interest may exist where an Assessor, RFNZ member or Panel member:

- is directly involved with a proposal (as a participant, manager, mentor, or partner)
- has a close personal relationship with the applicant, for example, family members
- is otherwise involved with an applicant's work programme, for example a collaborator.

An indirect conflict of interest may exist where an Assessor, RFNZ member or Panel member:

- is employed by an organisation involved in a proposal but is not part of the applicant's work programme
- has a personal and/or professional relationship with one of the applicants, for example, an acquaintance
- has, or previously had, involvement with a proposal that is in direct competition with a proposal being assessed
- may have personal or business interests that could compete with, or be affected by, the proposed impacts of the proposal.

Declaring a conflict of interest

Declare all conflicts of interest in the Conflicts of Interest section of your registration or proposal.

If you identify a potential conflict of interest after submitting your proposal, you must notify us immediately by [emailing transition fund 2027](#) with details of the conflict.

Please note that declaring a large number of conflicts, or declaring entire institutions as conflicted, may reduce the pool of Assessors available to assess your proposal.

Panel members

An independent Panel approved by RFNZ will review proposals at the Panel meeting stage. The Panel member names and biographies will be published on the [Call for Proposals web page](#) in early November 2026.

Assessment process

1. Decision on progression to assessment

RFNZ will consider proposals against the eligibility criteria and decide which proposals will progress to assessment. MBIE will only notify applicants whose proposals are determined to be ineligible by RFNZ.

2. Assessment

Each proposal will be independently assessed for Impact, Science Excellence and Talent Potential by 3 Assessors from MBIE's College of Assessors. Assessors will:

- review the proposal against each assessment criterion
- assign a score from 1 (low quality) to 7 (high quality) for each criterion
- provide comments to support their scores.

Assessors have been selected based on their knowledge and experience and have not been selected as a 'representative' of a particular organisation or sector.

3. Decision on progression to the Panel meeting

RFNZ will consider:

- application eligibility against the gazetted criteria
- Assessor scores and comments
- a rank list per pillar of proposals based on Assessment.
- any other relevant information specified in this Call.

RFNZ will decide which proposals progress to the Panel meeting. MBIE will notify unsuccessful applicants.

4. Panel meeting

Before the Panel meeting, each Panel Member will review their allocated proposals and the Assessor scores and comments.

At the Panel meeting, the Panel will review the proposals and agree consensus score and comment for each assessment criterion, as well as an overall score. The resulting scores will be used to produce a moderated rank list.

The Panel Chair (a member of RFNZ) will use the discussion and consensus comments to inform the written feedback provided to unsuccessful applicants once RFNZ has made the funding decision..

5. Final funding decisions

The Panel Chair will provide a report to RFNZ setting out the Panel's agreed scores and comments, together with its findings from considering the proposals collectively. This report will make a funding recommendation to RFNZ.

RFNZ will consider the Panel Chair's report and may make final funding decisions in accordance with the portfolio approach set out in the Gazette Notice.

RFNZ will make the final funding decisions. MBIE will notify applicants of RFNZ's decisions.

Feedback to applicants

Feedback will be provided to applicants following the final funding announcement at the end of the funding round.

Applicants whose proposals do not progress to the Panel meeting will receive Assessor feedback. Assessors will provide one strength and one weakness for each proposal and this feedback will be provided verbatim to applicants.

Applicants whose proposals progress to the Panel meeting but are not funded will receive the Panel's consensus comments.

No feedback will be provided for funded proposals.

The assessment criteria

Each proposal will be assessed against the criteria below and assigned a score from 1 (low quality) to 7 (high quality) for each criterion. Proposals that progress to the Panel meeting will be reviewed using the same criteria and scoring scale.

Impact (weighting 33%)

The extent to which the proposed research has the potential to deliver meaningful outcomes for New Zealand's economic, social or environmental benefit, appropriate to the applicant's discipline and career stage.

Assessment must have regard to the extent the proposal:

- aligns with the National Pillar Priorities
- articulates credible potential impact benefits and potential pathways to impact from the proposed research, science or technology or related activities, even where impacts are uncertain, longer-term or indirect
- will build individual, institutional, or system capability that strengthens New Zealand's ability to realise impact over time
- has identified and appropriately considered potential impacts for Māori where relevant.

