

Research funding expectations policy

This policy outlines the expectations that researchers can have of the Natural Hazards Commission (NHC) Toka Tū Ake research funding, and that our staff can have of the research we support.

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Introduction

Natural Hazards Commission (NHC) Toka Tū Ake, a New Zealand Crown entity, has a research and education mandate under the [Natural Hazards Insurance Act 2023](#). This role has been defined under Clause 126 (e) of this Act, under Function of Commission, that states we are to facilitate research and education, and to contribute to the sharing of information, knowledge, and expertise.

The NHC is a strategic research funding agency of New Zealand, primarily funded through New Zealand home insurance levies. Our people help to ensure NHC is an active partner with all our suppliers who contribute to our resilience and research programmes. Our thought leaders are also strong research advocates contributing to New Zealand's natural hazard knowledge, to generate useful outcomes and benefits for all New Zealanders.

The NHC strives to understand the role, influence and impact research can have in order to stay up-to-date and informed on issues related to New Zealand's resilience to natural hazards. This means establishing a supportive and respectful relationship with our funded researchers that goes beyond the life of a research funding agreement. We understand that the path to uptake and impact of research can be long and complicated, and this is why the NHC is committed to engaging and supporting research whilst maintaining a connected, agile and flexible funding approach, to ensure the research we fund is useable, useful, and used.

This policy is a reference to what researchers and the NHC can expect from the relationship, and guidance around what the NHC funding can be used for. Many of the items here are also outlined in the terms and conditions of our funding contracts.

Some of this guidance may contradict existing arrangements or contracts. If you have an existing agreement with the NHC dating pre-July 2024, then please refer to your contract's terms and conditions. For any arrangements contracted post-July 2024, this information is valid and will be reflected in our contracts where appropriate. Some ongoing contracts will be updated at the time of renewal or via a request for variation of the contract.

Our research strategy and investment priorities

Our research portfolio is guided by our [Resilience Strategy for Natural Hazards Risk Reduction \(2019-2029\)](#) and our latest [Research Investment Priorities Statement](#).

Research funding should address at least one of our four areas of research interest ('research themes'): *Resilient Buildings*, *Smarter Land-Use*, *Supporting People and Decisions*, and *Quantifying Hazards and Impacts*. Benefits to New Zealand and authentic consideration of Vision Mātauranga are also very important elements



that the NHC considers in conjunction with our priorities when choosing research projects for funding.

Relationship expectations

Research collaborations

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC) understands that our engagement with researchers and host organisations (sometimes referred to as “supplier”, depending on arrangements between the parties) can extend beyond the life of the original contract, with research outcomes (benefits) often realised years after a contract has formally ended. Our staff will work with researchers to help ensure that the research outputs reach their intended audience and that, as much as possible, the research achieves the intended outcomes to improve New Zealand’s resilience to natural hazards.

The NHC also encourages researchers to upskill, especially in the areas of science communication, to ensure effective translation of their science to policy and/or practice. Principal investigators and other appropriate researchers who are funded by the NHC will be encouraged to attend science communication or science to policy/practice workshops when they are available. These may include NHC-hosted workshops, or delivered via other organisations, and are designed to support researchers in developing communication skills to effectively engage with decision makers, stakeholders and the media about their research.

The NHC works with other New Zealand research programmes to aggregate and combine certain research activities for maximum benefit, and then translate these activities to reach the intended outcomes and impact. We know that sometimes research has more impact when it is presented or combined with other relevant research, so we may ask researchers to work with us and other groups to share new knowledge, data and experience.

Research partnerships will always be vital to the NHC’s focus on building resilience to natural hazards in New Zealand given the time and financial contributions provided by MBIE and other ministries, as well as the knowledge and expertise in the CRIs, research organisations (Universities, research consultancies and engineering firms) and professional societies.

The NHC has established strong relationships with CRIs through ongoing projects (e.g. GeoNet, DEVORA, It’s Our Fault) and Universities (e.g. University Research Programmes, Biennials, postgraduate sponsorships, QuakeCoRE). In addition, the NHC also works closely with numerous professional societies, as well as councils, government agencies and engineering consultancies – usually on highly focussed research projects.



