

Auckland Unlimited

Submission to Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment :

Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways Green Paper (March 2022)

Introduction

Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland is home to one-third of Aotearoa New Zealand’s population, with over 1.7 million people, and has experienced significant growth in its population over the last decade. The Auckland Plan 2050 recognises these pressures in identifying that, to achieve the Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland we want, we must address the three most important challenges of high population growth, ensuring prosperity is shared amongst all Aucklanders, and reversing environmental degradation.

Auckland faces economic challenges such as income disparities, cost of living, and lower productivity levels persist. The Auckland Plan 2050 aspires to create the conditions for a resilient economy through innovation, employment growth and raised productivity. Innovation needs a business-friendly, supportive environment. It requires strong connections between the individuals and organisations involved in developing new and improved products, services, processes and markets. The role of New Zealand’s Research, Science and Innovation (RSI) system is integral to improving the outcomes for business, our people, and our environment.

Auckland Council, along with New Zealand’s regional and unitary authorities, are major producers and end-users of science and a key part of the nation’s RSI system. Science undertaken by our sector delivers detailed, local-scale knowledge, generates much of New Zealand’s vital monitoring data and provides expertise on the application of research, particularly in relation to the science-policy interface. As such, Auckland Council’s response is by way of input into the *Te Uru Kahika Green Paper response*, a joint submission on behalf of the regional and unitary councils Aotearoa.

Introduction

Auckland Unlimited, a CCO of Auckland Council, is the largest regional cultural and economic development agency in New Zealand, with the purpose of “Enriching cultural and economic life in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland”, to create a legacy for future generations.

The organisation has an established record of preparing industries and businesses for Auckland’s future, through implementation of programmes and facilities that embed research and innovation tools to uplift skills and capability in high growth sectors, and to foster an entrepreneurial mindset – particularly focussed on increasing Māori, Pasifika, and female representation.

Understanding that a strong and connected innovation ecosystem drives economic growth; Auckland Unlimited deliver a range of innovation programmes: [*Innovation Clinic*](#), [*Business Clinic*](#), [*Māori Business Clinic*](#), [*Get Market Ready*](#), and [*XLabs*](#). A network of innovation facilities has been successfully established to bring forward regional knowledge hubs that provide space, equipment, and support to nurture collaborative technology-led innovation, and foster Māori and Pasifika entrepreneurship. Each facility - [*GridAKL*](#), [*GridMNK*](#), [*Click Studios*](#), and [*The Reserve*](#) - plays a significant role in building strong communities, nurturing skills and talent, growing business capability, connecting founders with capital, and embedding innovation in Auckland’s DNA.

There are also innovation programs and facilities within the Auckland tertiary - Auckland Unlimited provides these organisations with mentoring and judging expertise, connections to external commercialisation expertise, and opportunities for funding (grants and equity). In parallel, their research expertise is obtained by Auckland Unlimited for Auckland businesses undertaking research and development.

Auckland Unlimited Submission

Auckland Unlimited welcomes this consultation on the future of New Zealand's Research, Science, and Innovation (RSI) system as laid out in the Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways Green Paper. We support MBIE's vision of creating a research sector that can best honour Te Tiriti, give life to Māori research aspirations, and enable mātauranga Māori .

Development of programmes and facilities that encourage growth of the innovation ecosystem are critical for New Zealand, and Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, as our economy recovers from the sustained impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. As we seek to reactivate our economy, there is a significant opportunity to rebuild our industries, and support transformation of entrepreneurial ideas into business solutions, services, and products that build productive export-ready businesses solving challenges, and creating the jobs of tomorrow.

Auckland Unlimited are end-users of the RSI system, accessing core research and science services to inform decision making for the region that supports greatest impact for residents, industries, and businesses.

In this submission on MBIE's Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways Green Paper, we acknowledge that parts of the RSI system work well and that some areas present opportunities for improvement. We seek to be involved in, and contribute to, the next stages of the Te Ara Paerangi consultation, and our submission is set out under the key themes of the green paper.

National Research Priorities

We support development of a consistent set of research priorities, however we recognise that underpinning principles should be collaboratively developed before priorities are set. These principles should be determined in collaboration with Māori, central government, local government, economic development agencies, scientists, industry, and other key partners.

Development of research priorities should reflect the needs of New Zealand, but also the strategic needs of regions in the medium and longer term. Coordination will be required to avoid siloes or duplication of regional priorities.

Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland faces challenges and opportunities that are unique from the rest of the country, with the largest Māori and Pasifika population and communities. There is a keen desire by these communities to access the opportunities a strengthened RSI eco-system offers, but barriers to this must be addressed – for example South Auckland Local Board areas have significantly low levels of internet access which inhibit opportunities for rangatahi to engage in the RSI system from an early age

South Auckland has the youngest demographic make-up of any area in New Zealand and while Māori and Pasifika currently make up 27 per cent of Auckland's total population, they account for 43 per cent of youth under 15. Looking even further forward, more than one-in-six of New Zealand's babies were born in south and west Auckland in 2019 and 2020, and close to half of Auckland's babies.

We support development of regionally specific research principles that acknowledge Māori and Pasifika communities as the future workforce and innovators/entrepreneurs of Tāmaki Makaurau. The economic base of iwi enterprise also continues to grow. These provide an impetus to embrace opportunities that foster alternative pathways, equity of access, and connection into the RSI system – outside of the typical graduate/PHD career pathways.

