

# Charting career pathways for commercialisation professionals.

Commercialisation  
professionals work  
**behind the scenes to  
bridge science and  
business**, ultimately  
turning innovation into  
real-world solutions.

KiwiNet 

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## About KiwiNet

KiwiNet is the combined power of New Zealand's Universities, Crown Research Institutes and other research organisations that receive public funding. Together these research organisations represent a total combined research expenditure of over \$800 million and represent 80% of the publicly funded researchers in New Zealand.

Through KiwiNet, the commercialisation offices of these organisations are pooling knowledge and resources to support and accelerate research commercialisation. This support means that Aotearoa New Zealand's best scientific discoveries can be developed further, ready for private investment, so they can ultimately become the new products, services and clever start-up companies that are transforming lives and changing the world.

# Nau mai, Haere mai.



It is with great pleasure and a profound sense of optimism that I welcome you to a groundbreaking initiative, the Commercialisation Professional Framework.

This document charts the career pathways within the realm of commercialisation, poised to unleash the potential of scientific innovation not only within Aotearoa New Zealand but across the global stage.

Today, we stand at the intersection of possibility, where science converges with business, where innovation is no longer confined to laboratories but flourishes through strategic collaborations, robust partnerships, and transformative ideas.

This framework, a testament to our commitment to excellence, is the very first of its kind in Aotearoa New Zealand. Building upon the foundation laid by the KCA's framework for the Australian context, we proudly forge ahead with a distinctly Kiwi vision, one that embraces our unique strengths and aspirations.

The landscape of commercialisation is evolving at pace. We find ourselves on the cusp of an era that celebrates deep tech investments, where innovation transcends boundaries, and where ideas are nurtured to generate tangible impacts. The synergy of science and business is where true magic happens, creating solutions that address global challenges and illuminate pathways for progress.

Commercialisation professionals are the unsung heroes of New Zealand's Research, Science, and Innovation (RSI) scene. They do it all — from analysing markets and managing intellectual property to securing funding and forming strategic partnerships. They understand that economic, environmental, cultural and societal benefits require not only scientific brilliance but also sharp business acumen. Their contributions propel progress, foster job creation, and catalyse transformative change.

For those embarking on their commercialisation journey, I implore you to discover the opportunities that await. The spirit of innovation knows no bounds, and as we welcome a new generation of early-career commercialisation professionals, we invite you to be catalysts for transformation.

Your contributions will shape industries, spark ingenuity, and drive economic growth, amplifying the potential of our scientific endeavours to touch lives worldwide.

This framework is a first step, a live document that we intend to evolve and iterate over time to respond to the unique context of commercialisation in Aotearoa New Zealand. We particularly acknowledge the important opportunity to include a stronger voice from tangata whenua in this framework as it evolves. We look forward to working with tangata whenua to grow this framework into one that best represents a shared aspiration for the commercialisation sector.

With unwavering enthusiasm and a firm commitment to our shared vision, I extend my warmest welcome to each of you. This is not merely a framework—it is an invitation to become architects of change, champions of innovation, and stewards of progress.

Together, let us shape the future, bridging the gap between science and the world, for there has never been a more exhilarating time to be a part of the commercialisation profession.

Ngā mihi nui,  
James

Dr James Hutchinson / September 2023  
CEO, KiwiNet

# The Commercialisation Professional Framework and its purpose

This framework is an initiative by KiwiNet designed to highlight the diverse landscape of career opportunities within the field of research commercialisation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It draws on the work of Knowledge Commercialisation Australasia (KCA) with their Capability Framework that outlines career paths for those working in commercialisation. We have offered a framework that contextualises the commercialisation profession in Aotearoa New Zealand.

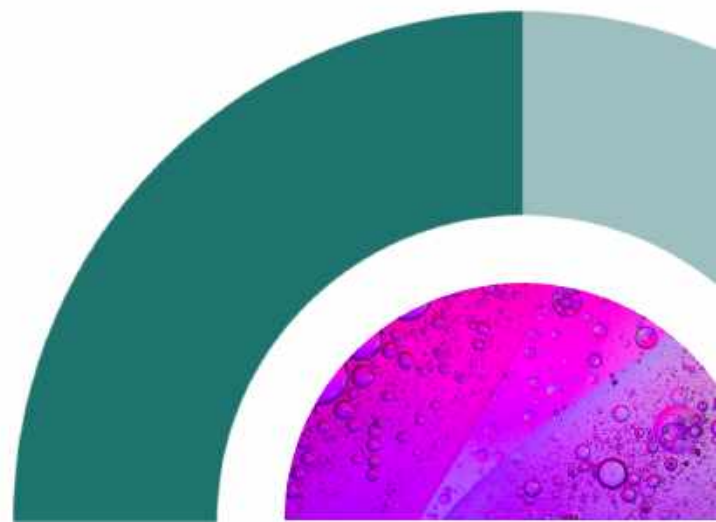
Our framework serves as a guide, providing individuals with insights into the various career stages, job titles, and skills required to excel as commercialisation professionals. By shedding light on the career pathways in this dynamic sector, KiwiNet aims to inspire, educate, and empower individuals to pursue a career in commercialisation and to level-up professionally.

By understanding the skillsets associated with the career pathways, individuals can proactively seek out training and development opportunities to enhance their capabilities and remain competitive in the field.

