



Edmund Hillary Fellowship

Immigration Policy Settings

Submission to the Productivity Commission

December 2021

“People do not decide to become extraordinary. They decide to accomplish extraordinary things.”

Sir Edmund Hillary

Context

This submission by the Edmund Hillary Fellowship (EHF) specifically addresses the issue of immigration policy settings to attract high-impact entrepreneurs, investors and innovators to Aotearoa NZ. The Edmund Hillary Fellowship fully endorses the submission by the Angel Association: this submission adds a focus on lessons learned through the pilot Global Impact Visa programme created as a partnership between EHF and Immigration NZ.

Overview

Aotearoa NZ is at an inflection point: the imperatives of attracting talent and skilled investment to support Covid-19 recovery has never been stronger. We need to build a thriving start-up ecosystem to improve our productivity, climate response and economic diversity. NZ has attracted international attention for our approach to Covid-19: we have a real - but rapidly narrowing window - of attractiveness to international entrepreneurs and investors as a country that is globally neutral, with a politically stable system and the ability to show regulatory and policy flexibility. NZ has a growing reputation in agricultural technologies, life sciences, medtech, gaming, fintech and aerospace. However entrepreneurial and investor skills shortage remains a significant handbrake.

An immigration attraction policy must be founded on capitalising on our core advantages. We note that the draft paper does not address mechanisms for attracting and selecting high impact migrants, who are essential as net job and wealth creators. The perspective of EHF Fellows, who represent world-class investors, entrepreneurs and innovators, is that NZ's size and flexibility, coupled with the advantages outlined above, allow us to be a testbed for completely new systems and solutions for global impact. Our biculturalism and indigenous wisdom, founded in kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga, is seen as bringing a fresh and purpose-based lens that captures social, environmental and economic wellbeing. Our challenge, therefore, is how this is being captured within our policy settings.

We must move quickly:

1. **The world is innovating on talent attraction and we are being left behind:** Our policy response must be adaptive and flexible, and founded on understanding both the needs of talent and what Aotearoa offers that is unique and aligned to the purpose of those we seek to attract.
2. **Policy should attract future-focussed skills** in addition to filling today's skills gap. For example, there are transformative global trends, [Web 3.0](#), coupled with crypto currencies, that NZ is not yet meaningfully engaging with. NZ ranks 11th in the world in our aerospace, and could take a leadership role. Global entrepreneurs and investors with

knowledge in these emergent sectors can serve to both inspire and also demystify pathways, building skills in readiness for future demand.

3. **Covid-19 is a catalyst to redefining talent attraction without borders.** There is scope to reconsider the temporary visa settings which have been targeted to primarily lower-skilled labour and students. We can attract global talent that may want to engage for three, six or twelve months with Aotearoa, and consider themselves virtual 'citizens', without the need for physical relocation and residence. There are global models for this with Estonia's '[Digital Passport and e-residency](#)' and Finland's '[90-day migration scheme](#)'.
4. **The government should consider how they can partner with the private sector** to deliver more effective policy outcomes. Entrepreneurs, innovators and early stage business investors are likely to be individualistic self-starters looking for the type of engagement that only an independent, more entrepreneurial organisation can deliver. Private sector partnerships allow for a flexible and appropriate lens to identify talent, and also for a values and purpose-based criteria to be applied to selection, alongside the compliance/regulatory requirements of immigration policy. This is important if NZ is to get the benefits of sustainable investment, upskilling and cross-skilling our future workforce from new migrants, and ensure we honour te tiriti o Waitangi.
5. **A portfolio approach to talent:** if we are to attract world-class talent mid-career we need to recognise they cannot be easily 'boxed' into one visa class. They will be a mix of entrepreneurs, investors, philanthropists, systems designers often wrapped into one with multiple projects occurring simultaneously. A portfolio approach allows us to attract a breadth of skills and talent aligned to our economic, social and environmental needs. It recognises that only a percentage of migrants will create exponential impact. It also accepts the risk of perceived 'failure' which is part of innovation and should be regarded as valued learning. A policy setting that has little appetite for perceived failure serves to turn away ambitious entrepreneurs. It is possible to target entrepreneurs who have high upside potential and very low direct consequences of failure, other than their venture not meeting its potential. We believe a portfolio approach will be more effective than a very categorised and narrow visa-class focussed at a specific type of investor or entrepreneur.

In 2016, the government invested \$4 million in a public/private immigration pilot - the Global Impact Visa programme. This programme has proven itself to be compelling to global innovators, encouraging referrals and experiencing a rapid increase in demand and calibre of

applicants. Our request for any future immigration programmes is that we do not lose the lessons but refine and build on this pilot for the future.

The Edmund Hillary Fellowship

The Edmund Hillary Fellowship (EHF) was established in 2016 in partnership with Immigration NZ. The purpose has been to pilot an innovative approach to attracting world-class entrepreneurs and investors to Aotearoa for global impact. Five years' on, EHF has 532 Fellows of which 400 are international Fellows. The pilot attracted over 3,500 applications for 400 global impact visas with both demand and word-of-mouth referrals increasing over time. The pilot ended in September 2020, at a point of highest demand.

