



Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) selection process

This document contains general information about the CoREs selection process and details of the framework that will be used by the Royal Society Te Apārangi to recommend CoREs to be funded from 1 January 2021.

Context

The Tertiary Education Commission Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua (TEC) is responsible for selecting and administering the Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs).

The CoREs Fund was established in 2001 to encourage the development of excellent tertiary education-based research that is collaborative, strategically focused and creates significant knowledge transfer activities. CoREs must be world-class research collaborations in an area of importance to New Zealand.

The first CoREs were established in 2002 and a further funding round was undertaken in 2006/07. In 2014, six CoREs were selected following a fully contestable funding round. In 2015 four more CoREs were selected meaning there are ten CoREs that are funded to the end of 2020.

The TEC is responsible for developing the operational policies and practices needed to select CoREs to be funded from 2021. This requires an open-tender process to be established that will provide the TEC with recommendations for funding. The principles for the selection round, objectives for the fund and mandated assessment criteria are set out in the funding mechanism issued by the Minister for Education under Section 159L of the Education Act 1989. The Mission Statement for CoREs sets out high-level expectations of CoREs in terms of role, performance and achievements (Appendix 1) and will provide the context for addressing key questions in the next selection process.

Purpose of the selection process

The selection process is required to identify up to ten CoREs that can be recommended for funding. At least one of these recommended proposals must be focused on Māori research.

There will be probity assurance throughout the process.

The TEC has contracted the Royal Society Te Apārangi (the Society) to run the selection process.

Scope

The selection process **will**:

- Select up to ten CoREs for funding from 2021 (including at least one Māori-focussed CoRE);
- Provide guidance on whether the funding requested in each proposal is appropriate;

- Review the suitability of the impact statements for each short-listed proposal;
- Ensure each proposal realises any opportunities to support the development of Māori and Pacific research capability and/or deliver outcomes that benefit Māori and Pacific peoples, and that the Proposal has been developed in meaningful consultation with relevant communities;
- Provide feedback to applicants which may include making recommendations to each CoRE on the development of their research/strategic plans.

Out of scope

The process will not consider gaps in the New Zealand research system, or the Government's research priorities when making funding recommendations. As such, the process will not make recommendations:

- to review or change the CoREs policy framework; or
- to seek proposals in specific disciplines.

Only the information contained in the application or divulged during any site visit or interview will be used for assessment purposes. No external information will be taken into account eg what a Panellist or Committee member may know from their professional role. Neither the Expert Selection Panels nor the Advisory Committee will seek additional information to inform their judgements. The only exception to this is if the Proposal includes information that is known to be misleading or inaccurate. If such information is identified, this will be brought to the attention of the Selection Panels and Advisory Committee.

Process for the selection of CoREs

Expert Selection Panels of international standing will be used to assess all Proposals against the excellence and tertiary education selection criteria set out in the funding mechanism. Proposals that meet these requirements will be long-listed for consideration by the Advisory Committee and ranked according to their fit against the assessment criteria and ability to deliver against economic and/or public good outcomes.

Selection process for the Expert Panel and Advisory Committee membership

The Chair of the Advisory Committee will be appointed by the Society in consultation with the TEC. An open nomination process will be run to identify candidates from which the Society will select all other members of the Advisory Committee.

The membership of the Expert Selection Panels and their respective Chairs will be determined by the Society.

The membership of the Panels and Advisory Committee will collectively have attributes which may include:

- understanding of the key attributes of world-class research teams;
- understanding the potential for tertiary education institutions (TEIs) to support New Zealand's cultural, environmental, social, and economic priorities;
- experience of best practice for knowledge transfer including the development of human capital and the formation of links with public and private end users;
- experience and reputation in assessing excellence in Māori research; and,
- diversity and breadth of perspective.

Advisory Committee

This Committee will review the assessment information provided by each of the Expert Selection Panels for long-listed Proposals and consider the benefit to New Zealand and governance and management structures/systems outlined in the Proposals.

Once the Committee has reviewed the long-listed Proposals, it will identify a short-list of Proposals for site visits or interview. Following the site visits or interview, the Advisory Committee will rank the short-listed Proposals and make recommendations to the TEC.

