



**2025**

**Guidelines for  
applicants –  
Collaborator-led  
research**

**Applications for Building Research Levy 2025**



If you are applying for a scholarship, these are not your guidelines, please refer to [Guidelines for applicants – Scholarships](#).

Please make sure you read this together with the [2025 Research Investment Priorities](#)

## Quick reference guide

<b>Funding available</b>	Approximately \$2 million for the 2026-2027 financial year.
<b>Contract start date</b>	1 April 2026.
<b>Registration</b>	There is a mandatory registration stage for all new prospective applicants. If you have already registered your interest with BRANZ Inc. through previous rounds, you will automatically be sent a link to the web portal-based application in July. If you have not received a link, please review your spam mailbox or contact us at: <a href="mailto:researchinvestment@branz.org.nz">researchinvestment@branz.org.nz</a> .
<b>Application process</b>	Once registered, the application process has two stages. In stage one you are required to submit a Concept <sup>1</sup> through a web portal. Successful Concepts will then move to stage two, where you will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. Please do not submit your application via email. There will be no other way to submit applications other than utilising our web portal.
<b>Submission</b>	Concepts must be submitted via our web portal. If successful you will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. The Full Proposal template will be provided by BRANZ's Research Investment Team.
<b>Assessment</b>	Concepts will be assessed for eligibility by BRANZ's Research Investment Team. If eligible, Concepts will be assessed by a Subject Matter Experts Panel <sup>2</sup> . Full Proposals will be assessed by the Research Investment Advisory Group – the RIAG <sup>3</sup> .
<b>Privacy</b>	The information collected from your application will be shared for the sole purpose of assessing your proposal. The sharing of this information will be limited to BRANZ's Research Investment Team and members of the assessment panels. Assessors will sign a confidentiality agreement and conflict of interest register prior to receiving any material.
<b>Contact us</b>	If you have any questions, please contact <a href="mailto:researchinvestment@branz.org.nz">researchinvestment@branz.org.nz</a> as early as possible. Once applications have been submitted, it will not be possible to make any changes to them. Late applications will not be considered. If you need to withdraw your application, please send us an email at <a href="mailto:researchinvestment@branz.org.nz">researchinvestment@branz.org.nz</a> .

## Key Dates

<sup>1</sup> **Concept template** this is the form that succinctly outlines your research idea/proposal.

<sup>2</sup> **Subject Matter Experts Panel** is a group of BRANZ internal research experts and external subject matters experts, assessing Concepts specifically matched to their relevant skills and expertise.

<sup>3</sup> **Research Investment Advisory Group (RIAG)** is our newly established overarching panel that will review all proposals - BRANZ-led research, collaborator-led research and scholarship. This independent panel will provide expert advice to the BRANZ Inc. Board, based on the Objectives and associated Investment Signals and the assessment criteria



<b>Concepts submission period</b>	Early July until 5 August 2025
<b>Concepts due</b>	12 noon on 5 August 2025
<b>Results from Concept announced</b>	Early September 2025
<b>Full Proposal submission period</b>	Early September until 8 October 2025
<b>Full Proposals due</b>	12 noon on 8 October 2025
<b>Applicants notified of results</b>	Early December 2025
<b>Contracting period</b>	December 2025 – April 2026
<b>Contracts begin</b>	1 April 2026*

\*Contracts may commence before 1 April 2026; however, the first payment will be available from 1 April 2026.

**Please Note:** Dates are subject to change.

## What is new from previous years?

1. We have introduced the Concept template through a web portal. This replaces the previously used Expression of Interest template, offering a more streamlined and concise approach to presenting your ideas. Other submission types (Email, Word, PDF, etc.) will not be accepted.
2. A registration must be completed to access the Concept template. The link to the Concept template cannot be transferred to another individual.
3. We have developed a [Research Investment Strategy](#), our ten-year trajectory for our Building Research Levy investment.
4. We have a companion document, our [2025 Research Investment Priorities](#). Our annual research investment priorities are in this document. We will release a new Research Investment Priorities each year.
5. As part of the new Strategy, we have also introduced cross-cutting enablers, key aspects that we like to foster and invest in that can apply across the four focus areas. Please read them carefully and consider which ones might be addressed by your research. Applications that can demonstrate relevance and address one or more cross-cutting enablers will be prioritised.
6. We have introduced two new assessment panels: the Subject Matter Experts Panel and the Research Investment Advisory Group (RIAG), see definitions on page 1.