Key components of the pilot included:

- A 30-month flexible Global Impact Visa (GIV) with a pathway to residency if sufficient impact for Aotearoa NZ can be established
- A public/private partnership model between EHF and Immigration NZ
- An independent 'Fellowship' community of high-impact global and NZ entrepreneurs, innovators and investors. Applicants had to be accepted into the Fellowship to be eligible for a GIV.
- A clear and aspirational purpose: 'to incubate solutions to global problems from Aotearoa New Zealand, and make a lasting positive impact on the world'. The programme has been successfully positioned as the world's first immigration policy focussed on creating positive global impact.
- An in-person 'Welcome Week' experience where Fellows and their families connected with each other, learned about Te Ao Māori and Aotearoa, and engaged with the wider ecosystem through a 'New Frontiers' event. This immersion has been highly-valued by Fellows.
- Structured connections into the NZ innovation system, regions and businesses.
- Support and services for Fellows through to permanent residence

To date Fellows' early impact to March 2021 includes investing \$94 million in NZ businesses, creating 61 new ventures for global impact and creating four new venture investment funds to support start-ups with skills, connections and capital.

This is just the beginning. More than half our Fellows are offshore. Because of COVID-19, 242 Fellows have been unable to apply for or activate their visas through border closures. While they understand the current challenges and are engaging, investing, and advising kiwi organisations remotely, the potential of the Fellowship will not be fully unlocked until we can re-open our borders to the world.

Approaches to attracting entrepreneurial and investor talent

Over the past four year of the Global Impact Visa pilot, EHF has identified what we believe are important features and lessons learned from the Global Impact Programme that we believe can be more broadly applied to talent attraction visa settings in the future.

Recommendation	Comment
<p>1. Consider as part of policy design how Aotearoa can welcome, induct and support high-impact migrants to enhance their experience and accelerate impact.</p>	<p>The Global Impact Visa pilot created an independent Fellowship community, with strong purpose alignment based on Aotearoa's values and identity. This was essential to Fellows building strong relationships with each other, NZ businesses and regional communities. It supported induction and a 'soft landing' into Aotearoa, in the process creating massive goodwill for the country.</p> <p>The Fellowship community proved a powerful drawcard: applicants willingly paid upfront fees without requiring tax/financial incentives offered by other countries. It also drove referrals, which lowered cost to attract and increased demand/calibre of Fellows.</p>
<p>2. Offer a flexible visa approach with a pathway to residency.</p>	<p>A 3-year flexible multi-entry visa gives space for visa holders to engage and move venture/investments to NZ: Fellows report difficulty gaining traction here without first forming on-the-ground relationships.</p>
<p>3. Align selection criteria and permanent residence process with future economic, innovation and climate change needs</p>	<p>Ensure alignment with future economic, workforce and innovation skills requirements - this requires cross-government collaboration. Retain a broad portfolio approach to applicants' skills and lifestage but with a clearer focus on benefits and outcomes for Aotearoa.</p>
<p>4. Adopt a broad portfolio approach to applicants' skills and lifestage</p>	<p>Identify a portfolio set of attributes, with a clearer focus on benefits and outcomes sought for Aotearoa, rather than focus on narrow dollar amounts or skills.</p>
<p>5. Ensure a robust independent selection and impact evaluation process that includes those with a deep understanding of innovators</p>	<p>There is an inevitable tension between the legal/transactional frameworks of immigration and the entrepreneurial mindset of innovators. A robust and independent selection and review process, involving both private sector and government, allows for this.</p>
<p>6. Consider a requirement for residency to include activity and impact</p>	<p>This incentivises deeper ecosystem engagement, and rewards unpaid contribution (e.g mentoring, advising). Suggest refining how impact is assessed, include Te Ao</p>

	Māori & Iwi engagement.
7. Ensure understanding of Te Ao Māori and the principles of te tiriti o Waitangi are treated as foundational.	Builds values alignment and honours our obligations to tangata whenua: there is genuine concern about 'colonisation 2.0' for high impact migrants. Note innovative migrants see power & purpose in the principles of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga.
8. Incentivise or require skills transfer and upskilling of Māori rangatahi and Pasifika youth, given its importance to addressing inequality and future skills and workforce needs.	By 2050, Māori, Pasifika and Asian youth will be our workforce, required to support an aging population. Embed this as a requirement for talent coming into Aotearoa, and link to programmes & pathways for engagement.
Inducting and activating high impact investor/entrepreneur migrants	
9. Partner with the private sector to ensure an effective welcome induction experience	Ensure migrants have opportunity for deep in-person connections with other migrants and the ecosystem, including engagement with Te Ao Māori. This includes regional players.
10. Initiate a 'migrants life-cycle approach' to account for settling, connecting and creating impact	Understand the specific needs of high-impact migrants, in a process which is deeply personal as well as professional. Seek strategic partnerships that support rapid activation and engagement into our ecosystem and regions, including Maori business and Iwi.
11. Ensure access to platforms to allow high impact migrants to better identify, connect and collaborate with each other & the ecosystem	This requires platforms that support capture of meaningful meta-data and skills, along with impact data (in time). Without this, new migrants struggle to connect to each other and the ecosystem has poor visibility of their skills/projects causing opportunity cost.
12. Embed the principles of te tiriti of Waitangi and evolve the relationship with mana whenua.	This is essential to integrating Fellows into Aotearoa. This is more than one-off induction: it requires access to ongoing cultural induction, including support for establishing business aligned to the principles of te tiriti.
13. Support regional induction experiences	This allows migrants to understand community alignment with personal values and innovation clusters. Allows the building of deeper in-person relationships.

Conclusion

We welcome the Productivity Commission's inquiry into innovation and believe it is essential we bring a fresh perspective to our immigration settings if we are to achieve our ambitions of an

innovation-led recovery. We would be happy to speak personally to any aspect of this submission or the Global Impact Visas programme.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosalie Nelson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'R' being particularly large and stylized.

Rosalie Nelson

Chief Executive

Edmund Hillary Fellowship