

University of Otago Research Grand Challenges

Purpose

To coordinate and foster interdisciplinary Grand Challenges that harness our research and innovation strengths to solve pressing national or global problems.

To promote and advance the reputation of Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka | the University of Otago in these areas.

To lead and assist in the establishment, coordination and maintenance of key strategic partnerships in these areas, including (but not limited to):

- Local and national government agenda
- Key community and industry partners
- Global universities.

Structure

- Reports to DVC (R&E)
- Academic leadership, including a Director (or a co-directorate) internally funded at up to 0.5FTE
- Academic and professional staff leadership group, which may include limited representation for key foundation partners (academic or otherwise)
- Independently chaired Advisory Board (advisory to DVC (R&E)), which may be supplemented by other focused advisory groups as required
- Operational Manager, reporting to Director
- Other support (finance, communication, marketing, admin) provided through relevant shared service
- Virtual presence and “head office”, using shared meeting and event spaces when needed for activities.

Funding

Support will be provided through University Research Committee, initially for three years at \$150k per annum for each entity to support directorate and associated functions. Additional \$30k per annum available for distribution as research seed-funding grants (via a process to be managed and overseen by Research Committee).

Initial Call for Expressions of Interest

A call for expressions of interest will be made in March 2025 to lead and coordinate the first two Grand Challenges.

To encourage concrete progress towards achieving the overall goals of Vision 2040 – “transforming lives, connecting communities, and nurturing the environment in Otago, Te Waipounamu, Aotearoa, the Pacific, and the world” – these will be in the areas of:

- Sustainability research aligned with *Tī Kōuka: The Sustainability Strategic Framework 2022–2030*
- Māori research aligned with *Te Aka Matua 2030/Māori Strategic Framework 2030* and Whakamana i Te Tiriti o Waitangi Domain Plan.

An additional call is expected to be made in late 2025 or early 2026 for two further Grand Challenges:

- Pacific-led research aligned with the *Pacific Strategic Framework 2022-2030*
- An open call for an area of pressing global need, as determined by the strength of the case presented and quality of the application.

It is expected that one additional future call will be made for a pair of Grand Challenges, which will also be in areas determined by the strengths and merits of the application submitted.

“Steady state” will see six Grand Challenges supported on a rolling series of three-year funding cycles, giving opportunities for regular refresh.

Structure of Expressions of Interest

- Focus on alignment with the *Māori Strategic Framework 2030/Te Aka Matua 2030* and Whakamana i Te Tiriti o Waitangi Domain Plan, and *Tī Kōuka: The Sustainability Strategic Framework 2022–2030*
- Focus on leadership, structure, vision and track record of applicants
- Seek inclusive representation from across all four academic divisions, with integration of Social Sciences and Humanities particularly encouraged
- Identify directors and independent Advisory Board chair
- Identify key partners (existing and aspirational).

Asking for:

- Aspirational goals
- Strategic alignment
- Operational structure and timeline
- Proposed research directions, including an outline of potential translational pathways to achieving impact
- Key Performance Indicators.