No surprises approach

The NHC is a Crown entity and reports to a board and Minister who expect to be informed of all activities that will generate public interest or have an impact on the work that we are doing. This is the reason the NHC expects a “no surprises” approach with suppliers and researchers that are funded through the NHC. It is important for researchers to provide early notification to the NHC of any upcoming publications, media or public-facing activities that could result in enquiries by public, media or government officials to the NHC.

If a researcher is unsure about whether something to be published might be of public interest, please contact research@naturalhazards.govt.nz as early as possible to seek advice. We can often support researchers and their organisations to get their research noticed by the right people. This is achieved by writing briefings or updates for Ministers, drafting papers for the NHC Board, or working with the researcher to develop a media or stakeholder communications plan. NHC staff can also work with other government departments and agencies to provide consistent messaging and coordinate the response to generate a positive impact.

Media and social media

The NHC expects to actively promote the research that we invest in. NHC research is funded through a public levy, and therefore it is important that the output of the research is made accessible to the public. Likewise, the impact of research can only be realised if it is shared with decision makers who can act on its outputs.

Researchers can expect us to work with them to promote their research through a range of activities, which may include media. If so, the NHC will support researchers to effectively engage with media.

The NHC encourages researchers to actively engage with the public through social media. This may take the form of the researcher posting on their own (public-facing) social media channels, taking care to acknowledge the NHC in all relevant posts, or working with the NHC to post on the NHC’s social media channels. There is support available to researchers unfamiliar with social media through the likes of the [Science Media Centre](#), or contact the NHC Research team for advice.

Communication and stakeholder engagement

Researchers are supported to identify and engage with their stakeholders and end-users through-out their research project. Early stakeholder engagement and clear communication of research outputs to targeted audiences typically results in more effective uptake and greater impact of the research.

There are a wide range of activities that may be appropriate depending on the type and stage of the research project and the intended audience, such as, vlog or blog posts, social media posts, presentations to a lay audience, presentations to NHC staff, or workshops with end-users.



The NHC is keen to assist with effective stakeholder engagement of our funded research, so if a researcher is unsure about what activities are appropriate, they are encouraged to ask our Research team.

Reporting and invoicing

Progress reports

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC) research projects require regular progress reporting or activity milestones from the supplier (i.e. the researcher), that are aligned with project payments. Payments are issued to the supplier upon approval by the NHC of a satisfactory progress, activity or final report. In general, these progress reports or activities (e.g. a Steering group meeting, presentation to NHC staff) will cover progress of research against milestones, financial status (if required), updates on any risks realised or disruption to the project, any new students, partnerships or engagement activity (including media or other public-facing communications).

The frequency and form of reports depends on the type of funding received but will most likely be at a quarterly, 6-monthly, or annual basis. Please refer to the Research Reporting Guidelines on our website for more information.

Final reports

The NHC typically requires a final report upon completion of a research grant, such as the Biennials or University Research Programmes (URPs). This final report should provide an in-depth analysis and insight into the outputs of the research. The final report or portions of it will be made publicly available on our website.

We typically place a value of 10% or more of the grant's total value on this final report, which is paid upon approval by the NHC.

Publications

The NHC asks to receive a copy of every publication related to the research we support and/or fund, this includes articles published in peer-reviewed journals or in conference proceedings, posters, technical reports, or guidance. Under our 'no surprises' policy, currently funded researchers should give us a heads-up as early as possible about upcoming publications.

We are also interested in the outputs of research we fund, even after the funding for the research has finished. NHC is not just a funder but an end-user of the research it funds and therefore is always interested in the ongoing outputs of our research investments. Please email them to Research@naturalhazards.govt.nz as soon as they are available.



Invoicing

The host organisation (also referred to as the supplier) is required to invoice the NHC at Invoices@naturalhazards.govt.nz as stipulated in their agreement, which is typically throughout the life of the project, and not just upon completion. The typical timing of each invoice is usually every 6 months for a multi-year project. Infrequent invoicing or leaving invoicing to the end of the project makes it hard for the NHC to manage our finances and forecast future budgets for research funding. Our financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June, so it is important we receive all invoices due by the end of June no later than the first week of June.

