

Research Funding Guidance

Our contact details

Email: Research@naturalhazards.govt.nz

Physical Address: Level 1, 161 Victoria Street, Wellington, 6011

Postal Address: PO Box 790, Wellington 6140

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This document provides general guidance to researchers and research offices about our funding processes from pre-proposal through to contract completion.

INTRODUCTION

Who are we:

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC Toka Tū Ake) is a New Zealand Crown entity. Our purpose is to reduce the impact on people and property when natural disasters occur, by protecting homeowners and helping them recover from natural hazard events.

We do this by providing the first layer of residential land and building insurance cover for a range of natural hazards, and through careful administration of the Natural Hazard Fund. New Zealanders can have confidence their claims will be paid because NHCover is funded by levies, reinsurance and a Crown guarantee.

Building resilience to natural hazard events has long been a core part of our role. Our new legislation has increased that focus, making clear our role in informing, enabling and influencing decisions that can reduce Aotearoa New Zealand's vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards.

Part of that is increasing community resilience, and we invest in research, and promote education and awareness aimed at preventing or minimising the impacts of natural hazard events.

As a Crown Entity, the Crown Entities Act 2004 establishes the way we work, while the NHI Act sets out our roles and functions.

Our core functions:

- **facilitate research and education, and contribute to the sharing of information, knowledge and expertise on natural hazard risks, impacts and resilience**
- collect the levy for the insurance provided under the NHI Act, and manage the Natural Hazard Fund, including by investing in the Fund in accordance with the NHI Act; arrange reinsurance or other risk transfer products in respect of all or part of NHCover
- administer NHCover when claims arise.

What do we fund, why do we fund it:

Our Research Team coordinates around \$10m per annum of research funding through both competitive and directly negotiated grants. Research funding decisions are driven by



our [Resilience Strategy for Natural Hazards Risk Reduction](#), [Research Strategy](#) and our [Research Investment Priorities](#). **These documents are necessary reading for anyone wishing to apply for NHC Toka Tū Ake research funding.**

Research funding falls under one or more of our four themes: Resilient Buildings, Smarter Land Use, Supporting People and Decisions, and Quantifying Hazards and Impacts. Benefits to New Zealand and authentic consideration of Vision Mātauranga are important elements that we consider in conjunction with our priorities when making decisions about what research we fund.

Under our legislation accessing funding for research activities requires meeting the following criteria:

The resilience ‘benefit test’ criteria



We use a benefit management framework to identify, define, measure, and manage the delivery of potential benefits from research we fund. The framework also allows us to see where benefits are on track to be fully realised and where we might usefully intervene if a project is at risk of going off track.

Applying for Funding

This section describes our different funding mechanisms including competitive, negotiated grants, and funding for sponsorships and events.

Competitive Grants:

We run two contestable grant rounds, Biennials and University Research Programmes.

The Biennial grant round is run every two years and aims to fund research projects of up to 2 years for a maximum of \$100,000 each from a total pool of \$1.2 million. These grants are open to all proposals aligned with our research investment priorities and are intended to be accessible to early career researchers. Check [Projects on the go](#) to see a list of Biennial projects.

The University Research Programme (URP) grant round is run every three years and aims to fund up to ten programmes for a maximum of \$450,000 with a total budget of up to \$4.5 million. These grants are intended to be led by mid- to senior-career researchers at universities with programme management experience and capacity to support developing research capability that is aligned with programme delivery.

For the opening dates of the next rounds, see [All about funding](#).

Negotiated Grants, Sponsorships and Events:

Negotiated grants are for research projects including postgraduate grants, post-doctoral fellowships, and sponsorships for things such as awards, partnership activities, conferences, and events. These grants are intended for projects which are not appropriate for one of our competitive research rounds because of factors such as amount of funding required, time limitations or timeliness of project.

Postgraduate grants and postdoctoral fellowships are available to support outstanding postgraduates and post-doctoral fellows who are looking to contribute to either a current or new NHC Toka Tū Ake-funded project that meets our targeted Research investment priorities.

Sponsorships support awards, partnership activities, conferences, and events that contribute directly to the sharing of information, knowledge, and expertise for the benefit of New Zealand. We also sponsor one-off events and activities such as international workshops or conferences hosted here in New Zealand.

Negotiated research projects are non-competitive grants that are awarded to a project



that addresses a specific business or strategic need or an unanticipated event (e.g. an earthquake or landslide). Researchers are encouraged to contact our Research Team to discuss their new research project ideas, to ensure that they align with our research priorities, our strategy, and our funding criteria.

Researchers can apply for a negotiated grant at any time. Consideration of proposals is contingent on having funding available at the time.

Applicants can submit funding proposals in SmartyGrants, our Investment Management System - a secure online portal.