The overarching goal of the Commercialisation Professional Framework is to demystify the commercialisation sector in New Zealand, highlighting it as a visible and viable career pathway with the transformational impact that an empowered profession offers for Aotearoa. The framework also aims to align with the Te Ara Paerangi Te Tiriti o Waitangi guidance provided by the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (MBIE).

It serves to guide individuals through the exciting and ever-evolving world of turning ideas into impact, ultimately contributing to the growth and success of New Zealand's innovation ecosystem.

Our framework serves as a guide, providing individuals with insights into the various career stages, job titles, and skills required to excel as commercialisation professionals.



# The commercialisation sector in Aotearoa

In Aotearoa, New Zealand, a dynamic community of commercialisation professionals is flourishing within a maturing deep tech innovation ecosystem.

The term 'deep tech' encompasses intellectual property-rich research stemming from public funding, typically originating from our universities, public research organisations (PROs) and Crown Research Institutes (CRIs). This intellectual property-rich research finds its way to market through avenues like spinouts, startups, and licensing agreements.

Many emerging technologies nurtured within our academic and research institutions are poised to shape our collective future, promising positive impacts for society at large.

In this field, there are professionals who bridge the gap between academia and industry. They are often referred to as technology transfer or commercialisation professionals and have a versatile skill set. This includes an understanding of intellectual property strategy, portfolio management, market validation, and pathways to market. Coupled with business nous and complemented by real-world industry experience, this knowledge forms a purpose-driven and rewarding career.

What positions New Zealand's commercialisation community uniquely in Aotearoa is our relationship with te ao Māori (the Māori world) and a dedication to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This informs a growing commitment to tikanga Māori, embracing the cultural capabilities of te ao Māori, working alongside tangata whenua to steward Mātauranga Māori where appropriate and to explore mutual opportunities to achieve Māori aspirations through commercialisation. This unique approach enriches our mahi and contributes to a prosperous and culturally inclusive commercialisation landscape for Aotearoa.

We estimate up to 100 technology transfer professionals work within our PROs (including junior-level analysts and interns), with up to 300 commercialisation professionals active in Aotearoa, New Zealand, including VC portfolio managers who work directly with company founders and industry venture arms.

As our community of commercialisation professionals grows and evolves, it becomes a driving force behind the transformational innovations of tomorrow. Those with an entrepreneurial spirit, a curious mindset, and a strong work ethic are invited to the captivating world of research commercialisation in New Zealand.

# Career Pathways Overview

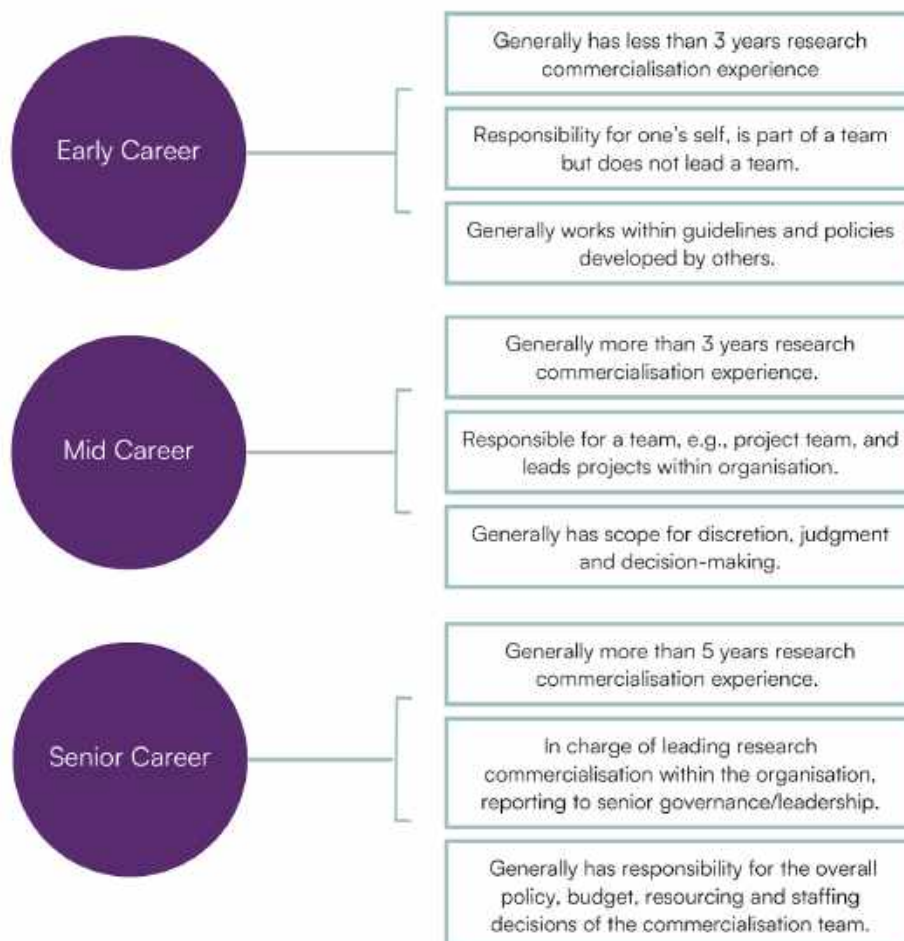
## Navigating the path to success in commercialisation

A career in commercialisation is a journey that attracts individuals with a blend of entrepreneurial spirit, analytical prowess, and a commitment to fostering innovation. Throughout their professional evolution, these specialists contribute significantly to turning cutting-edge technologies and intellectual property into lucrative opportunities.