Science Excellence (weighting 33%)

The extent to which the proposed research is fit for purpose, rigorous innovative, ethically conducted and internationally benchmarked, and addresses areas of clear national need.

Assessment must have regard to the extent the proposal:

- is ambitious, new to New Zealand, and fit for purpose; it must be able to advance New Zealand beyond the current state of knowledge and practice to deliver the intended outcomes
- will generate and disseminate new knowledge, data, or methods or deliver scientific, technical, or innovative outcomes
- has a well-designed, coherent, and credible research plan, including appropriate identification and management of risk (noting that higher levels of uncertainty may be appropriate for exploratory research)
- is well positioned within the domestic and international research context; and where applicable, demonstrates clearly how the proposal builds on, complements, or differentiates from existing national and international research

- appropriately considers the relevance of the Vision Mātauranga policy and, where relevant, demonstrates a fit-for-purpose approach; where not relevant, this is clearly stated.

Talent Potential (weighting 34%)

The extent to which the Principal Investigator demonstrates existing research capability and future potential, and the likelihood that the proposed outputs will be achieved. This will be considered relative to opportunity and their research discipline and career stage.

Assessment must have regard to:

- the Principal Investigator's skills, experience, and capability to undertake excellent research and contribute effectively, including the quality and relevance of research contributions to date
- the clarity and credibility of the Principal Investigator's career development intent, including potential to build research capability and leadership
- appropriate organisational support, such as access to appropriate mentorship and appropriate facilities, space, equipment, and other necessary resources.

How funding decisions will be made

RFNZ will make final funding decisions to those proposals that they consider will deliver the greatest impact for New Zealand. RFNZ must make funding decisions on proposals for TRF2027 in accordance with:

- the Public Finance Act 1989 and the relevant Appropriation Acts for Vote Business, Science and Innovation
- the eligibility and assessment criteria specified in the Gazette Notices and the relevant schedules in the Gazette Notice listed in the Key resources section
- the investment signals set out in the Investment Plan
- the Government's Vision Mātauranga policy, if applicable to the proposal.

RFNZ may also consider a portfolio approach.

Portfolio approach

Final funding decisions will not be based solely on proposal rankings. RFNZ may take a portfolio approach, considering how proposals collectively contribute to a balanced portfolio within the Technology for Prosperity pillar, having regard to the National Pillar Priorities, the indicative funding available, and the relative merits of competing proposals.

Where RFNZ takes a portfolio approach to funding decisions on proposals for TRF2027, this will include:

- ensuring each proposal funded has sufficient merit as assessed against the assessment criteria in Schedule 1 of the Gazette Notices
- considering how the overall mix of investments made meets the investment signals in the Investment Plan, Science Investment Plan and Pillar Investment Plans, with particular regard to the funding amounts as set out in the table above
- ensuring that the best proposals are funded within the Technology for Prosperity pillar to the extent that is practical within funding amounts for this mechanism

- meeting general policy objectives and specific objectives set out in the Gazette Notice including the Vision Mātauranga policy.

For the Project and Talent Development mechanisms, RFNZ will consider the mix of investments between the mechanisms within the Technology for Prosperity Pillar.

Notification and publication

We will advise the proposal's Application Administrator or Research Office of the funding decisions in November 2027. Details of the successful applications will be published on our Transition Research Fund 2027 web page and announced by a press release, and potentially by the Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology.

The Transition Research Fund Contract template sets out what information MBIE may publish about funded Talent Development contracts.

Contracting, payment, reporting and monitoring

The contracting process

If RFNZ decides to invest in your proposal, MBIE will enter into a Funding Contract with your organisation (subject to any pre-contractual conditions being met). The Transition Research Fund Contract template is available in the Key resources section.

The signed contract must be returned to MBIE within one month of being issued, unless MBIE agrees otherwise.

RFNZ may:

- set pre-contractual conditions that must be met before MBIE and the applicant organisation can enter into a contract
- set special contractual conditions
- vary the amount of funding allocated from that requested.

Payments

Talent Development contracts will run from 1 March 2028 to 28 February 2030. The first payment will be equivalent to 4 months' funding, providing organisations with additional cash flow from the start of the contract to help retain early career researchers. The remaining funding will be paid in equal monthly instalments, with no payments made during the final 3 months of the contract.

