

Trends in Research Funding: Challenges and Opportunities for Materials Science and Engineering

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Abstract

Increasingly researchers and research institutions are being held to account not just for the quality of research we do but its benefit to society, the environment and the economy. Research funding systems around the world are responding to public and government requirements to justify the research spend. Many of us in materials sciences and engineering can readily point to the potential future economic benefit of our work. But what about the social benefit? How do we contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals? How are we developing capability in under-represented groups? How are we engaging the public, not just by communicating our results, but by involving them in the design and assessment of our science? In New Zealand, all researchers are asked how our projects address Vision Mātauranga, a policy designed to enable a distinctive contribution by Māori to research and innovation. Rather than looking at these as impositions, many are seeing the opportunity to position their research to deliver benefit. This talk will cover some of the challenges and look at case studies of research programmes that are addressing these new challenges.