

#137

COMPLETE

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Page 2: Section 1: submitter contact information

Q1

Name

Ben Curran

Q2

Email address

Privacy - 9(2)(a)

Q3

Yes

Can MBIE publish your name and contact information with your submission?
Confidentiality notice: Responding "no" to this question does not guarantee that we will not release the name and contact information your provided, if any, as we may be required to do so by law. It does mean that we will contact you if we are considering releasing submitter contact information that you have asked that we keep in confidence, and we will take your request for confidentiality into account when making a decision on whether to release it.

Q4

Yes

Can MBIE contact you in relation to your submission?

Page 3: Section 2: Submitter information

Q5

Individual

Are you submitting as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Page 4: Section 2: Submitter information - individual

Q6

Yes

Are you a researcher or scientist?

Q7

Age

Privacy - 9(2)(a)

Q8

Gender

Q9

In which region do you primarily work?

Q10

Ethnicity

Page 5: Section 2: Submitter information - individual

Q11

Respondent skipped this question

What is your iwi affiliation?

Page 6: Section 2: Submitter information - individual

Q12

Respondent skipped this question

If you wish, please specify to which Pacific ethnicity you identify

Page 7: Section 2: Submitter information - individual

Q13

University

What type of organisation do you work for?

Q14

No

Is it a Māori-led organisation?

Q15

Biomedical and clinical sciences

Which disciplines are most relevant to your work?

Q16

There is a balance between Mātauranga Māori and other science knowledge

What best describes the use of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in your work?

Page 8: Section 2: Submitter information - organisation

Q17

Respondent skipped this question

Organisation name

Q18

Respondent skipped this question

Organisation type

Q19

Respondent skipped this question

Is it a Māori-led organisation?

Q20

Respondent skipped this question

Where is the headquarters of the organisation?

Q21

Respondent skipped this question

What best describes the use of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in your organisation?

Page 9: Section 3: Research Priorities

Q22

Priorities design: What principles could be used to determine the scope and focus of research Priorities?(See page 27 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Do not set all research priorities at a national level. Set aside funding, at least equivalent to any of the nationally set research priorities for a number of smaller research projects of varying size across a number of disciplines that are set by communities. These could be at an hapu level, or driven by community organizations. Support researcher interaction with communities to develop research with communities - specifically focusing on the current needs of those communities.

As far as nationally set priorities, multi-institute/multi-disciplinary research will not occur unless it is a requirement of funding. The current Academy talks of multi-disciplinary research, of collaboration across institutes, but these words are largely empty and will remain so unless they are forced to engage in these activities.

Q23

Priority-setting process: What principles should guide a national research Priority-setting process, and how can the process best give effect to Te Tiriti?(See pages 28-29 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Flexibility to modify, create or disband national research priorities sounds good. Remember though, that you are talking about modifying, creating and disbanding peoples careers. Unless those careers are more certain, there will be resistance to that level of flexibility.

With regards to expert advice - ensure that you have input from across all levels of research. I understand the attraction of utilizing senior researchers from current institutions, but that feedback will only represent a small fraction of views from within the research community.

Māori absolutely need to be front and center of process of setting national level research priorities.

Q24

Operationalising Priorities: How should the strategy for each national research Priority be set and how do we operationalise them?(See pages 30-33 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

No matter how the governance for each priority is arranged, have a code of conduct for (at least) those in governance positions, which include both statements against racist behavior and actual consequences should the required standards not be met.

Where possible, do not give leadership to a single institution or organization - force leaders to create strategy that results in collaborative behavior.

Split oversight from operational roles. Make sure the oversight roles have teeth, and that those in oversight roles are not the best buds of those that they are overseeing - though that will be hard in a country as small as New Zealand. Oversight roles should have the capacity to engage with researchers and communities at all levels within a research priority and not just take the word of those at the top. The apparent lack of awareness of MBIE of state of early career researchers that has become apparent over the last couple of months of consultation is extremely worrying. It would be encouraging if MBIE/funding organizations could continue something resembling the same level of engagement with researchers across the board that has been happening as part of this review process, as part of ongoing governance - that's one aspect of governance that could be spread across priorities. I acknowledge that that would be labor intensive, but it would be worth it.

Page 10: Section 4: Te Tiriti, mātauranga Māori, and Māori aspirations

Q25

Engagement: How should we engage with Māori and Treaty Partners?(See page 38 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

On a long term basis. Even five year time frames are short. Māori should have a voice and be involved in the creation, running and governance of as much of our research as possible. Part of that should not be limited to how things work over the next five year window though.

Auckland City council has the unitary plan which lays out a basic road map that's reviewed every 10 years. Put something like that together for research/science, a larger framework reviewed every 5 years as the research landscape changes, but have a larger plan.

Q26

Mātauranga Māori: What are your thoughts on how to enable and protect mātauranga Māori in the research system? (See pages 38-39 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Having funders participate in public discourse when mātauranga Māori is belittled in academia would be a good start. Funders have standing in that conversation, silence is tacit approval of racism.