For more information on how to create an account or navigate using SmartyGrants please visit [SmartyGrants Help Guide for Applicants](#). Alternatively, you can email us at research@naturalhazards.govt.nz

Proposal Budgets

Budgets should be prepared using the template available on [our website](#). When you are preparing your proposal budget, please consider the following guidance.

General expenses

We expect our research funding to be used by the researcher/host organisation/supplier for the sole purpose of undertaking the project

The researcher and host organisation or supplier are responsible for monitoring expenditure throughout the period of the project. We are not responsible for budget overruns. If a project requires additional funding to complete its contracted obligations, it is the responsibility of the researcher, in conjunction with their organisation, to inform our Research Team as soon as possible to make new arrangements or request formal changes to their project's Agreement.

Overheads

Overhead costs can be included in a budget seeking our funding for Biennials and negotiated grants only; URPs are not eligible to apply for overhead expenses. Applicants to Biennials and negotiated grants are encouraged wherever possible to secure co-funding through a discount or waiver of overhead costs. If overhead costs do need to be included, we expect overheads to be equivalent to no more than 30% of the cost of staff time allocated to the project.

Salaries

Our funding can be used towards staff salaries; however, this is considered an overhead cost and therefore the limit on overheads (see above) should be considered. Our research funding should not be used to cover full salaries of researchers, as these should be



subsidised by their organisation. Postdoctoral fellows are treated as staff members in our research agreements, not students.

Funding for students, research assistants and summer scholars

Our research funding can be used to cover postgraduate student costs, salaries of research assistants, and summer scholarships. However, we expect to see time allocated to the supervisor of the student in the budget, regardless of if it has associated cost included or in-kind support.

Funding for students can include their stipends and enrolment related costs, especially where they are relevant to the project, such as thesis papers or course work related to skills required to do the research.

Initial project costs

The first payment released to a project is generally calculated to be up to 25% the project's total project value. However, if required, we can negotiate the initial payment amount made on a grant to help cover costs that are anticipated to occur early in the life of a project. These costs are often related to high set-up and commencement costs of projects. We may request additional information to demonstrate that the costs are reasonable and expected.

Conference travel and attendance

Our research grants cannot be used to cover conference attendance or conference travel unless your Agreement states otherwise. If a researcher is presenting a paper or leading a workshop on the project matter funded by us, we will accept requests for discretionary consideration of providing conference support.

Travel Costs

Any non-conference travel costs necessary to a project, including flights and accommodation, can be requested in the proposal's budget spreadsheet, and included as part of the total budget for approval. Travel costs should be reasonable and necessary i.e. Flights should be booked as early as possible and at low or lowest available price.

Conference and event sponsorship

Our research funding can be used to sponsor events like workshops and conferences relevant to understanding New Zealand's natural hazard and risk and increasing our resilience. In return for our sponsorship, we will negotiate acknowledgement of our support at the event. This typically includes advertising on the event website and proceedings, a booth for engagement purposes, a speaker position, free registrations for our staff as appropriate, and a summary report post-event describing the attendance rate, benefits, outcomes and challenges of the event.



We expect events sponsored by NHC Toka Tū Ake to have an enforceable and acceptable Code of Conduct. An example of an acceptable Code of Conduct may be requested from us prior to or after contracting.

Capital expenses

Our funding can be used to cover limited capital costs in exceptional circumstances. While capital equipment is the responsibility of the applicant's organisation, exceptional requests for our funding for capital equipment should be explained and justified in the budget.

Materials and apparatus purchased with research grant monies should be used exclusively for activities related to the funded project during its duration unless the impact of its use for other purposes is immaterial to the progress and quality of the project.

Reporting:

Specific reporting requirements will be agreed in each individual agreement however we generally aim to have progress reports due on a 6 monthly schedule.

Progress reports should provide a brief update on the progress/completion of project milestones, communication and public engagement, and provide an opportunity to formally report on any risks or issues that have arisen as well as bring our attention to any notable successes, share publications etc.

NHC Toka Tū Ake may submit the final report for peer review. We will notify you if a peer review is to be sought. Details of the review will be kept confidential and any matters of concern arising out of the review will be communicated to the Recipient. Any peer review comments must be addressed before acceptance of the final deliverable.

Additional guidance on progress, annual, and final report content is available in each report template, available through [SmartyGrants](#), and on our website [Research funding documents and templates](#).

How to submit your reports

If you submitted your research proposal via our research management system [SmartyGrants](#) you will have access to the report templates via your portal account. For more information on how to access these templates and submit your reports in SmartyGrants, please visit the [SmartyGrants Help Guide for Applicants](#). If you cannot access these templates, please get in touch with us at Research@naturalhazards.govt.nz.

