

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Research Proposal Development Specialist - Environmental Sustainability

Reports to:	Pre-award Proposal Development Lead
Division:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research
Tenure:	Permanent
Location:	Hamilton
Date:	August 2026

Vision

Ko te tangata -

A research-intensive university providing a globally connected, innovative and inclusive studenty experience in an environment characterised by a commitment to diversity, respect for Indigenous knowledge, and high levels of community engagement.

Values

Ko te mana o Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato ka herea ki tō tātou:

- Tūngātahi me te Māori
- Mahi pono
- Whakanui i ngā huarahi hou
- Whakarewa i te hiringa i te mahara

The University of Waikato places a high value on:

- Partnership with Māori
- Acting with integrity
- Celebrating diversity
- Promoting creativity

1. GENERAL

The Research and Enterprise office provides operational support to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, leadership in implementing the University's research strategy and leadership of the University's central research support infrastructure, including identifying research opportunities, working alongside researchers and research teams to develop mission-led impact-focused research proposals, brokering multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional

research team proposals, developing appropriate proposal management and governance mechanisms, supporting researchers in engaging with research stakeholders, managing and reporting on research contracts, and supporting wider research performance and compliance requirements.

Research Office Staff work collaboratively with Academic Divisions, Finance, Ethics, Commercial and Business Partnerships and the School of Graduate Research where appropriate to support the wider needs of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Portfolio.

The Research and Enterprise office includes staff working in and between the Research Nodes, Regional Offices and Central Office.

2. POSITION PURPOSE

The Research Proposal Development Specialist supports the design, development, and submission of high-quality, multi-institutional and multidisciplinary research funding proposals. The role works in close partnership with academic staff and project teams to coordinate all aspects of proposal preparation, ensuring alignment with funder priorities, institutional strategy, and mission-led research objectives. A key focus is the development of compelling research impact plans, including identifying and coordinating partnerships required to deliver measurable impact outcomes.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY

The Research Proposal Development Specialist reports to the Pre-Award Proposal Development Lead.

4. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Internal:	Director of Research and Enterprise Deputy Vice Chancellor Research Assistant Vice Chancellor Impact Research and Enterprise staff Commercial and Business Partnership staff School of Graduate Research staff Divisional Academic and Research staff Deans, Associate Deans and Department Chairs Finance Office staff
External:	Other Institution Research Office staff and researchers Funding agencies Research partners and stakeholders

5. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Proposal Development and Coordination

- Execute end-to-end development of complex funding proposals
- Manage timelines, milestones, and deliverables
- Coordinate multidisciplinary and multi-institutional contributions

Research Impact Development

- Develop high-quality impact plans
- Engage partners across industry, government, and community

Funding Opportunity Identification

- Identify relevant funding opportunities
- Work with researchers on competitiveness and fit

Writing and Content Development

- Draft and Edit proposal content – particularly impact and impact pathway
- Translate complex ideas into compelling narratives

Budget and Compliance

- Support Proposal Budget Preparation and ensure availability of resources
- Ensure Compliance with funder guidelines

Stakeholder Engagement

- Build relationships across academic and external partners

Team Contribution

- Work effectively as a member of the Research & Enterprise team to support other team members and provide support and/or coverage of functions.
- Work collaboratively to encourage transparency across activities, open sharing of knowledge, and the building of positive relationships to support a high-performance culture.
- Work with other team members on projects.
- Support a positive culture and morale.
- Comply with and undertake responsibilities set out in the University's Health and Safety Policy

Continuous Improvement

- Actively contribute to the ongoing development and improvement of funding systems, trends and processes.

Health & Safety

- Participate in the maintenance of a safe and healthy work environment for self and others including students. Comply with and undertake responsibilities set out in the University's Health and Safety Policy.

NOTE: Staff have an annual Objectives, Development and Reflection (ODR) meeting with their manager.