Start measuring institutes on the number of Māori in leadership positions that are not Māori focused. This is not to suggest that positions related to Māori engagement are not necessary, they are.

If Māori are primarily employed, especially at senior levels, in Māori engagement roles, it makes an institutes commitment to diversity ring hollow. Force the institutes to be more reflective of wider society in their makeup at all levels, tie it to their ability to apply for funding, and not just special funding rounds, all funding.

In academic circles there is often request for training in mātauranga Māori. In some respects that would be beneficial, but in others it risks becoming a box to be ticked. Enabling and protecting mātauranga Māori requires embedding it in our research system. Part of that requires I think, enabling a much longer term process. A process where there are prospects for long term careers for Māori, and space for non-Māori to stick around and build long term relationships with Māori.

Q27

Regionally based Māori knowledge hubs: What are your thoughts on regionally based Māori knowledge hubs?(See page 39 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Use of regional knowledge hubs as places from which to initiate research ideas and projects is an excellent idea. It would bring some aspects of research closer to communities, and enable researchers from more distant regions to build a career without being forced to choose between career and home - more potential researchers for New Zealand and research more closely connected to communities is a win-win.

The crowns role in this should be as a facilitator though, not a driver. Facilitate communication from larger institutions, possibly fund positions that are part-time located across a hub and an institution - make building relationships with hubs something upon which institutes are measured and judged on. Again, don't rely on shiny reports and empty words from institutions to judge success.

Page 11: Section 5: Funding

Q28

Core Functions: How should we decide what constitutes a core function, and how do we fund them?(See pages 44-46 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Core functions should constitute the bulk of the countries research program. Competitive funding rounds have essentially become a lottery that requires vast amount of wasted time from researchers and do not result in best science being chosen.

Q29

Yes

Establishing a base grant and base grant design: Do you think a base grant funding model will improve stability and resilience for research organisations?(See pages 46-49 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Q30

Establishing a base grant and base grant design: How should we go about designing and implementing such a funding model?(See pages 46-49 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

A concern raised in the green paper is that providing a base grant that meets a greater proportion of research and salary costs would leave less allocation for for priorities and competition. This doesn't need to be the case, besides which, if you decide that those research and salary costs should be subject to competitive grants, they still have to be paid.

Providing stability for your workforce would allow that workforce to devote a greater amount of time and thought to your research priorities instead of chasing money to secure their salaries. Research priorities can still be targeted by directing institutions receiving base funding towards those priorities, the details of which could be left to the strategic direction of the priority leadership.

Whatever funding could be left for research that might require support above and beyond the base level grant. Given that people would no longer be desperately seeking funding to ensure they have a job, it's likely that there would be fewer applications.

The idea that competitive grant rounds are the best way to fund innovative science is a mindset that needs to be left behind. The idea that the way to get the best from your research workforce is to have them continually focused on whether they have a job next year or not, is another idea that needs to go. Establish a base level of funding, invest in structures and research priority leadership that guides research and leave competitive funding for particularly expensive projects or long shots.

Page 12: Section 6: Institutions

Q31

Institution design: How do we design collaborative, adaptive and agile research institutions that will serve current and future needs?(See pages 57-58 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

The base form of institution design is already mostly implemented - Centers of Research Excellence. The CoRE's are a good idea but are held back by the terms which tie them to universities and CRIs.

CoRE's, or CoRE like entities should be funded in such a way as to potentially become self-funding. The vast overheads and claim of ownership of all IP by universities prevents this from happening.

Not all CoRE's should be funded with a view to becoming self-funding. Some should though and those should be funded as long as they are doing good work that benefits the country. Some entities running national databases or facilities that are of use across research sectors should not be included in this.

There are however, CoRE's that have been funded through several rounds that could have easily been self-funded entities by now. Instead their IP claimed in it's entirety by host institutions which disappears into some vast fund to pay for shiny new buildings and recreation centers.

CoRE-like entities that become self funded would form a base for research outside of academia, providing non-academic research career paths and freeing up money for future national research priorities.

The current universities might claim they already perform this function. They do not, as evidenced by minimal non-academic research in New Zealand.

Within the university system, if there is any hope for collaboration and adaptive/agile research, then it needs to be required of universities and literally tied to funding. If it's not, many empty, aspirational words will be said and nothing will happen.

Q32

Role of institutions in workforce development: How can institutions be designed to better support capability, skill and workforce development?(See page 58 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Most institutes, certainly the universities talk about workforce development, but do not go to any great pains to do anything about it, instead depending on the precarity of early career researchers. If there are alternative research career pathways outside of academia, universities will be forced to care for their workforce.

Q33

Better coordinated property and capital investment: How should we make decisions on large property and capital investments under a more coordinated approach?(See pages 58-59 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Fund property development for the universities separately. Make property development easier when it is jointly funded by multiple institutions that can show better potential utilization of the real estate.

