

FAQs on the National Statement of Science Investment

What is the purpose of the National Statement of Science Investment (NSSI)?

Since 2007/08, government investment in science has grown by 70 per cent and a number of changes have been made to the structure of the science system. Now is a good time to take stock of our science investments to ensure they're targeting the most appropriate areas.

It is crucial that we ensure current and future investments are effective in delivering benefit to New Zealanders. Central to the NSSI is the Government's vision for the shape of the science and innovation system in 10 years' time, and for science and innovation's contribution to New Zealand.

What is in the NSSI?

The NSSI sets out the main mechanisms of the Government's science investment, outlines the purpose of each of these and explores how they interact to encourage the application of science and innovation in New Zealand.

It also outlines the rationale and future directions for science funding in New Zealand, in particular contestable funding, with the aim of ensuring that the system makes an effective contribution to the outcomes that the Government is seeking.

The NSSI is structured as follows:

Section 1 sets out the vision for 2025.

Section 2 contains some high-level analysis of the performance of the New Zealand science system.

Section 3 discusses the function of different parts of the system, why the system is structured the way it is, and how Government wants it to work in the future. These frameworks will inform how the Government will think about and act in partnership with the science sector over the next 10 years. It also sets out the future direction for investment in some key sectors and discusses investment in people who work as part of the science system.

Section 4 sets out future investment direction in some key areas, as well as the general future investment pathway.

Section 5 describes how the many policy actions that are planned or already under way will contribute to delivering the vision for 2025, and sets out the guiding principles behind them.

Section 6 provides a timeline of the key actions and expected outcomes from our science investments.

What are the high-level goals of the final NSSI?

Over the next 10 years, we want to see:

- A better-performing science system that is larger, more agile and more responsive, investing effectively for long-term impact on our health, economy, environment and society
- Growth in BERD to well above 1 per cent of GDP, driving a thriving independent research sector that is a major pillar of the New Zealand science system
- Reduced complexity and increased transparency in the public science system

- Continuous improvement in New Zealand’s international standing as a high-quality R&D destination, resulting in the attraction, development and retention of talented scientists, and direct investment by multinational organisations
- Comprehensive evaluation and monitoring of performance, underpinned by easily available, reliable data on the science system, to measure our progress towards these goals.

What actions will the Government undertake to achieve its goals?

Actions outlined in the NSSI include:

- Implementing the revised contestable science fund
- Introducing Annual System Performance Reports, as well as a comprehensive sector-wide evaluation, monitoring and reporting system
- Establishing Regional Research Institutes
- Reviewing Crown Research Institutes’ Core Funding
- Undertaking a strategic refresh of the Health Research Council
- Developing an International Science Strategy to guide our approach to international engagement

How will the Government measure progress against its goals?

While the NSSI takes a 10-year view, it will be refreshed every three years. This refresh process will report back on progress.

The NSSI states that the two pillars of success are ‘excellence’ and ‘impact’. How will these be measured?

Excellence encompasses the quality of the science, the people involved in it and the outcomes it generates. We understand excellence to mean the best people, taking a rigorous approach, leading to optimum results.

Impact encompasses the ways in which scientific research benefits individuals, whānau, communities, organisations, New Zealand, and the world. The dimensions of impact that we consider include those in the economic, environmental, health and social spheres, specifically including those identified under the Vision Mātauranga policy.

How is the final NSSI different to the draft?

In May 2014, the Government released a draft NSSI for public feedback. Much of the feedback received on the draft NSSI welcomed it as a description of the current science and innovation system, but stakeholders also asked for a document that was more focused on the future, and that contained a more comprehensive plan for science and innovation in New Zealand. This final NSSI responds to that feedback.

It is more forward looking and presents the Government’s vision for the future in a more specific way. It also presents a revised structure for this vision. Where the draft contained seven objectives, the final document contains a clearer description of what the Government expects the growing science system to achieve. It relies mostly on two main ‘pillars’ as the means to achieve that vision: excellence and impact.

Who was consulted in the development of the NSSI?

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) sought views from a range of stakeholders when developing the NSSI. This included Crown Research Institutes, universities, independent research organisations, Māori researchers, as well as the businesses, government departments and regional government that fund, provide and use science. The general public were also invited to have their say, with the draft document released for open consultation.

A series of workshops were held to gather the views of key stakeholder groups. These included Māori researchers, organisations such as the Health Research Council, the New Zealand Association of Scientists, Crown Research Institutes, university research representatives, and the Independent Research Association of New Zealand. MBIE also met with business representatives, departmental Chief Science Advisers and the Network of Commercialisation Centres. Comment was sought from international experts.

Why are you changing contestable funding?

The draft NSSI launched a review of the MBIE-managed contestable fund to align it with the future direction of the science system. It consulted on high-level proposals for change to increase the flexibility of the fund and its responsiveness to emerging research opportunities and needs. It also sought to reduce the complexity and cost of the fund's operational processes.

The review concluded that there is a lack of clarity on the purpose and role of the fund in the wider science system. Its structure hindered government from shifting funding to emerging research opportunities and needs, operational processes appeared complex, and some costs were disproportionate to the scale of funding available.

What are the changes?

The newly designed contestable fund will:

- Be a single, larger, more agile fund that can respond to emerging opportunities
- Have two investment mechanisms, with funding offered through an annual call for proposals for either short-term fail-fast projects or large-scale, medium-term research projects
- An Investment Plan that will communicate how, when and why the Government will invest over a three-year horizon
- Streamlined, robust operational processes that will reduce complexity and cost

When will they be implemented and how?

The changes will be implemented through MBIE's 2016 science investment round. More information will be made available shortly.