

## New Zealand's Biological Heritage National Science Challenge Guidance for SLG: Building the right teams

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Tēnā koutou,

This short document provides some guidance for SLG, Knowledge Brokers, and research leads as we construct the 'right teams' for collective impact in Challenge and NRT investments. Now is the time to be proactive and assertive; to be clear about what we are aiming to achieve; to show how our values underpin our mahi; and how we want teams to work. Don't hesitate to set clear boundaries and expectations – in the long run, it will yield better results.

We have prepared several documents to help with the next phase of investment in Tranche 2 of the Challenge, and in Ngā Rākau Taketake. These include:

1. [Key messages](#) and information for the beginning of Stage 2.
2. A list of **critical dates and deadlines** for the Challenge and NRT in 2020.
3. [BioH](#) and [NRT KPIs](#) and the Challenge [Outcomes Framework](#), each on a single A3 sheet.
4. A template for the **Lead Collaborator contract**.
5. [Criteria](#) to help guide teams through the investment process, including how to choose potential sites and/or collaborators. Note also that the Challenge has a [Conflicts of Interest policy](#).
6. A [framework \(timeline\) for investment decision-making](#), including key points where documentation needs to be made available to SLG and/or Mana Rangatira for approval.
7. Templates for: the [Annual Workplan](#) that teams should use to plan their research; a [Communications Plan](#); an [IP Management Plan](#), and a **Stakeholder Engagement Plan**. These documents must be built into the lead provider's contract as one of the first deliverables.
8. Best practice guidelines for [working in partnership with Māori](#), including our investment strategy, the VM scoring system, templates for cultural safety agreements, and Challenge diversity policies.
9. A document that should help with key messages – '[why get involved with the Challenge](#)'.
10. Last but not least: the **Investment Prospectuses**. These should be viewed as an important tool to leverage and incentivise co-investment from non-Challenge sources.

All of this information is [available online](#). We urge you to read and familiarise yourself with these – they are intended to shape cultures and ways of working as we build an extended network of influencers who are familiar with Challenge expectations and values, and our focus on impact. We also have the Challenge [operating principles](#), [diversity & inclusion policy](#), and [code of conduct](#). Teams should be made aware of these as they sign the lead contract and start negotiations with subcontractors.

Just as important, but often overlooked, is how we frame up our expectations about culture and behaviours as we construct the teams. Particularly when working with the research sector, we are likely to encounter resistance, and/or expectations that are primarily focused on funding. We need to work hard to get key messages across – we are not about funding but about creating impact. To that end:

- **Clarity:** Be clear and directive in all communications – negotiated funding is a new way of working for many, but it doesn't have to lack transparency or rigour. Experience suggests that it is worth spending 5 minutes at the beginning of conversations with people who are new to the Challenge to update them on the 2019 scoping process and where that landed.
- **Documents:** Use the documentation provided as a touchstone, and point teams to it online.
- **Mapping the research landscape:** Ensure that we are reaching out – fairly and transparently – to all Challenge Parties and beyond, to source expertise. Do not let institutions or individuals push

back on this – it was one of the weakest points of the scoping process, yet is a very important part of mapping the research landscape.

- **Choosing research co-leads:** We will very likely need to provide quite a bit of guidance to the research co-leads in the early stages of development of an investment. We also need to be transparent about the criteria for our choice of co-leads: because we know they will uphold our values, that they will be inclusive and reach out to the research sector, in many instances they have experience building large collaborative teams, and so on. Please provide support and backup to research co-leads – experience so far tells us they will get questions like ‘who are you and why are you leading this mahi’. Explain to them that it will take a lot of time to build the relationships needed; check with them that they have the capacity to ‘front load’ this work in the early stages.
- **Don't tolerate competitive behaviour:** Make teams aware that ‘gatekeeping’ or excluding competitors will not be tolerated. Evidence that they have reached out will be expected before contracting can proceed, and it provides valuable ‘real time’ information for updating Investment Prospectuses. The information will be critical for mapping capability needs, and to assure potential investors that we have done our due diligence and demonstrated that we are not duplicating investment effort.
- **Capacity:** This is an area in which our SLG and Knowledge Brokers *must* be firm. Insist that a lack of capacity will not be viewed favourably. Having the capacity to pay attention and deliver the work will be critical for the foreseeable future. Yes, we are sympathetic to the Endeavour round and end of financial year in June but only up to a point. Our biosecurity is in crisis and our biosecurity system needs work, so where do their priorities lie? And if there is a skill-set we absolutely cannot do without, don't hesitate to come back to Mel or Andrea if you need help to have those ‘higher level’ conversations within the research organisations. Or alternatively, ask them whether there is an early-career colleague who has the skills we are seeking, and the capacity to keep things moving.
- **Keep it moving:** Set up short Zoom meetings or hui as needed to keep things moving and to ensure that communication channels remain open. Be proactive: don't leave it to others to set up meetings that end up being weeks down the track. We need to move quickly to secure all our lead contracts in a timely fashion. Make use of the Support Team to help with setting up meetings and hui.
- **Agility and flexibility:** Ensure that teams are aware that we expect agility and flexibility in the development of the Annual Workplan; and that evidence that they have taken a long hard look at their own research directions (annually or more frequently as needed) will be viewed favourably by Mana Rangatira. Make teams aware that the Challenge holds back c. 20% of our investment annually to ‘reward’ such flexibility: it enables us to pursue new opportunities as they emerge. Conversely, teams that lack ability to pivot, rigidly adhering to milestones, are unlikely to be rewarded.
- **Communications:** please remember to share information and communicate across the SLG. The Support Team is setting up some tools and processes for us to share information and tips for what is working and what is not, but don't hesitate to get in touch with your colleagues if you believe that some crucial piece of information could help them. Don't wait for someone else to organise it.
- **Budget:** you, and the research leads you are guiding, will inevitably get questions about budgets. Give people clarity about the budget we are working to, and be clear that Challenge investment cannot possibly cover all of their priorities. Get them to shape up any shortfalls or gaps in such a way that they can be highlighted in the relevant Investment Prospectus, because the aim is to incentivise investors to add resources to the overall effort.