**Early-career commercialisation professionals** embark on this path by assessing market potential and cultivating an entrepreneurial ethos within their organisations. They collaborate with diverse stakeholders, manage intellectual property, and lay the groundwork for future success.

As **mid-career commercialisation professionals** progress, they become seasoned leaders in the innovation landscape. Their expertise expands to encompass comprehensive commercialisation strategies, project management, and mentorship. They bridge the gap between market trends and research, driving innovation culture forward.

At the pinnacle of their careers, **senior-career commercialisation professionals** emerge as influential leaders. They possess a deep understanding of entrepreneurship and play pivotal roles in shaping organisational strategies. Their wealth of experience transforms insights into tangible commercial opportunities, fostering growth and innovation not only within their organisations but also within the broader innovation ecosystem.



# EARLY-CAREER COMMERCIALISATION PROFESSIONAL

## Shaping tomorrow's commercialisation landscape

Individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit and a collaborative mindset may find commercialisation to be an exciting and purposeful career path. A developing commercialisation professional typically assesses the market potential of innovative technologies and intellectual property. They actively foster an entrepreneurial culture within their organisation, collaborating with researchers, students, and industry connections to identify and nurture commercialisation prospects. Their versatility spans analytical tasks, project management, IP protection, and stakeholder engagement.

### Commercialisation Expertise

- Proficient in entrepreneurship elements and their application within the organisation.
- Actively contributes to promoting entrepreneurial capability among researchers, students, and the organisation.
- Influences an innovative culture within the organisation.
- Basic understanding of New Zealand's research and innovation ecosystem.

### Knowledge Transformation and Entrepreneurial Development

- Understands commercialisation strategies for various technology sectors.
- Skilled in capturing, storing, and disseminating knowledge for commercialisation opportunities.
- Connects market trends with research to identify commercialisation prospects.

### Relationships, Strategy and Trends

- Aligns with the organisation's strategic direction.
- Contributes to implementing strategic initiatives.
- Engages effectively with researchers, industry connections, and stakeholders.
- Able to assess market trends and evaluate IP potential.

### Managing Projects and IP

- Manages small projects with senior support.
- Provides valuable contributions to project work.
- Comfortable with managing IP creation, protection, and enforcement.
- Understands the principles of Mātauranga Māori and how they apply to IP stewardship and commercialisation in the context of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

### Experience and Empowerment

- Contributes to various commercialisation projects.

### Culture and Inclusion

- Possesses a foundational understanding of Mātauranga Māori principles and te ao Māori.
- Demonstrates introductory awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) values and an early commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion.

### Skills and Attributes

- Comfortable with well-defined analytical tasks.
- Skilled in working within project budgets.
- Able to mentor summer students and interns.
- Effective engagement and presentation skills.

### Team and Leadership

- Mentors summer students and interns.
- Leads teams for simple projects.
- Engages with internal team members and stakeholders.

To gain a deeper understanding of these capability clusters, we encourage you to refer to the Capability Cluster Assessment Tool, which is referenced on page 22.

## JOB TITLE EXAMPLES

- Commercialisation Intern
- Commercialisation Coordinator
- Commercialisation Specialist
- Commercialisation Analyst
- Marketing Analyst
- Business Development Officer
- Projects Officer



# MID-CAREER COMMERCIALISATION PROFESSIONAL

## From insights to impact

At the mid-career stage, these professionals emerge as seasoned leaders in the innovation ecosystem. Building upon their early experiences, they have a firm grasp of commercialisation strategies, markets, and stakeholder engagement.

Their acumen extends to assessing intellectual property potential and championing an innovation-driven culture. They take the reins in planning and executing complex projects while aligning with the organisation's strategic objectives. Mid-career professionals often mentor junior colleagues, fostering a culture of knowledge sharing and empowerment. They draw from their extensive industry connections and a deep understanding of market trends to translate research into tangible commercial opportunities.

### Commercialisation Expertise

- Proficient in entrepreneurship elements and their application within the organisation.
- Actively contributes to promoting entrepreneurial capability among researchers, students, and the organisation.
- Influences an innovative culture within the organisation.
- Develops a broad understanding of New Zealand's research and innovation ecosystem.
- Deepens knowledge of commercialisation strategies for various technology sectors.

### Knowledge Transformation and Entrepreneurial Development

- Demonstrates expertise in capturing, storing, and disseminating knowledge for commercialisation opportunities.
- Connects market trends with research to identify and assess a wider range of commercialisation prospects.
- Develops a detailed understanding of commercialisation strategies for different technology sectors.

### Relationships and Strategy

- Aligns with the organisation's strategic direction and contributes significantly to implementing strategic initiatives.
- Engages effectively with researchers, industry connections, and stakeholders on a broader scale.
- Regularly assesses market trends, evaluates IP potential, and influences strategic decisions.

### Managing Projects and IP

- Manages a variety of projects independently.
- Comfortable leading projects and teams across different science disciplines.
- Proficient in managing IP creation, protection, and enforcement for a diverse portfolio of opportunities.
- Comfortable managing elements of Mātauranga Māori within commercialisation projects, working alongside Māori stakeholders.

