



POL020	AKO AOTEAROA FUNDING POLICY Policy for selection and management of funded projects	
Responsibility:	Project Funds Manager Ako Aotearoa	Effective: 22 February, 2019 Review: 22 February, 2021
Related Documents:	Ako Aotearoa Project Funding Procedures and Guidelines 2019 Full Proposal Form 2019 Funding Agreement 2019	
Policy approved by the Board: 22.02.2019		Updated

Funding Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the objectives, strategies, and procedures applicable to Ako Aotearoa’s project funding.

Objectives

- 20.1** Ako Aotearoa’s project funds are intended to support projects that conduct impact-driven, translational¹ research and innovation² on factors that influence change in teaching practice, and enhance teaching and learning for the benefit of tertiary learners. This intention applies to all of Ako Aotearoa funding.
- 20.2** The objectives of Ako Aotearoa funding are in line with Ako Aotearoa’s Shared Strategic Agenda as follows:
- Lifelong learning journeys to achieve the best possible outcomes
 - Influence factors that enhance education for improving economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes for learners
 - A range of valuable tertiary education options that are customised, personalised, accessible and that provide holistic skill sets and innovative thinking. Cultural centeredness is fundamental to these options
 - Contributing long term and sustainable benefits to the wider community through enhanced tertiary teaching, positive learner experiences and equitable learner outcomes

¹ Translational research is a type of work that attempts to bridge the gap between basic research and the world of practice,. Australian Council for Educational Research.
https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1009&context=professional_dev

² The process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that people value (New models of Tertiary education, New Zealand Productivity Commission, Wellington, March 2017

- The tertiary education sector is an agent for change for learner success through collaboration instead of competition
- The tertiary education sector builds its capabilities through professional standards, to enable educators to self-assess and direct their professional learning
- The tertiary education system values learner experiences and voices to establish learners as partners
- Create a New Zealand where Māori, Pakeha, Pacific Peoples and migrant groups are equal citizens with equal rights and the ability to participate and contribute to New Zealand's society

20.3 Ako Aotearoa will fund projects that are consistent with Ako Aotearoa's strategic agenda. Project Funding will be aligned with sectors and themes that are determined as priorities by Ako Aotearoa as follows:

- Adult and community education (ACE)
- Wānanga
- Priority groups such as Māori and Pacific Peoples
- Adult literacy and numeracy (ALN)
- Lifelong learning
- Potential for system-wide impact
- Value for the regions – supporting region-specific industries, populations and community groups such as Iwi, and
- Future proofing education through innovation.

20.4 Ako Aotearoa will work across the regions to ensure that our funding will support the development of learner outcomes in regions where specific needs are identified by industry, Iwi, community and other groups.

Funding Amount and Duration

20.5 Ako Aotearoa's total funding amounts (over the whole duration of the project) will be at three levels: \$15-50K, \$51-100K and \$101-150K as detailed in Funding Procedures and Guidelines (2 AAF-1).

20.6 Projects will normally be funded for a duration of 18 months to 30 months. An extension of funding may be applied for, on a case-by-case basis.

Co-Funding

20.7 Ako Aotearoa project funding operates on a co-funding basis. Organisations must contribute to each project either in dollars or in kind at the co-funding levels stipulated, based on the size of the organisation and not normally exceeding twice Ako Aotearoa's contribution.

Selection Criteria

20.8 Project proposals will be selected based on the following criteria. The project:

- Has potential to stimulate sustainable change in teaching practice that delivers enhanced benefits for learners
- Is aligned with objectives, priorities and themes given in 20.2 and 20.3

- Is undertaken by a team that collaborates, which may be cross-institutional and/or cross-sector
- Displays design characteristics for high potential impact, as detailed in AAF-1. This includes the opportunity to impact a relatively large number of learners, relative to the funding
- Is based on a clear, evidence-based need. The proposal demonstrates how the planned work either fills a gap in the existing knowledge or builds on other existing work, especially in a New Zealand context and other work co-funded by Ako Aotearoa
- Has the potential to create and implement new policies, systems, approaches, processes, methods, practices, products and technologies
- Design (including the measurement of learner benefit) is clear, appropriate and robust
- Represents value for money
- Is undertaken by a team that exhibits the capability with potential to satisfactorily complete the project and deliver a change towards impact
- Is capable of, or contributes to, delivering sustainable Professional Learning and Development opportunities and/or strengthening a Community of Practice or networks of learning
- Displays inter-disciplinary approaches, where relevant.

