

For Fellows in New Zealand in 2021

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS - UPDATED

The Department of Internal Affairs serves and connects people, communities and government to build a safe, prosperous and respected nation.

The Department provides policy and system leadership to support government and departmental decision making in areas including identity, digital transformation, government technology, public record-keeping, gambling, racing, fire services, local government, ethnic communities and the community and voluntary sector.

The following topics are suggested as potential research areas:

- What does volunteering look like in 21st Century New Zealand? What does volunteering mean? How do we measure hours people spend in their communities and are our indicators giving us accurate data?
- What is the state of public-private partnerships in government services? Has the ever increasing onset of digitally delivered services changed public-private business models in New Zealand? If so, to what degree has policy evolved and responded to this?
- How could Government build capability within the private and charitable sectors to use the Living Standards Framework and Indicators Aotearoa as a base for delivering, measuring and improving positive economic, social and environmental outcomes? How do we address community need in the evaluation and delivery of impact across wider government objectives?
- Low voter turnout: In 2010 turnout was 49% and it has continued to decline to 41.4% in the recent 2019 local elections. Low voter turnout is often a symptom of low public engagement/interest in local government. How do we reverse this decline and reengage citizens with local representation?

DEPARTMENT OF PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET - UPDATED

THE POLICY PROJECT was established in 2014 as a collaborative, public sector-wide initiative to build policy capability and improve the quality of policy advice. It is hosted by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and co-funded by government agencies with significant policy functions. The Policy Project team supports the Head of the Policy Profession (and Chief Executive of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet), who is responsible for building a high performing policy system that supports and enables good government decision making. The Policy Project work programme and the frameworks, tools, standards, processes and other capability focused-initiatives arising from it are co-designed with policy practitioners from across government, and championed by the Tier 2 Policy Leaders Network (deputy chief executives with policy responsibilities).

The following topics are suggested as potential research areas for an Axford Fellow:

- As the public sector environment evolves with the approved changes to the State Sector Act 1988, how can we incentivise NZ government agencies to look ahead and provide advice to the government about future challenges and opportunities, and on whether existing regulatory and other policy interventions are suitable for current and future conditions?
- We know that innovation in policy design and implementation can create public value. We also know that innovation involves experimentation and not all new policy ideas will be successful, but if we 'fail early, learn fast' this can take us one step closer to identify what will work. Given these dynamics, what is the relationship between innovation and the public's trust in government institutions? What does this mean for how we talk about, approach and evaluate innovation in policy design and implementation in government?

THE CHILD POVERTY UNIT has been established in DPMC to support the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, as the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction. The Unit's role includes supporting the passage of the Child Poverty Reduction Bill and agencies to implement the legislation, once passed; working with others to identify actions and policies for reducing child poverty; and providing advice on other relevant matters.

A potential topic for an Axford Fellow to explore would be:

- We know that debt is a significant issue for low-income people, particularly when it becomes 'problem debt' – it becomes so substantial they are unable to pay their debt or other household bills. But what do we know about the extent and nature of debt amongst low-income households in New Zealand? What do these debts look like and who are they to? What kinds of lenders are involved? Do people have more debt to private lenders, or to Government agencies? What is the impact of these debts on low-income households in New Zealand?

MINISTRY FOR BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND EMPLOYMENT (MBIE) - UPDATED

Here are some specific suggestions from across MBIE:

- **Transitions** – what transition pathways can best foster progress towards a high value, inclusive, sustainable and low emissions economy?
- **Partnership with Māori** – how can government agencies best partner with Māori to support Māori iwi-led or co-designed solutions?
- **Regulatory stewardship** – how can the use of data, insights and intelligence be enhanced to lift regulatory systems assurance and performance?
- **Business dynamism and wellbeing** – from a wellbeing perspective, how do we think about New Zealand's many small, old, low-productivity firms (especially in regions)?

- **Firms and workers in the digital age** – what is the effect of digital technologies on firms and workers?
- **Demographic change and entrepreneurship** – what are the implications of demographic change on entrepreneurship in New Zealand?