### Culture and Inclusion

- Demonstrates an advanced understanding of Mātauranga Māori, te ao Māori, and the economic potential of the Māori value chain, actively participating in fostering partnering relationships with tangata whenua.
- Exhibits a deep comprehension of DEI values within the organisation and actively advocates for their promotion and implementation.

### Experience and Empowerment

- Leads on multiple commercialisation projects, gaining expertise in various sectors.
- Empowers and mentors junior team members and summer students effectively.

### Skills and Attributes

- Comfortable with complex analytical tasks and decision-making in commercialisation.
- Skilled in setting and managing project budgets for more diverse initiatives.
- Continues to mentor and lead teams for increasingly complex projects.
- Exhibits strong interpersonal skills and an enhanced ability to present in public.

### Team and Leadership

- Provides extensive mentorship to summer students, interns, and junior team members.
- Leads teams for more complex and diverse projects.
- Engages with internal team members, industry connections, and stakeholders at a broader scale.

To gain a deeper understanding of these capability clusters, we encourage you to refer to the Capability Cluster Assessment Tool, which is referenced on page 22.

## JOB TITLE EXAMPLES

- Commercialisation Specialist
- Commercialisation Manager
- IP Specialist
- Technology Manager
- Business Development Manager
- Commercialisation IP Manager
- Projects Manager
- Relationships Manager
- Contracts Lawyer
- Contracts Manager
- Business and Innovation Manager

# SENIOR COMMERCIALISATION PROFESSIONAL

## A visionary leader

At the senior-career stage, these seasoned professionals emerge as influential leaders in research commercialisation. Over years of experience, they have honed their expertise in formulating and executing commercialisation strategies, encompassing IP management and strategic initiatives.

Their proficiency extends to navigating intricate market trends and effectively engaging with essential stakeholders. Senior commercialisation professionals often assume leadership roles in overseeing substantial projects, providing invaluable guidance on organisational strategies, and serving as mentors to the next generation. They set KPIs and develop work programmes for their teams, and they're accountable for crucial deliverables such as budgets and portfolio outcomes in their unit or organisation.

Leveraging their wealth of experience and profound understanding of market dynamics, they transform insights into tangible commercial opportunities, fuelling innovation and growth within the organisation. This, in turn, plays a pivotal role in shaping New Zealand's innovation ecosystem.

### Commercialisation Expertise

- Possesses a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship elements and their practical application within the organisation.
- Leads the formulation and execution of initiatives that develop and promote entrepreneurial capability and culture among researchers, students, the commercialisation unit, and the broader organisation.
- Leads in influencing and nurturing an innovative culture within the organisation.
- Demonstrates a deep understanding of New Zealand's research, science, and innovation ecosystem.
- Excels in the commercialisation of various technologies across different science sectors.

### Knowledge Transformation

- Demonstrates expertise in capturing, storing, and disseminating knowledge for commercialisation opportunities.
- Connects complex market trends with research, identifying and evaluating a broad range of commercialisation prospects.
- Leads in the development and implementation of strategies for effective knowledge transformation and transfer.

### Relationships and Strategy

- Leads in shaping and implementing the organisation's strategic direction.
- Effectively engages with researchers, industry connections, and stakeholders, leveraging their skills in commercialising opportunities.
- Engages at a strategic level to assess market trends, evaluate IP potential, and influence crucial strategic decisions.





### Culture and Inclusion

- Champions the appropriate inclusion of Mātauranga Māori and a te ao Māori worldview within the organisation, actively promoting the potential of the Māori value chain for economic growth and enhancing partnering relationships with tangata whenua.
- Ensures diverse perspectives are integrated into decision-making processes and fosters a corporate culture that wholeheartedly embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the organisation.

### Project Management and IP

- Proficiently manages an extensive portfolio of projects independently.
- Leads projects and teams across different science disciplines and industries with confidence.
- Demonstrates expertise in managing IP creation, protection, and enforcement for a diverse portfolio of opportunities.

### Experience and Empowerment

- Leads multiple commercialisation projects, gaining expertise in various sectors.
- Advocate for policies and initiatives that boost the recruitment, retention, and career advancement of Māori professionals within the sector.
- Establish and lead partnerships that stimulate Māori entrepreneurial growth and innovation
- Empowers and mentors junior team members and summer students effectively.

### Skills and Attributes

- Comfortable with complex analytical tasks and decision-making in commercialisation.
- Skillfully sets and manages project budgets for diverse initiatives.
- Continues to mentor and lead teams for increasingly complex projects.

### Team and Leadership

- Provides extensive mentorship to summer students, interns, and junior team members.
- Leads teams for more complex and diverse projects.
- Engages with internal team members, industry connections, and stakeholders at a broader scale.

To gain a deeper understanding of these capability clusters, we encourage you to refer to the Capability Cluster Assessment Tool, which is referenced on page 22.

## JOB TITLE EXAMPLES

- CEO
- Group Manager
- Senior Commercialisation Manager
- Business Development Manager
- Senior IP Manager
- Commercialisation IP Director
- Commercialisation IP Deputy
- Commercialisation IP Technology Senior Manager / Senior Officer
- Projects Senior Manager
- Engagement Director / Associate Director / Senior Director
- Engagement Director
- Executive Manager
- Business and Innovation Senior Director



# Stories from the commercialisation frontlines

In the ever-evolving landscape of business and innovation, there exists a unique breed of professionals who possess the remarkable ability to bridge the gap between groundbreaking ideas and tangible success.

