

I am an early career researcher working for a CRI. I previously worked at Confidentiality - 9(2)(ba)(i) but recently left for a position at another CRI offering better pay and a more manageable workload. I, unfortunately, don't have the time or, if I'm being honest, the expertise to complete a full submission form but though I should offer my experiences and thoughts in some form so have prepared this email. As the content of this submission could have impacts on my future in the sector I would appreciate it if my details were kept confidential.

As a researcher I love the work I do, I feel hugely privileged to work in this field. Working on research projects is challenging, engaging and fun all at the same time and I wouldn't trade this profession for anything. Unfortunately, more and more of researcher's time is being taken up by non-research activities. Namely applying for funding. Scientists are spending a huge amount of time applying for funding, competition for funds is so tight and expectations are so high that even small pools of funding require huge amounts of time and effort to apply for. The number of hours required to complete an application can sometimes exceed the amount of time the potential project would fund. In my previous position, I felt a huge amount of pressure to bring in revenue for the organisation. Funded hours were the main measure of my worth, my skills and experience and contribution to science were less important. I feel that the current competitive funding model is getting in the way of innovation and slowly breaking down the brilliant minds of our research sector through stress and burnout. While more funding would certainly be beneficial, changes to how funding is allocated and spent within organisations would also be hugely impactful.

The majority of researchers, especially those of younger generations, actively want to engage and collaborate with Māori but building relationships in the volatile boom and bust environment we work in is difficult. I can only imagine how frustrating it must be for Māori researchers and organisations to be bombarded with requests for collaboration and contribution on research proposals, many of which won't go on to secure funding and as such have no future. To engage and build meaningful connections between Mātauranga Māori and western science we need time, and the current funding model places a huge premium on time. Regionally based Māori knowledge hubs may go a long way toward solving half of this problem but allocating time for relationship building will help forge meaningful collaborations between non-Māori and Māori researchers and knowledge holders. During my time at Confidentiality I experienced the development of a large divide between corporate and research staff within the organisation. The size and spending on middle management seemed to be exponentially increasing and the responsibilities of each position became increasingly vague. The adoption of corporate language and profit-driven culture was strange and often at odds with the values I would expect for a scientific organisation. When the pandemic threatened the organisation's financial interest corporate stressed the importance of being frugal, but this frugality only seemed to apply to research staff salaries. The pressure on research staff to focus time on projects which could have financially positive outcomes for the organisation was immense, we often found ourselves in the uncomfortable middle ground between placating profit-motivated management and acting in the public interest. This culture also makes collaboration difficult; I have experienced the near breakdown of otherwise positive and productive collaborations over needlessly hostile contracts. Since leaving Confidentiality - 9(2) I haven't experienced these pressures to the same degree so these corporate culture issues may lie solely with Confidentiality and not all CRIs.

To sum things up I think a base grant funding model would solve many of the issues researchers face but I think it should be directed at research staff and activities, with a strong focus on NZ centred fundamental research. I think encouraging collaboration and co-location of CRIs with universities is a good idea and a base grant focused on fundamental research could help facilitate this. I think that the current research environment is overly competitive and unproductive and changes to address this will have the largest impact on the sector.

Thanks and good luck.

Confidentiality - 9(2)(ba)(i)