Reporting and monitoring

Successful applicants will be required to submit annual reports and a final report through Pītau. MBIE will evaluate these reports to monitor progress and performance.

Reports are due to MBIE each year in February/March with the first one due in 2029. A final report is due at the end of the contract. Reporting guidance and templates are published annually.

Annual reports

Guidance for the first annual report will be published by November 2028. The report is expected to cover:

- progress against the deliverables and tasks set out in the work programme
- any emerging risks
- action being taken to manage those risks.

Final report

Guidance for the final report will be published by November 2029. The final report is expected to cover:

- the project's overall outcomes and key achievements
- the steps taken to deliver the project
- any changes made to the approach and the reasons for those changes
- an updated public statement.

Contact

If you have any questions about applications, please contact your host organisation's research office, in the first instance.

You can contact MBIE's [Transition Research Fund 2027 team](#) if:

- your organisation does not have a research office
- your organisation's research office cannot assist you

For Pītau queries email the [IMS Support Team](#) or phone:

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

You can also subscribe to our Alert e-newsletter: [Science and Innovation updates](#)

Talent Development Assessment and Scoring Guidance - 2027 Investment Round

Your proposal will be assessed using the guidance, criteria, and scoring tables below.

This information is also produced in scoring grids, see appendix.

All assessment criteria will be assessed in line with the policy intent of the Transition Research Fund 2027 as outlined in the Transition Research Fund 2027 Investment Plan and Gazette Notice.

Impact (33% weighting)

The extent to which the proposed research has the potential to deliver meaningful outcomes for New Zealand's economic, social or environmental benefit, appropriate to the applicant's discipline and career stage.

Assessment must have regard to the extent the proposal:

- a. aligns with the National Pillar Priorities
- b. articulates credible potential impact benefits and potential pathways to impact from the proposed research, science or technology or related activities, even where impacts are uncertain, longer-term or indirect
- c. will build individual, institutional, or system capability that strengthens New Zealand's ability to realise impact over time
- d. has identified and appropriately considered potential impacts for Māori where relevant.

If there is clearly no alignment with the National Pillar Priorities, a score of 1 will be recorded.

Note that proposals may range from exploratory, discovery-led research through to applied research. Applicants' responses should be appropriate to the nature, maturity, and expected timeframe of the proposed work.

The scores in the table below range from 1 (low quality) to 7 (high quality).

Score	Keywords	Example
1	(Low quality) None Not fit for purpose Negligible Missing Not credible	The proposal does not align with the National Pillar Priorities. The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are negligible. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is negligible. Where relevant, the project has not identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.
2	Minimal Poor Inadequate Insufficient	The proposal shows minimal alignment with the National Pillar Priorities. The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are minimal.

	Doubtful Lacking Unlikely	Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is insufficient. Where relevant, the project has poorly identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.
3	Limited Uncertain Some Partial Incomplete Lacks detail Possible	The proposal shows some alignment with the National Pillar Priorities. The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are limited. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is partially identified. Where relevant, the project has partially identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.
4	Acceptable Sufficient Suitable Adequate Reasonable Quite likely	The proposal shows adequate alignment with the National Pillar Priorities. The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are sufficient. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is reasonable. Where relevant, the project has adequately identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.
5	Significant Good Substantial Well Clear Large Probable	The proposal shows clear alignment with the National Pillar Priorities. The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are substantial. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is significant. Where relevant, the project has clearly identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.
6	Strong High Comprehensive Very good Very well Extensive Certain	The proposal shows strong alignment with the National Pillar Priorities. The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are comprehensive. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is certain. Where relevant, the project has comprehensively identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.
7	(High quality) Excellent Exemplary Impressive Outstanding Total Definite	The proposal shows excellent alignment with the National Pillar Priorities. The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are exemplary. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is outstanding. Where relevant, the project has outstandingly identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.

Science Excellence (33% weighting)

The extent to which the proposed research is fit for purpose, rigorous, innovative, ethically conducted and internationally benchmarked, and addresses areas of clear national need.