6. SPECIALISATION

A Research Proposal Development Specialist in the “environmental sustainability” domain must be capable of translating complex, science-driven investments into clear, compelling proposals that demonstrate improved resilience, environmental outcomes, and long-term sustainability. This requires strong expertise in aligning proposals with strategic priorities such as natural hazard and climate risk mitigation, biodiversity protection and restoration, sustainable resource allocation, clean energy transitions, and circular production systems. The role demands the ability to articulate integrated, system-level solutions that address key challenges—including increasing exposure to weather extremes, biodiversity loss, resource pressure, and decision uncertainty—while outlining pathways to climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilient economic development. It also requires emphasising the application of advanced science (e.g., environmental monitoring, modelling, data systems, and decision-support tools), supporting evidence-based governance and policy, and demonstrating how coordinated action across sectors will deliver measurable environmental, economic, and societal outcomes aligned with New Zealand’s long-term resilience and stewardship goals.

7. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Research Proposal Development Specialist will be performing satisfactorily when:

- Consistently delivers high-quality, complete, and compliant proposals aligned with funder requirements
- Meets deadlines and manages multiple submissions effectively
- Demonstrates strong stakeholder engagement, working constructively with researchers and partners
- Improves the clarity, competitiveness, and impact framing of proposals
- Contributes to successful funding outcomes or improved success rates over time
- Shows strong knowledge of funding schemes, processes, and institutional priorities
- Provides reliable coordination of inputs (budgets, narratives, documentation) utilising the University of Waikato Research Management System
- Maintains attention to detail and accuracy across all proposal materials
- Supports continuous improvement of templates, processes, and systems
- Builds strong trust and working relationships with academic and research staff in the area of specialisation.
- Required behaviours such as collaboration with other areas, team work within the team etc, such as:
- Interactions in the course of performing duties are conducted professionally, respectfully and collaboratively.
- Valuable contribution and participation in relevant meetings and/or projects is provided.
- Advice provided complies with professional standards, University policies and procedures and supports the University’s strategic objectives.
- Safe and healthy work practices are followed that comply with University policies and procedures, relevant work standards and statutory obligations.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Essential

- Postgraduate qualification (Master's or equivalent experience) in a discipline related to the specialisation

Desirable

- Doctoral qualification
- Training in research development, grant writing, or project management

SKILLS

Essential

- Excellent writing, editing, and communication skills
- Strong organisational and project management capability
- Ability to manage multiple deadlines and complex inputs
- Strong stakeholder engagement and relationship management skills
- Ability to translate complex ideas into clear, compelling proposals

Desirable

- Budget development skills
- Facilitation and collaboration skills

KNOWLEDGE

Essential

- Understanding of the research funding lifecycle (pre-award)
- Knowledge of proposal development, grant writing, and budgeting
- Understanding of research impact and funder expectations
- Awareness of compliance and governance requirements

Desirable

- Knowledge of research management systems
- Awareness of emerging funding trends and partnership models

EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Experience developing and coordinating research funding proposals
- Experience working with multidisciplinary and/or multi-institutional teams
- Experience in a research-intensive environment
- Proven ability to enhance proposal quality and competitiveness

Desirable

- Experience with large-scale or mission-led research programmes
- Familiarity with major funding schemes and competitive processes
- Experience developing research impact plans

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Personal Attributes

- Proactive, self-motivated, and outcome-focused
- High attention to detail and commitment to quality
- Collaborative and professional approach
- Able to work under pressure and adapt to changing priorities

Key Competencies

- Proposal development and coordination
- Research impact planning
- Stakeholder engagement
- Strategic alignment with institutional and funder priorities
- Effective communication and influence

Specialisation: Environmental Sustainability and Resilience

- Ability to translate complex environmental and climate science research into persuasive proposals
- Understanding of areas such as climate adaptation and mitigation, natural hazard risk, biodiversity restoration, clean energy systems, and circular resource use
- Ability to articulate impact including environmental outcomes, resilience, sustainability, and public value
- Capability to develop pathways to implementation, policy integration, system transformation, and real-world environmental outcomes

Other Requirements

- Commitment to collaboration, continuous improvement, and professional standards
- Ability to build strong working relationships across the University and externally
- Commitment to health and safety and a positive team culture
- Commitment to equal opportunity and to the University's partnership with Māori as intended by the Treaty of Waitangi