These profiles aim to be a source of inspiration for anyone aspiring to make a mark in the world of commercialisation. They show that with determination, resilience, and a commitment to lifelong learning, you can turn science into successful businesses that positively impact the world.

Some of them stumbled upon this profession by chance, while others made a deliberate transition from the laboratory, bringing their scientific expertise to the forefront of business innovation. Some were drawn to commercialisation through a passion for entrepreneurship, while others found their calling in the intersection of technology and market trends. Each person's journey is unique, and together, they bring diversity and depth to the world of commercialisation.



# Ella Moffat

Ella Moffat is an emerging talent in the field of commercialisation.

A graduate of business studies, her journey into commercialisation highlights the potential of early-career professionals who are passionate about blending science and business.

She explains: "I had always loved science but knew it wasn't my strength. At University, I was involved in organisations like Chiasma, Momentum, and the Massey Student Enterprise Club. They gave me access to witness cool innovation within the science community, and I realised that science and business had to work together to create real-world impact."

Before joining Massey Ventures Limited (MVL), Ella was their student board observer, which helped her understand the inner workings of the commercialisation process. A pivotal moment that launched her career was when she met Mark Cleaver, who offered her an internship at MVL.

She says a standout moment for her was the role she played in establishing the Student Investment Fund at MVL: "I was able to pick some incredible people's brains, including Andrew Chen and Andrew Lewis, to set it up. Then, I led the fund's first investment into EatKinda, a process full of learnings and a highlight of my career so far."

She enjoys the inclusive and transparent team culture at MVL, saying, "We get to see and be part of everything, including how deals are done and decision-making. This has really developed my thinking and makes my job enjoyable and energising."

Ella's journey so far in commercialisation is an inspiring example for other emerging professionals in the field. Her advice for other early-career researchers: "Seek out a mentor or supervisor who will champion you and support your growth within this space. Also, being inquisitive is a valuable quality in commercialisation."



"Seek out a mentor or supervisor who will champion you and support your growth within this space. Also, being inquisitive is a valuable quality in commercialisation."

# Mitali Purohit

Mitali has carved her unique path through the complex world of deep tech commercialisation.

Her journey began with a summer internship at Pacific Channel followed by an analyst role after completing her Bioscience Enterprise degree, sparking her interest in the field. She recalls, "I did not know commercialisation existed as a career path existed until serendipity played its role. I learned 90 percent of commercialisation on the job, and my dedication to the sector began there"

Early in Mitali's career, she played a pivotal role in commercialising a revolutionary technology through the startup, Somnaceutics Ltd. In just two years, they established the company, secured patents, recruited top executives, implemented strong governance, raised capital, and successfully exited to a corporate partner for global expansion.

"This experience was a steep learning curve and exposed me to many of the skills required for successful commercialisation," Mitali reflects.

As she transitioned to AUT Ventures, Mitali took on the role of Senior Commercialisation Manager. Here, she honed her skills in preparing opportunities for KiwiNet funding, investor funding, and industry partnerships.

Mitali was acutely aware of the lack of female founders in her roles. In her next role at Icehouse Ventures, she addressed this by establishing Aotearoa New Zealand's first female founder fund, ArcAngels.

She then led the establishment of the Technology Incubator Programme v.2.0, supporting the spinout of 12 new startups and securing \$55M in investment commitment in its inaugural year. Today, she serves as a General Partner at Nuance Capital following her role as Investment Principal, investing in deep technology startups raising seed to Series B.

Mitali is passionate about supporting founders as they tackle global challenges. "Working with founders who are developing solutions to the world's biggest problems is really motivating. Commercialisation can be lonely for researchers, so being able to offer them support is fulfilling."

"Successful outcomes not only benefit founders, universities, and investors financially but also drive further innovation, allowing them to improve their lives and reinvest in new ventures."

Mitali's advice for aspiring commercialisation professionals is clear: "Figure out what you are passionate about and build your area of expertise." Her journey from a generalist to a specialist in capital raising showcases the importance of honing one's skills and networks in a chosen field.

"Consider shifting your focus from 'finding a cure in a lab' to the passion of 'funding a cure for humans and the planet.' It has defined my career path to date."



# Michael Love

Michael's journey into the world of commercialisation commenced in 2019 during his PhD in biochemistry.

During this time, he was researching an alternative to antibiotics using bacterial virus proteins called endolysins.

He reached a turning point when he took part in the KiwiNet Emerging Innovator Programme, igniting his interest in commercialisation. Michael explains, "I enjoyed being involved in the ecosystem and understanding what it would mean to commercialise my 'cool idea' - more than being in the lab doing my research!"

While completing his PhD, Michael sought ways to continue in the field of commercialisation, eager to support others in their efforts to create real-world impact through their research. Another pivotal moment for Michael was sitting in on the KiwiNet Investment Committee meetings which helped him see the opportunities of the field.

"Sitting in on my very first KiwiNet Investment Committee meeting, I could see clear examples of research on the pathway to commercialisation and what creating impact could mean."

