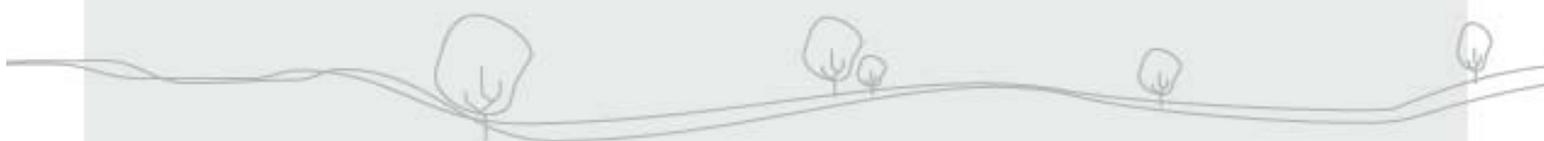




TEACHING & LEARNING
RESEARCH INITIATIVE
NĀU I WHATU TE KĀKAHU, HE TĀNĪKO TAKU

Request for Proposal

**Supporting learning in the early years –
developing deeper understandings for
practice**



Background

The TLRI is seeking to achieve its aims by funding research projects that align strongly with the principles and priorities of the initiative *and* by supporting a range of innovative and purposeful activities designed to strengthen the way the TLRI achieves these aims, which are to:

- Build a cumulative body of knowledge linking teaching and learning
- Enhance the links between educational research and teaching practices—and researchers and teachers—across early childhood, school and tertiary sectors
- Grow research capability and capacity in the areas of teaching and learning.

The TLRI began in 2003 and has now funded 101 projects of which 73 are now completed. As part of the ongoing development activities TLRI has commissioned a series of sector-based reviews that sought to address the question: “What contribution has the TLRI made to knowledge building about teaching and learning?” These reviews were discussed in one-day symposia at which participants sought to identify key learning in terms of the aims of the TLRI and future priorities.

In light of these reviews, and in a bid to strengthen the way the TLRI programme is fulfilling its aims, the TLRI Advisory Board has decided to release a Request for Proposals (RFPs) in selected areas each year. The RFP will be framed within the TLRI Overview document¹ that describes the strategic, research and practice principles and priorities of the TLRI. Within this framework, the RFP will have specific requirements in terms of focus and design. The RFP-based projects will complement other TLRI projects that will continue to be funded in the traditional way: that is, the sector-initiated projects that go through an Expression of Interest and Full Proposal process.

This first RFP is for a project located in the early years. There is increasing awareness of the importance of learning in the early years and of the need to determine ways to support learning, particularly for those children who need more support to be successful as learners at school and throughout their lives. The completed TLRI work in this sector, along with that of the Centres of Innovation, has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the teaching and learning of young children and has kept the work of New Zealand researchers in the foreground internationally. The RFP in the early years seeks to build on this work by locating a project in areas identified by experts in the sector as being potentially significant in terms of addressing a strategic priority of the TLRI which is on “deepening our understanding about how we might address current inequities in educational outcomes and on creating the teaching and learning processes that will support success for all types of learners in the 21st century” (TLRI Overview document). The successful RFP will have a focus on supporting learning for children who learn in more than one language, or on learning with ICT, or a combination of these ideas. It is expected that the successful project will provide a springboard for future research in early years.

The project will be for 2 years with an additional 6 months for completion of writing. It will be funded to a total value of \$300K + GST. Funding for the successful project will begin in January 2013. The TLRI Advisory Board plans to use the RFP-funded TLRI projects to highlight the contribution of the TLRI to teaching and learning in New Zealand. It is anticipated that there will be a special event to recognise the awarding of the grant to the successful team.

¹ <http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/pages/02%20Overview.pdf>

Project purpose

1. *The project will focus on persistent issues and/or challenges of practice in early years teaching and learning.* Through this project we are seeking to deepen understanding of how to support **early years learning**. Specifically, proposals should have a focus on **learning in more than one language in the early years OR learning with ICT OR a combination of these ideas**.
2. *The project will demonstrate a commitment to interactive, collaborative design.* The project will require teams in which each member brings particular expertise for the collective endeavour. This will include the expertise of practitioners and academics from a range of disciplines and possibly institutions. Overall, the partnership model as currently described for the Type I TLRI projects will be reflected within the design of this project. That is, project teams will involve researchers and practitioners with complementary expertise and where the research team as a whole is strengthened by the inclusion of each member. The question under investigation must matter to practice but the actual roles of each person in the team will depend upon the research design.

