



COVID-19 Innovation Acceleration Fund Fact Sheet

What is the purpose of the fund?

This fund is to:

- > accelerate the operational deployment of innovative solutions in order to support responses to COVID-19, and alleviate the direct impacts of the virus threat, and
- > provide rapid short-term support to New Zealand based entities to develop and more quickly deploy a range of new products, processes, or services ('products').

What funding is available?

The initial size of the fund is \$25 million (*excluding GST*). As a guide, a minimum proposal size is expected to be \$50,000 (*excluding GST*).

What is the scope of the fund?

Funding is expected to be for products where the bulk of research required has already been undertaken, and support is needed to accelerate the delivery of products into operational environments more quickly than would happen otherwise.

This includes the costs of:

- > research and development
- > product development
- > prototyping
- > tooling up and pre-production activities.

Products must be intended to have a direct impact and be based on research. 'Direct impact' means those impacts that are immediately and directly attributable to addressing COVID-19 in the short (within 6 months) to medium term (within 18 months). As examples, the fund is likely to support:

- > medical products for detection, diagnosis, or treatment
- > clinical trials if they will be completed within the medium term
- > products for containment or prevention
- > products to enable increased flows of people, goods or services that would otherwise be slowed or stopped due to COVID-19 or related response measures.

Funding is expected to be for development of new products, usually meaning new to the world. However, funding could support development of products which are already available globally if a strong case is made regarding availability, lower cost, speed of deployment, or adaptation needed to the product in order to deliver significantly greater impact than would otherwise occur. Commercial and business development/ marketing activities are not included.

The fund is particularly keen to accept applications that are focused around the social and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19.

What is out of scope?

In general, the fund will not support proposals:

- > where the function which the proposal intends to support is undertaken by central Government departments, or the intended customer or user is a central Government department, AND
- > work is already underway on such functions such that the work outlined in the proposal may be redundant

Out of scope are activities which are:

- > not related to innovation and not based on research
- > likely to have only a marginal impact on responding to COVID-19 in the short to medium term
- > products that are intended to ameliorate second-order economic impacts, such as reduced business traffic or losses
- > manufacturing, production, or ongoing deployment of the product (other than during the prototyping and test phase)
- > an enhancement of an existing product that shows little or no evidence of having had additional R&D undertaken in order to specifically respond to the challenges of COVID-19
- > market research, marketing, advertising and sales
- > losses that might result if an entity internally redeploys its resources from an existing activity to one supported by the fund
- > bonuses, performance payments, or other ex gratia rewards
- > costs incurred prior to the start date of our contract.

The fund may reject applications where a sufficient level of high-quality activity has already been supported. The fund is intended to support a range of different technologies and responses to COVID-19. As such, decisions will take into account the spread of funding across different types of project.

The fund is now less likely to support applications relating to ventilator-type products, data modelling that is intended to be undertaken at a national scale, and proposals for population-level contact tracing technology or apps as several projects are already being funded in these areas.

We will continue to update this guidance as we become aware of specific examples of such functions.

Can the project be high risk?

Any money would also be aimed primarily at supporting innovative activities. This means the products being developed may not have proven efficacy at the time the funding is awarded. Some products supported by this fund may subsequently fail to be effective, or fail to be deployed for reasons discovered while undertaking the activities supported by this fund.

How developed does the implementation pathway need to be?

Products should have a pathway to deployment such that, if successful, they can be deployed in time to have the desired effect. Applicants will ideally have identified and received in-principle support from a customer or user. In-principle support is particularly important for products which have central government, government agencies, or government-funded entities (e.g. DHBs) as target customers. Cross-sector collaboration in the development of such products is encouraged, and MBIE may be able to provide assistance if needed.

How will intellectual property be treated?

Intellectual property (IP) developed as a result of funding should be made available to the rest of the world – recognising that this unique situation encourages New Zealand to be open to sharing any new knowledge to address impacts of COVID-19. IP brought into the project by an entity remains their possession.

If an applicant has serious concerns about making this government-funded IP widely available, then they may make an alternative case in their proposal that addresses why the retention of IP would lead to greater benefits to

New Zealand, or mean the work could not otherwise progress.

As a provider, how do I apply?

To express your interest, email CovidInnovationFund@mbie.govt.nz, with a brief project summary that outlines a discrete piece of work you are requesting funding for.

MBIE may consult with other government agencies and will provide advice as to whether the project is sufficiently relevant to the fund.

If invited to apply applications are submitted in our Investment Management System (IMS).

How will decisions be made?

MBIE will perform an initial triage of proposals received and aims to provide applicants with rapid feedback about the proposal. In some instances, MBIE may request additional information on the proposal. Please be aware that not all projects will be supported.

Eligibility criteria

- > Submitted by NZ legal entity
- > Majority (greater than half) of the proposed work to be undertaken by R&D and innovation staff in New Zealand, unless it can be otherwise demonstrated that the impacts are to New Zealand's greater benefit
- > Sufficient detail provided for assessment
- > Project is within the purpose and scope of the fund

Assessment criteria

- > Impact – benefits, intellectual property
- > Effectiveness – track record, feasibility, viability
- > Delivery – resourcing, timing and staging, coordination and alignment, risks

MBIE may obtain expert assessment of any proposal at its discretion, from staff of relevant government agencies or external reviewers who have signed a confidentiality agreement.

Decisions will be made by the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation. MBIE will provide the Minister with recommendations regarding proposals received, which may include due diligence such as consideration of cost effectiveness. Special conditions may be attached to funding approval.

MBIE may amend, suspend, cancel or re-issue all or any part of this fund.



As an assessor, how do I assess?

Remote assessment is provided via MBIE's portal ims.msi.govt.nz or as otherwise advised by MBIE via email. Succinct comment is sought and scoring will use a scale from 1-7 as per usual MBIE practice. Proposals rated 1 are characterised as "insufficient, irrelevant, lacking information" and 7 being "excellent, exemplary, detailed, and impressive". Comments from assessors may be summarised and provided to the Minister.

What will the contract terms be?

Funding will be contracted on MBIE terms which MBIE will supply in due course. Your funding will be contingent upon acceptance of these terms.

What publicity will be given to the project?

Information on any award may be made public, including names of the awardee and their collaborators, funding amounts, title, project dates and public statement.

When publicising any work, funded partners are expected to acknowledge the contribution made by MBIE's COVID-19 Innovation Acceleration Fund.

