

New Zealand's Biological Heritage National Science Challenge

Criteria for choosing Research Leads and Lead Providers

In the BioHeritage Challenge, one of the most important considerations for us is the choice of Co-Leaders for our research investments, and thus the Lead Provider that employs them, because our focus is on investment for national-scale impact.

Whilst all of our contracting is done 'by negotiation' (and not through contestable funding rounds), we aim to ensure that our criteria for choosing Co-Leads, and the lead agency, are transparent. To that end, we apply the following criteria when selecting Co-Leaders (sometimes called 'research leads').

Criterion	Our expectations of the Co-Leaders	Our expectations of the Lead Collaborator organisation
Willing to uphold the Challenge values at all times	Focused on an inclusive, diverse, collaborative team-based approach.	Research office and executive team need to understand and uphold Challenge values.
Understands Challenge vision, focus on impact, and the bigger picture	Impact-oriented, not funding-oriented.	Willingness to align co-funding to support research lead is always helpful.
Proven experience in constructing diverse, multi-organisational teams	Willing to have one-on-one conversations with a diverse range of individuals and organisations in order to construct the 'right team'.	Support and recognition from the Lead Collaborator that team construction 'by negotiation' takes more time than contestable processes.
Capacity and prioritisation	Must have the capacity to run a large programme and be willing to prioritise Challenge work, sometimes at the expense of other work.	Support for the research co-leads is desirable from the Lead Collaborating organisation, for example back-filling other work whilst they take on a research leadership role.

Criterion	Our expectations of the Co-Leaders	Our expectations of the Lead Collaborator organisation
Capability and capacity to operate back-room systems and processes to support the investment	Must have organisational support to help with contracting and other agreements/arrangements.	Support from Lead Collaborating organisation for the research leads is a must – key points of contact in Lead Collaborator research office need to be able to work closely with Challenge Support Team. Experience with sub-contracting a must.
Flexible and agile	Needs to be fearless when others hold on to the <i>status quo</i> ; willing to 'pivot' in new directions when it is desirable, and to navigate the conversations needed to do so in order to bring the team along.	Sensitivity, and acknowledgement that at a system level the Challenge focus is on creating impact; pastoral care of research co-leads is expected because if a team is required to pivot, questions may be asked.
Does not tolerate competitive or 'gate keeping' behaviour	Needs to be able to uphold the Challenge values and our goal of building a more inclusive, diverse and collaborative culture in the NZ science system.	Recognition and support from leadership that a 'revenue' focus drives competitive behaviour which might be counter to Challenge values.
Excellent communications skills	Needs to plan and prioritise communication across a large multi-institutional team using all the tools available to them; not just at the beginning of the investment cycle but throughout.	Support and recognition from the Lead Collaborator that communications support may be needed.
Experience partnering appropriately with Māori	Focus on co-design; Mātauranga knowledge built into the innovation pathway; appropriate resourcing for Māori researchers, communities and or research partners.	Support from Lead Collaborating organisation required, with expectations and concerns around trusted relationships raised and discussed early with the Challenge leadership team.
Experience working with stakeholders	Focus on co-design; stakeholder expertise built into the innovation pathway.	Support from Lead Collaborating organisation required, with expectations and concerns around trusted relationships raised and discussed early with the Challenge leadership team.