## Eligibility criteria for collaborator-led research

For Concepts and Full Proposals to be eligible under the Building Research Levy Act, they should meet the following criteria:

- a. Applications must be written in English and meet professional quality standards (e.g. proof-read, coherent writing and plain language).
- b. The funding must be used to directly support the delivery of research activities and outputs, not to fund the establishment or ongoing operations of centres, positions or infrastructure.
- c. The funding cannot be used to fund fundamental research or research that produces sensitive data that cannot be shared (except when it relates to culturally sensitive data, e.g. mātauranga Māori).
- d. The research project must directly address at least one objective in the Affordability focus area from the 2025 Research Investment Priorities.
- e. Eligible applications must have a Project Lead/Principal Investigator based in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- f. The research must be conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand. If some of the research is conducted overseas, BRANZ's Research Investment Team reserves the right to consider or decline the proposal considering the benefit to Aotearoa New Zealand from a wider context.
- g. The funding cannot be used for work that is already being paid for by another source unless specified as co-funding.
- h. The research must not commercially profit solely one research organisation, company, student, or university. In case of doubt, BRANZ's Research Investment Team will discuss with the lead the nature of the commercial gain for the proposed research.



## Assessment process

The application and assessment process include the following steps:

1. Applicants register using our web portal.
2. Applicants access a link provided to them after their registration, to submit a Concept utilising new web portal.
3. BRANZ's Research Investment Team assesses eligibility.
4. Eligible Concepts are assessed by the Subject Matter Experts Panel against the assessment criteria. Please refer to the assessment criteria section in this guideline.
5. The Subject Matter Experts Panel meets to moderate assessment and recommend a shortlist of high-quality research Concepts.
6. BRANZ's Research Investment Team considers the final recommendations from the Subject Matter Experts Panel to determine the final list of Concepts to be invited to develop Full Proposals.
7. Successful applicants are invited to submit a Full Proposal using the form provided by BRANZ's Research Investment Team.
8. Applicants invited to prepare a Full Proposal can book a meeting with a member of BRANZ's Research Investment Team to receive feedback from the Concept assessment process. For more details refer to Receiving Feedback section in these guidelines.
9. Applicants submit Full Proposals.
10. RIAG receives Full Proposals and assesses them against the assessment and balancing criteria.
11. RIAG meets to moderate assessments, including balancing portfolio and recommend funding.
12. BRANZ Inc. Board receives final recommendations and makes investment decisions. When making these decisions, the Board will:
  - a. Consider the RIAG's reviews and moderation discussions.
  - b. Take into account portfolio balance across the four focus areas, BRANZ's research investment Outcomes, Goals and Objectives in the Research Investment Strategy, and the annual investment priorities from the 2025 Research Investment Priorities.

**Your privacy is important to us:** BRANZ Inc. is required to store and share your application securely and only use it for the purpose for which it is intended to. Your application will be shared with the relevant assessment panel. All assessors will sign a confidentiality agreement and declare any existing or perceived conflicts of interest prior to receiving any material.

## Assessment criteria

- **Strategic alignment** – the research is aligned with Objectives and associated Investment Signals outlined in the 2025 Research Investment Priorities and addresses relevant cross-cutting enablers from BRANZ's Research Investment Strategy.
- **Impact and value of research** – research findings translate into actionable outputs and outcomes with a defined benefits for the sector across Aotearoa New Zealand. There is clear evidence that the research has not been done before or does not duplicate efforts that could be adopted to the Aotearoa New Zealand context.
- **Research excellence** – high quality research fills important knowledge gaps, is well-conducted, innovative, where applicable, and makes significant contributions to our industry.
- **Delivery confidence** – the research team's capability, capacity and access to research facilities and data needed to conduct the proposed research is evident.
- **Inclusivity** – where applicable, research is conducted in a transdisciplinary way, with diversity of perspectives, considering Aotearoa New Zealand's unique culture and associated knowledge systems.
- **Partnering and co-funding** – we seek partnerships with co-investors to maximise the benefit and impact of our collective research investment.

