



## **Axford Policy Research Topics – Learning from the United States**

### **For Fellows in New Zealand 2027**

The Ian Axford Fellowships in Public Policy are for outstanding mid-career US professionals to bring their expertise in public policy to a New Zealand government agency.

The Fellowship is interested in candidates who can contribute to contemporary policy priorities in New Zealand. Below you will find examples of some of the past questions that Fellows have answered for New Zealand, as well as prompts depicting a number of questions that have been identified as being particularly useful for future Fellows to explore. This list is not exhaustive and we encourage applicants working in areas not listed below, who think their area of expertise would be useful to New Zealand public policy, to also consider applying.

At the end of this document, you will find a list of resources to further help you navigate priorities of the New Zealand government and better understand its organisation.

Where possible, the Ian Axford Fellowship will assist you in identifying a relevant individual at your proposed host agency to discuss your potential project. In order to assist this process, please send your CV and a copy a brief outline of your intended research topic to [fellowships@fulbright.org.nz](mailto:fellowships@fulbright.org.nz). Please note that identifying a relevant contact can be lengthy, and therefore we recommend you begin this process at least three weeks prior to the application deadline to avoid disappointment. ***Unfortunately, the Ian Axford Fellowship is unable to guarantee assistance in finding a relevant contact at every agency.***

Please note that New Zealand will have a general election in November 2026. Some agencies may therefore be unable to confirm their ability to host prospective Fellows for 2027.

#### **Past topics that Fellows have tackled include<sup>1</sup>:**

- ➔ *Evaluating Strategic Risks in the Pacific Islands (Paul Holland 2025 at New Zealand Defence Force).*
- ➔ *Financing Mechanisms for the Multilateral Development Banks (Kathleen Cochrane 2025 at The Treasury).*

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<sup>1</sup> To see full reports go to <https://axfordfellowships.org.nz/policy-reports/>

- ➔ *Community Engagement Strategy for New Zealand's Independent Police Conduct Authority (Julie Buchwald 2025).*
- ➔ *Social media monitoring by NZ agencies and how to ensure the protection of New Zealanders' privacy and civil liberties (Rachel Levinson-Waldman 2024 at the NZ Privacy Commission).*
- ➔ *How to navigate decision-making about generative AI in a social service department (Megan Seeds 2024 at the Ministry for Social Development).*
- ➔ *A comparative analysis of policy solutions to improve supply chain resiliency in NZ and the US (Sam Mulopolus 2023 The Treasury).*
- ➔ *Financing strategies for housing development (Jeff Mosley, 2018, Ministry of Social Development).*
- ➔ *Improving primary health care access (Amy Downs, 2017, The Treasury).*
- ➔ *Developing and prioritising climate change adaptation strategies for NZ's biodiversity (Paul Phifer, 2019, Department of Conservation).*
- ➔ *Teaching and learning in a networked NZ (Michael Wolking, 2018, Ministry of Education)*

### **Key questions to prompt further exploration of possible topics**

#### Emerging Technologies

- How might we harness the benefits of AI and other new technologies to improve public services and outcomes for New Zealanders?

#### Energy and infrastructure

- What are our future energy and infrastructure needs, and what are some creative ways of addressing these?
- How can we best prepare for future national and regional emergencies, and how should we manage responses when they occur?

#### Economic growth

- How can we harness new ways of working to drive economic growth?
- How can we ensure that regulation promotes growth and economic efficiency in New Zealand's key industries (eg agriculture)?
- How can price stability be secured in the New Zealand economy?
- What ways can we prepare more New Zealanders for the workforce?
- How can we improve competition in key sectors (eg banking and the grocery sector)?

#### Society and social issues

- How is society changing, and how might our democratic and policy processes need to change in response?

- How might government institutions, agencies and thinking adapt to respond to modern challenges?
- How can we work differently, across government, private and community sectors to solve some of our most difficult social issues (eg, family violence, housing insecurity)?
- How can we reduce crime (including youth re-offending and organised crime)?
- What ways can we improve outcomes for school students (eg, attendance and maths/literacy attainment)?

#### Future-proofing the New Zealand government in a changing world

- How can government continue to respond to significant pressures (e.g. fiscal, geopolitical, environmental and societal)?
- What does good data/digital investment and modernisation look like for government agencies?
- How should technology advancements impact the way government agencies work?
- What should social investment look like to achieve positive outcomes for New Zealanders?
- With societal expectations of government changing, and populations increasingly fractured, how can government manage its relationship with its citizens – particularly in an age of misinformation?

#### Further resources

- [List of central government agencies/departments](#). This list outlines the scope of work for each agency/department. Please use this list to help identify a potential host for your proposed topic.
- [2023 Speech from the Throne](#). This speech was made following the forming of New Zealand's current coalition government outlining their priorities.
- [Government Targets](#) outlined by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC).
- February 2025 speech outlining [economic and fiscal challenges for New Zealand](#) by Secretary to the Treasury.
- February 2025 speech on [reorientating New Zealand's public service](#).
- [2025 NZ Treasury Stewardship Reports](#) (these focus on building a sustainable, resilient economy and fiscal structure for generations to come).
- NZ 'digital government transformation' [website](#).