Restrict how money generated from research can be used - limit the amount that can be spent on property and other capital investments. Force the bulk of money generated by research outputs to be used to fund further research infrastructure and people.

Q34

Institution design and Te Tiriti: How do we design Tiriti-enabled institutions? (See page 59 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

The regional hubs are an excellent idea.

Make the ability to apply for funding dependent on it. Or make a certain percentage of the the base grant dependent on ensuring that institutions either have are are credibly working towards a representative workforce, to engagement and cooperation with things like regional hubs, or iwi groups.

Q35

Knowledge exchange: 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?(See pages 60-63 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

If CoRE-like entities were to become self funding, I would encourage MBIE to investigate something along the lines of the Mondragon system in Spain. That system is not research focused, but a system where entities are self funding, employee owned and splitting profits between employees, the communities they work with and further development would provide impetus to care and develop their workforce. And as an added bonus, provide a much more attractive career path for early career researchers than is currently available.

MBIE also need to consult with a much wider cross section of the research community to understand impact. The University Research Offices group will provide an understanding of research impact heavily influenced by what is beneficial for universities, not for researchers. And the actions of universities have demonstrated quite emphatically over the years that what is good for universities is not the same as what is good for researchers. Which means that as a funder, MBIE and the crown are not getting the best out of their research workforce.

Anything published should be via open-access. As much as I like the idea of making all generated IP publicly available I don't believe that would work within our wider economic system. For some research - that around public health for example, the results of research should be open and used for the good of all. Funding structures would have to reflect that. In many research areas though, engagement with industry should be welcomed. Having said that, income from industry partnerships should count as income generated from research - restrict what can be done with that to funding new research and/or researchers over and above what a base grant allows.

So, consult outside of the usual channels. Facilitate on going conversations between researchers and communities around what has been, is, or might be impactful.

Page 13: Section 7: Research workforce

Q36

Workforce and research Priorities: How should we include workforce considerations in the design of national research Priorities?(See pages 69-70 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Again, and I cannot stress this enough, if multi-insitutional, multi-disciplinary research is desired, it will not get done unless it is required of universities. There is still far to much parochial empire building and hoarding of data within institutions. The requirements for promotion or even just for securing a permanent position do not incentivize collaboration. Data is not shared, because there might (not probably, just might) be another paper in it and you need a stupid number of papers to get a permanent job. So any insights a different set of eyes might have are lost.

The research workforce contains a large number of highly specialized people. Those people are however, not incapable of turning their focus in a timely and responsive manner as research priorities change.

Q37

Base grant and workforce: What impact would a base grant have on the research workforce?(See pages 70-71 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

Funding a core of the research workforce through a base grant would allow researchers to devote significantly more time to the research priorities. That extra time is essential to supporting researchers to produce the best possible research.

Q38

Better designed funding mechanisms: How do we design new funding mechanisms that strongly focus on workforce outcomes? (See page 72 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

The research workforce in New Zealand does not currently have much in the way of opportunity outside universities and CRIs.

Long term support to kick start self funding research organizations - that are not owned by universities, that can't be sold, and use income generated from their research to fund further research would provide opportunities outside of the current structure. This would give the research workforce options, and with those options, better outcomes.

Page 14: Section 8: Research infrastructure

Q39

Funding research infrastructure: How do we support sustainable, efficient and enabling investment in research infrastructure?(See pages 77-78 of the Green Paper for additional information related to this question)

The universities and the larger research system, as it currently stands do not serve industry as well as they could, nor to do they serve the bulk of the research workforce or the communities they engage with well.

The crown has the opportunity to do several things.

- 1) facilitate ongoing conversations across the spectrum of the research community, which will have the added bonus of giving the crown visibility of how funding structures and initiatives are working. This would allow system reviews and realignment of research priorities to be more closely aligned with both what communities need and researchers can do.
2. Provide long term support for the generation of a research industry external to universities. This would improve options and conditions for the research workforce. It would provide a much greater base of research available for New Zealand companies to engage with, and in the longer term leave more of the crown funding available to be dedicated to public good research.
- 3) Lay out a long term plan, that is open to and continually being reviewed as research priorities change. A long term plan could accommodate a number of different structures such as CoRE's, CoRE-like entities that have a goal of becoming self-funded, and entities that provide services such as databases of national resources.
4. End the precarity that is endemic for the large majority of the current workforce. Core funding to cover everything from utilities to basic levels of research that align with the national level priorities. With competitive grant funding left to fund research infrastructure and additional researchers as needed for larger, more ambitious projects.

All of this would be more labor intensive for the crown, but would be worthwhile. In the end, it would be moving New Zealand's research focus from short term, to having a much longer term view of where and how research might be beneficial to New Zealand. Part of that is understanding that we have to take care of and support not just the communities that we work with, but the people at core of the research community itself.