Use of Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake funds

General expenses

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC) expects the grant to be used by the researcher/host organisation for the sole purpose of undertaking the project as described in the formal agreement.

The researcher and host organisation are responsible for monitoring the expenditure throughout the period of the project. The NHC is not responsible for budget overruns unless it has given prior written approval as we may not be able to accept requests for additional funding. If a project requires additional funding to complete its contracted obligations, it is the responsibility of the researcher, in conjunction with their organisation, to inform the NHC as soon as possible to make new arrangements or formal changes to their project's agreement.

Overheads

Overhead costs can be included in a budget seeking the NHC funding for Biennials and negotiated grants only; URPs are not eligible to apply for overhead expenses. Applicants to Biennials and negotiated grants are encouraged wherever possible to secure co-funding through a discount or waiver of overhead costs. If overhead costs do need to be included, the NHC expects overheads to be equivalent to no more than 30% of the cost of staff time allocated to the project.

Salaries

The NHC funding can be used towards staff salaries, however this is considered to be an overhead cost and therefore the limit on overheads (see above) should be considered. Our research funding should not be used to cover full salaries of researchers, as these should be subsidised by their organisation. Postdoctoral fellows are treated as staff members in our research agreements, not students.



Funding for students, research assistants and summer scholars

Our research funding can be used to cover post-graduate student costs, salaries of research assistants and summer scholarships. However, this should not be the entire use of a project's budget considering students require qualified supervision to produce the high-quality research outputs expected by the NHC.

Funding for students can include their stipends and enrolment related costs, especially where they are relevant to the project, such as thesis papers or course work related to skills required to do the research.

Initial project costs

Normally, the first payment released to a research project is calculated to be up to 25% the project's total project value. However, if required, the NHC can negotiate the initial payment amount made on a grant to help cover costs that are anticipated to occur early in the life of a project. These costs are often related to high set-up and commencement costs of particular projects. NHC may request additional information to demonstrate that the costs are reasonable and expected.

Travel to conferences

The NHC research grants cannot be used to cover attendance at, or travel to, conferences as part of a standard research project. Unless an agreement states otherwise, any expenditure in this regard must be applied for separately. We have a small additional fund for this purpose and discretionary consideration will be given to supporting conference attendance if the researcher is presenting a paper or leading a workshop on the project matter being funded by the NHC.

For clarity, any necessary travel related to a research project, including flights and accommodation, can be requested in the research proposal's budget spreadsheet, and included as part of the total research project's budget for approval.

Conference and event sponsorship

Our research funding can be used to sponsor events like workshops and conferences relevant to New Zealand's natural hazards, particularly with respect to improving our resilience to them. In return for our sponsorship, the NHC will negotiate acknowledgement of our brand at the event, such as on the event website and proceedings, a booth for engagement purposes, a speaker position, free registrations for attending NHC staff as appropriate, and a brief summary report post event describing the attendance rate, benefits, outcomes and challenges of the event.

Capital expenses

The NHC funding can be used for some capital costs. While capital equipment is the responsibility of the applicant's organisation, exceptional requests for the NHC's funding for capital equipment should be explained and justified in the budget.



Materials and apparatus purchased with research grant monies should be used exclusively for activities related to the funded project during its duration unless the impact of its use for other purposes is immaterial to the progress and quality of the project.

Requesting changes to agreements

Extensions and variations

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC) will consider extensions and variations to research project agreements on a case-by-case basis. We require you to complete a Variation Request Form (available on our website to download) that briefly explains the change/s requested and why. These requests should be submitted as soon as possible because they take at least 2-3 weeks to process.

The decision will be based on the following:

- the case presented – what is the variation, why is it required, and any impacts
- any previously granted variations and extensions (both current grant and any previous grants)
- the capacity of the NHC’s research portfolio to accommodate the changes

We will try to accommodate these variation requests as much as possible, but we are under no obligation to accept an application for extension or vary a contract. This decision is at the discretion of the NHC.