Fund Management

- 20.9** Ako Aotearoa staff will ensure consistency of management of its project funding and encourage participation and collaboration across organisations.
- 20.10** In keeping with Ako Aotearoa principles and values, we will form partnerships with successful applicants to support the progress of each project as much as possible.
- 20.11** Ako Aotearoa project funding will support projects of national and regional significance, or partnership projects as commissioned by Ako Aotearoa.
- 20.12** Through the partnership stream, Ako Aotearoa will support projects in partnership with other funders or tertiary education organisations as opportunities arise.
- 20.13** The Director of Ako Aotearoa will approve funded projects, including partnership projects up to \$70,000 (total Ako Aotearoa's contribution to the project, over its duration).
- 20.14** The Ako Aotearoa Board may approve partnership projects where Ako Aotearoa contributes more than \$70,000.
- 20.15** As advised by Ako Aotearoa, the Board may either commission or establish 'Expressions of Interest' for specific work and/or increase the amount or duration of funding available.
- 20.16** Ako Aotearoa will administer the funding through the Project Leader's host organisation, with delegated authorities as appropriate. Where there is joint leadership of a project, one project leader must be identified as the contact and Ako Aotearoa will deal with that person's host organisation.

- 20.17** Ako Aotearoa funding can be used for all costs associated with a project (that are actual and reasonable), with the exception of capital items. All costs will be considered on a case-by-case basis (also see 20.43).
- 20.18** The host organisation and Ako Aotearoa sign a formal funding agreement. The agreement includes a schedule of payment, milestone reporting requirements, and expected outputs from the project.
- 20.19** Agreed milestones will typically align with key achievements within a project. Periodic (e.g. quarterly) milestone reporting may also be considered on a case-by-case basis. Apart from any necessary start-up funds, payment of funds will be dependent upon meeting the agreed milestones.
- 20.20** Ako Aotearoa will, at the completion of the project, require a summary of auditable accounts of total project expenditure (i.e. against funds committed by both the organisation and Ako Aotearoa to the project). Interim reports on expenditure against the budget will be provided as agreed as part of milestone reporting and as specified in the funding schedule. In addition, Ako Aotearoa reserves the right to independently audit funded projects, at our own cost. In the case of an audit, Ako Aotearoa will provide a reasonable notice period to the project team.

Funding Applications

- 20.21** Applications must be endorsed by each participating organisation's Chief Executive Officer/Tumuaki, or delegated manager.
- 20.22** Any project team from a New Zealand-based legal entity delivering tertiary education is eligible to apply for funding and to lead projects.
- 20.23** There will be two funding rounds each year, unless otherwise notified to the sector beforehand.
- 20.24** Ako Aotearoa is not obligated to fund any or all of the proposals submitted.
- 20.25** Individuals may submit one application per funding round as Project Leader. An individual can be a Project Leader only on one project at a time.
- 20.26** Ako Aotearoa accepts applications for projects that currently, or may in the future; receive partial funding from sources other than Ako Aotearoa and the leading organisation. In all cases, Ako Aotearoa will only fund new or unfunded elements of a project.
- 20.27** All potential ethical issues arising from projects must be identified and addressed by applicants in discussion with Ako Aotearoa before final project approval.
- 20.28** In the event of a project application being declined, feedback may be provided to unsuccessful applicants, with a view to assisting them in making future applications.

- 20.29** Funding decisions can be appealed on the grounds of process only, as detailed in 2-AAF-1.
- 20.30** An up-to-date register of funded projects will be maintained. Progress against projects will be collated and advised regularly to the Ako Aotearoa Board.