## Concept expectations

The Concept template helps you present your research idea in a clear and structured way. It guides you to describe the goals of your project, how you plan to do it, what you expect to achieve, and what difference your research could make in the real world.



This template is designed to help you tell a compelling story about your project and show how the research aligns with the prioritised research objectives in Affordability.

Before you start:

- Read the Research Investment Strategy and 2025 Research Investment Priorities.
- Review this Guidelines for applicants to ensure eligibility.
- Ensure the Concept aligns with at least one Objective in the Affordability focus area.
- Adhere to character/word limits.
- Do not consider including URLs, as linked content will not be reviewed.
- Investigate whether there are synergies between your idea and existing research at BRANZ or elsewhere.

### What a Concept is not?

- **A Full Proposal:** A Concept is not meant to include every detail of your project. It is a high-level overview, not a comprehensive research plan.
- **A literature review:** While references and background context are useful, a Concept should focus on your proposed idea and its relevance to our Objectives and associated Investment Signals, not a detailed academic review.
- **A funding application for immediate approval:** The Concept is used to assess the alignment and potential of your idea. Approval to proceed to Full Proposal does not guarantee funding.
- **A sales pitch without substance:** Strong Concepts are not just persuasive, they are grounded in clear objectives, sound methodology, and realistic outcomes.
- **An informal idea summary:** A Concept is not a casual or rough outline. It should be well-structured, concise, and directly address the assessment criteria.
- **A place for external links or attachments:** Concepts should be self-contained. Do not include URLs or refer to external websites for critical information.

### Full Proposal expectations

The applicant and its contracting institution agree to BRANZ's terms and conditions as part of the research funding agreement; this is only needed for Full Proposal applications (we reserve the right to change the terms of the funding agreement at any stage during our contract negotiations).

Your Full Proposal should clearly describe what research you plan to undertake, why it matters, and how you will carry it out. It must be persuasive, well-structured, and aligned with BRANZ's 2025 Research Investment Priorities.

Your proposal must be built around a clearly defined research question or hypothesis. This should be supported by relevant literature and data, and focus on a real, impactful issue in the building and construction sector. The question should be specific, feasible, and guide all aspects of your proposal.

Clearly state your research objectives. These should be specific, measurable, and logically aligned with your research question. Ensure your methodology is well thought out, describe the techniques, tools, and data sources you will use, and explain why they are appropriate. Show that your approach is feasible and that your team has the skills and experience needed to carry it out.

You must clearly explain the potential impact of your research. Describe how it will fill a knowledge gap and contribute to innovation, policy, improvements to the building and construction industry, or social outcomes. Proposals with strong, well-considered pathways to impact will be prioritised. You are expected to demonstrate how you will work collaboratively and engage with stakeholders to ensure your research is relevant, used, and has lasting value.

Include a clear timeline that outlines key phases and milestones, and a realistic, transparent budget that reflects the needs of the project. Identify any potential risks and outline how you will mitigate and manage them.



Clearly define the outputs (such as reports, datasets, or publications) and anticipated outcomes of your work (such as policy implications or incentives to change industry behaviours). Describe how you will communicate your findings, including engagement with stakeholders, communities, and/or decision-makers.

Overall, your proposal should present a focused and compelling research plan that addresses a real-world challenge and has the potential to deliver meaningful benefits. We are looking for proposals that combine scientific rigour with practical relevance, delivered by capable teams in partnership with others.

### What we value the most in research proposals?

- **Collaboration:** Engagement with relevant research teams across Aotearoa New Zealand, national and international researchers, iwi, policymakers, and industry.
- **Building on international knowledge:** Research that adapts and applies global insights to the Aotearoa New Zealand context.
- **Strong pathways to impact:** Demonstrating system-wide impact and a clear change lens.
- **Data innovation:** Initiatives that use, develop, and/or innovate data and tools supporting the building and construction industry, adhering to the FAIR Data approach (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reuseable).
- **Mātauranga Māori informed approaches:** If relevant to the project, integrating indigenous knowledge to enrich and diversify research reach and impact.
- **Capability strengthening:** Research and initiatives that enhance current and future capabilities, providing solutions, tools, and support for the sector's workforce and future research leaders.

### Receiving feedback on your Concept and Full Proposal

No feedback will be provided to those whose Concepts are not successful.