Ethics, privacy and data

Ethics

If research that the Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC) funds include human or animal participants, we expect researchers to abide by the ethics processes required of their host organisation. Proposals to the NHC must clearly stipulate when social research activities are being conducted with human participants and the steps taken to ensure correct procedures and participant privacy is maintained.

Researchers should consider the following guidelines and standards as part of their research plan:

[Royal Society Code of Professional Standards and Ethics](#)

[Te Ara Tika Guidelines for Māori Research Ethics](#)

[Ethical Guidelines for Post-disaster Research](#) - particularly important for scientists researching responses to natural hazard events.



Private data

Research may include working with private or confidential information/data. The NHC expects that confidential data will remain secure and only anonymised or aggregate data will be disseminated publicly. This is the responsibility of the researchers and their host organisations.

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC) data

There is a standard process for all data requests. This process includes a data sharing request that will be filled out by a NHC employee and presented to the NHC Data and Information Governance Forum for approval. There may also be additional requirements depending on the nature of the data required, such as, signing a data sharing agreement or filling in an information security questionnaire to ensure the proper controls are in place for storing private data.

Depending on the data requested this process may take a while (a minimum of 2 weeks) and this timeframe should be considered as part of the research plan. The NHC takes information security very seriously considering the sensitive data it holds.

Usability of research outputs

Intellectual property

In brief, all new intellectual property (IP) arising from, or developed during the course of a research project, remains with the researcher and/or host organisation. In return for project funding, the Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC) requests an unrestricted, perpetual, non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty free, irrevocable licence to use the results of that project (including but not restricted to the final report and any product developed in conjunction with the project). This licence provided here should continue to be valid and in effect beyond the completion date or beyond the termination of this project. For more information, refer to the terms and conditions of the standard research agreement.

The NHC also seeks to publish and distribute the project reports and findings, and any other information relating to the project, without charge, in any form and through any medium (including our website, internal networks and communications) subject only to the approval of the researcher/host organisation. There is an obligation by the researcher and/or host organisation to provide one copy to us of all documentation including reports, conference presentations, guidance and any other papers at the time it is completed or due.

The researcher/host organisation is expected to acknowledge the research grant awarded by the NHC in any report, article or any other publication arising directly from the Project, in the form “*A study [part] funded by Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC)*”.



The NHC appreciates researchers/host organisations advising us in advance of any media activity or publicity regarding the project (i.e. ensuring a “no surprises approach”), as well as informing the media or interested parties of our funding for the project, even after the funding agreement has concluded.

Please note: If a project is contracted using our services agreement, all pre-existing IP rights remain the property of their owner, whilst all new IP rights in the deliverables become the property of the buyer (NHC). The supplier is required to grant to the NHC a perpetual, non-exclusive, worldwide, transferable, sub-licensable and royalty-free licence to use, for any purpose, all intellectual property rights in the deliverables that are not owned by the buyer to a) receive the full benefit of the services and deliverables, and b) use, copy, modify and distribute the deliverables. Please refer to the terms and conditions of our services agreement for more information.

Acknowledgement

Researchers should acknowledge the funding received by the NHC in every final report, article, publication or presentation that arises from their project. They should also advise the media, or any stakeholders of the funding support received by the NHC for the project where possible.

Open access publications

The NHC encourages open-access publishing with complying journals. We expect researchers to consider this in their original proposal budget and include related publication expenses in their budget costs. For existing funding arrangements please contact Research@naturalhazards.govt.nz if additional funding support is required to help cover the costs of open-access fees. Exceptions can be made, for example if there are no suitable open-access journals or the researcher is aiming for high impact journals such as Nature Geoscience.

As stated in our Research Reporting Guidelines, if an open access, peer reviewed paper has been submitted to or preferably already published in an established journal and meets these criteria, it will be accepted in lieu of a separate final report provided it is accompanied by a summary report with a link or identifiable reference (such as a DOI) to the relevant publication/s. If the researcher intends to publish the deliverables, this should be included in the original proposal, so it is made clear in the research agreement the intended format of the final report.