Assessment must have regard to the extent the proposal:

- is ambitious, new to New Zealand, and fit for purpose; it must be able to advance New Zealand beyond the current state of knowledge and practice to deliver the intended outcomes
- will generate and disseminate new knowledge, data, or methods or deliver scientific, technical, or innovative outcomes
- has a well-designed, coherent, and credible research plan, including appropriate identification and management of risk (noting that higher levels of uncertainty may be appropriate for exploratory research)
- is well positioned within the domestic and international research context; and where applicable, demonstrates clearly how the proposal builds on, complements, or differentiates from existing national and international research
- appropriately considers the relevance of the Vision Mātauranga policy and, where relevant, demonstrates a fit-for-purpose approach; where not relevant, this is clearly stated.

The scores in the table below range from 1 (low quality) to 7 (high quality).

Score	Keywords	Example
1	(Low quality) None Not fit for purpose Negligible Missing Not credible	The proposal is not fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. No new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is not credible, and risk management is missing. Is not positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is no recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is missing.
2	Minimal Poor Inadequate Insufficient Doubtful Lacking Unlikely	The proposal is minimally fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Insufficient new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is insufficiently credible, and risk management is lacking. Is poorly positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is insufficient recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is lacking.
3	Limited Uncertain Some	The proposal is somewhat fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand.

	Partial Incomplete Lacks detail Possible	Limited new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is partially credible, and risk management is limited. Is somewhat positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is some recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is incomplete.
4	Acceptable Sufficient Suitable Adequate Reasonable Quite likely	The proposal is sufficiently fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Adequate new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is reasonably credible, and risk management is acceptable. Is adequately positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is suitable recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is acceptable.
5	Significant Good Substantial Well Clear Large Probable	The proposal is clearly fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Significant new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is clearly credible, and risk management is clear. Is well positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is good recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is clear.
6	Strong High Comprehensive Very good Very well Extensive Certain	The proposal is strongly fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Comprehensive new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is highly credible, and risk management is very good. Is strongly positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is very good recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is strong.

7	(High quality) Excellent Exemplary Impressive Outstanding Total Definite	The proposal is impressively fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Outstanding new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is impressively credible, and risk management is exemplary. Is impressively positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is outstanding recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is excellent.
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Talent Potential (34% weighting)

The extent to which the Principal Investigator demonstrates existing research capability and future potential, and the likelihood that the proposed outputs will be achieved. This will be considered relative to opportunity and their research discipline and career stage.

Assessment must have regard to:

- the Principal Investigator's skills, experience, and capability to undertake excellent research and contribute effectively, including the quality and relevance of research contributions to date
- the clarity and credibility of the Principal Investigator's career development intent, including potential to build research capability and leadership
- appropriate organisational support, such as access to appropriate mentorship and appropriate facilities, space, equipment, and other necessary resources.

The scores in the table below range from 1 (low quality) to 7 (high quality).

Score	Keywords	Example
1	(Low quality) None Not fit for purpose Negligible Missing Not credible	The Principal Investigator has none of the skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives no confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is missing.
2	Minimal Poor Inadequate Insufficient Doubtful Lacking Unlikely	The Principal Investigator has inadequate skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives minimal confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is lacking.
3	Limited Uncertain	The Principal Investigator has some of the skills, experience, or the capability needed.

	Some Partial Incomplete Lacks detail Possible	The Principal Investigator gives some confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is limited.
4	Acceptable Sufficient Suitable Adequate Reasonable Quite likely	The Principal Investigator has suitable skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives acceptable confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is adequate.
5	Significant Good Substantial Well Clear Large Probable	The Principal Investigator has good skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives significant confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is good.
6	Strong High Comprehensive Very good Very well Extensive Certain	The Principal Investigator has strong skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives very good confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is very good.
7	(High quality) Excellent Exemplary Impressive Outstanding Total Definite	The Principal Investigator has excellent skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives exemplary confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is excellent.