Today, Michael holds the role of Commercialisation Advisor at the University of Canterbury (UC), work with researchers on their innovative ideas and research. He says a particularly motivating aspect of his role is discovering and nurturing UC researchers through the Emerging Innovator Programme.

"Knowing that I can contribute, even in a small way, to help them realise their entrepreneurial potential and commercialise their research, is what drives me."

Michael's evolution from a protein biochemistry researcher to a commercialisation advocate shows what you can achieve when you seize new opportunities and embrace new perspectives.

His parting advice to aspiring professionals in the field is simple but powerful: "Take opportunities to connect and network with people across the ecosystem."

"Knowing that I can contribute, even in a small way, to help them realise their entrepreneurial potential and commercialise their research, is what drives me."



# Lari Dkhar

Lari's journey into the world of commercialisation began as a research student, a path seemingly distant from the bustling realm of innovation and entrepreneurship.

However, her curiosity for the commercial world was ignited through KiwiNet's Emerging Innovator Programme, which set Lari on a path of exploration.

"This fuelled my passion to explore the need and drive for translating intricate research and innovative ideas into practical real-world applications," she explains.

Her experience as an Emerging Innovator led her to pivot her career from a PhD researcher in biomedical science to an investment role at AUT Ventures. Here, she discovered the tangible results that came through connecting academia and industry, as she helped translate a research concept into a market-ready product in a university setting.

In her current role at NZ Growth Capital Partners, Lari is actively engaged in meeting and collaborating with founders across various sectors as part of the due diligence process. She enjoys the dynamic environment of her field, where she continuously encounters new technologies, industries, and collaborative opportunities.

"What I find most fulfilling and exhilarating about my role in commercialisation is witnessing the transformation of innovative ideas into real-world solutions that have a positive impact on people's lives."

Lari offers sage advice to those considering a similar path. Embrace curiosity, foster a diverse skill set, and learn from failures. Build a network of like-minded professionals and mentors who share your vision. And most importantly, embrace the unique journey that commercialisation offers, using every opportunity and challenge to carve your impactful path.

"I recommend nurturing curiosity, cultivating a versatile skill set, strategic networking, learning from failures, thinking beyond boundaries, and seeking mentors who resonate with your goals."



"What I find most fulfilling and exhilarating is witnessing the transformation of innovative ideas into real-world solutions that have a positive impact on people's lives."



# Mark Cleaver

Mark Cleaver is a seasoned professional in the field of research commercialisation, leveraging his background in business management to propel technology from research labs to practical applications.

Mark's journey into the commercialisation space was unconventional. Commercialisation wasn't a recognised career path initially. However, his roles as a science general manager at Manaaki Whenua and later as an operations manager, focusing on commercial services, sparked his interest in research commercialisation.

As Mark puts it, "Commercialisation is fundamentally about people. We are often dealing with very diverse interests, motivations, and philosophies. So, a crucial skill is understanding these individual drivers and put together projects or deals that ensure everyone feels heard and satisfied with the outcome."

Co-founding a business almost two decades ago provided invaluable lessons he now shares while working with start-up founders. His tenure at research organisations allowed him to collaborate closely with researchers, understanding their world and the passion that drives them.

Mark's career has been characterised by a series of influential roles and notable achievements. He was crucial in establishing companies like Biolumic, MUSAC, Ampersand Technologies, Novolabs, Hyperceptions, Captivate Technology, MiB Optics, and Nanophage Technologies. Additionally, he contributed to successful exits, including the sale of MUSAC and NZ Veterinary Pathology, the sell-down of Magritek shares, and the sale of the FERRI PRO™ technology to Nestle.

Mark considers it a privilege to be part of the journey of inventors and researchers, sharing in their ideas and discoveries. "They often represent a lifetime's work and are incredibly important to the inventors," he says. "To witness such a wide range of ideas across departments, disciplines, and demographics has consistently been a strong motivator."

Reflecting on his journey, Mark offers valuable advice to early and mid-career professionals aspiring to follow a similar path:

"Resilience and flexibility are key for both success and personal fulfilment in the field of commercialisation. The sector continually evolves, shaped by macro-environmental factors, trends, government policies, corporate strategies, and more. As professionals, we must remain adaptable, aligning change with our values and the public good nature of our roles."

Mark's journey inspires and demonstrates the great potential for positive impact in research commercialisation. His dedication to nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship has not only helped numerous researchers and inventors but has also significantly advanced technology and society.



# Sheena Thomas

Sheena Thomas, despite being relatively new to the field of commercialisation, brings a wealth of insights and knowledge that she's gathered through her career journey.

Sheena embarked on her career journey with an Honours degree in English Literature and Philosophy, taking on roles in executive search and later in the energy sector, with Z Energy. Initially holding roles in communications and government relation, Sheena then made a lateral move to the strategy team at Z Energy. As the strategy manager for low carbon fuels, part of her role involved evaluating low-carbon fuel and hydrogen ventures for potential investment, exposing her to projects at various stages of commercialisation.

One pivotal project that stands out in her career at Z was working with LanzaTech, Air New Zealand, and Scion on sustainable aviation fuel production feasibility in New Zealand. She explains: "That experience solidified for me how much I enjoy working at the intersection between science and research, inspiring tech, audacious goals, and public good with economic returns. My current role at GNS is right in this intersection, and I love it."

