National Project Fund

Request for Proposals

Making a significant difference in factors influencing the outcomes for tertiary learners

15 June 2018

Contents

Introduction to RFP

This Request for Proposals (RFP) invites proposals for funding through Ako Aotearoa's National Project Funding (NPF) for 2018.

Ako Aotearoa's investments seek change towards making an impact for learners. Past investments have led to the development of a significant knowledge base, funded through our National Project Fund and the Regional Project Funding since 2008. As we launch into the future, certain strategic themes were identified through our business plan for guiding our work as follows:

- A consistent approach to building capability across the tertiary educational system
- Enhancing outcomes for Māori and Pasifika learners
- Improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes of adult learners
- Strengthening a culture of learning and teaching through networks and communities of practice.

We will align this RFP with some of these strategic themes.

Ako Aotearoa is a learning organisation with a culture of applying evaluation after completion of projects that is integral to ongoing improvement in how we design, implement, and extend our knowledge base. It is our intent to look for clear evidence that demonstrates the translational character of the project, through our Impact Evaluation Framework. The overall purpose of Ako Aotearoa's research project funding is to promote the development of a translational body of knowledge with potential to drive change for impact at different levels within the tertiary education system. System changes, system resilience, and lifetime learning are our big drivers.

Teams are referred to our [Ako Aotearoa project funding procedures and guidelines 2018](#) (PDF, 804kb); and [Ako Aotearoa funding policy 2018](#) (PDF, 103kb)

We particularly value the formation of partnerships and collaborations (*e.g.*, between sectors such as different types of tertiary providers, with service providers and workplaces, policy agencies, community, and social groups) but recognise the inherent complexity of such work, and recommend early conversations, planning, design, and expectations being agreed between the collaborating partners. We recommend that our guidance documents be consulted during this planning process. Please review Ako Aotearoa's Project Funding Guidelines and Procedures 2018 at all stages of the project.

We will encourage multidisciplinary research that crosses boundaries of knowledge areas and combines perspectives that aim to derive wholesome outcomes for learners through learning and teaching.

We will also look at projects that address implementation of previous promising findings that have not been implemented before.

Aiming for impact

Please review our Funding Procedure and Guidelines 2018 as you reflect on this aspect. Ako Aotearoa's funding will seek to increase change towards impact at every stage. We will actively support teams to:

- Elicit evidence of benefits to learners
- Attain changes in practice, especially organisation-wide, and across several organisations and sector
- Implement findings for the benefit of tertiary learners
- Strive for wins: conference presentations, awards, community/social influence, recognition, etc.
- Obtain positive media interest through news items, local radio features, social media, etc.
- Seek employer/employee interaction, feedback, benefits/gains
- Feedback from other organisations highlighting benefits of the work/resources developed
- Achieve recognition internationally
- Be future focused.

Types of project funding

A key aim of this RFP is to increase outreach and extend previous findings. We will therefore fund research that explores effects of scaling up, implementation of existing evidence, proof of concepts, findings, innovation that have shown promise to deliver changes in factors affecting practice with impact for learners. We encourage applicants to draw on the knowledge base developed through previous Ako Aotearoa projects (in both National Project Funds and Regional Hub Project Funds) and demonstrate ways in these findings can be successfully applied in broader, larger contexts.

We will also make room for some new thinking and innovation and invite exciting solutions that create new designs, models, processes and methods with the potential to capture and motivate our learners.

 It is expected that proposals fall into one of the following categories:

a) Developing or scaling up existing knowledge or new knowledge that has high potential for successful implementation, with the ability to drive large-scale change towards impact (please review our Funding Procedures and Guidelines, 2018).

b) Testing of new and innovative solutions/technologies to better engage our learners and to improve their outcomes (while writing their proposals,

applicants are encouraged to reflect on how these new concepts/innovations would drive change should they be scaled up/implemented in the future).

Please see Table 1 for details:

Table 1: Funding types, amounts, and duration

Category	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Testing new concepts, new models, new approaches, innovations, including new technologies.	100–150K	100–150 K	NA
Addressing gaps in knowledge and implementing/scaling up of Ako Aotearoa's research findings and other new research, *e.g.*, methodologies, approaches, processes, and tools to drive systems change.	100–150 K	100–150 K	100–150 K

Proposals falling into both categories will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Suggested approach

The team must demonstrate a thorough review of existing research and a knowledge gap or use of a model that has proven successful on a pilot scale. A team is expected to include an appropriate mix of practitioners/educators, professional staff, institutional leadership, experienced researchers, and those implementing the project as appropriate to the topic.

