

# Cooperative research

In a letter to government, The Council of the Royal Society of New Zealand strongly shares the view that urgent measures are needed in New Zealand to increase the degree of research cooperation between research institutions, including universities and Crown Research Institutes, and New Zealand's entrepreneurial sectors.

While the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission's recommendation of "Model B" centres is aimed at just such a target, during the period that TEAC was formulating this recommendation, two or three similar initiatives were developing. For example, criteria for the current CoRE centres do include an element of cooperation in the selection process. New Zealand's new Venture Investment Fund may also cover part of the same policy territory. The initiative most directly falling into the same policy territory, however, is the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology's "Consortia" initiative, aimed at extending long-term funding to those who cooperate in research.

While the society is loath to ignore any opportunity to increase funding in this area, it does believe that sufficient instruments are now being developed in this field that additional funding would be better applied via one of these than via a new instrument such as Model B Centres. We do understand in saying this, that a creative route will be needed in order to have Vote Education funding work in close harmony with Vote RS&T, and (preferably) Vote Economic Development, to achieve a unified policy instrument.

The preference we express in the paper is that the Foundation's Consortia initiative form the base upon which an expanded and cooperative approach be undertaken. In the Council's view, the Consortia initiative needs stronger government direction and increased funding to assure its success.

Since our own paper was drafted, the Council has noted, from the Prime Ministers' February 12 address, that the Government has named three areas (biotechnology, ICT and creative industries) for particular emphasis. This aligns well with the paper's own suggestion that Government take a stronger role in setting this level of policy.