

Frequently Asked Questions – 2017 Seed Project Funding Round

Q: What happens if my application includes PhD study? Will the PhD be funded for three years?

In this round, projects will be funded for a maximum of two years so the involvement of PhD students needs to be carefully planned. All Challenge funding must be allocated by 30 June 2019. For this reason, in the 2017 round, we would expect to see more Masters than PhD students. Funding for three years of a PhD can be included in the project budget, but the provider will be responsible for managing scholarship funding beyond July 2019. If the seed project was terminated for any reason, a Masters/PhD student would continue to be funded provided the research topic to which the thesis related was aligned to the Challenge Programme.

Q: What do you mean by technical capacity?

Capacity (or capability) development has three dimensions: technical, human and relational.

The Challenge aims to improve the technical capacity of scientists through the research they perform. This will come about in the form of new technical knowledge, platforms, and tools. As well as developing technical skills, researchers will also develop their ability to connect with research end-users so that their technical achievements can be more readily translated into business and economic outcomes – which we are calling human and relational capacity.

Q: What are human and relational capacity development initiatives?

Relational capacity development initiatives involve using skills that improve the ability of a researcher to engage constructively with industrial partners and/or end-users. Human capacity initiatives are professional development intended to assist a researcher to become more end-user conversant.

In this Challenge, some capacity development activities will be funded separately but researchers are welcome to include in their proposal specific initiatives planned as part of the project.

Industry mentors or end-user advisors will be important for researchers developing their relational capacity as they will be expected to take on board end-user/industry perspectives in their research planning.

All SfTI researchers are required to participate in capacity development activities.

Q: Does that mean Seed Project researchers are required to find industry or end-user support for their research?

Researchers should state what plans they have, if any, to engage with end-users during the course of the research project. The Challenge Management Team will also help to facilitate these connections during the course of the research project.

Q: Why is there a focus on ITDAM?

Our intention is to fund more projects in ITDAM. To that end we need high quality proposals from the ITDAM community and are encouraging researchers in that area to submit applications. We will run workshops to help people formulate proposals.

Q: Why is Vision Mātauranga so important in this Challenge?

We want to build Mātauranga Māori into our research projects, improve connections to Māori stakeholders (businesses, communities, Trusts) and develop Māori technical capability. This Challenge aspires to integrate Mātauranga Māori into our research activities, governance and management and for distinctive Māori attributes to be developed in our collaborative practices.

Q: Under the IT, Data Analytics and Modelling theme what is meant by 'modelling'?

We mean modelling in a very broad sense. It could include developing formal models of a system's behaviour, simulation models of a novel process, statistical modelling to predict the performance of a service, machine learning models or visualisations to represent device actions/reactions, and so on. As long as there is a novel research question being answered through science, and a pathway to the development of a technology, such a project would make a suitable Seed Project proposal.

Q: Is it acceptable to include current SfTI PIs as advisors/mentors in a Seed Project?

Yes. However, we expect full separation between existing research and new research. The seed funding is not intended to support the progression or evolution of established groups' research and ideas. We are looking to fund radically new and different ideas, particularly from emerging researchers. So we are in favour of mentoring where the researcher is not part of the mentor's research team, and where we can see the mentoring is intended to grow the young researcher as an individual, not to direct their ideas or research.

The applicant can name their mentor (SfTI or otherwise) in part 4.2(a) of the application and should discuss the nature of this mentoring.

We would not expect to see SfTI-funded researchers named in part 4.1 of the application, as they cannot be part of the project team or involved in directing or influencing the research direction.

Q: Can international collaborators be named as associate investigators?

We encourage collaboration with local and international researchers where appropriate, but only New Zealand-based researchers can receive funding. We do not expect the Seed Project team to be world-leading but we would accept the presence of a particular international expert if the team identifies that as a particular need. We might support some travel funding to connect with international researchers, but the international researcher's time cannot be supported by the funding. Overall, we would prefer to see New Zealand-based research and teams.

Q: What does SfTI mean by 'novel'?

We are looking to fund radically new and different ideas, particularly from emerging researchers. We define 'novel' as research going off in a new and different direction and that is not supported by current funding or part of existing research. We are motivated to support genuine innovation – this might be the creation of new ideas, or the revolutionary use of existing methods in a new context. The seed funding is not intended to support the progression or evolution of established groups' research and ideas.

Q: Who from the SfTI Challenge will have oversight of my Seed Project contract if I'm successful?

Two of our Theme Leaders will be assigned to oversee the research progress. The Theme Leaders are researchers themselves so they understand the difficulties of doing risky science. You will have access to your assigned Theme Leaders during the term of your Seed Project contract, and one of them will meet with you quarterly. The Theme Leaders assigned to your Seed Project are there to help and offer advice as your research progresses and if it changes direction.

Q: Can my seed project proposal align with spearhead research in this Challenge?

This CfP calls for primary alignment with one of the three technical themes and secondary alignment with Building NZ's Innovation Capacity and Vision Mātauranga. The proposal should concentrate on this alignment. Our preference is for proposals that consider different opportunities than the spearheads. In 2017, we are particularly interested in

seeing proposals that align with our IT, Data Analytics and Modelling Theme (ITDAM) as well as our Vision Mātauranga theme.

Q: How do I submit an application?

Through the IMS portal via Callaghan Innovation.

Q: How do I use the IMS portal?

If you have not used the IMS Portal before, you should contact your Research Office for assistance.

Q: Can international collaborators be named as associate investigators?

We encourage collaboration with local and international researchers where appropriate but only New Zealand-based researchers can receive funding.

Q: Can I submit a proposal that was not successful in a previous SfTI Seed project funding round?

Yes, all eligible proposals will be considered on their merits and according to the assessment criteria. However, if your previous proposal did not make the ballot, the revised proposal should be improved and any feedback from the assessment panel taken into account.

Q: How do I get in touch with the Challenge team to find out more about seed projects?

You can contact us by email SeedProjectsSfTIChallenge@callaghaninnovation.govt.nz