Selection Panels and Selection Process

- 20.31** Selection Panels will represent tertiary education providers (Universities, Wānanga, ITPs, ITOs, Educational Trusts, Māori tribal trust boards, PTEs and other types of tertiary education providers) and those who engage with the learners (SMEs, ACE, ALN, service sectors), peak bodies and innovation experts, as relevant to the proposals being assessed.
- 20.32** Selection of projects will be performed through a staged selection process. A screening panel whose capabilities and expertise will be selected to screen the proposals according to the portfolio of proposals submitted.
A shortlist of proposals will be made, through this initial stage.
- At the next stage, a mixed or online Decision Panel, including video-conferencing if needed, will assess shortlisted proposals seeking less than \$50,000 (total contribution by Ako Aotearoa).
- Decision Panels that assess shortlisted applications exceeding \$50,000 (total contribution by Ako Aotearoa) will convene face-to-face.
- 20.33** Where proposals have regional significance, at least two panel members of the review panel and decision panel will be selected from the region generating the highest number of proposals
- 20.34** A database of selection panel members will be maintained by Ako Aotearoa, and reviewed at least every two years.
- 20.35** Selection processes will be robust, equitable and transparent.
- 20.36** Ako Aotearoa will set in place processes to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest in the allocation of funds. In particular, a selection panel member who declares a conflict of interest with regards to a project proposal will not participate in the decision making process for that application. In addition, panelists cannot submit an application to the funding round on which they participate.
- 20.37** Ako Aotearoa will undertake a preliminary evaluation of all applications based on the selection criteria and share their commentary with the respective selection panel. Ako Aotearoa will not, however, have a voting role on the selection panels.
- 20.38** Ako Aotearoa will not fund projects that support business-as-usual activities or those that do not involve clear organisational involvement and contribution.
- 20.39** Selection panels and Ako Aotearoa will seek portfolio balance across regions, priority areas and sectors when selecting projects.

Review Process

- 20.40** Ako Aotearoa will manage a review process for all key project outputs. Information on the review processes are detailed in Ako Aotearoa Project Funding Procedures and Guidelines (2-AAF-1).

Dissemination for Impact

- 20.41** Project teams will be expected to proactively identify dissemination for impact.
- 20.42** Ako Aotearoa will work with teams to increase impact of the funded work and therefore widely disseminate outputs.
- 20.43** A minimum of 5 to 15% of the total budget (inclusive of Ako Aotearoa's contribution and the organisational contribution) must be ring-fenced for targeted dissemination activities, depending on the size of the project. Projects that receive over \$100,000 funding will be required to ring fence at least 10% of the funding for this purpose.
- 20.44** The nature of the final project reports and outputs of all projects will be agreed to on a case-by-case basis with project teams, well ahead of the final milestone and project completion.
- 20.45** Ako Aotearoa intends for all agreed project outputs to be widely available in the public domain. To achieve this, copyright will be determined using the *Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License*.
- 20.46** Ako Aotearoa will enter into a partnership in the development of outputs that may generate an income (e.g. Professional Learning and development workshops, software, digital technologies) on a case-by-case basis.
- 20.47** Ako Aotearoa will take reasonable steps to ensure that the project teams' right to publish in exclusive contexts (e.g. in peer-reviewed journals) will not be prejudiced by our dissemination requirements. However, sharing work with practitioners in the sector has primacy over publication in these contexts.

Impact Evaluation

- 20.48** Teams will be required to work with Ako Aotearoa in monitoring impact during and after the project and participate in Ako Aotearoa's Impact Evaluation Process.
- 20.49** Each funded project team will be expected to assess the extent to which their project has achieved its proposed benefits to learners through the Ako Aotearoa Impact Evaluation Framework Process.
- 20.50** After completion, all funded projects must be initially assessed through a self-assessment process, which will take place within six to nine months after completion, as determined by Ako Aotearoa on a case-by-case basis.

The self- assessment is carried out by the project team and led by the contracting organisation. The results must be reported to Ako Aotearoa and will inform the impact evaluation process.

20.51 Ako Aotearoa may withhold an agreed portion of funding until the self-assessment is completed.

Termination of Funding

20.52 Ako Aotearoa may terminate funding of a project if:

- Insufficient progress is being made
- There is a significant and irreversible breach of the funding agreement
- Significant risk to Ako Aotearoa is identified once the project is underway.

Full grounds for termination are detailed within the Funding Agreement. The final decision is to be made by the Board on advice from the Director, for projects where Ako Aotearoa's contribution is over \$70,000.