Applicants invited to prepare a Full Proposal can receive feedback from the Concept, if requested.

Everyone who submits a Full Proposal—whether successful or not—can request general feedback.

All feedback is provided in good faith to help improve future applications.

### Conflicts of interest

Panel members will operate under a confidentiality agreement. This includes a declaration and management of any conflicts of interest.

### Final funding decisions

The RIAG assesses Full Proposals and makes recommendations based on the assessment and balancing criteria. Final funding decisions are made by the BRANZ Inc. Board, following our portfolio management approach.

When making these decisions, the BRANZ Inc. Board will:

- Consider the assessors' reviews and moderation discussions.
- Take into account portfolio balance, across the four focus areas, our Research Investment Outcomes, Goals and Objectives in the Research Investment Strategy, and our annual Investment Signals from the 2025 Research Investment Priorities.

Please note that BRANZ Inc. may choose to invest a different amount overall than what was initially indicated for this funding round.

Once the BRANZ Inc. Board has made a final funding decision, all applicants will be notified of the outcome of their Full Proposal.

Decisions made by the BRANZ Inc. Board are definite. BRANZ Inc. will not enter into further discussions about scoring or moderation.



## Contact

If you have any questions, please contact us at [researchinvestment@branz.org.nz](mailto:researchinvestment@branz.org.nz).

## FAQs for collaborator-led research project applicants

### 1. What is the difference between BRANZ Inc. and BRANZ Ltd?

The Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ) is made up of two different legal entities. BRANZ Inc. is an incorporated society and acts as the parent body. Its main purpose is to be the steward of the Building Research Levy, ensuring that BRANZ's activities remain aligned with the public good and interests of the industry. BRANZ Ltd is a liability company, wholly owned by BRANZ Inc. It is the operating arm that delivers research and services, carrying out research, testing, consulting and product certification. BRANZ is not a regulator, but an independent research organisation.

### 2. Can my proposal include members from BRANZ Ltd's research team?

Yes, cross-organisational collaboration is encouraged and prioritised to harness synergies between research initiatives. This includes working with BRANZ Ltd researchers. If your application is working in conjunction with any of our colleagues from BRANZ Ltd, please include them as part of your research team and include their time on your requested budget. You will need to consult with them prior to submitting your Concept.

### 3. How can I get in touch with BRANZ Ltd to discuss potential collaborations?

BRANZ Inc. can facilitate connections with BRANZ Ltd researchers, but please bear in mind that the sooner those connections are made, the better. Please get in touch at [researchinvestment@branz.org.nz](mailto:researchinvestment@branz.org.nz) or visit our website to learn more about our current research <https://www.branz.co.nz/>.

### 4. Can I submit more than one proposal application?

Yes, you can submit more than one Concept. Please note that during the Full Proposal stage if you are the lead researcher in more than one proposal your total time for all the proposed projects cannot exceed 1FTE.

### 5. Can I include CAPEX expenses in my proposal budget?

Yes, although CAPEX funding is only accepted on a case-by-case basis. It is recommended that any CAPEX expenses are covered by either existing capital expense for the project team or organisation or by any other co-funders.

### 6. Has the investment process changed since 2024?

Yes, investment process has changed since 2024. Key updates include the introduction of an online Concept template, replacing the Expression of Interest form, with now only web portal submissions accepted. Two new assessment panels have been established—the Subject Matter Experts Panel and the Research Investment Advisory Group (RIAG). For more details, please read the "What is new from previous years?" section in the Guidelines for Applicants.

### 7. Is there an online seminar?

Yes, our online seminars have proven to be a very useful tool for prospective applicants. This year BRANZ Inc. will hold two online drop-in session with the same content on both occasions. Applicants can choose the one that better suits their availability. Those sessions will be held during mid-July and will be hosted on Teams. Applicants are encouraged to have watched a few short (5-10 min) videos prior to the drop-in session so that the time can be used for Q&A. The sessions are provided to ask questions about the 2025 Research Investment Priorities and not specifically about your Concepts.

### 8. What if I can't attend the seminar?

BRANZ's Research Investment Team will also be available for several weeks to answer any remaining questions and to discuss potential proposals. Please email [researchinvestment@branz.org.nz](mailto:researchinvestment@branz.org.nz) to organise a meeting.

