

RESEARCHER SKILLS & DEVELOPMENT (RSD) FUND - GUIDELINES

Introduction

Researcher development is a key priority area in the University strategic plan; [Taumata Teitei](#) (*Research & Innovation Priority 5: nurture, recruit and retain outstanding research talent*); and [People & Culture Priority 2: To develop a future-ready workforce](#).

The long-term vision for Researcher Development (RD) is to:

- Nurture and recruit outstanding research talent through the provision of outstanding researcher training and capability building opportunities.
- Foster a culture of continuing researcher development.
- Enable researchers to identify and enhance a range of skills suited to their personal career pathway.

What is the Researcher Skills and Development (RSD) Fund?

The University already has an excellent suite of RD offerings (including workshops, webinars, online modules, events etc) for researchers. However, there are always opportunities to expand and improve these to ensure that changing researcher and compliance needs are met. The RSD Fund has been established to help enhance and expand researcher development offerings across the University to supplement existing funding sources for the design, development, and delivery of RD offerings. This annual fund is managed by the Researcher Development team through the Research and Innovation Office (RIO).

Please note this fund is distinct from the [Research Development Fund \(RDF\)](#) which provides internal funding for research related initiatives within each faculty and LSRI.

Who is the fund for?

This fund is aimed at teams of academics and/or professional staff to design, develop, enhance and deliver offerings related to a particular [RD capability area](#) and/or current strategic priority area or cohort (see below). These may take the form of one-off RD activities to support time-bound development activities (e.g in preparation for grants; in response to new compliance or legislative requirements) but the preference is for initiatives which can be sustained long-term, and which are collaborative between faculties, LSRI, research centres, and professional staff services functions (see assessment criteria linked to from the last page).

The fund **is not for** individual researchers or offerings for undergraduate students. Please contact the [Researcher development team](#) for any questions including questions about the suitability of your idea for the fund or who you might partner with.

What can be funded?

The design, development, enhancement, and delivery of RD activities by:

- Buying-out University academic or professional staff time for their subject matter expertise;
- Contracting in external subject matter expertise;
- Purchase of off-the-shelf training products for delivery within the University (where appropriate resources are not available within the university);

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- Additional costs associated with the design, development, or delivery of the RD offering e.g catering, resource development.

For more information on previously funded projects please see [Initiatives supported through the Researcher Skills and Development Fund](#).

Strategic priority areas and cohorts for 2026

Annually we reassess the strategic priority capability areas and cohorts that we would like to prioritise through the RSD Fund by engaging with OD, ADRs, RSMs, directors of our university research centres, ROMs, and the DVCR-leadership team.

Priority areas 2026:

- Research proposal ideation
- Responsible use of AI in research
- Transdisciplinary research
- Career planning and workload management
- Research impact, knowledge mobilisation and translation
- Research leadership development
- Data management and reproducibility
- Compliance related RD

Priority cohorts 2026:

- Early career researchers
- Māori and Pacific researchers

How much funding can be applied for?

The total amount of the fund available is \$500k for 2026. There is no maximum amount of funding that can be sought per request, but individual requests approved for 2023-25 funding rounds ranged from \$10k to \$80k.

Note: Where available co-funding options should be explored in advance of your application. The Researcher Development team can support co-funding discussions, as required. RIO and the Deputy Vice Chancellor-Research have the right to reserve and allocate funds to emerging and strategic Researcher Development priorities.

What is the time and duration of the fund?

Awards will begin on 1 January 2026 and run for one calendar year. Any unallocated or underspent funds **cannot be carried into the following financial year**, therefore full spend of allocated funds is required within the calendar year. Funding for projects lasting more than one year may be considered but **MUST** be discussed with the Researcher Development team.

How do you request funding?

Please complete the [RSD Fund – Application form](#) and send to the RIO Researcher development team at Researcherdevelopment@auckland.ac.nz by **Friday 29th August 2025**.

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Note: It is expected that academic staff applicants will have sought endorsement from their appropriate Faculty/LSRI leader e.g. Associate Dean – Research (ADRs), prior to submitting the application to RIO.

Where can you get help to complete the funding request?

If you have any questions around eligibility for the RSD Fund, require assistance to complete the funding request, would like to discuss possible co-funding options or have more general questions in relation to the fund, please contact [Dr Julia Mouatt](#), Researcher Development Manager.

What happens next?

Once you have submitted your funding request it will be reviewed and then assessed by a small panel consisting of two ADRs, the Researcher Development Manager and OD's Practice lead for Academic Staff Experience. This panel will make recommendations as to which requests will be funded, based on pre-defined prioritisation criteria (see [Researcher Skills and Development Fund Assessment Criteria](#)).

The panel recommendations will then be endorsed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.

Notification of award will be provided in October/November after which it will be determined how the successful applicants would like to draw down on their funds. From January 2026 successful requestors will be required to engage in quarterly updates of the spend to date and delivery progress. A summary report will be requested at the end of the year for the end of year RSD Fund report, and to [share how the fund is used](#) across the university, a summary paragraph and, where possible, an image to accompany it will be requested.