Expert Selection Panels

The number and composition of the Expert Selection Panels will depend on the number of Proposals received and the range of domains that those Proposals cover. Domains of the research are to be assigned to the Proposal by the applicant.

Selecting at least one CoRE with a Māori research focus

The process used to select CoREs for Māori-focussed research will be broadly similar to that used to select other CoREs (ie an open, fully contestable process with two assessment stages and a site visit) with assessment criteria drawn from the Funding Mechanism.

If no Proposals meet the selection criteria, the Advisory Committee may recommend the Proposal that best meets the criteria. The TEC will then work with the applicant to ensure that the Proposal is further developed and the resulting CoRE is of a comparable standard to other CoREs.

Key questions to be addressed by applicants

Applicants need to make sure they demonstrate how their Proposal meets the assessment criteria. Proposals should consider the following questions:

Excellence: excellent research:

- › Is the academic strength of the proposed research team demonstrated?
- › Is the academic strength of the proposed research programme demonstrated?
- › Is there a commitment to ensuring research is innovative, outcomes-focussed and has impact?
- › Does the proposed collaboration and the degree to which partners have contributed to the proposal indicate that there is meaningful collaboration and investment in the proposal?
- › Is the CoRE likely to have both national and international influence?
- › Is there a commitment to equity and wellbeing outcomes, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion in the proposed research programme and/or in the proposed research team?

Contribution within the tertiary education system, including:

- › Does the proposal make a significant contribution to the priorities of the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019?
- › What is the CoRE's contribution to graduate, postgraduate and new researcher education? Is the proposal likely to have a strong impact on the development of New Zealand's future workforce?
- › Does the proposal demonstrate contribution to the development of a culture of innovation and wealth creation in New Zealand?
- › Is there a commitment to prioritising equity and wellbeing outcomes, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion in teaching activities?
- › Is there a connection to undergraduate and compulsory-sector initiatives to broaden participation in post-graduate research?

Contribution to New Zealand's future development, including:

- › Is there potential for the research to have public good and/or economic impact in New Zealand?
- › Is there a commitment to engagement and exchange with potential stakeholders/ end-users?
- › Is there a strong intention to drive the connections that lead to research translation?

Governance and management, including:

- › Does the planned governance and management show strength and an ability to deliver on the CoREs impacts?
- › Is there clarity around proposed host and partner contributions, and are the benefits clear?
- › Have the partners committed to strong collaborative practices?

In addition, the selection process will consider how the CoREs will support the goals set out in:

- › Ka Hikitia: the Māori Education Strategy;
- › The Pacific Education Action Plan; and
- › Vision Mātauranga

Interpretation of equity and well-being

This information has been included to provide information about how we interpret equity, wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, and how this will be assessed during the selection process. Broadly, two issues are being addressed. Firstly the Crown is addressing its obligation as a partner to the Treaty of Waitangi by supporting Māori capability and secondly, by supporting broader equity and inclusion goals.

In general

Equity and wellbeing outcomes should be developed through both execution of the CoRE research programme and through the achievement and development of its staff and students. It is expected that responsibility for delivering equity and wellbeing impact rests with the CoRE governance and management structure, not those research staff that are members of a group that is being served.

Proposals should reference relevant government standards and initiatives including (but not limited to) the Treasury's Living Standards Framework and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Diversity in Science Statement (note that this should be interpreted to apply across all fields). We would also expect to see recognition and inclusion of the Treaty of Waitangi and an explanation of how this will be reflected in the work of the CoRE.

Much of the Government's equity and wellbeing focus is on improving equitable participation of Māori, Pacific peoples and women. However, equity and wellbeing should also be considered in regard to other groups such as those with disabilities and the rainbow community.

Staff and students

We expect to see a commitment to continuous improvement in the participation of Māori and Pacific staff and students in governance, management and Associate Investigator/Principal Investigator roles. To support this we expect each CoRE will develop robust career development policies for its students and academic staff.

We also expect CoREs to address issues relating to access, for example funding four-year PhD scholarships or other initiatives.