Project collaborations across different parts of the sector—*e.g.,* church and community groups, industry training organisations, independent tertiary establishments (*i.e.* Private Training Establishments (PTEs) and other Tertiary Educational Organisations)—are encouraged. This is to demonstrate the applicability at scale and ensure relevance of the selected topic.

Number of projects to be funded

Ako Aotearoa is making a full allocation amount available through the National Project Fund to key strategic areas. We will co-fund **up to four to five projects in 2018** for commencing in January 2019, aimed at the topic areas we have outlined.

Depending on the number of proposals received and the total that fit the selection criteria, we will allocate funding to the best proposals that fit our selection criteria.

The total Ako Aotearoa contribution to 2018 projects is a maximum of $600,000 with a maximum contribution for any one project of $150,000, plus a matching contribution of a minimum of half to up to twice that amount from project partners.

Specifications for proposals

Theme 1
Building Educational Capability: Professional Standards for Teaching in the Tertiary Sector

In the absence of formal teacher training, many tertiary teachers are expected to build their capabilities as adult educators on the job. Therefore it is essential to provide good professional learning to help tertiary teachers develop their teaching capability, especially when evidence from tertiary education indicates that the ability of the teacher has a large impact on the educational outcomes[1]. A good teacher can have a significant impact on what students learn even when there is large variation among the students' abilities, prior knowledge, and approaches to learning.

Ako Aotearoa aims to help teachers develop their educational capabilities. We are exploring how teaching standards can help to build capability. There have been a number of initiatives that are promising. ACE Aotearoa has developed a teaching standards framework for use with adult and community education for NZQF levels 1–3. At this foundational level the teaching standards are helping to identify the performance and expertise required to teach. Some organisations who teach NZQF Level 5 and above have been using the UK based Higher Education Academy standards and processes to help staff gain reflect on their teaching expertise. These organisations use teaching standards to help the teacher identify what is required for good teaching and can give a process to develop capabilities.

Proposals addressing this theme could explore how professional standards for teaching could help build institutional and/or personal capability.

Suggested topic areas

- How can Professional Standards for Teaching enhance the quality of teaching in the Whare Wānanga/vocational sectors? For example, how can Whare Wānanga utilise existing or develop new models and frameworks that contextualise Professional Standards for Teaching that incorporate distinct organisational values and tikanga?
(Teams may select one of the sectors, as appropriate to their interest.)
- What are the enablers and barriers to using Professional Standards for Teaching in the Whare Wānanga/vocational educational sector to help staff reflect on their teaching and support student learning?
- How can teaching standards be applied to professional learning and development programmes at individual and/or institutional levels to improve teaching quality?

Expected project timeframe

Projects will be carried out for approximately two years beginning January 2019.

Desired outcomes

Proposals should demonstrate how projects would achieve the following outcomes:

1. Evidence required to meet your research outcomes (see our selection criteria and outcomes framework).
2. Potential for establishment of a sustainable network/community of practice that supports ongoing professional learning and development potential, dissemination, and implementation of key findings.

Theme 2
Māori and Pasifika Learner Outcomes

There have been ongoing systemic failures within the tertiary sector to improve Māori and Pasifika learning outcomes. This pattern has continued without significant improvement with increasing evidence of disparity over the last decade. Much is known about the reasons for the lack of parity in achievement, and many strategies have been trialled and implemented, but despite pockets of success in some institutions, there is no significant improvement on a larger scale across the sector. Some of these systemic issues include:

- The need to do more to attract and support Māori and Pasifika learners to succeed on par with other learners. (TEC, sub. 2, p. 4)
- A sound knowledge in New Zealand of the persistent ethnic disparities in academic success at tertiary level. "There is no excuse for tolerating continuing tertiary disparities when promising solutions and tools for evaluating success exist". (Te Rōpū Āwhina Whānau, sub. 12, p. 1, emphasis in original)
- Tertiary education providers needing to find more suitable ways to accommodate Pasifika students' needs. Many Pasifika students in tertiary education are the first in the family to study at this level and information needs to be provided not just to the student, but to their whānau in a way that is aligned to their culture, and not that of the institutions, to support the student (Ed. Collective, sub. 89, p. 46)
- Despite the strategies and frameworks developed over time, participation and achievement rates for Māori in mainstream tertiary education organisations remain lower than anticipated. There are a myriad of structures and processes that can and do serve to impede Māori innovation and participation at all levels and in all contexts (Te Mata o te Tau, the Academy for Māori Research and Scholarship at Massey University, sub. 99, pp. 2–3).

Ako Aotearoa seeks projects that offer new thinking and approaches that will make significant differences for Māori and Pasifika learners. We want to see approaches to projects that extend and develop this knowledge base by creating new models, formats, and methods for project design and implementation. We encourage you to review the recently completed *Synthesis of Projects Focused on Supporting Māori Learners* report (Sciascia, 2017), along with the 2014 publication on *Success for*

Pasifika in Tertiary Education (Alkema, 2014). *Doing Better for Māori in Tertiary Settings* (TEC, 2013)[1] is also recommended for review. These texts will provide some context of what has been funded already and offer some ideas around building on previously funded project models, frameworks, and approaches.

[SYNTHESIS REPORT | Māori-learner-success-in-tertiary-education-Highlights-from-Ako-Aotearoa-supported-research-projects](#) (PDF, 5.4mb)
[SYNTHESIS REPORT | Success-for-Pasifika-in-tertiary-education-Highlights-from-Ako-Aotearoa-supported-research](#) (PDF, 6.4mb)

In this funding round, successful projects will be funded that provide evidence of creative combinations of approaches that address systemic issues that Māori and Pasifika learners face through:

- New innovative and holistic approaches to Māori and Pasifika student engagement and retention
- New educational innovations that are learner-centred and not been previously explored.

Suggested topic areas

- Designing and developing Institutional capabilities that develop Māori and Pasifika learner-centred systems
- Implementing/scaling up proven models of success for Māori, Pasifika and inter-cultural models.

Expected project timeframe

Projects will be carried out for approximately two to three years beginning January 2019.

Desired outcomes

Proposals should demonstrate how projects would achieve the following outcomes:

1. Consideration of potential impacts on learners and how this might advocate for change across institutions and beyond
2. Evidence required to meet your research outcomes (see our selection criteria and outcomes framework)
3. Potential for establishment of a sustainable network/community of practice that supports ongoing professional learning and development potential, dissemination, and implementation of key findings.

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[1] http://maori-lit-review-2013.publications.tec.govt.nz/Indicator+Framework

4. If developing an innovation describe demonstrable, and/or measurable effects on learner success and aspirational goals on the potential to deliver future learner success using the new innovation by its upscaling and implementation (incorporation into mainstream)

5. If developing an innovation, suggested methodology and/or mechanism that supports sustainable, ongoing updating and implementation of key findings through the innovation – Ako Aotearoa may enter into further agreements to partner with the extension of most promising innovations.

Theme 3
Foundation Education and Adult Literacy and Numeracy

These projects could address the testing of new concepts or scaling up/implementation of existing promising evidence.

New Zealand's results in the latest international Survey of Adult Skills, part of the "Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development" (OECD)'s Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) was released in June 2016[2]. The results indicate that research into effective adult literacy and numeracy approaches is needed to raise the literacy and numeracy levels of adult New Zealanders and achieve parity of outcomes for Māori and Pasifika peoples.

PIAAC is an international study that measures the skills and competencies regarded as necessary for working age adults to participate in society and for economies to prosper: reading literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments. PIAAC gathers information and data on how they use these skills at home, at work, and in the wider community.

The survey revealed that although New Zealand scored above the OECD average in the PIAAC domains, 11.8% of adults in New Zealand attained only Level 1 or below in literacy proficiency and 18.9% attained only Level 1 or below in numeracy. At Level 1 in literacy, adults can read brief texts on familiar topics and locate a single piece of specific information identical in form to information in the question or directive. In numeracy, adults at Level 1 can perform basic mathematical processes in common, concrete contexts, for example, one-step or simple processes involving counting, sorting, basic arithmetic operations, and understanding simple percentages[3].

