



October 2026 Science, Innovation & Technology Reforms webinar frequently asked questions

We received a large number of questions during the 9 October 2026 webinar. This document provides responses to the key themes raised by participants, including questions that could not be addressed during the live session.

The future funding system

How did the Science Investment Plan inform the Pillar Investment Plans?

The Science Investment Plan identified a set of challenges, opportunities and areas of expected contribution from public investment for each pillar. The Pillar Investment Plan outcomes primarily build on these opportunities, while being informed by the challenges and expected areas of contribution. The Science Investment Plan investment principles also informed the development and relative weighting of the outcomes.

What role did the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) play in developing the Pillar Investment Plans?

Research Funding New Zealand (RFNZ), supported by the Pillar Advisory Groups, led the development of the Pillar Investment Plans. The Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology commissioned RFNZ to develop the Pillar Investment Plans, with Pillar Advisory Groups providing expertise and perspectives from across the science and innovation system. MBIE supported this process by providing secretariat services and analysis, facilitating engagement and drafting content under RFNZ's direction. Separately, MBIE provided advice to the Minister on the Pillar Investment Plans and the wider reforms in its policy advisory role.

How will the new funding system be designed, phased and communicated?

The Transition Research Fund 2027 will provide funding while future investigator-led and mission-led funding mechanisms are developed. The Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology has asked RFNZ for advice on the design of these mechanisms. The scheduled update to the Pillar Investment Plans in the second half of 2027 will reflect advice from RFNZ on funding settings.

To stay up to date on both the Transition Research Fund and future investment rounds, we recommend you [subscribe here](#) for MBIE alerts.

How will funding be allocated across pillars, mechanisms and types of investment?

The funding trajectories in the Pillar Investment Plans reflect the shifts set out in the Science Investment Plan, including progressively reprioritising investment towards Technology for Prosperity. Within each pillar, the Pillar Investment Plan weightings indicate where greater or lesser emphasis is expected over time, and the investment areas signal the balance of funding instruments that will contribute to each outcome. Scale and duration of funding, along with any caps or other details will be set through individual funding mechanisms. RFNZ will manage science investments as a portfolio in line with the weightings.

Transition and alignment of existing investments

How will existing platforms and institutional funding transition into the new system?

Existing platforms and institutional funding will continue under their current contracts while future mission-led funding mechanisms are designed. The Pillar Investment Plans will guide future investment decisions as existing investments come up for review or reinvestment.

Each pillar recognises the role of funding, denoted as ‘enabling funding’, that supports capability and activities contributing to multiple outcomes. Institutional funding for Public Research Organisations through the Strategic Science Investment Fund is expected to contribute to both specific outcomes and enabling funding. MBIE is working closely with these organisations to understand the implications of any potential changes.

Existing contracts have been mapped to pillars for payment purposes only. For future contracts, researchers will identify the pillar that best reflects the research’s primary purpose.

How will health research be supported in the new funding system?

Health research will continue to be supported through the Health Research Fund, administered by the Health Research Council, until new legislation enables funding decision-making to transfer to RFNZ. In the meantime, the Health Research Council will align the fund’s settings with the Healthy People and a Thriving Society Pillar Investment Plan. The Health Research Council will provide further information about its funding opportunities as these are developed. The Transition Research Fund will also provide a limited amount of funding for health research proposals aligned with the Pillar Investment Plans. RFNZ’s investment in health research will increase proportionally once responsibility for the Health Research Fund transfers to RFNZ.

Alignment to pillars and outcomes

Will discovery research be supported through the pillars?

Yes. Discovery research remains an important part of the future system and will continue to be supported across all pillars, including research where pathways to application or commercial returns may be long and uncertain. Different outcomes will require different combinations of discovery, applied and translational research. Maintaining a strong pipeline of novel ideas is important because these ideas can underpin significant future outcomes, even when their eventual direction and impact cannot be predicted in advance.

How will research that spans pillars or does not fit neatly within specific pillar priorities be accommodated and assessed?

The Pillar Investment Plans provide strategic direction, not rigid boundaries. Research that spans pillars or disciplines is expected, and applicants should identify the pillar that best reflects the research's primary purpose. Choosing a primary pillar does not prevent a proposal from contributing to outcomes in other pillars. Assessment processes will recognise cross-pillar and transdisciplinary research. The detailed arrangements for assessment across pillars are still being developed.

How will specific fields of research or research areas be supported through the pillars?