More generally, MBIE is potentially interested in a range of topics that touch on our interests. MBIE is responsible for extensive policy, regulatory and service delivery functions that impact on the business environment. This includes responsibility for key legislative and regulatory frameworks, managing public services onshore and offshore, and overseeing ownership interests in business-critical Crown agencies. Our role includes leadership (e.g. we co-lead the Government’s Economic Strategy), advice (e.g. about business, consumer, building and labour market regulations), investment (e.g. Provincial Growth Fund and investment in science and innovation) and regulatory delivery (e.g. consumer protection and minimum employment standards).

TREASURY

A research project that investigates:

- Alternative models of **central government, local government, private sector (local and foreign)** collaboration towards promoting investment solutions to local problems. What governance and financial models are being tried – what works? What is the role of regional economic policies? Comparative analysis and assessment (*This topic coincides with State Sector Commission’s first topic*);
- Comparative analysis of **deliberate “green growth” policies** across the world – any models that work well? (This topic would suit a shorter, 3-5 month Fellowship)
- How can **public agencies be better incentivised to work together on collective solutions** to problems that cross agency boundaries; to focus on sustainability, resilience and long-term outcomes to support intergenerational wellbeing; and to strengthen capacity and capability to address the long-term challenges facing the country? How can this be done while improving citizens’ sense of trust in public sector agencies?
- What **new tools and economic instruments are emerging to incentivise the sustainable use and efficient allocation of ecological resources**, recognising changing understandings and legal frameworks regarding ownership and stewardship obligations over natural resources? How can these instruments manage the ecological and economic dependencies.
- As the labour market environment evolves towards more non-standard work arrangements, what should **minimum protections for workers and support for transitions between jobs** look like? What is the range of measures used in advanced economies and where are they heading? (This topic would suit a shorter, 3-5 month Fellowship)

- How can **national wellbeing measures** be used to enhance **state sector performance reporting**? What are the most promising avenues to characterise the **link between government interventions and wellbeing outcomes**?
- What rights/responsibilities/obligations look like for the non-economic capitals, with a focus on framing the boundary of government/non-government roles
- The development of a practical production function that frames what comprehensive wellbeing accounts would look like. i.e. something more like Kuznets than the rather abstract “multi factor” productivity work at the moment?

THE STATE SERVICES COMMISSION (SSC) – PENDING UPDATE

The State Services Commission’s mission is to deliver high performing State Services working as one to achieve priority results for New Zealanders. They are very interested in comparative work on the direction of change in public management in New Zealand and a United States jurisdiction (or jurisdictions).

Suggested research topics:

- Methods for organising around the specific needs of a local community (i.e. place-based initiatives) within the context of organisations with varying levels of devolved hierarchies (e.g. national level government departments, local government, and/or NGO/private sector).
- Methods for organising around the needs of individual complex cases that span multiple service areas (e.g. health, social, education, justice), including how central government can promote and enable (goal directed) networks, support data and informational needs, and share and diffuse lessons.

(These two topics coincide with Treasury’s first topic)

Some others:

- Exploring agencification and the use of arms-length bodies (e.g. Crown Entities, State-Owned Enterprises): performance advantages/disadvantages of arms-length bodies versus departments of the legal Crown; the relationship between governance practices (particularly board governance) and performance; and navigating the balance between autonomy and alignment with government direction.
- How can government promote public service as an exciting and noble profession? Despite having one of the best regarded and highest performing public sectors in the world, survey data suggests most New Zealanders would prefer to work in the private and/or NGO sectors. How can we be more attractive to New Zealanders who want to make a difference?
- A permanent politically neutral civil service. New Zealand’s State Sector Act requires a politically neutral civil service that provide free, frank and full advice to Government. These provisions have reportedly become eroded in some comparable jurisdictions, and some commentators fear they may be under threat in New Zealand. This project would explore the advantages/disadvantages of a permanent politically neutral civil service delivering free and frank advice, and policy options relating to this question (including legislative reform).