As shown in Figure 1 below, there are sharp ethnic differences in achievement, particularly for Māori and Pacific peoples, who still score on average below the levels of the total population, with the biggest gap being in numeracy. Numeracy has also "flat-lined" in the total population since the last international survey in 2006 (the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey – the first international survey to cover adult numeracy).

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[2] http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/research/piaac
[3] OECD. (2016). *New Zealand – Country Note – Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*. Paris: OECD. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Skills-Matter-New-Zealand.pdf

Young people performed less well than the general adult population[4], sounding an alarm bell for New Zealand's future if this situation is not addressed.
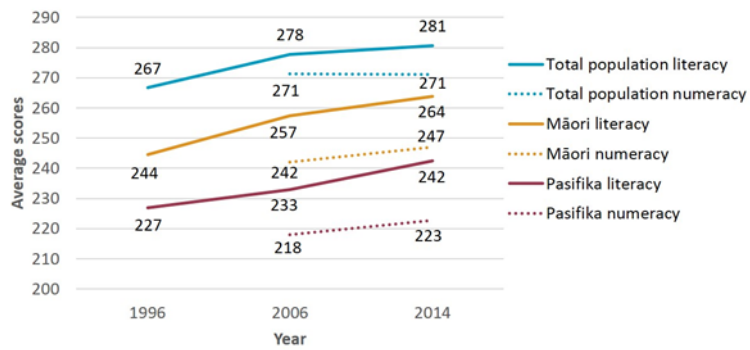

Figure 1. New Zealand results in literacy and numeracy by total population, Māori and Pasifika, compared to previous international surveys[1]

[4] Jones, M., & Satherley, P. (2017). *Youth Skills: Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/survey_of_adult_skills/youth-skills-survey-of-adult-skills-piaac

Suggested topic areas

- Improving adult numeracy of all learners with innovative approaches and solutions
- Cultural capability:
- Accessing the knowledge of two worldviews/epistemologies (*e.g.* Māori and Western) to enhance the programmes of learning

- Testing the effectiveness of the Te Ata Hāpara reading comprehension option in the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (LNAAT)

- Testing the impact of various indigenous approaches (*e.g.* "āta" framework, "tivaevae" framework) on learner engagement with Māori and Pasifika learners

- Strategies for stronger learner engagement and early intervention
- Supporting learners with learning differences
- Learning interventions in high priority areas
- Supporting learners with maths anxiety
- Proportional reasoning/measurement/statistics
- Comprehension/decoding.

Desired outcomes

Proposals should demonstrate how projects would achieve the following outcomes:

1. Statistically significant gains using the LNAAT, gains using established assessments, demonstrable improvements in performing literacy and numeracy tasks in authentic situations

2. **Potential for establishment of a sustainable network/community of practice that supports ongoing professional learning and development potential, dissemination and implementation of key findings and approaches.**

Expected project timeframe

Projects will be carried out for approximately three years beginning January 2019.

Theme 4
Future Proofing Learning and Teaching through Innovation

During a stakeholder survey conducted by Ako Aotearoa in 2017, it became apparent that our stakeholders expressed interest in a possible range of new programmes and services, with new topics such as "alternative credentialing, investigating new teaching and learning spaces and learner-driven personalised learning" being high on their preferences.

The Productivity Commission, in its report "New models for tertiary education (2017)", summarised innovative activity as "the process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that has value" (2016, p.xi). They explained that this process could occur rapidly or incrementally over decades (Tarling, sub. DR 107). This report summarises some innovations in tertiary education in both New Zealand and abroad and will serve as key topic areas for exploration in this year's NPF round.

Suggested topic areas

In addition to the above, the following topic areas concerning learner-centred innovations are suggested:
1. Potential to capture and motivate our tertiary learners with e- advising, animations, educational gaming, immersive-learning environments, hands-on simulations, virtual/augmented reality, social media, etc.
2. Use of data analytics in educational design and delivery to substantially lift outcomes, particularly for those underserved by tertiary education
3. Ability to deliver system-change and policy changes by the way data is linked/captured/analysed and translated, *i.e.*, intelligent systems, artificial intelligence, use of data analytics in educational design and delivery
4. Emerging roles in "bridging the gaps" e.g., knowledge brokers in education and other new interfacing approaches
5. Enabling deeper online learning and e-learning with new technologies such as open-ended textbooks/massive open online courses (MOOCS) and other digital resources.