At points of time throughout the project there will be interactions that will both inform the community of interest and influence the ongoing research that is being undertaken in the project. This new element of ongoing evaluation is intended to generate proposals in which the thinking and emerging findings of the research are constantly considered by practitioners and/or learners.

3. *The project will use a mixed methods approach.* Quantitative and mixed methods approaches that underpin the generation of robust evidence are sought. The design will also indicate how the expertise of each team member is critical to the investigation and how the collective participation supports the learning of all involved. A further aspect of the design will be to take account of the range of interests within the education settings, including parents, whānau and the wider community.
4. *Project outcomes, dissemination and effects for learners.* The dissemination plan must show how the young children in the study benefited and how understandings from the study might potentially benefit other learners. Dissemination approaches could include but are not limited to: development of new learning tools, publications, workshops, a website, road shows and online resources.

The proposal should include

1. *Title of the research project.*
5. *Description of the proposed project.* The proposal must demonstrate how it addresses the aims of the TLRI and the specific focus for this RFP. It needs to provide a clear rationale for the focus of the study, explaining the gap in understanding and/or need it is attempting to address and how it will contribute to student learning. The work needs to build upon, and be located within, the national and international literature of the area(s) being explored.

2. *Research design and methodology.* The following must be clearly described:
 - a. *The research question(s).* These should advance learning in the field and suggest how the study will contribute to and extend what is already known.
 - b. *Design and methodology.* The proposed research design and data-collection methods that follow logically from the research question(s).
 - c. *Data-analysis plan.* This should explain how the data will be managed and analysed and how these data will then be used to answer the research question(s) in a way that provides trust in the findings.
 - d. *The quality-assurance processes* to be employed.
3. *Timetable.* A project plan for the work identifying key milestones.
4. *Project team.* 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.
5. *Ongoing evaluation for the project team.* Description of how the team proposes to interact with the community of interest during the project and with each other to reflect and perhaps adjust and fine-tune the project to ensure best possible results.
6. *Dissemination.* Description of how the project team proposes to ensure that the research is accessible to a practitioner audience. This should include demonstrating how the learners in the study benefited, how the understandings from the study might potentially benefit other learners and the implications for practice.
7. *Budget.* A detailed budget is required, with clear explanatory notes for each expenditure that justify the allocated costs.
8. *Referees.* The names and contact details of two referees who can attest to the ability of the team to carry out the proposed project.

Submission of a proposal

The closing date for receipt of proposals is **5 pm on Wednesday 15 August 2012.**

An **electronic copy [Word document]** must be submitted to tlri@nzcer.org.nz and four unbound hard copies should be sent to:

Teaching and Learning Research Initiative
C/- NZCER
Level 10, Education House
178–182 Willis Street
PO Box 3237
WELLINGTON 6140

Selection criteria and process

The proposals will be assessed by an independent panel that will make recommendations to the TLRI Advisory Board who will make the final decision. The proposals will be assessed using the TLRI Full Proposal Selection Criteria (*see Full Proposal Guidelines, p. 14*), taking account of the specific requirements of this RFP which include: a **strategic** focus on learning in the early years in more than one language or ICT or a combination of these ideas; a **research design** that is consistent with the TLRI partnership values and that uses a quantitative and mixed methods approach; and a **practice** focus where there is an iterative and interactive approach to dissemination and clear benefits for learners.

As part of the selection process, proposers may be contacted and asked to provide additional information, or to discuss the proposal. The overall selection process is subject to independent audit.

The TLRI Co-ordination Team will negotiate research contracts with the successful applicant.

Useful references

Early Years symposium summary (2010). Available at:

<http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/pages/TLRI%20Early%20Years%20Symposium%20.pdf>

Meade, A. (2010). *The Contribution of ECE Centres of Innovation to building knowledge about teaching and learning 2003– 2010*. Paper presented at the TLRI Early Years Symposium, NZCER, Wellington, 12 November. Available at:

<http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/pages/AMeade-ECE-Paper2010.pdf>

Nuttall, J. (2010). *The Contribution of the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative to building knowledge about teaching and learning: A review of early years projects, 2004– 2010*. Paper presented at the TLRI Early Years Symposium, NZCER, Wellington, 12 November. Available at:

http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/pages/Nuttall_TLRI_final_paper2011.pdf

Penuel, W. R., Fishman, B. J., Cheng, B. H., & Sabelli, N. (2011). Organizing Research and Development at the Intersection of Learning, Implementation and Design. *Educational Researcher*, 40(7), pp. 331–337.

TLRI Full Proposal Content Guidelines 2012. Available at:

<http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/pages/Full%20proposal%202012.doc>