- Cross-agency governance. New Zealand has used various cross-agency governance arrangements to manage crosscutting issues for over 15 years, with varying success. We are currently pursuing various options for collective accountability and consensus decision-making. We would be interested in any research project that would advance our understanding of how to set effective governance arrangements, decision-rights, resourcing, and accountability, for problems that span agency boundaries.
- Options for managing fragmentation of the public service. New Zealand has a relatively large number of government departments (currently ~30); this means some problems require up to a dozen departments to work together. New Zealand has used a variety of cross-agency governance arrangements to manage these problems, but there would be some benefit in considering alternate models. This could include fewer, larger department; tiered arrangements (senior versus junior ministers and department chief executives); subsidiary departments, etc. *(This topic would suit a shorter, 3-5 month Fellowship).*
- Leadership development and deployment, including methods for providing leaders with a variety of leadership experiences. New Zealand has a relatively decentralised model of leadership development (compared to, for example, the Senior Executive Service model used in Australia and elsewhere). There have been various attempts at encouraging the identification of high-potential leaders and deploying them where they are needed, or where they will be exposed to development opportunities, but these currently compete with the incentives for departments to hold onto their best talent.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE – PENDING UPDATE

A research project that provides:

- An investigation into the cost effectiveness of the approach to sentencing in New Zealand (even effectiveness would suffice);
- A study of whether there is something that we could learn from the United States approach to government that would teach us about how to make cross-agency working (as per our Better Public Services initiatives) actually happen?;
- A concept of the optimal speed for various cases to go through the justice system. This would cost up the price of getting justice wrong and would help to produce a framework of acceptable risks at various points i.e. there is a trade-off between speed of case and quality of outcome (the risks of justice getting it wrong). The analysis would evaluate which parts of the justice system were most important for getting it right and which parts of it could be traded off for speed;
- Some research related to the Trans Pacific Partnership. For example, does closer civil justice co-operation between countries offer benefits in terms of free trade;
- Some insight into contract law, and if there are major developments happening in one country (for example Australia), how important is it for other countries to be aware of those developments;
- An analysis of the different types of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms coupled with an analysis of the types of disputes that are more suited to alternative dispute resolution;
- A comparative analysis of central and local government roles and responsibilities, the division of roles and functions, and the source of local government's power (this analysis

could, in particular, draw comparisons between the position in New Zealand and in (some) US states);

- A cost-value economic analysis of the rule of law or human rights;
- A framework for setting incentives and sanctions across criminal and civil jurisdictions. The objective of developing such a framework would be to ensure that incentives and sanctions are proportionate and effective; and that procedures for enforcement (i.e. via the courts or through other means) are efficient;
- An analysis of voter disengagement. What do we understand about the causes of voter disengagement, and what is the impact of voter disengagement on the legitimacy of the laws made by Parliament?
- What works in family violence prevention?

ORANGA TAMARIKI | MINISTRY FOR CHILDREN - UPDATED

A few suggestions/priorities for us:

- The focus for Oranga Tamariki will increasingly shift to Early Intervention and Prevention in relation to the wellbeing of children, families and whanau
- The role of Oranga Tamariki in driving child wellbeing more broadly will come into sharper focus over the next few years
- Given the establishment of our operating model, the next set of questions will be, Does Oranga Tamariki operate as a cohesive system of support for children more broadly
- What does accountability for a Children's system look like
- How are we best to drive cross agency focus on child wellbeing and ensuring a children's lens is applied by other agencies throughout their work
- As we raise the age for the youth justice system, what will be the impact of bringing 17 year olds into the YJ system on reoffending
- Given neurological and sociological development of young people, what is the appropriate age to transition from youth to adult systems

MINISTRY FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Manatū Taonga / Ministry for Culture and Heritage (the Ministry) is the Government's leading advisor on cultural matters; funds, monitors and supports a range of cultural agencies; and delivers a range of high quality cultural products and services. Culture includes arts, heritage, media, and sport and recreation. It refers to Māori culture and the cultures of all New Zealanders.

The Ministry is responsible to and supports the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage; the Associate Ministers for Arts, Culture and Heritage; the Minister of Broadcasting; and the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Fifteen cultural agencies relating to the areas of Arts and music; Broadcasting and film; Heritage; and Sport receive vote funding through the Ministry. The Ministry provides advice to the New Zealand Government on where to focus its interventions in the cultural sector. It seeks to ensure that Vote funding is invested as effectively and efficiently as possible, and that the Government's priorities are met.