Alternatively, if you submitted your proposal using one of the templates on our website or if you do not have access to SmartyGrants you can use the reporting templates available [here](#) and email your report directly to Research@naturalhazards.govt.nz.



Invoicing

Invoices should be sent to invoices@naturalhazards.govt.nz with Research@naturalhazards.govt.nz CC'd.

In order to allow us to facilitate prompt payment of invoices please ensure your invoice clearly states your unique Purchase Order (PO) number, your four-digit NHC Toka Tū Ake contract number, and a description of the milestone/deliverable that the invoice is seeking payment for. Invoices should be submitted once a milestone has been reached, or a deliverable has been accepted by NHC. Any invoices submitted in advance will not be paid until these conditions have been met.

Requesting changes to agreements

We will consider requests for extensions and variations to research project agreements on a case-by-case basis. We provide a Variation Request Form for you to explain the circumstances and changes requested. Variation requests take two to three weeks to process so please submit any request as early as possible.

The request will be assessed based on

- the case presented – what is the variation, why is it required, what impacts will it have, and how would these be mitigated?
- any previously granted variations and extensions (to the current grant and previous grants)
- the capacity of NHC Toka Tū Ake's research portfolio to accommodate the changes

We try to accommodate variation requests, when possible, but we are under no obligation to accept a request to vary or extend an Agreement.

Ethics, privacy and data

Ethics

Funded research that involves human or animal participants must abide by the ethics processes of the host organisation or supplier. Proposals must clearly stipulate when social research activities are being conducted with human participants and the steps taken to ensure correct procedures and participant privacy is maintained.

Researchers should consider the following guidelines and standards as part of research planning, in addition to your organisation's processes:

- ✓ [Royal Society Code of Professional Standards and Ethics](#)
- ✓ [Te Ara Tika Guidelines for Māori Research Ethics](#)



- ✓ [Ethical Guidelines for Post-disaster Research](#) – this resource is particularly important for scientists researching responses to natural hazard events.

Private data

Research may include working with private or confidential information or data. We expect that confidential data will remain secure and only anonymised or aggregated data will be disseminated publicly. This is the responsibility of the researchers and their host organisations.

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake data

We have a standard process for all requests to use our data. This process includes a data sharing request that will be filled out by our staff member and presented to our Data and Information Governance Forum for approval. Depending on the nature of the request there may be additional requirements such as signing a data sharing agreement or filling in an information security questionnaire to ensure proper controls are in place for storing private data.

Depending on the request, this process may take a while (a minimum of two weeks) and this timeframe should be considered as part of the research plan.

Our Relationship Expectations

We aim to develop trusted relationships with all our funded researchers. We assign research advisors to each project to supervise and serve as a point of contact, ensuring effective communication throughout the research journey and providing a clear single point of contact who will know all about your project. We encourage researchers to talk to us at any time about their progress, successes, opportunities, or difficulties they face during their projects. We provide support and resources to address challenges during the research process, promoting an environment of trust and shared goals. When emailing a research advisor please ensure the research inbox (Research@naturalhazards.govt.nz) is CC'd.

Dissemination and Uptake of Research

We are keen to support researchers to engage with stakeholders and users of their research, and to raise the visibility of their research amongst wider audiences. Upon completion, and if appropriate, we may lead some communications and stakeholder engagement activities with the support of the researchers (or vice versa) to ensure the research outputs are accessible, used by a range of audiences, adopted promptly, and have a nationwide impact where feasible.

We understand that our engagement with researchers and host organisations or suppliers can extend beyond the life of the original contract, with outcomes and benefits realised years after a contract has formally ended. We will work with researchers to help ensure



that research outputs reach their intended audience and that, as much as possible, the research achieves the intended outcomes and benefits to improve New Zealand's resilience to natural hazards.

We work with other New Zealand research programmes to aggregate and combine research activities for maximum benefit and then translate these activities to achieve intended outcomes and impact. We know that sometimes research has more impact when it is presented or combined with other relevant research, so we may ask researchers to work with us and other groups to share new knowledge, data and experience.

No surprises approach

It is important for researchers to notify us as soon as possible of upcoming publications, media engagements, or public-facing activities. We are a Crown entity and report to a Board and Minister who expect to be informed of all activities that will generate public interest or have an impact on the work that we are doing. This is the reason we expect a “no surprises” approach from our suppliers and researcher.

Please share a heads up through the Research Team inbox research@naturalhazards.govt.nz. We often support researchers and organisations to get their research noticed by the right people. We can help write briefings or updates for Ministers, present papers to our Board, and develop media or stakeholder communications plans.

Acknowledgement of NHC Toka Tū Ake funding

Researchers should acknowledge our funding contribution in every final report, article, publication, presentation, or other communications or media activity that arises from their project. When working with media or stakeholders, researchers should also acknowledge the support received by us for their project. A suitable form of acknowledgement is “A study [part] funded by Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake”, followed by the NHC grant number in square brackets [grant number XXXX]. If you are unsure of your grant number, please review your contract documentation, or contact the Research team for assistance.