Sheena initially connected with the GNS Science team through their work improving hydrogen production efficiency and cost-effectiveness through materials science. This led to an interest in the work of GNS Science, and ultimately influenced her decision to join the organisation in her current role as Commercial and Business Partnerships Manager. Sheena reflects on this, saying, "Looking back, it feels somewhat poetic to have played a role in the spin-out of bspki — GNS' first spin-out company and New Zealand's first deep tech hydrogen start-up."

Sheena's drive in her role at GNS Science stems from the chance to contribute to a greater cause. She articulates, "New Zealand has everything it needs from a brainpower perspective to punch above its weight. In commercialisation, I can play a role to ensure that the incredible science we do is living up to its impact potential. And I can't deny that it is quite satisfying to close deals!"

Sheena attributes much of her success in commercialisation to her strong focus on building and nurturing relationships, both internal and external.

"I continue to invest time in building internal relationships to understand what drives my colleagues and ensure mutual understanding. This creates a solid foundation for tackling complex challenges together," she explains.

"External relationships with stakeholders and potential investors are equally crucial. Getting to know them in advance helps me grasp diverse perspectives and negotiation positions, setting the stage for long-term success."

Sheena's journey exemplifies that success in commercialisation hinges on relationship-building skills, curiosity, a passion for science, and dedication to creating a lasting impact.



# Amanda Davies

Amanda Davies is a seasoned professional in the field of commercialisation, whose journey is as diverse as it is inspiring.

With a background in analytical chemistry, her career began as a Forensic Scientist at ESR. Here, she engaged in contract research with private firms, developing a deep understanding of bridging the public-private sector gap.

After a hiatus to raise her family in Rotorua, Amanda felt a need for mental stimulation beyond motherhood. So, she picked up contract work, organising forestry sector conferences, publishing a Timber Engineering Journal, and importing and selling balance bikes for toddlers.

Her yearning to return to science led her to Damar Industries, where she gained insights into product development and factory scale-up, offering her a front-line perspective on research adoption in industry.

A pivotal moment occurred when Amanda found a job vacancy at Scion's Commercialisation team, leading her to join as a Commercialisation Associate. Intrigued by the prospect of working at the interface between science and industry, she immersed herself in the field.

As Amanda reflects, "The more I talked to people, I discovered my skillset was fairly unique and was highly valued by Scion and others in the ecosystem." This realisation marked the beginning of her remarkable journey in commercialisation.

Over the past five and a half years, Amanda's career has flourished, with her currently at the helm of a team of commercialisation professionals at Scion. She is also one of the longer-standing members of the KiwiNet Investment Committee and is a Director on the KiwiNet Board.

Amanda finds fulfilment in knowing that her work contributes to the future of the planet. As she explains, "The work we do as commercialisation professionals is critical to ensuring that public research delivers the greatest impact as quickly as possible." She is motivated by the desire to secure a better future for her children and generations to come.

Throughout her career, Amanda has identified several key skills and qualities that have been instrumental in her success. These include:

- **Adaptability:** Being open to applying her skill set in different contexts.
- **Strategic Thinking:** The ability to see the big picture, assess multiple scenarios, and identify risks and opportunities.
- **Effective Communication:** Distilling complex information into simple, understandable concepts.
- **Building Networks:** Establishing mentorship and camaraderie with peers, encouraging personal growth.

To those considering a career in commercialisation, Amanda offers valuable advice: "Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and leap at every opportunity that is presented to you."

"If you are prepared to work hard and soak up the advice and learnings of others, there is massive opportunity to grow personally at an exponential rate."



# Jeremy Jones

Jeremy Jones' began his career as a Process Development Chemist at Glycosyn, a contract development and manufacturing company specialising in cGMP grade materials.

Armed with an MSc in Carbohydrate Chemistry from Otago University, Jeremy's early career was firmly rooted in the lab.

Glycosyn's unique blend of commercial elements within a scientific framework provided him with early exposure to the world of commercialisation. Around six years into his tenure, Jeremy attended a leadership development course that opened his eyes to skills as a scientist and their transferability in the business side of science. This realisation was a moment that would set him on a course towards a career in commercialisation.

Jeremy's journey in commercialisation gained momentum with a secondment to KiwiNet as a Commercialisation Manager. He recalls, "During my time at KiwiNet, I grew my network and learned a ridiculous amount about the commercialisation of science in a very short amount of time from KiwiNet's partner organisations."

Jeremy then assumed the role of Senior Commercialisation Manager at Viclink. Soon after, he was able to spin out one of Viclink's start-up companies, AuramerBio. "This experience was like an accelerated MBA," Jeremy reflects. "I gained exposure to all aspects of running a business in just six months."

After three years of dedicated effort, Jeremy decided it was time to seek a new challenge. Following a period of consulting, he made the decision to return to Viclink, which has since become Wellington UniVentures.

Jeremy shares advice that underscores the importance of adaptability, continuous learning, and building strong relationships when navigating the field of commercialisation:

- **Embrace Uncertainty:** Thriving in commercialisation means being comfortable with ambiguity and taking calculated risks.
- **Dream Big, Plan Carefully:** Envision possibilities and create actionable plans to bridge the gap between vision and reality.
- **Leverage Your Network:** Build strong relationships, offer support, and admit when you don't know something.
- **Stay Hungry:** Never rest on your laurels; this industry rewards the grind if you're up for it.
- **Learn Learn Learn:** KiwiNet and their wider network contain so much knowledge and experience, and the best part is it's available to anyone who asks.