The Pillar Investment Plans focus on the outcomes research contributes to rather than prescribing eligible disciplines or technologies. No field of research is automatically excluded, rather proposals will need to show how the research contributes to a relevant Pillar Investment Plan outcome. Many technologies and research areas could contribute to outcomes in more than one pillar. For example, genetic technologies may align with different pillars depending on their purpose and application. Researchers will be best placed to determine where their proposal fits, based on its primary purpose and the outcomes it is intended to support.

How will the Pillar Investment Plans support emerging opportunities and the adoption or adaptation of new technologies?

The Pillar Investment Plans support emerging opportunities as well as established strengths, with government potentially playing a greater role where foundational capability needs to be built or private investment is limited. This may include projects that test, adapt or pilot overseas-developed technologies under New Zealand conditions where this contributes to Pillar Investment Plan outcomes. Whether a particular project is eligible will depend on the settings of the relevant funding mechanism.

Eligibility, partnership and intellectual property

Who will be eligible to apply for or participate in funding?

Eligibility criteria will be set for each funding opportunity. New providers will be able to apply where they meet the relevant eligibility requirements, so participation will not be limited to previous recipients of science funding. The Government encourages participation from end or next-users and international partners where this contributes to the objectives of the funding opportunity and is consistent with the eligibility criteria.

What role will industry and other end users play in shaping, assessing and delivering research?

Industry and other end users have helped shape the priorities in the Pillar Investment Plans through representation on the Pillar Advisory Groups and input during targeted engagement. Their expertise may also inform the assessment or governance of research, although the detailed arrangements for this are still being developed.

Industry and end-users may lead research proposals where they meet the relevant eligibility criteria, though for many, partnering with a research organisation is likely to be more appropriate. As partners, they are expected to be involved early to shape funded research, test potential use cases and strengthen pathways to impact.

Expected contributions from industry and end-user partners may include funding, infrastructure, expertise, insights or in-kind support. This will vary according to the research, the maturity of the technology or sector, the likely beneficiaries and the funding mechanism. Greater co-investment will generally be expected where there are mature industries and identifiable commercial beneficiaries, with specific requirements communicated through each funding opportunity.

How will intellectual property and confidentiality be managed in collaborative research?

Intellectual property (IP) created through publicly funded research will be managed with regards to the relevant funding contract and any agreements between collaborating organisations. From 1 July 2026, the Government's IP Management Policy applies to IP created or developed as a result of an SI&T funding contract, but does not apply to pre-existing IP. The policy requires organisations and creators to apply its rules and other requirements consistently with its principles. These principles require parties to act in good faith and address contributions, ownership and benefits early, ideally by agreeing IP arrangements at the start of a project. The principles are set out in [Annex B of the Policy](#).

Confidentiality requirements, including how sensitive information is handled during application, assessment and delivery, will be set out in the relevant funding opportunity and contractual arrangements. Where the IP Management Policy applies, it does not alter creators' confidentiality obligations under their employment or other arrangements with their research organisation.

Governance, system roles and accountability

How do the Pillar Investment Plans fit within the wider reforms and governance arrangements, and how will the different parts of the science system work together?

The Pillar Investment Plans are part of the Government's wider reforms to create a more strategy-driven science, innovation and technology system. They put the Science Investment Plan into action by translating its priorities into outcomes and providing strategic direction for investment across the system. RFNZ will make most of the research funding decisions and monitor investment against the Pillar Investment Plans, while the plans will also inform funding administered through other parts of the system, including the New Zealand Institute for Advanced Technology and Public Research Organisations.

The Pillar Investment Plans have been agreed by the Government and are intended to provide stable and enduring direction while remaining adaptable as circumstances change.

What legislative framework does RFNZ operate under?

RFNZ currently operates under the Research, Science and Technology Act (2010), with specific responsibilities set out in Gazette notices. The Research, Science, Innovation and Technology Bill has been introduced to Parliament and identifies the statutory roles and responsibilities of different system actors, including RFNZ's decision-making authority over most SI&T portfolio funding mechanisms. Further details about system roles, interactions and implementation will be communicated as the reforms progress. A summary showing how the strategy, funding and delivery roles fit together is available on [MBIE's website](#).

How will progress and impact be measured, and how will this evidence inform future priorities and investment decisions?

RFNZ will monitor investment against the Pillar Investment Plans, while performance will also be considered across the wider science, innovation and technology system. Pillar-specific performance measures are being developed and will be included in the scheduled update to the plans in the second half of 2027, alongside more explicit guidance on funding commitments. This evidence will inform future priorities, investment weightings and funding decisions, including when the plans are refreshed in early 2029.