



Strategic Research Development Fund 2026 CALL FOR RESEARCH CONCEPT PROPOSALS

1. PURPOSE

The AUT Transformational Technologies Research Network (AUT TTRN) invites **Strategic Research Concept Proposals** to support the development of ambitious, interdisciplinary research programs that target major external funding opportunities.

This internal fund is designed to:

- Enable cross-faculty teams to co-design large-scale research programmes;
- Support preparation of competitive applications to major funding schemes;
- Strengthen Māori and Pacific research engagement;
- Position AUT TTRN to secure multi-year, multi-million-dollar external funding.

This is not a project delivery fund. It is a strategic concept and proposal development fund.

2. FUNDING AVAILABLE

- Maximum per proposal: \$30,000
- Funding period: 1 July 2026 – 31 December 2026

Funds must be expended within this period. A realistic and strategically aligned budget is expected.

3. ELIGIBILITY

Proposals must:

- Be led by an AUT academic eligible to apply for external research funding;
- Include researchers from at least two schools/faculties or clearly distinct disciplines;
- Demonstrate genuine interdisciplinary collaboration;
- Include at least one Early Career Researcher (ECR) and/or Māori and/or Pacific researcher (strongly encouraged).

Engagement of Postgraduate Research (PGR) students is encouraged.

3.1 Strategic Alignment

Proposals must align with one or more AUT TTRN research areas:

- Smart and Sustainable Futures
- Human-Centered Technology Innovation
- Creative and Connected Technologies



Proposals must also demonstrate alignment with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ethical, responsible innovation.

4. PURPOSE OF FUNDING

Funding may be used for activities directly related to the development of a major external funding proposal, including:

- Research Assistant support for scoping or pilot data;
- Preliminary feasibility studies;
- Partnership co-design workshops;
- Proposal development retreats;
- External expert consultation;
- Technical prototyping or modeling (non-capital);
- Data acquisition;
- Grant-writing facilitation support.

Funding cannot be used for teaching buyouts, conference travel, student tuition or scholarships, publication costs, capital equipment, or unrelated operating costs.

5. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By 31 December 2026, successful teams must:

- Complete research work that contributes to a major external funding application; OR
- Produce a draft of an external funding proposal ready for submission.

A concise final report must be submitted by 31 January 2027.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Criterion A – Strategic Research Excellence (35%)

Criterion B – Interdisciplinarity & Team Capability (30%)

Criterion C – External Funding Strategy & Readiness (25%)

Criterion D – Vision Mātauranga / Te Tiriti Alignment (10%)

While there is no separate budget criterion, budgets must be realistic and aligned with the fund's purpose.

The funding panel comprises TTRN's Chairs, two senior academic representatives, a Māori academic representative, and a representative from AUT Research Office.



7. APPLICATION FORMAT

Please complete the application form provided. Maximum length: 5 pages (excluding CVs and budget table).

The application must include:

- Project Overview
- Research Concept
- External Funding Strategy
- Vision Mātauranga / Te Tiriti Alignment
- Team Capability & Roles
- Budget (max \$30,000)
- Abbreviated CVs

8. TIMELINE

Milestone	Date
Applications Close	15 May 2026 (5:00 pm)
Assessment Period	May 2026
Awards Announced	June 2026
Funding Period	1 July 2026 – 31 December 2026

9. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Funds will be administered through AUT TTRN in accordance with Tier 4 Research Network provisions. The AUT TTRN Governance Group will provide oversight. Ethical approval is required where applicable.

10. Submission Guideline

Completed applications can be sent with CVs of investigators to ttrn@aut.ac.nz