Recently, Jeremy restarted his consultancy business, using a decade's-worth of skills to help public research organisations accelerate projects through their pipelines for greater chances of success.

His lasting passion for commercialisation stems from its transformative power. As he puts it: "Commercialisation is the difference between exciting research findings gathering dust and actually getting turned into a product that can get out in society and have a direct impact on people's lives."



# Ela Romanowska

Ela Romanowska has a Masters in Electronic Engineering and is a Registered Technology Transfer Professional with over 20 years' experience working in deep tech research and commercialisation.

Her fascination for gadgets and technology influenced her choice to study engineering. She recalls, with a hint of pride in her non-conformist nature, "I was told by teachers that Engineering was only for 'boys' so, of course, I had to prove them wrong!"

Her commercialisation career kicked off during her time at the CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), the largest research and development organisation on the African continent. Ela found herself at the forefront of its innovation work — managing commercialisation partnerships, as well as assisting in the planning of an Innovation Hub.

"This exposed me to a commercial mindset, and that start-ups need 'virtual incubation' - coaching and mentoring — as much as other forms of support."

Ela ventured into her own consulting business and took on a role within the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association — akin to KiwiNet. "For my sins, I was elected to the Executive. We were volunteers, which was really challenging. We successfully lobbied the government for significant funding into the sector, built technology transfer capabilities across the region, and contributed to the formulation and assessment of the internationally recognised RTTP status.

The government's introduction of its Research and Development Strategy, which led to the creation of the Innovation Fund, was a pivotal career moment. Ela assumed the role of Seed Fund Manager, supporting due diligence and deal structuring for technology development and commercialisation projects spanning universities, research organisations, and startups. It also meant working closely with tech transfer offices. "After nearly ten years in investing, I tried 'the other side of the fence' — setting up such office at a university."

Ela recently relocated from South Africa to New Zealand to be in the same time zone as her closest family. She is a Senior Commercialisation Manager in the Wellington UniVentures team.

Ela says, "I have been incredibly privileged to have had so many opportunities to support creating impact, for which I am deeply grateful." In terms of the most valuable skill for research commercialisation, she says, "first and foremost is building trust relationships, building trust relationships, and building trust relationships. Did I mention building trust relationships?! Key to this is connecting at a human level through empathy and vulnerability."

Ela shares her valuable insights for individuals considering a career in commercialisation:

- Be curious and willing to learn from experts and experiences across all aspects of research and commercialisation.
- Participate in every stage of the commercialisation journey, from raising funding for applied research to working with startups and everything in between.
- Use your passion to inspire and empower those you support — the founders and researchers. Remember, they are deep experts in their fields, and you are there to enable the unfamiliar commercialisation journey. Laugh and commiserate together in success and failure.
- Last but by no means least, in a role that is complex and unpredictable, having a sense of humour always helps. It lightens the load and builds resilience for the next wild commercialisation ride!



# Where to from here?

The next step in your commercialisation career journey

## Join our community

We welcome you to join your online community for collaboration, growth, and impact. Moderated by KiwiNet, this is a safe space for sharing resources, training opportunities and events and connecting with a wide range of ecosystem contributors. For information on how to join, please refer to [kiwinet.org.nz](http://kiwinet.org.nz) for details.

## Capability Cluster Assessment Tool

KiwiNet has developed an online assessment tool to enable you to evaluate yourself against each of the Commercialisation Professional capability clusters. The tool is designed to be used as a starting point for discussing professional development and career progression.

The tool can be used as:

- **Self-assessment:** designed for those entering the profession to provide a starting benchmark or for those wanting to curate a personalised development plan based on the capability clusters.
- **180 assessment** — a self-assessment and assessment performed by your manager/senior. This tool is designed to enable professional development and career progression conversations.
- **360 assessment** — a self-assessment, an assessment performed by your manager/senior and an assessment performed by someone who reports directly to you. This tool enables professionals to obtain comprehensive feedback on skills gap analysis.

Costs per each type of assessment vary. Please refer to [kiwinet.org.nz](http://kiwinet.org.nz) for details and access.

## Registered Technology Transfer Professional (RTTP)

Begin your journey to become a Registered Technology Transfer Professional (RTTP), an internationally recognised qualification combining knowledge and experience.

Plan your personalised professional development programme with relevant training, workshops and conferences to build your RTTP CE credits.

For more information about the registration process and requirements, visit the Alliance of Technology Transfer Professionals website.

## Contact us

If you have any inquiries regarding the Commercialisation Professional Framework, please feel free to get in touch with us.

[kiwinet.org.nz](http://kiwinet.org.nz)  
[admin@kiwinet.org.nz](mailto:admin@kiwinet.org.nz)





**KiwiNet** 

Kiwi Innovation Network Limited  
Private Bag 3105  
Waikato Mail Centre  
Hamilton 3240  
New Zealand

[www.kiwinet.org.nz](http://www.kiwinet.org.nz)

Telephone  
+64 7 858 6049

E-mail:  
[admin@kiwinet.org.nz](mailto:admin@kiwinet.org.nz)