Guidance on Terms

Ambitious	- Seeks to advance New Zealand beyond the current state of knowledge and practice through challenging, novel or high-value research. - May involve a greater degree of scientific or technical uncertainty where justified by the potential significance of the outcomes.
Benefit (as it relates to Impact)	Impact being the strong positive effect or influence of a research outcome. Example impacts include: - protecting New Zealand's reputation or diversifying the economy - economic gains – e.g., from the attraction of multinational businesses to, or retention of business in, New Zealand - improved social well-being or preservation of cultural heritage and values - improved or better environmental outcomes - increased resilience to natural hazards and adaptation to climate change - better informed government policy - better use of resources or more efficient processes, e.g., via creation of a research platform that has additional utility for users - support for emerging and new sectors or upskilling existing industry - job creation, e.g., via new start-ups or development of a cluster of businesses - new, or improvement to existing, standards or approaches for regulators - generation of new knowledge, insights, methods or capabilities that enable future applications, pathways to use, or downstream economic, environmental, or social benefits for New Zealand - strengthening New Zealand's research capability, including specialist expertise, emerging researchers, partnerships and research platforms that contribute to future innovation and impact. Benefit to New Zealand should be in context of the scale and extent of the impact (see below). - When assessing benefit, consider the value of the investment over the cost of performing the research, recognising that benefits may be direct or indirect, immediate or long-term, and may arise through future application of new knowledge rather than a foreseeable commercial outcome.
Capability	- The skills, knowledge, experience, expertise and resources required to successfully undertake and deliver the proposed research, science or technology, or related activities. - May include individual, team, organisational or system capability, including specialist expertise, research infrastructure, partnerships and the development of future capability.
Credible/Credibility	- Realistic, evidence-based and sufficiently justified, with assumptions, claims and expectations supported by appropriate information. - Demonstrates a reasonable likelihood of being successfully delivered within the proposed timeframe, resources and risk settings.
Credible research plan	Contains all of the expected elements, in a way which can be managed and effectively implemented. Expected elements include:

	- the research methods/methodology, design and proposed outputs - a risk management and mitigation plan - provision for access to and use of the facilities and equipment for carrying out the research.
Dissemination	- Making the research results available for potential end- or next-users so that impact and benefits can be achieved. - May vary according to the situation and should not be confined to publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals. For example, a patent publication is a form of dissemination.
Extent	- The area or degree of coverage of the benefits, irrespective of scale. - Consider whether benefits are narrow (for example, individual organisations), widespread (for example, across multiple sectors), or enabling (for example, increasing uptake of investments already made). Benefit should not solely be to a single firm or end-user.
Fit for purpose	- Appropriate and well matched to the research objectives, intended outcomes, and stage of the research. - Uses methods, resources, partnerships and approaches that are suitable for delivering the proposed research and its intended outcomes.
Innovation/Innovative	- Bringing in new methods or ideas for adaptation to New Zealand context or applications. - Degrees of innovation range from minor innovations of existing processes/techniques to the implementation of completely new processes/techniques that significantly challenge the status quo. - Can include the application of existing processes or techniques in new or unexpected areas. - Advances knowledge, understanding, methods, data or capabilities beyond the current state of research and practice.
National Pillar Priorities	- The National Pillar Priorities set out the science and research investments required to lift New Zealand's economic growth and productivity, environmental resilience, and living standards. Opportunities are clearly defined investment areas, to enable system performance and national impact. - The priority opportunity areas identified within the four pillars of the Science Investment Plan: Technology for Prosperity, Primary Industries and Bioeconomy, Environmental Sustainability and Resilience, and Healthy People and a Thriving Society. - Alignment should be demonstrated through a clear and meaningful contribution to one or more priority opportunities, rather than by broad or incidental relevance.
Novelty	- A new method or idea. - All or some elements of a proposal may be novel. - Novelty can range from making incremental to ground-breaking advances, and from novelty in science approach to intended outcomes.
Pathway(s) to impact/Implementation Pathway	A plan that outlines, in sufficient detail, the steps a team will take in the goal to disseminate and realise impact from research outputs.