Research projects and programmes

Research programmes should consider any implications on equity and wellbeing that may arise as a result of implementing the research. We would expect to see that the research programme pathways to impact are developed following meaningful consultation with relevant communities. This includes any groups who could reasonably be affected by the proposed research (for example end-users in the health system).

We also expect that where Māori and Pacific research organisations are included as collaborative partners, that they have meaningful roles in the research programme. Where appropriate, the research programme should reference the goals set out in He Kai Kei Aku Ringa (the Crown-Māori Economic Growth Partnership), and Maihi Karauna (the Crown's Māori Language Strategy).

Appendix 1: Mission Statement for Centres of Research Excellence

Government's investment intention

It is the intention of the Government that investing in Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) will support growth in research excellence and the development of world-class researchers in areas of existing excellence that are important to New Zealand's future development.

Mission statement for CoREs

This mission statement sets out high-level expectations of CoREs in terms of role, performance and achievements, as well as shared responsibilities of host and partners.

The mission statement will form the basis of selection criteria and ongoing performance monitoring of the CoREs.

Research carried out by CoREs

CoRE research must be leading edge research of world-class quality in an area of importance to New Zealand. CoRE research demonstrates academic strength as well as planned and effective progress towards defined impacts with public good and/or economic benefits.

- › CoRE research may be basic and/or applied. It is always pioneering, commonly multi-dimensional and/or multi-disciplinary, and likely to involve collaborative and inter-institutional participation and exchange.
- › A CoRE will define its area of strategic impact, the need for this focus and the potential benefit for New Zealand. It will regularly revisit and refresh research planning to ensure its research is innovative and solution-focused.
- › A CoRE is innovative and responds quickly to opportunity. It allocates funding for excellent research that has next-stage potential impact and is aligned with its strategic direction.
- › It is anticipated that, over time, the research and personnel profile of a CoRE will evolve within its area of strategic impact, reflecting the innovative and cutting edge nature of a CoREs research activities.
- › A CoRE commits to equity and wellbeing outcomes, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion in its research activities and/or its research teams.
- › CoRE expertise can be directed to government science priorities, as appropriate.

CoREs as an element in the tertiary education system

A CoRE builds research capability in areas of existing excellence. It translates new knowledge into teaching and the training of future researchers. It offers specific and novel opportunities for graduate students, emerging and established investigators, across its partner institutions.

- › A CoRE plans its contribution to the teaching and learning environment of its partner institutions. It is able to demonstrate its educational outcomes and its contribution to employment outcomes for graduates.
- › A CoRE commits to equity and wellbeing outcomes, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion in its teaching activities.
- › A CoRE ensures key investigators have the opportunity to influence the experience of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows working with the CoRE.

CoRE collaboration and collaborative practices within CoREs

The CoRE model is a collaborative research partnership hosted by a TEI. It has appropriate governance and processes to ensure all partners contribute to delivery of agreed strategic outcomes.

- › The host and partners share responsibility for the development and regular review of institutional partner agreements.
- › Agreements recognise a combined responsibility for resourcing the CoRE as well as ensuring that research is of excellent quality and adds strategic benefit.
- › Agreements set out host and partner contributions, which include financial and/or in-kind contributions.
- › The CoRE host and partners together agree and implement collaborative policies and practices.

Engagement by CoREs with end-users and stakeholders

CoREs are characterised by active and outward-facing engagement with next-stage and potential end-users to ensure the CoRE delivers the strategic benefits it seeks for New Zealand.

- › A CoRE will invite potential end-users to contribute to the planning of current and future research options, including consideration of potential for impact.
- › A CoRE engages in research translation to support and encourage research uptake.
- › CoRE outreach can take many forms and have many audiences. A CoRE will identify its outreach partners and explore with them the best ways to engage.
- › A CoRE develops an engagement plan to bring focus to its dialogue with stakeholders, and its knowledge exchange activities and connections.

The role of CoREs at a national and international level

A CoRE demonstrates authority in its research area, both in New Zealand and overseas.

- › A CoRE builds wide networks within national and international research communities and uses this connectivity to strengthen its research, people, engagement and influence
- › A CoRE deploys its leadership to facilitate wide stakeholder debate on issues of significance
- › A CoRE operates as a showcase for New Zealand.