### 9. Is there a minimum/maximum project duration?

There is no minimum or maximum project duration requirement. But projects between 12 to 30 months are preferred.

### 10. Is there a minimum or maximum amount of funding that can be requested?

This year, there is no minimum or maximum amount of investment that can be requested for your project. However, due to limited funding availability, it is recommended that you choose wisely and present a realistic budget.





**11. Can projects apply to more than one objective?**

Yes, integration across the research investment Objectives is strongly encouraged. However, a clear demonstration will be required to show how the research relate to more than one objective. If relevant, proposals should reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of the system challenges.

**12. How can I check topic alignment for my project?**

See the 2025 Research Investment Priorities, for this year's prioritised Objectives and context to help you determine alignment. Please also read the Research Investment Strategy for context for the relevant Objectives, and for the ultimate Goals and Outcomes BRANZ Inc. is seeking to achieve with the Levy investment. If you need further support, please contact BRANZ's Research Investment Team.

**13. I have a great idea, but it doesn't align with the 2025 Research Investment Priorities. Do I have to wait for the next funding round?**

Yes, the process seeks to capture great ideas that align with BRANZ's annual Priorities.

**14. How specific do I need to be about who the members of the research team are?**

Demonstrating the ability to deliver is one of our investment criteria. This helps us to understand the proposed work to be undertaken, and to consider if the research team contains the right expertise and capacity. Please specify the individuals, the roles they will play, the skills they will provide, the organisations they represent and their availability. Please also ensure you consider the size of your team to meet project deliverables.

**15. Can a PhD student be part of the research team?**

Yes, but the project idea cannot be the sole basis for their PhD thesis (for that please refer to BRANZ's scholarships). BRANZ Inc. encourages research proposals to consider students (particularly Master's and PhD scholars) to be part of the project team.

**16. Do I need to specify how our stakeholders contributed to this idea?**

When submitting a Concept, it is expected that you have identified and at least spoken to key collaborators and/or stakeholders, although full engagement is not required. However, at the Full Proposal stage you must demonstrate effective engagement with relevant stakeholders, with evidence to support their commitment. This includes co-design and explanation of their involvement, as appropriate to the size and nature of the project. Please include details of individuals and businesses and the nature of any collaboration (for example, whether collaboration is being established or confirmed).

**17. Is co-funding required?**

While co-funding is not a mandatory requirement, you need to demonstrate how you have investigated additional sources of funding. BRANZ Inc. will consider co-funding (cash or in-kind contributions) during the assessment process. Co-funding conditional to BRANZ's project approval is accepted, but it is strongly advised that you notify your co-funder of the timeframes for communication with applicants.

**18. What are the tax implications of my project being funded by BRANZ Inc.?**

BRANZ Inc. cannot provide tax advice. Government guidance can be found at [Inland Revenue – Te Tari Taake](#).

**19. Does BRANZ Inc. have a position on intellectual property?**

Intellectual property pertaining to the goods and services supplied by undertaking the commissioned research will be owned by BRANZ Inc. This is our key mechanism to ensure actionable, accessible insights can be applied and shared as widely as possible to the industry.

**20. What happens if my organisation wishes to make profit out of this research?**

BRANZ Inc. invests in research for wider industry good. Applicants are required to identify any potential private gains within the proposal, which will be reviewed by the assessment panels. BRANZ Inc. will then assess the extent of 'private gain' (if any) that exists in any proposal. If private gain exists, BRANZ Inc. will review the importance of the proposal and consider whether any private gain risk can be appropriately managed or mitigated.

**21. Does the organisation or university represented by an applicant need to be based in New Zealand?**

Yes, in principle. There are some aspects that are important to consider, such as:

- The research must benefit Aotearoa New Zealand principally, as the Building Research Levy is paid by New Zealanders.
- Funding agreements are signed between BRANZ and an organisation based in New Zealand.
- Payments are made only in New Zealand dollars (NZD).





**22. Are there any special considerations to think about when submitting an application that includes mātauranga Māori?**

Any consideration related to mātauranga Māori relate to the license a researcher or research group has to utilise and share culturally sensitive information. It is important that if the research project proposes to partner or engage with Māori communities, the information provided by the communities is protected from potential misuse or appropriation, and the work is conducted in the most appropriate and respectful way. Should a project with mātauranga Māori considerations be selected for funding, Research Investment will discuss with the project team how to protect the cultural assets utilised and/or created in the research.