	• A credible implementation pathway should cover the ‘who, what and how’ within the plan, including identified end-users and beneficiaries, potential partners, and key events or milestones required to deliver. • The implementation pathway should be appropriate for the research stage. Thus, a pathway for a talent development project is likely to be more speculative in approach and detail than a pathway for a programme. • Examples used should be credible and specific (such as identifying the form or requirements of regulatory approvals). • Consider the relevant skills and experiences of the team and how the plan will leverage existing or future relationships/networks for maximising outcomes.
Rigorous	• Extremely thorough and accurate, allowing little to no room for error.
Risk	• Risk is defined as the effect of uncertainty on objectives, both research and outcomes. • Scientific and technical risk is the basis of an ambitious proposal. This includes assumptions based on current knowledge or scientific principles. • A project that involves risk may seek to apply scientific techniques in an unproven or speculative way. • The level of risk taken should be justified by the magnitude of the impact benefits sought. The level of risk should be matched by appropriate risk management.
Risk Management	• The coordinated activities used to direct and control a project or its’ objectives when regarding risks. Risk should be managed through risk mitigation strategies and/or contingency plans. • Residual risk should be considered against the potential additional scientific value.
Scale	Relative size, in context, for example: • an economic development project may express scale in financial worth or as a share of a market • social and environmental projects may use statistics on population size, the number of people or organisations affected, or level of emissions reduced • in assessing scale, consider the value over and above business as usual.
Well-positioned	The research takes account of existing knowledge and research, either by: • avoiding redundancy or overlap, or • using existing knowledge/research as a platform for achieving more significant advances in knowledge than would otherwise be the case • describing links with key related science activities (often funded separately) which are complementary or synergistic • has international links that provide leverage and additional value. • being well matched to the outcome opportunity that it is intended to address • demonstrates an understanding of the domestic and international research context, including how the proposed research builds on, complements or differs from existing work.

Appendix – Scoring Grids

Impact: (33% weighting)	SCORE & KEYWORDS						
	1 (Low quality) <i>None Not fit for purpose Negligible Missing Not credible</i>	2 <i>Minimal Poor Inadequate Insufficient Doubtful Lacking Unlikely</i>	3 <i>Limited Uncertain Some Partial Incomplete Lacks detail Possible</i>	4 <i>Acceptable Sufficient Suitable Adequate Reasonable Quite likely</i>	5 <i>Significant Good Substantial Well Clear Large Probable</i>	6 <i>Strong High Comprehensive Very good Very well Extensive Certain</i>	7 (High quality) <i>Excellent Exemplary Impressive Outstanding Total Definite</i>
The extent to which the proposed research has the potential to deliver meaningful outcomes for New Zealand's economic, social or environmental benefit, appropriate to the applicant's discipline and career stage. Assessment must have regard to the extent the proposal: a. aligns with the National Pillar Priorities b. articulates credible potential impact benefits and potential pathways to impact from the proposed research, science or technology or related activities, even where impacts are uncertain, longer-term or indirect c. will build individual, institutional, or system capability that strengthens New Zealand's ability to realise impact over time d. has identified and appropriately considered potential impacts for Māori where relevant. If there is clearly no alignment with the National Pillar Priorities, you must record a score of 1.	The proposal does not align with the National Pillar Priorities The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are negligible. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is negligible. Where relevant, the project has not identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.	The proposal shows minimal alignment with the National Pillar Priorities The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are minimal. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is insufficient. Where relevant, the project has poorly identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.	The proposal shows some alignment with the National Pillar Priorities The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are limited. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is partially identified. Where relevant, the project has partially identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.	The proposal shows adequate alignment with the National Pillar Priorities The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are sufficient. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is reasonable. Where relevant, the project has adequately identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.	The proposal shows clear alignment with the National Pillar Priorities The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are substantial. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is significant. Where relevant, the project has clearly identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.	The proposal shows strong alignment with the National Pillar Priorities. The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are comprehensive. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is certain. Where relevant, the project has comprehensively identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.	The proposal shows excellent alignment with the National Pillar Priorities. The potential (direct or indirect) impact benefits and potential pathways of the proposed work are exemplary. Potential capability build (individual, institutional, or system) is outstanding. Where relevant, the project has outstandingly identified and considered the potential impacts for Māori.

