



Terms of Reference – MBIE Science Whitinga Fellowship

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the world economy and is likely to have long-term adverse impacts on the Research, Science and Innovation (RSI) workforce. Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) has held discussions with the RSI sector and heard that most early career researchers (ECRs) planning to take up employment overseas have either had offers deferred or fully rescinded, and new positions require ECRs to be within the country before applying. For those planning to remain in New Zealand the number of available positions has reduced¹.

In response to some of these acute impacts being experienced by New Zealand ECRs, the Government is providing support by funding a new “one off” fellowship, the MBIE Science Whitinga Fellowship.

The intent of the Fellowship is to support up and coming researchers to rise and establish a career in their chosen field of research. This is captured in the name of the Fellowship ‘Te whitinga mai o te rā’ which can translate to “the rising of the sun”.

The MBIE Science Whitinga Fellowship is to be administered by the Royal Society Te Apārangi (the Society) on behalf of MBIE.

Objective

The objective of the Fellowship is to support excellent ECRs who demonstrate a passion for research, science and innovation to help New Zealand maintain its excellent, world-class research capability. This in turn will boost resilience in the New Zealand research workforce and contribute to the recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

Description

Thirty fellowships of two years in length will be awarded by a competitive process for research undertaken in any field, including the humanities, mātauranga and social science at an eligible New Zealand research institution.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be either New Zealand citizens, or permanent residents.
- Applicants must have a PhD conferred on or after 01 January 2017 or to have completed all requirements for their degree to be conferred at the time of application.
- The eligibility period for PhD conferral may be extended under the following scenarios:
 - Extended sickness leave.
 - Part-time employment or career interruptions as a result of care giving responsibilities as agreed with the Society.

¹ A Resilient Research, Science & Innovation Sector Enabling Post-Pandemic Economic Transformation

Published by Gary Evans, Rob Murdoch and Hamish Spencer Science Advisors, Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment July 2020. <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/11628-a-resilient-research-science-and-innovation-sector-enabling-post-pandemic-economic-transformation>.



- Applicants must be supported by a New Zealand-based research organisation which can demonstrate it is capable and willing to provide appropriate support and facilities that will enable the applicant to succeed in their Fellowship.
- The host institution must agree to employ the applicant for the duration of the Fellowship.
- Applicants must be able to provide evidence that they have the support of a suitably qualified supervisor.
- Applicants must not be currently employed in a long term full time research position.
- Applicants must be able to commence their programme of research within six months of the award notification, unless otherwise agreed to by the Society.

Criteria

The award criteria must ensure successful proposals are consistent with the background and objectives of the Fellowship stated above. Selection criteria will be published on the Society's website and will take account of:

- Academic and research excellence.
- Potential for career development.
- Appropriateness of the proposed research programme.

Selection Process

The selection process will be determined by MBIE in conjunction with the Society and will include a stratified selection ballot. The selection process will reflect MBIE's Diversity in Science Statement, with a commitment to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion in the final cohort of funded Fellows

The final decision will be made by MBIE. The selection process will be published when the Fellowship opens for applications.

Operation

Fellowships are awarded on an at least 0.8 Full Time Equivalent basis, unless otherwise agreed by the Society.

The 30 two year MBIE Science Whitinga Fellowship will award per annum (excl. GST):

- \$75,000 towards the researcher's salary
- \$75,000 in organisational overheads
- \$10,000 for research-related expenses.

The total value of the MBIE Science Whitinga Fellowship is \$320,000.

Reporting, monitoring and evaluation

The Society will report to MBIE in accordance with the Funding Agreement. The reporting will include information on the applications, monitoring of the Fellows and administration of the scheme. MBIE may request the Society to undertake an evaluation of the scheme once the initiative has ended in order to assess the success of the scheme.