We welcome a re-shaping of the RSI system to address inequalities and inequities arising for Māori, Pasifika and women, that goes beyond an aim to make the RSI system 'equal', but that enables additional support required to have the same 'equal' platform as others.

Te Tiriti, Mātauranga Māori, and Māori Aspirations

Auckland Council and Auckland Unlimited partner with Māori to deliver better outcomes for Māori in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland via the respective *Kia Ora Tāmaki Makaurau Māori Outcomes Performance Measurement Framework* and the *Te Mahere Aronga 2021 – 2024 Māori Outcomes Plan*.

We acknowledge the intergenerational inequities that have led to disparities in the social and economic development of Māori communities. The existing RSI system was not founded on a premise of valuing mātauranga Māori, nor has it designed systems and processes where Māori are equal decision makers under the Treaty in defining RSI priorities.

Tāmaki Makaurau is home to world class indigenous research institutions, collectives and individual including Wānanga, academic institutions, Iwi, hapū, whānau and community organisations. So we support development of an inclusive and values-led RSI system that centres on a commitment to develop an inclusive, Te Tiriti based approach of partnership. An RSI ecosystem that embraces Mātauranga Māori science methodologies alongside western science methodologies and kaupapa Māori research methodology and principles

We acknowledge, and welcome, that giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi may require governance arrangements, priority setting approaches, funding investment, intellectual property mechanisms, and reporting /evaluative frameworks that are different to the current system.

Funding

To fully respond to increasingly urgent and complex national and regional challenges, an approach of stable, long-term funding is required more equitably across the breadth of research, science, and innovation systems.

We support a re-balancing of the RSI system that directs more long-term base grant funding toward technology-led innovation approaches, and scales existing innovation facilities and assets to improve national productivity, through development of new products, services and solutions that address complex challenges.

To enhance commercialisation opportunities arising from research, we support a reduction in the large equity stakes currently being taken in tertiaries' newly-formed spin out businesses.

These institutional equity stakes result in businesses being unable to secure suitable follow-on investment from the private sector, as the level of remaining equity is too small, and therefore unattractive as a potential investment.

We recommend re-shaping institutional funding policies to address issues arising from institutional investment and shareholdings in early-stage ventures.

The future funding model must make provision for the historical inequity of decades of under-investment in mātauranga Māori, and support a Te Tiriti partnership approach with a view towards intergenerational outcomes

Institutions

We recognise that the RSI system must serve the current and future needs of New Zealand nationally, whilst also recognising regional specific challenges and opportunities, and that any re-shaping of the RSI system should promote and facilitate knowledge creation *and* knowledge transfer.

We support the concept of regionally based knowledge hubs that provide a physical, and welcoming, entry point for industry to engage with the RSI system/community to understand how they can adopt research, innovation, or technology to improve their productivity, and create new products/services that open up access to new markets.

Adoption of an institutional approach akin to *InnovateUK's* catapult network presents an opportunity to scale existing regional research and innovation facilities into knowledge hubs that provide access to cutting edge equipment, research, and technical expertise that is prohibitive in cost for the average business.

Catapults provide end-users with use cases setting out the benefits to be gained from adoption of research or technology, as well as bringing forward space for businesses to test, demonstrate and improve their ideas/products/services, moving at a pace relevant to industry.

Research Workforce

We acknowledge that New Zealand's RSI system is world-class and develops excellent research, benefitting from attraction of international scientists, some of whom lead in their respective fields or collaborate with leading overseas researchers (hence importing knowledge to NZ).

We welcome an opportunity to re-balance the research workforce further and increase opportunities for home-grown research talent. We support an enhanced RSI system that provides pathways attractive for Māori, Pasifika, women, and youth to engage in. Mechanisms could be introduced that fund emerging researchers from our under-represented groups that have completed an academic pathway, complemented by provision of paid work internships as an alternative pathway to enter the RSI workforce. Professional development opportunities for existing RSI workforce should include cultural competency upskilling, and an increased number of secondment opportunities to build both knowledge base and wider community engagement.

The Performance Based Research Fund drives academic research however it does also encourage competitive behaviour within the research workforce to publish, but not necessarily transfer knowledge to other bodies (local government, economic development agencies, industry) to support commercialisation of research. We welcome a re-shaping of the RSI system that shifts the current research workforce culture, and coordinates engagement with other bodies for better commercialisation outcomes – where publicly funded research has an open access policy as standard, and knowledge transfer outside of the science community to industry/businesses/end users is packaged and facilitated to increase uptake to address challenges. In parallel, we recommend strengthening the nascent, parallel innovation-career pathway for academics such that they can pursue research commercialisation opportunities without harming their academic career.

Infrastructure

We support provision of appropriate infrastructure to ensure the RSI system operates at the frontier of research and innovation.

Provision of cutting-edge technology, accurate and timely datasets, and tools to support monitoring and reporting systems are required.

Adoption of the *InnovateUK* catapult network model (as noted under the Institutions theme) could bring forward an opportunity to centralise shared overhead functions around HR, data/IT systems, governance entities, libraries etc.

The catapult network model could present a ‘one door’ access point for end users to engage with the RSI system, providing an opportunity to direct users to the appropriate catapult for their needs.

Rather than bringing forward new catapult centres, we support utilisation of existing assets in the first instance, to scale and build regional capability.

Ngā Mihi Nui

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