

University Research Programme 2027 – FAQs from Webinar

This document captures frequently asked questions (FAQs) raised during a webinar about the University Research Programme (URP) 2027–2030, hosted by Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake on 8 April 2026.

A recording of the webinar is available on our website. Please note the recording excludes the Q&A portion of the session.

1. How many applications can be submitted – and can a person or institution submit more than one proposal?

There is no set limit on the number of proposals that can be submitted by an individual or by an institution.

Multiple proposals from the same tertiary provider are acceptable, provided each proposal is distinct and meets the eligibility criteria.

As a matter of practice, we generally do not expect to fund more than one programme led by the same Principal Investigator in a single round, so applicants may wish to focus on submitting their strongest, best-aligned proposal(s).

2. Who can apply (eligible host organisations) – and can non-University organisations be involved as partners?

URP proposals must be submitted by a New Zealand tertiary education provider that offers postgraduate study and has a dedicated research support function (including universities, legal entities representing a university, wānanga, or other tertiary providers that meet these criteria).

Organisations such as regional councils and other agencies cannot apply as the host organisation for URP.

However, non-university organisations are welcome to be involved as partners, collaborators, end-users, or associate investigators (for example, contributing expertise, data, co-design, or pathways to uptake), provided the eligible tertiary provider remains the contracting host.

3. Who can be on the research team (PI/Co-Is/associate investigators), including international and non-university contributors?

Research teams may include associate investigators and collaborators from outside universities, including Crown Research Institutes/PROs, councils, consultancies, and other organisations.

International collaborators may also be included on the team where relevant.

The URP Guidelines do not prescribe a specific academic rank for the Principal Investigator; instead, proposals are assessed on research excellence, capability to deliver, collaboration, and impact.

Applicants should ensure the team structure (including PI availability across the three-year term) is credible and can clearly support the research deliverables, including building research capability through the course of the programme.

4. Is collaboration encouraged (across universities/agencies), and will NHC help connect similar teams?

Yes. Collaboration across agencies and/or disciplinary boundaries is explicitly considered in assessment, alongside clear connections to existing initiatives.

Cross-university collaboration is welcome, but proposals must still identify a single eligible host organisation for contracting and delivery.

Because the URP is a contestable process and proposals are treated as confidential, we cannot facilitate introductions between submitting teams during the round. Instead, applicants are encouraged to form partnerships early (including with end-users) and describe how those relationships support a clear pathway to uptake and impact.

5. Budget rules: what costs are eligible (students/scholarships, equipment, FTE), what are the overhead limits, and can proposals be co-funded?

Overheads: URP allows overheads up to 30% of staff-related costs. (Note, this is different from previous URP rounds, where overheads were not permitted.)

Students: Funding can support postgraduate students (stipends and relevant enrolment-related costs), research assistants, and summer scholarships; budgets should also include appropriate supervision time.

Equipment: Limited capital costs may be supported in exceptional circumstances if clearly justified in the budget.

FTE allocation: There is no fixed FTE split—budgets should be fit for purpose and support both delivery and capability building.

Co-funding: Co-funding can be included, but URP proposals must not duplicate activities already funded elsewhere. If your proposal is primarily a co-funded extension of an existing project (“pure co-funding”), it may be better suited to a negotiated grant approach. If co-funding is included, clearly describe what URP funding would deliver that is distinct, and how the programme meets the benefit test and has a clear pathway to uptake.

6. How should applicants show alignment with other research (including existing NHC-funded work), and how do you handle overlap/duplication?

Proposals should explain how the programme fits within the wider research landscape—for example, how it complements existing work, builds on prior findings, fills a gap, or connects to relevant initiatives and end-user needs.

This does not require a full review of NHC-funded projects; rather, it should demonstrate awareness of relevant research and a clear rationale for why the proposed programme is needed now.

URP eligibility requires proposals are not for activities already funded elsewhere, so any related or leveraged funding should be clearly described, with a clear distinction between what is already funded and what URP funding would deliver.

7. How is the legislative “benefit test” assessed in practice, and how should applicants demonstrate a clear line of sight to benefit and uptake?

The benefit test is an eligibility requirement. Proposals must clearly explain how the work has the potential to benefit insured persons and/or reduce the future cost of providing natural hazard cover.

Assessment begins with an internal eligibility check (including benefit test), before proposals proceed to expert assessment.

Strong proposals describe: who benefits, what changes as a result of the research, when benefits are expected, and the evidence or logic supporting the pathway from outputs to real-world use.

We also expect a clear path to uptake—how findings will be used in policy, practice, guidance, tools, communication, or decision-making (not just academic outputs).

8. How will funding be allocated across different research themes?

There are no predetermined quotas for how many programmes will be funded in any particular research theme (Quantifying hazards and impacts; Supporting people and decisions; Resilient buildings; Smarter land use).

Funding decisions consider expert panel assessments and strategic moderation, including portfolio balance and alignment with signals/targets in our Resilience and Research Strategies.

9. Is there a preference for national vs local/regional-scale studies?

There is no requirement that research be national in scale. However, proposals should clearly explain how benefits will be realised and how findings can be applied beyond a single location (for example, through transferable methods, scalable tools, guidance, or relevance to high-exposure settings).

10. Do you fund flood risk/resilience research, given the NHI Scheme doesn't cover flood damage to residential buildings?

NHC's natural hazards cover includes storm and flood damage to residential land only, not damage to residential buildings. (More information on what is covered through NHCover is available on our website: <https://www.naturalhazards.govt.nz/know-your-cover/>).

When considering benefit, proposals focused primarily on flooding impacts to residential buildings will generally not meet the benefit test.

However, research relating to flood/storm hazards and impacts more broadly may still meet the benefit test if it has a clear pathway to benefit insured persons (i.e., NHI levy payers) and/or reduce future scheme costs—for example, by improving hazard understanding, supporting better land-use decisions, reducing exposure, informing risk reduction actions, or strengthening the evidence base used for risk management.

This can include a strong multi-hazard angle – for example, improving understanding of how flood risk interacts with other hazards covered by NHC (such as landslides, tsunami, or fire following an event).