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To:	New Zealand Productivity Commission		
Attention:	Frontier Firms Panel		
Sender:	Name type here	Date:	05 Feb 2021

Thank you for your extremely detailed and thorough report on Frontier Firms in Aotearoa, New Zealand. I write this feedback as the Director | Kaihautū of the Canterbury Knowledge Commons | Te Pae Raka Hau, and as a Professor at the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wananga o Waitaha. The Knowledge Commons seeks to build community and regional prosperity by building partnerships between the tertiary sector, public services, and private institutions. By working in kotahitanga we seek to ask and answer complex problems that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to do independently. Through the sharing of knowledge, resources, mana, networks and capital we look to grow the Canterbury region so that all prosper.

I read with interest the benchmarking of other successful countries in the report and noted the role that universities have played in driving their success in innovation and economic growth. In Aotearoa, several funders support university-led research; however, what appears to be lacking is the engagement with external stakeholders that may lead to direct translation of knowledge into applicable advancement in our society. This is exemplified in Figure 7.3 that shows a bias in funding towards investigator-led research. This has been an effective model in enabling universities to support their institutional research needs but perhaps does not enable a smooth or effective transition into frontier firm development, realised innovation in society, and ultimately economic growth and return. I strongly maintain that there exists a place for researcher-led innovation and blue skies thinking but building partnerships and alliances that lead to truly engaged research has been shown to yield positive results for the benchmarked countries.

It is our recommendation that the Government prioritise research that is partnered with non-academic institutions, such as private enterprises and the public sector, to carry out and complete research that has benefits for both public research institutes and private businesses. This is somewhat alluded to in R7.3, with an allocation of a proportion of funding to business-oriented research; however, we feel this should be more strongly worded and the impact to business be made part of far more research funding applications. That is, even if blue skies thinking associated with Marsden is the central kaupapa a statement on what potential benefit to society and economic growth is expected from the research would encourage a mindset that is focused on engaged and relevant research to our business sector.

From here, it is my recommendation that funding be prioritised to proposals that operate in a partnership model that benefits both research and business growth. This can enable a greater focus on translating innovative research to real-world application outside of academia. This prioritisation of funding could come from a reframing of existing kaupapa associated with funding mechanisms

or it could be from the reallocation of funding from other systems that do not offer as great a focus on external impact/engagement of academic research. One such example is the PBRF that currently does not have a strong external impact/engagement component to its scoring mechanism. It is my recommendation that PBRF scoring de-prioritise its research funding component and only elevate research that is shown to have an external impact/engagement approach.

One of the foundations of the Knowledge Commons is that we are a platform that is founded and built on Te Ao Māori in our operations and behaviour. We are not a Māori organisation, as the current draft document defines; however, we see value in tikanga Māori and being Te Tiriti centred in our approach. It is my recommendation that collaboration with tangata whenua be established so that tikanga Māori and Te Tiriti is not siloed to be important to Māori firms alone but be important principles for all firms in Aotearoa. This may not be the intention of the draft document but it does read that the impact of our bicultural roots are particularly seen in Māori firms but not as important in others. It is my recommendation that this be re-thought, with the support and collaboration of Māori leaders.

Thank you, again, for your mahi in creating this document. I am more than happy to elaborate on any points I have raised here but also offer my support to share the Knowledge Commons model with the panel and the successes we have seen in a short period of time through consilience of knowledge, kotahitanga and collective passion for the wellbeing of all people.

Nā



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