Open access data and tools

All data collected and/or managed using NHC funding should adhere to New Zealand government data and information management principles, FAIR and CARE principles, where appropriate (see [section on Ethics and Scientific Conduct](#)). Where necessary data access may be managed via registration but should be available to all users in some form without cost.



NHC supports open data as it acknowledges that we work in the system that operates most effectively when data is findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable. This ensures effective decision making for risk management.

These principles extend to tools used to access and visualise data.

Information sharing

New Zealand Research Information System ([NZRIS](#)) is a database and online hub of information about research, science, and innovation in New Zealand. It is the system which is established by government directive outlined in the Research, Science, and Innovation (RSI) domain plan for organisations that are distributing, receiving, or utilising public funds to undertake RSI activities.

The NHC intends to, and may be required to, provide RSI Data to NZRIS to support the understanding of the government's investment in RSI activities. NHC expects researchers to assist it (where necessary) to comply with its obligations under NZRIS.

NHC is still working on what protection rules to apply to RSI Data, but researchers should expect to be informed and consent requested to share data prior to submission. Once these details are defined the NHC will include the granting of consent as part of any new contracts.

Official Information Act obligations

As a government entity, the NHC has obligations under the Official Information Act (OIA) to disclose information regarding its activities and the information it holds in accordance with the Act. If we receive an OIA request where the researcher or the research is subject to the OIA then the NHC expects the researcher to assist with the request as required.

Confidentiality

The NHC expects all information shared with the NHC, that is related to the funded research activity, may be made publicly available unless the researcher marks the information as confidential (see [section on Ethics and Scientific Conduct](#)). The likelihood of confidential information being produced from a research project should be declared in the original proposal, so the NHC research team can prepare to manage this accordingly. All parties to a contract will liaise, prior to releasing any confidential information, should any of them receive a request (or have an obligation) that includes the possible disclosure of information that another party has identified as confidential.

Other

Health & safety

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC) expects all researchers and project team members to comply with their obligations under the Health and Safety at Work (HSW) Act



2015 as it relates to, or affects, their research agreement with the NHC. This includes complying with all reasonable directions of the NHC relating to health, safety, and security, and reporting any of the following that applies to the parties or the researcher, or relates to or affects the agreement:

- notifiable injury, illness, incident or event, or any notice issued under the HSW Act 2015 or any other health and safety legislation, and
- Protective Security Incident.

Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake (NHC) contact details

Email: Research@naturalhazards.govt.nz

Physical Address: Level 1, 161 Victoria Street, Wellington, 6011

Postal Address: PO Box 790, Wellington 6140

Code of conduct

For all events sponsored by the NHC we expect researchers/host organisations to have and enforce an acceptable Code of Conduct, approved by the NHC. A copy of this may be requested by the NHC prior to or after contracting.

Project delays

If the researcher's work falls behind the schedule outlined in the agreement (which may be updated from time to time), the researcher must inform the NHC. If the delay is caused by factors within the researcher's control, all practical measures to fix the delay should be taken.

Duty of care

The researcher and host organisation shall exercise reasonable skill, care and diligence in all matters relating to the project.

Governing law and currency

This agreement will be governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of New Zealand, and each party submits to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of New Zealand. Any references to dollars are references to New Zealand dollars unless otherwise stated.

No assignment

The NHC research agreement is designed to be specific to the individual researcher and the host organisation. Both the researcher and the host organisation are not allowed to



give, sell, or delegate their rights or responsibilities in this agreement to someone else without getting written permission in advance from the NHC.

Notices

Any requests, notifications, obligations, or approvals that are authorized or required by our funding agreement, or are related to this agreement, must be communicated in written form. These written communications will be considered effective upon being received at the recipient's address, including email address.

Warranty/indemnity

The researcher and host organisation guarantee that they will conduct the project in a way that does not violate the intellectual property rights of anyone else. They also agree to compensate the NHC for any costs or legal liabilities that arise due to a breach of this guarantee. The compensation will be up to twice the total amount of the grant provided.