Open access publications

Our research is funded through a public levy, and therefore it is important that its output is publicly accessible wherever possible. Moreover, research is most useful when its outputs are used to inform decision-making.

We encourage open-access publishing with complying journals. We expect researchers to consider this in their original proposal budget and include related publication expenses in their budget costs. For existing funding arrangements please contact Research@naturalhazards.govt.nz if additional funding support is required to help cover the costs of open-access fees. Exceptions can be made, for example if there are no suitable



open-access journals or the researcher is aiming for high-impact journals such as Nature Geoscience.

We seek to publish and distribute the project reports and findings, and any other information relating to the project, without charge, in any form and through any medium (including our website, internal networks and communications) subject only to the approval of the researcher/host organisation or supplier. There is an obligation by the researcher and/or host organisation to provide us with a copy of all documentation including reports, conference presentations, guidance and any other papers at the time it is completed or due.

Media and social media

Researchers can expect to work with us to promote their research through a range of activities, which may include news media. We will support researchers to effectively engage with media.

As above, researchers (or their host organisations) must advise us in advance of any media activity or publicity regarding the project (i.e. ensuring a “no surprises approach”), as well as informing the media or interested parties of our funding for the project, even after the funding agreement has concluded.

We encourage researchers to actively engage with the public through social media, either by posting on their own public-facing channels and acknowledging our funding in relevant posts, or by collaborating with us to post on our social media channels.

We also support researchers enhancing their skills, especially in science communication, to effectively translate their research into policy and practice. Therefore, we recommend that researchers take advantage of workshops and other opportunities aimed at developing their communication abilities for engaging with decision-makers, stakeholders, communities, and the media.

Support is available through the [Science Media Centre](#), or researchers can [contact our Research Team](#) for advice on how to best engage with end users and communicate their research.

Our Contract

Research Funding Agreement Terms at a Glance:

We utilise a standard template agreement for funding. This agreement is designed to be fair to all parties while setting clear expectations. Below is a plain language summary of the terms of our agreement, this summary should not replace legal advice and does not cover all the terms. We highly recommend that you review the contract before signing to ensure you fully understand the terms of our funding.

Clause 1 Term states:



- The contract will start on the start date and end on the end date unless NHC agrees to an extension.

Clause 2 Research Grant states:

- The funding provided must be used solely for the research as described in the proposal
- Any equipment purchased using the funding is to be used primarily for the project
- Any unspent funds are to be returned to NHC

Clause 3 IP states:

- All **new** IP is owned by the recipient and licensed to NHC
- All existing IP remains as is unless it is part of the new IP
- The recipient agrees the provided outputs do not infringe on any other parties' rights

Clause 4 Termination states:

- NHC can terminate the agreement if; the recipient breaches the agreement (and doesn't prompt correct the breach), or the objectives of the project are not being met.
- On termination any outstanding payments will be made, and any unspent funds will be repaid.

Clause 5 Dispute Resolution states:

- In the event of a dispute the agreement managers will attempt to resolve the dispute
- Failing this they will escalate to their managers
- If the managers are also unable to resolve the dispute, they will escalate to a member of their executive leadership team (or equivalent)
- If the dispute is unable to be resolved at this point then the parties can either seek external resolution or NHC may terminate the agreement.

Clause 6 Event Beyond Control states:

- The recipient may request to temporarily suspend the project due to events out of their control which prevent them from working on the project.
- If this suspension lasts longer than 2 months then NHC can terminate the agreement.

Clause 7 General states:

- If the project is co-funded and the co-funding is withdrawn the recipient must let NHC know and NHC has the right to terminate the agreement.
- If recipient is falling behind the agreed timelines they must inform NHC and make efforts to get back on track.
- The project cannot be sub-contracted without NHCs agreement
- Any confidential information should be marked as such. NHC has obligations such as those under the official information act which may require the disclosure of confidential information. NHC will discuss this before releasing any confidential information.
- Variations must be agreed in writing.

Clause 8 Data states:



- Data collection should adhere to the NZ Government Data and Information Management Principles, and FAIR and CARE principles.

Clause 9 Health and Safety states:

- The parties must work together where required to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSW act)
- The recipient will ensure that its staff are complying with the HSW act.
- The recipient will report to NHC any notifiable event i.e. injury, accident, security incident.

Clause 10 Conflicts of Interest states:

- The recipient will not do anything to create a conflict of interest with this agreement
- Will notify NHC of any conflicts of interest that arise and take necessary action to resolve the conflict.
- If conflicts are not resolved NHC may terminate the agreement

