Request for Proposals

Achieving substantive change in learner outcomes: acting on the collective knowledge generated through the TLRI and Ako Aotearoa Projects

Specifications for Proposals

Context

The Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) seeks to enhance the links between educational research and teaching practices to improve outcomes for learners. The fund was established by the government in 2003 and is managed by the New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER).

Ako Aotearoa is the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence. Our vision is the best possible educational outcomes for learners. Our mandate includes funding large scale change projects *i.e.* projects that seek to achieve evidence-based, sustainable improvements in teaching and learning practice for the benefit of learners

The goals of the TLRI and Ako Aotearoa project funding are highly complementary and collectively seek to:

- enhance educational outcomes for learners
- build a coherent and cumulative body of knowledge effective tertiary teaching and learning in Aotearoa – New Zealand
- promote collaboration across and within different parts of the tertiary education sector, including between researchers and practitioners
- build research capability and capacity.

The TLRI and Ako Aoteaora are working in partnership to jointly fund a major project to improve tertiary education outcomes for learners. Up to $300K (GST exclusive) in funding is available for this work: this RFP is a call for proposals.

The work

We wish to commission a project that seeks to achieve a substantive and sustainable change in tertiary learner outcomes. The proposal might address improvement in learner outcomes in relation to one or more of the following areas of tertiary education:

- Enhancing connections between learning experiences, employment and broader educational aspirations
- Responding to diversity in ways that support learning
- Achieving success for priority learners in tertiary education
- Designing and using assessment and moderation

The project must:
- actively build upon the collective body of knowledge generated by the TLRI and Ako Aotearoa projects, and other research as appropriate
- demonstrate, with strong evidence, that the approach has a high likelihood of success (in terms of sustainability, and potential scalability)
- trial an innovative element/approach that affirms and/or challenges existing knowledge
- measure the impact on learners over time against a set of well-defined learner outcomes
- involve collaboration between researchers and practitioners

Ideally the project will also:
- be broadly applicable across a range of tertiary environments (ideally, the implementation will be explored in a range of tertiary contexts).

The proposal should include

- *Title of the research project.*
- *Description of the proposed project.* The proposal must demonstrate how it builds upon the collective learnings from the TLRI and Ako Aotearoa funded work and the specific learner benefits of focus. It needs to provide a clear rationale for the focus of the study, explaining the gap in understanding and/or the need it is attempting to address. Furthermore, the work needs to build upon, and be located within, the national and international literature of the area(s) being explored.
- *Research design and methodology.* The following must be clearly described:
  - *Research question(s) and anticipated outcomes.* These should advance learning in the field and clearly demonstrate the level of change expected for learners in the desired outcome(s).
  - *Design and methodology.* The proposed project design and data-collection methods must follow logically from the research question(s) and include a theory of change as to how the outcomes are expected to be achieved and sustained. Preference will be given to projects that utilise a mixed method design in which it is clear how the data sources inform each other and collectively contribute to achieving the project goals.
  - *Data-analysis plan.* This should explain how the data will be analysed to answer the research question(s) and test the learner benefit against the predictions made.
  - The *quality-assurance processes* to be employed, including risk analysis, ethical considerations, and project management.
  - *Timetable.* A project plan for the work identifying key milestones.
- *Project team.* The proposal must list the people involved, the expertise they bring to the team and their respective roles within the project. A short CV (one page maximum) for each member of the team must be appended.
- *Dissemination.* A description of how the project team proposes to ensure that the work is shared with all relevant audiences must be included. This should include dissemination approaches to be employed both over the course of the project and on completion.
- *Evaluation.* Description of how the ongoing outcomes of the work will evaluated as part of the [Ako Aotearoa Impact Evaluation Process](#)
- *Budget.* A detailed budget is required, with clear explanatory notes for each expenditure that justify the allocated costs.

- *Referees.* The names and contact details of two referees who can attest to the ability of the team to carry out the proposed project.

Expected Deliverables
- A full report
- A summary document to be publishable for wide distribution.
- Dissemination activities commenced as agreed with the project team

Project oversight and selection process
The project will be managed by Ako Aotearoa (for an overview of management processes see Ako Aotearoa Funding Guidelines 2012-2013). A steering group will provide formal oversight, and will comprise of nominees from Ako Aotearoa, the TLRI, and others as appropriate. The selection panel will be drawn from the steering group. Short-listed applicants will be asked to meet with this selection panel who will make a final decision. The TLRI and Ako Aotearoa reserve the right not to accept any proposal should proposals be of insufficient quality.

Time-lines and indicative budget
Detailed time-lines for the work will be established by mutual agreement with the successful proposer, but it is expected that the work will start in early 2013 and be completed by mid-2015. It is envisaged that the cost of the work will be up to $300,000 (GST exclusive).

Additional information:
Information about the TLRI is available at http://www.tlri.org.nz. Information about Ako Aotearoa is available on www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz.

Applicants are advised to consider the following supporting material:
- Advice for TLRI funding applications: http://www.tlri.org.nz/about-tlri/news-archive/advice-tlri-funding-applications
- Alkema, A. (2012). *Creating sustainable change to improve outcomes for learners: A framework for thinking about projects in tertiary education.* New Zealand: Ako Aotearoa

For further information regarding the project please contact Dr. Kirsty Weir, Ako Aotearoa Research Manager, on K.Weir@massey.ac.nz or 04 803 0107

Key Dates
- Applications close Friday 5th October 2012 5pm
- The selection panel meeting is expected to be held late October 2012

Submitting an application

Full proposals can be submitted as, either: one PDF file, emailed to K.Weir@massey.ac.nz, or one printed copy, posted to:
  Kirsty Weir,
  Ako Aotearoa,
  Private Bag 756,
  Wellington,
  New Zealand