Desired outcomes

Proposals should address how projects would achieve the following outcomes:
1. Demonstrable and/or measurable effects on learner success and aspirational goals on the potential to deliver future learner success using the new innovation by its upscaling and implementation (incorporation into mainstream)
2. Comment on barriers and enablers
3. Effects on learner experience/engagement by the application of the new approach/innovation

4. Suggested methodology/mechanism that supports sustainable, ongoing updating and implementation of key findings

Expected project timeframe

Projects will be carried out over two years beginning January 2019.

Relevant reading

OECD 2018. What does Innovation in pedagogy look like?

The Productivity Commission 2017. New Models of Tertiary Education. Chapter 11, Innovative activity. New Zealand Productivity Commission, Wellington

Vincent-Lancrin, S., G. Jacotin, J. Urgel, S. Kar and C. González-Sancho (2017), Measuring Innovation in Education: A Journey to the Future, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Victoria University 2018. Learning Through Experience in the Virtual Age
https://www.victoria.ac.nz/news/2018/06/learning-through-experience-in-the-virtual-age

Key information for applicants

Selection criteria and Indicators

Teams are invited to pitch their proposal against the following selection criteria. However, not all indicators would apply to all proposals. Neither is a single proposal expected to meet all indicators. Teams could also develop their own indicators systems to meet the selection criteria with justification.

Table 1 – Description of Selection Criteria

Criterion: Impact value (25%) **Indicators** High collaboration High implementation capability Ability to attain positive outcomes for learners Cross-institutional/cross-sector perspectives Potential for developing international reputation and credibility Active engagement of practitioners Ability to develop/establish communities of practice Ability to influence policy Evidence of the ability to generate sustained professional development opportunities	**Criterion: Immediate change value (25%)** **Indicators** Ability to influence change within Institute/ across Institutes/sectors Ability to generate debate Evidence of potential to monitor/demonstrate change for the benefit of learners: *e.g.* course completion rates and other indicators[5] Ability to improve teaching quality Multidisciplinary/cross-disciplinary approach Wide dissemination possibilities
Criterion: Quality of knowledge developed (25%) **Indicators** New knowledge, concept, or innovation Specific gap identified and addressed Built on Ako Aotearoa's previous work and/or existing research/knowledge Evidence of using action research Student engagement/partnerships evident Multi-disciplinary approach encouraged Quality of project design: outcome focused design, sound methodology for collection and analysis of data and information	**Criterion: Quality of team (25%)** **Indicators** Collaborative team with clear roles and expectations being agreed Diverse perspectives brought by team members Investigator capability (or sourcing these capabilities) Reliability Previous performance in similar projects or other undertakings, especially external contracts Capability to deliver quality outcomes

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[5] TEC 2018. A Tertiary Education System That Works for All- Education Performance Indicators. TEC, Wellington
http://tec.govt.nz/assets/Publications-and-others/Investment-Toolkit-Infosheet-A-tertiary-education-system.pdf

Preparing a proposal

Applicants are advised to review the selection criteria at the outset and "build" impact suited to their level of investigation.

We are looking to support projects that are innovative in approach or in the intervention(s) they propose, and/or can demonstrate how the project will effect a step-change in organisational and/or sector learner outcomes and success through their evidence. We encourage applications from organisations already working in this space who are looking to build on what they have already achieved.

A successful proposal will:
- Explain the proposed investigation and the reasons why it is important in the area
- Actively build upon pre-existing knowledge in the area (except innovation projects) and identify gaps, as appropriate
- Include an assessment of enablers and current barriers to the implementation of your findings
- Explain your proposed success indicators/measures/and demonstration of learner achievements
- Explain the anticipated value-add of the project to learner success
- Explain how your organisation(s) will reach impact in a sustainable way following the successful completion of the work, *i.e.,* your aspirational goals
- Be co-funded
- Be consistent with Ako Aotearoa's project funding criteria
- Not be a business-as-usual activity. We will not fund projects that support business-as-usual (BAU) quality enhancement activities within or across tertiary organisations.

