



*Office of the Mayor*

15 March 2022

Ministry of Business Innovation and  
Employment

Via email: [FuturePathways@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:FuturePathways@mbie.govt.nz)

Kia ora koutou

**SUBMISSION: TE ARA PAERANGI FUTURE PATHWAYS GREEN PAPER**

I write on behalf of Nelson City Council - Te Kaunihera o Whakatū (Council), a Unitary Council located in Te Taihū. Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the future of the Research, Science and Innovation (RSI) sector. This submission opportunity is important to local government and our Council as we are key user of public research. Council also undertakes a significant amount of work in the RSI space.

Working collaboratively with the community, Wakatū Incorporation, councils, iwi, business, science institutes, education, and other stakeholders, developed Te Taihū Intergenerational Strategy. It is the start of the design of the future we want, as the people of Te Taihū. The Vision for the Strategy is: Tūpuna Pono, To Be Good Ancestors. At the heart of the Strategy is the wellbeing of the people and places in Te Taihū (Oranga Te Taihū), with a particular focus on the wellbeing of current and future generations and the responsibility we have, as the current generation, to pass on the taonga of Te Taihū in a better state than when these taonga were placed in our care. The Strategy has been developed to outline how Te Taihū looks to build on sector strengths, modern science, and innovation to guide responses to challenges and opportunities.

Research, science and innovation is one of our growing strengths with a proud history and the highest number of scientists per capita of any New Zealand city. While the makeup of our economy has traditionally been viewed against core sectors, emerging concentrated economic drivers also cut across industries, presenting opportunities for expansion and growth when we converge our key strengths and the direction of travel for the global economy. These include:

- The Knowledge Economy – our intellectual capital that forms the value of so many of our businesses and allows us to sell knowledge to the world; high value low impact economic activities.



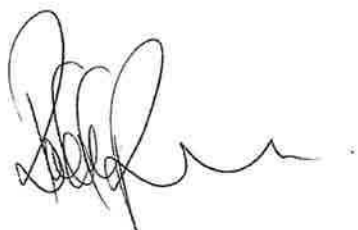
- The Māori Economy – our growing Māori economy, made up of both iwi and Māori owned enterprises, anticipated to grow substantially over the coming decade.
- The Green Economy – the part of the economy focused on sustainability and environmental restoration, and which includes our businesses who trade off a reputation for sustainability and care.
- The Digital Economy – the part of our economy enabled by remote working, and where our lifestyle proposition offers a unique competitive advantage as the digital economy continues to grow and develop.
- The Creative Economy – our emerging creative class, from artists and artisans, to graphic designers and writers, supporting a range of careers and businesses in our region.

Council has a responsibility to promote the wellbeing of our community, and the public research system is critical to addressing some of our biggest challenges. As our submission shows, Council supports the aim to create a future-focused research system that is adaptable, resilient, and connected. Council believes the public research system should build greater connections with local government, particularly because councils undertake significant work in a number of the Government's stated priority areas including climate change, economic development, built environment and environmental protection/management.

We welcome further updates and the opportunity to shape the future of the RSI sector in a way that helps our regional vision thrive. Please send further updates to

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Nāku iti noa



Rachel Reese

**Mayor of Nelson: Te Koromatua o Whakatū**

## **Issue 1 – What principles could be used to determine the scope and focus of national research priorities?**

Council supports investment in research, science, and innovation as a driver of New Zealand's future prosperity and wellbeing. Consistent with local government's role, Council supports the inclusion of a principle that research priorities should enhance the environmental, social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of communities in the present and for the future. Commissioning its own research or using others' research and innovations are key to enabling local government to fulfil its role. Therefore, a local government perspective should be considered when determining the scope and focus of national research priorities.

Local government involvement should not just be a tick-box exercise. Local government can, in the scoping stage, provide valuable insights into the operationalisation and usefulness of research, for example, using the work already undertaken through the Regional Council Research, Science and Technology strategy and priorities.<sup>1</sup>

The principles should include a focus on the development of technology required to drive New Zealand's future prosperity and wellbeing.

It is important that research priorities enable long-term thinking and planning by central and local government. These priorities will need to unlock and enable activities in the short-term which will deliver benefits in the long-term. For example, it is critical that the research, science, and innovation system supports initiatives which will drive the transition to a low-emissions and climate-resilient economy and guide short term environmental management decisions for long term environmental benefits.

Nelson City Council is an active user and supporter of the Envirolink scheme which aims to improve science input into environmental management activities, increase engagement and contribute to greater collaboration between regional councils and the public science system. Schemes like these demonstrate the value, for local government and their communities, of publicly funded research.

Local government should have greater involvement when determining the scope and focus of national research priorities. This should include its role as both researcher and user, including in areas such as climate change, built environment and environmental management. Council supports building on Envirolink and considers it should be expanded to include natural hazards.

