

RNA Platform

Ribonucleic Acid Development Platform

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

As you all head into a well-deserved break, we wanted to give you a quick platform update and overview of the key activities that are currently the focus of the Establishment Team.

Wrapping up 2023 and the Establishment Phase

Much of the work the Establishment Team has undertaken during 2023 has been to design, build and iron out the high level vision and purpose of the RNA Platform. This has included undertaking the vast array of administrative and governance tasks required to set up to responsibly manage \$70M of Government funding. We have broadly engaged with the Academic community, Industry, Government and other stakeholders to help define the processes and focus that we believe will provide a strong grounding for the scientific collaboration and development of the Platform. We are very excited going into 2024 now ready to embark on the elaboration of the scientific work programme and get stuck into the detail of what we can achieve with this amazing network of researchers.

1. Fast-start projects

- Thank you to all those who expressed interest in the Fast-Start process. We received 33 excellent applications that highlight the breadth and depth of capability we have across the country and we are excited to explore all of those ideas further within the future platform work programme.
- Several of these projects aligned very well with the aims and criteria for the Fast-start process, and these will be announced soon. The aim of this funding was to find activities that could quickly either a) contribute to the infrastructure available to the platform; or b) validate part of the platform infrastructure, such as RNA production.
- Some very interesting projects did not fit these criteria but will be fed into the Pillar work plans. Pillar leads will be actively engaging with these groups to incorporate these projects within the ongoing development of the work programme.

2. Appointment of Permanent Staff

- Interviews have been completed and we are close to finalising the appointment of the permanent Directors. We hope to announce these early in the New Year.
- The Chief Operating Officer role is also close to being filled, with announcement in a similar timeframe.
- Recruitment for the first three Pillar Leads (Formulation, Quality Control, and Process Development & Manufacturing) has been extended into the new year to accommodate availability.
- The recruitment process for the next three Pillar Leads will be commencing very early in the new year, so please keep an eye out for the Target Selection, Payload Design and Preclinical Testing advertisements.

What to Expect from the Platform in 2024

In the upcoming months, there will be ample opportunities for active participation in discussions shaping the Pillar work programmes. Expect increased engagement with the scientific community, led by Pillar Leads and overseen by Directors to ensure optimal efficiency and potential across the Platform.

Aligned with the Strategic Science Investment Funding (SSIF) process, the RNA Platform is dedicated to strategically advancing New Zealand's RNA technology capabilities and deliver an end-to-end capability for our community. Operating under high-performance expectations, the platform will manage work with an agile, goal-oriented approach. The focus is on swiftly delivering capabilities for designing and producing RNA therapeutics and vaccines.

Differentiating from other New Zealand public funding programs like the CoREs and NSCs, this SSIF investment will operate across a defined portfolio of research projects, utilizing rapid decision gates to prioritize high-impact research aligned with Platform goals.

A fundamental aspect of Platform activities is the commitment to retaining capability and access to intellectual property (IP) within New Zealand. An IP management process is under development to facilitate commercialization while keeping critical aspects in-country. Emphasis will be on commercial engagement and building a translational bridge to commercial use.

As we wrap up this year, the RNA Platform is gearing up to be your catalyst for progress, innovation, and self-reliance in RNA-based therapies. We're not just about science; we're about empowering New Zealand to contribute globally while looking out for our own and the broader Pacific community.

Wishing our incredible RNA community a fantastic break over the holiday season! May it be filled with joy, relaxation, and perhaps a bit of well-deserved indulgence. We hope you enjoy the summer break with your whānau and best wishes for the festive season,

RNA Platform Establishment Team



MERRY
CHRISTMAS