Co-funding model for this RFP

Up to five projects will be funded through Ako Aotearoa's NPF Fund:
- NPF funding operates on a co-funding model and organisations/applicants must contribute financially to the project by either an internal in-kind cost contribution and/or a cash contribution (from the funded party or other sources) to at least 50% of the total budget, but normally not more than twice the amount contributed by Ako Aotearoa.
- The organisation's contribution must reflect a tangible commitment from the applicant(s) to the project. The dollar value of internal cost contribution should be estimated using either the usual cost of the good or service or, if the item is not generally traded, an estimate of the out-of-pocket costs sustained by the provider in making the good or service available.
- To preserve the principle of a balanced partnership, we would not normally expect the applicant's contribution to be more than twice Ako Aotearoa's

contribution. For example, if you were requesting $75,000 in funding per year, we would expect your contribution to be $75,000–$150,000.

- The funding can be used for all actual and reasonable costs associated with a project. Your co-funded project budget must detail all financial requirements for the project. Costs will be considered and negotiated on a case-by-case basis but may include:
  - Staffing
  - Equipment and materials – only costs that impact directly on the project and that cannot otherwise be reasonably obtained from the organisation will be considered
  - Travel – to carry out the project or disseminate project outputs
  - Dissemination activities – for all NPF projects a minimum of 5% of the total budget must be ring-fenced for targeted dissemination activities[6].
  - Operational costs directly related to the project
  - Access to data
  - Overheads[7].

Ako Aotearoa must be advised if you have also applied for funding from other sources and if you have received other Ako Aotearoa research funding before. We are happy to partner with other funding bodies if there is clear value added by each funder's contribution.

Selection panel

An independent selection panel will select proposals for funding. NPF selection panel members have expertise and experience in strategic research and initiatives, and an understanding of the tertiary sector's diversity and priorities.

The selection panel will have eight to nine members, where our Māori caucus, Te Rūnanga Māori will endorse two members of the panel and our Pacific Peoples' Caucus will endorse two members. The Director Ako Aotearoa acts as each panel's non-voting Chair. The Ako Aotearoa Board approves all members. Panellists will be listed on our [website](#).

Short-listed applicants may be asked to meet with and present to the selection panel. The panel will make the final funding decision. Decisions will be made by early November 2018 and applicants will be informed of the panel's decision shortly after.

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6 Projects proposing the development of digital/web-based outputs, which require hosting /maintenance, are expected to project costings for 10 years and to incorporate these costs into the project budget.

7 Not more than 20% of Ako Aotearoa's funding is expected to cover organizational overheads.

Submitting a proposal

How to apply

Please complete the **NPF18 – RFP Proposal Application Form** and email the form as a PDF document to Beatrice.Dias@ako.ac.nz for this RFP no later than **5.00pm, 15ᵗʰ August 2018**. The Project Contact Leader will be sent an email acknowledging receipt of application. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Formal review service

Applicants may submit their draft proposal for feedback. Ako Aotearoa will provide high-level, brief feedback within ten working days via return email to the Project Contact Leader. This formal review service will be available from **9.00am, 20ᵗʰ July until 4.00pm, 3ʳᵈ August**. Please email draft proposals in a word document to Beatrice.Dias@ako.ac.nz

Funding workshop webinar

A funding workshop webinar will be posted to the Ako Aotearoa website on the **16 July 2018,** and will cover the scope of the four proposed funded projects, funding models, and information on developing an application. Please access this resource via the National Project Fund webpage

Key dates in 2018

15 June	**Release of RFP (applications open)**
15 June	Funding workshop webinar posted to our website
20 July	Formal review service opens
03 August	Review service closes
15 August	**Applications close**
September	Funding selection panel meeting held
Early-November	Applicants notified of the panel's final decision
30 November	Contracts signed between Ako Aotearoa and successful providers
January 2019	Projects commence

Key sources for applicants to consult

Ako Aotearoa recommends that applicants consider the supporting material below and those recommended under each theme, as they develop their proposals.

References

Boereboom, J. 2017. Assuring the quality of tertiary teaching in New Zealand. Education Review, September 16. 2017. Educational Central
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