Topics of interest

The Ministry would be interested in discussing with potential candidates any relevant research topics relating to its focus. Areas of particular interest include:

- **The public value of culture** - a key strategic strand of the Ministry's policy research programme relates to better understanding, articulating and measuring the public value of culture and cultural wellbeing. In particular, we are interested in how the economic and social public benefits of investment in culture can be articulated, measured and presented to best assist policy considerations and decision making.
- **International approaches to supporting careers in the arts:** The Ministry is interested in research into ways to support creative people into work in the creative sector. We are particularly interested in ways of developing business skills and the concept of apprenticeships in the creative sector.

MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

We are the Government's principal adviser on the environment in New Zealand and on international environmental matters. Our mission is environmental stewardship for a prosperous New Zealand – tiakina te taiao kia tōnui a Aotearoa.

We are not involved in day-to-day environmental management; rather, we focus on providing environmental management systems, including laws, regulations and national direction and information about the health of the environment.

Potential topics may address the following:

- Approaches for transitioning to a low carbon economy
- Adapting to the impacts of climate change
- Moving to a circular economy
- Freshwater management including allocation and transfer of nutrient discharges

- Planning frameworks - national and local decision making especially in connection with environmental and urban outcomes
- Valuing cultural services – a framework for acknowledging, accounting for and valuing for decision makers

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Research that examines the following issues:

- What models of partnership between tertiary education institutions and employers are most effective at preparing students for success in the workplace and at meeting employers' skills needs?
- What are the most effective models for tertiary institutions to play a role in fostering start-ups and knowledge transfer between tertiary institutions and industry? (staff/researcher/student mobility being just one means to the greater end).
- What roles employers could play in supporting successful transitions from school? How would it be best to measure the success of the employer role?
- The impact of high expectations of success – that lead to equity and excellence. This could include for example study of initiatives such as Puhoro STEM academy, where students and their parents are encouraged to choose the hardest standards; the outstanding results some kura are producing for their students and so on.
- How can government policy and sector practices be improved to achieve better transitions for at-risk students between secondary schooling, tertiary education and employment?
- The essential nature and contribution of identity, language and culture to education outcomes in New Zealand.
- How teachers can best be supported to connect to the identity, language and culture of children? How will we measure the value of the support to understand whether it is making a difference?
- What policy frameworks give best effect to inclusive education for a particular group of children (e.g. those with high and complex needs, or those with hearing needs)?
- How can learning support education policy and delivery frameworks balance and manage tensions between the concept of inclusion from a child rights, alongside parental choice, allocating scarce resources and evidence about what works?

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Ministry of Social Development is the Government's primary source of advice on social development. The Ministry supports Ministers across seven portfolios – Social Development, Disability Issues, Seniors, Youth, Revenue, Veterans and Employment.

Topics of interest for research are:

- Improved understanding and modelling of labour market challenges and future economic risks (including automation, low productivity, lack of job security and modest wage growth) for lower-skilled workers.
- Approaches for tackling intergenerational poverty and poor social outcomes.
- Approaches to better partner with Māori to address ongoing disproportionate adverse social outcomes, including unemployment, low pay, and lower life expectancy.
- What social and employment support systems will be needed for young people over the next 20 years?
- Improved understanding of the factors driving barriers to employment and full civic and social participation of individuals with a disability or health condition.
- New approaches for supporting older people to maintain a full range of social and economic participation in community and civic life.
- How can technological innovations support new and innovative approaches to the way New Zealanders receive social services (including income support)?
- Approaches for using and building on existing social development networks and resources to support long-term community, regional and economic development.
- What would make for an easily accessible and flexible welfare system that would be able to respond to changes to the nature of employment in the coming decades?
- What are the substitution/displacement effects of employment assistance in New Zealand, and what drives these?

These are complex issues that will not be resolved by one agency working in isolation. Sustainable, long-term solutions will involve cross-agency work from a number of government agencies as well as greater partnerships with other players, including service providers, community groups, iwi, Māori organisations and employers.

If you are interested in any of the topics listed for Ministry of Social Development, contact fellowships@fulbright.org.nz for further detail.