**23. If two research proposals appear to work on a related topic, will BRANZ prefer those projects to merge into one or keep them separate?**

It depends on the desire of the relevant project teams whether to amalgamate the research projects. Before connecting two applicants, Research Investment will consult with them if they are interested in consolidating their projects and if not, they will continue as separate proposals. While BRANZ strongly encourages collaborative research projects, the applicants' privacy is more important, and merging research proposals can only be supported when appropriate.

**24. How are research offices going to be advised of Concepts being submitted by applicants from their institution?**

The Research Investment team will communicate to research offices the successful Concepts. This is for their awareness in case a successful Full Proposal is granted, and they need to work with BRANZ on a funding agreement.

**25. How is BRANZ managing potential conflicts of interest from members of the assessment panel considering Concepts put forward?**

Members of our Subject Matter Experts panel will provide a conflict of interest declaration before they receive Concepts for assessment. If an applicant prefers a Subject Matter Expert panellist to refrain from assessing their proposal due to a conflicting alignment with certain school of thought, they can disclose that information on the Concept form. Research Investment will always endeavour to find the most appropriate assessors which can ensure impartiality and fairness at the time of assessing the applicant's Concept.

**26. Is there a number of Concepts that BRANZ is thinking of putting through to Full Proposals stage?**

No, at this stage there is not a minimum or maximum number of Concepts that will be put forward to the next stage. Each Concept will be assessed on its merit and quality. At the time of final funding decisions by the BRANZ Inc. Board, the available budget will also play a role in the final number of proposals funded.

**27. What's the difference between a cross-cutting enabler and the assessment criteria?**

Cross-cutting enablers are 'the what' for your research proposal. Those are not mandatory and will have different levels of relevance depending on your research, or not be relevant at all. Assessment criteria, on the other hand, are critical for your research project. The eligibility and assessment criteria elements, being 'the how' the research will be undertaken, must all be considered and addressed in your application.

**28. Can one project lead make multiple applications for funding?**

Yes, as long as the project lead can prove they can do all the work expected as part of the projects proposed. The total amount of hours across all projects should not exceed 1 FTE allocation for a single person.

**29. How likely are the priorities and associated investment signals for this year to be repeated next year, considering the 10-year horizon of the BRANZ Research Investment Strategy?**

Our priority areas are carefully selected after a rigorous selection process, including discussions with industry leaders, BRANZ staff and regulators, as well as conversations with our Board who sets the ultimate direction. At this stage we cannot guarantee what priorities will be selected for next year's funding round.

**30. I've got an idea, but it is not aligned strongly with the current priorities for collaborator-led research. Instead, it aligns with the priorities for BRANZ-led research. How do I contact the right people to look for potential partnerships or collaborations?**

Please get in touch with Research Investment and we will connect you with the right people at BRANZ. If



the research is multidisciplinary then it might be more than one researcher that needs to be informed, and we will do our best to connect you with the right research team. Please bear in mind that this is subject to the current strategic direction of our BRANZ researchers, and it doesn't mean that all ideas can be adopted or pursued.

**31. Can funding for a PhD student be included in the application if it partially covers the PhD project (e.g. 1.5 years)?**

Yes, as long as it is clear that the PhD thesis is not part of the research outputs. Scholars funded by a collaborator-led project are part of the research team, and their funding is not a BRANZ scholarship. If the successful project party is not a tertiary institute, they need to make their own contractual arrangements to pay the student/university.

**32. Can funding for a new PhD student (three years) be included in the application?**

Yes, as long as the PhD student understands that should their circumstances change the project lead/principal investigator is expected to replace the student with someone of similarly suitable profile. This will be on agreement with BRANZ on a case-by-case basis and will require a variation to the project. Also, please refer to Question 31 (above).

**33. Can the Research Office submit Concepts on behalf of applicants using their office email as the primary contact?**

No, the project lead is expected to be the applicant for the Concept and Full Proposal stages. BRANZ will notify research offices accordingly should a Concept be invited to move into Full Proposal stage.