While Envirolink is an example of collaboration with the local government regional sector in the environmental space, Council notes the scope for greater sector involvement in other priority areas including economic and social wellbeing such as research undertaken in the arts and humanities.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.envirolink.govt.nz/assets/RC-RST-SummaryBrochure2020.pdf>  
<https://www.envirolink.govt.nz/assets/Research-for-Resource-Management-2020.pdf>

The Government should also consider the potential for national research priorities to align with some of the national direction Government is issuing under new legislation such as the proposed Natural and Built Environments Act. There may be scope for some of the outcomes desired under new and existing legislation to be supported via the public research system.

## **Issue 2 – What principles should guide a national research priority-setting process and how can the process best give effect to Te Tiriti?**

Council believes local government should be involved in setting public research priorities, especially considering the focus on long-term challenges such as climate change, freshwater, and the biodiversity crisis. Collaboration is a key principle as we aim to build a high degree of connectivity in both the development and use of science, research, and innovation. This needs to be broader than just environmental priorities, and should recognise local government's role in promoting economic, social, and cultural wellbeing.

Council supports a system where decisions on research projects incorporate Mātauranga Māori and give effect to Te Tiriti. Council agrees that decisions should also reflect the interests and involvement of key stakeholders and considers local government to be one of these stakeholders.

Council is in favour of establishing a clear process to support co-development of research priorities with Māori. Council acknowledges this will likely follow a different process to other priorities.

Council supports dedicated funding for specific local government focus areas to provide some longer-term certainty for the sector.

## **Issue 3 – How should the strategy for each research priority be set and how do we operationalise them?**

Where research is undertaken in partnership with local government, or in an area of local government's responsibilities, accountability mechanisms should be included to ensure that thought has been given to the use of the research findings and any wider implications. This will ensure the researchers understand local government needs and perspectives, and that as end users local government can operationalise the research findings.

## **Issue 4 – How would you like to be engaged throughout the Future Pathways programme?**

Council would like to be engaged through local government bodies such as LGNZ, Taituarā, the Regional Council Chief Executives (RCEOs) and Special Interest Group (SIG) networks.

**Issues 5, 6 & 12– What are your thoughts on how to enable and protect Mātauranga Māori in the research system? What are your thoughts on regionally based Māori knowledge hubs? How do we design Te Tiriti enabled institutions?**

We acknowledge our iwi partners of Te Taihū including Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Koata, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Tama, Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Kuia, Ngāti Apa ki te Rā Tō and Rangitāne. Council also partners with a range of Māori and hapū organisations. We believe that iwi are best placed to respond to these questions.

**Issues 7 & 8– How should we determine what constitutes a core function and how do we fund them? Do you think a base grant funding model will improve stability and resilience for organisations? How should we go about designing and implement such a funding model?**

Council has no additional comments on core functions or funding model. However, Council considers development and maintenance of databases, collections and monitoring to be a core function, and funding to support the ongoing gathering, management and reporting of information should be considered a priority. These functions support a range of activities and Council supports access to this information by local government where applicable.

**Issues 9 & 10 – How do we design collaborative, adaptive and agile research institutions that will serve our current and future needs? How can institutions be designed to better support capability, skills and workforce development?**

Council agrees that the value of public good research extends beyond the institutions undertaking the research and Government, and includes stakeholders such as local government, iwi Māori and NGOs. We face common challenges, such as climate change, and funding processes need to be designed to support collaboration and an interconnected system of research and knowledge sharing.

**Issue 11 – How should we make decisions on large property and capital investments under a more coordinated approach?**

Council agrees that better coordination of property and capital investment and co-location can enable stronger connections between researchers across the system and support resilience and efficient use of resources. This coordination should include other institutions and stakeholders, including Local Government, private research, and the proposed Māori knowledge hubs.

**Issue 13 – How do we better support knowledge exchange and impact generation? What should be the role of research institutions in transferring knowledge into operational environments and technologies?**

As noted above, co-location and/or collaboration of stakeholders would support knowledge exchange. Nelson City Council has supported this principle with funding for the new Science and Technology Precinct located at Port Nelson as a hub for innovation and creativity.

Stakeholders who will use the findings should be considered early in the process when setting the scope and function of the research. Council believes this will better support the operationalisation of research findings. Local government plays an important role as a collaborator in local communities and can help to transfer knowledge created in the public research system.

**Issue 14 & 16 – How should we include workforce considerations in the design of research Priorities? How do we design new funding mechanisms that strongly focus on workforce outcomes?**

Council would argue that local government resourcing and capacity should be included in the consideration and design of research priorities. This includes local government as a provider of information, a user of information, user and provider of expertise, and implementer of research findings to effect positive change.

**Issue 15 – What impact would a base grant have on the research workforce?**

Council notes that base grant funding will provide certainty to the public research system; support public good and collaborative science; and enable the holding and reporting of accessible long-term data sets by research organisations.

**Issue 17 – How do we support sustainable, efficient, and enabling investment in research infrastructure?**

Investment and development of infrastructure should be undertaken in collaboration with others, such as private research institutions and the tertiary education system. This will enable more effective use of the investment and allow highly experienced researchers to work alongside others in more efficient ways.