Science Excellence: (33% Weighting)	SCORE & KEYWORDS						
	1 (Low quality) <i>None Not fit for purpose Negligible Missing Not credible</i>	2 <i>Minimal Poor Inadequate Insufficient Doubtful Lacking Unlikely</i>	3 <i>Limited Uncertain Some Partial Incomplete Lacks detail Possible</i>	4 <i>Acceptable Sufficient Suitable Adequate Reasonable Quite likely</i>	5 <i>Significant Good Substantial Well Clear Large Probable</i>	6 <i>Strong High Comprehensive Very good Very well Extensive Certain</i>	7 (High quality) <i>Excellent Exemplary Impressive Outstanding Total Definite</i>
The extent to which the proposed research is fit for purpose, rigorous, innovative, ethically conducted and internationally benchmarked, and addresses areas of clear national need. Assessment must have regard to the extent the proposal: a. is ambitious, new to New Zealand, and fit for purpose; it must be able to advance New Zealand beyond the current state of knowledge and practice to deliver the intended outcomes b. will generate and disseminate new knowledge, data, or methods or deliver scientific, technical, or innovative outcomes c. has a well-designed, coherent, and credible research plan, including appropriate identification and management of risk (noting that higher levels of uncertainty may be appropriate for exploratory research) d. is well positioned within the domestic and international research context; and where	The proposal is not fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. No new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is not credible, and risk management is missing. Is not positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is no recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not	The proposal is minimally fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Insufficient new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is insufficiently credible, and risk management is lacking. Is poorly positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is insufficient recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and	The proposal is somewhat fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Limited new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is partially credible, and risk management is limited. Is somewhat positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is some recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people,	The proposal is sufficiently fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Adequate new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is reasonably credible, and risk management is acceptable. Is adequately positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is suitable recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people,	The proposal is clearly fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Significant new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is clearly credible, and risk management is clear. Is well positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is good recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and	The proposal is strongly fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Comprehensive new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is highly credible, and risk management is very good. Is strongly positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is very good recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and	The proposal is impressively fit for purpose, ambitious or new to New Zealand. Outstanding new knowledge or outcomes will be generated and disseminated. The research plan is impressively credible, and risk management is exemplary. Is impressively positioned within or aligned with domestic and international research. Where relevant, there is outstanding recognition of the distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of

e. applicable, demonstrates clearly how the proposal builds on, complements, or differentiates from existing national and international research appropriately considers the relevance of the Vision Mātauranga policy and, where relevant, demonstrates a fit-for-purpose approach; where not relevant, this is clearly stated.	relevant, appropriate explanation is missing.	resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is lacking.	knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is incomplete.	knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is acceptable.	resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is clear.	resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is strong.	Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including Mātauranga Māori. Where not relevant, appropriate explanation is excellent.
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Talent Potential: (34% weighting)	SCORE & KEYWORDS						
	1 (Low quality) <i>None Not fit for purpose Negligible Missing Not credible</i>	2 <i>Minimal Poor Inadequate Insufficient Doubtful Lacking Unlikely</i>	3 <i>Limited Uncertain Some Partial Incomplete Lacks detail Possible</i>	4 <i>Acceptable Sufficient Suitable Adequate Reasonable Quite likely</i>	5 <i>Significant Good Substantial Well Clear Large Probable</i>	6 <i>Strong High Comprehensive Very good Very well Extensive Certain</i>	7 (High quality) <i>Excellent Exemplary Impressive Outstanding Total Definite</i>
The extent to which the Principal Investigator demonstrates existing research capability and future potential, and the likelihood that the proposed outputs will be achieved. This will be considered relative to opportunity and their research discipline and career stage. Assessment must have regard to: a. the Principal Investigator's skills, experience, and capability to undertake excellent research and contribute effectively, including the quality and relevance of research contributions to date b. the clarity and credibility of the Principal Investigator's career development intent, including potential to build research capability and leadership c. appropriate organisational support, such as access to appropriate mentorship and appropriate facilities, space, equipment, and other necessary resources.	The Principal Investigator has none of the skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives no confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is missing.	The Principal Investigator has inadequate skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives minimal confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is lacking.	The Principal Investigator has some of the skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives some confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is limited.	The Principal Investigator has suitable skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives acceptable confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is adequate.	The Principal Investigator has good skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives significant confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is good.	The Principal Investigator has strong skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives very good confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is very good.	The Principal Investigator has excellent skills, experience, or the capability needed. The Principal Investigator gives exemplary confidence in their career development intent and potential. Appropriate organisational support is excellent.