Sphere New Zealand (Sphere)

Founding Charter

Version 2.0

15 September 2026

1. Vision

A globally competitive sector of New Zealand-developed technologies that reduce emissions, improve resource efficiency, strengthen environmental resilience, or enable these outcomes at scale. This sector delivers measurable economic and environmental impact in domestic and international markets and is recognised globally for innovation and excellence.

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2. Purpose

Sphere exists to accelerate the global scaling of New Zealand-developed technologies that contribute to a more sustainable and resilient world, strengthening both the economy and the environment.

It does this by aligning capital, corporates and public systems to address the barriers and unlock the opportunities that shape company scale, including capital access, commercial deployment, and international markets.

Sphere convenes founders, company leaders, investors, corporates, public agencies and ecosystem partners to align capability and enable successful growth.

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3. Who We Serve

Sphere serves companies developing proprietary technologies with the potential to deliver environmental and economic impact at global scale.

The organisation focuses on technologies developed in New Zealand, with strong economic and strategic benefit to New Zealand. This includes companies with international investment or ownership structures where core technology development and value creation remain anchored in New Zealand.

Sphere primarily engages with technologies commonly referred to as climate technology and cleantech. In practice, this includes technologies that reduce emissions, improve resource efficiency, strengthen environmental resilience, or enable these outcomes at scale.

Companies focused solely on distribution, integration or deployment are not core members. These organisations are engaged as critical partners in enabling commercial deployment pathways.

Sphere supports companies from early commercialisation through to global expansion, where clear potential exists for scalable impact.

Sphere is nationally accessible and inclusive across regions and across the innovation community.

Sphere recognises the important role of Māori leadership, enterprise and investment in Aotearoa New Zealand's innovation ecosystem and welcomes engagement with iwi, Māori businesses and Māori innovators where there is alignment with Sphere's focus on developing and scaling New Zealand-based technologies.

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4. Role

Sphere operates as a focused sector catalyst that converts founder insight into system alignment and improved scaling outcomes for New Zealand-developed technology companies.

Founder Insight

Maintaining a trusted network of founders and company leaders that enables practical knowledge exchange, collective problem-solving, and early identification of the real barriers and opportunities affecting company scale.

Founder insight, strengthened through collaboration with investors, corporates, agencies, government and ecosystem partners, provides sector intelligence that guides Sphere's activity.

System Alignment

Improving coordination across the organisations and institutions that influence company scale, including investors, corporates, infrastructure operators, agencies, government and ecosystem partners.

This strengthens capital pathways, enables clearer deployment opportunities, and supports coordinated access to domestic and international markets.

This includes coordinated, evidence-based advocacy and engagement with agencies and government to address structural barriers affecting capital access, deployment and company scale. This work is grounded in founder insight.

Scaling Outcomes

Strengthening the conditions that enable companies to secure investment, achieve commercial deployment, and scale globally.

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5. Founder Independence

Sphere remains company- and founder-centred in its priorities and activities.

While Sphere collaborates with government agencies, research institutions, investors and corporates, its role is to support companies developing and scaling New Zealand-developed technologies.

Sphere does not represent the institutional interests of any partner organisation and maintains independence in determining sector priorities.

Sphere engages in coordinated, evidence-based advocacy but does not represent individual company commercial interests.

Sphere's priorities are shaped by the needs of companies developing and scaling New Zealand-based innovation.

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6. What We Will Do

Sphere activates its role through a limited number of high-leverage initiatives that translate founder insight into system alignment and improved scaling outcomes.

These may include:

Founder insight
Enabling targeted exchange among founders and company leaders to identify and act on shared barriers and opportunities affecting company scale.

Capital and deployment pathways
Connecting companies with capital providers, deployment partners and market opportunities capable of supporting commercial growth.

International engagement
Supporting pathways into international markets, aligned to specific capital and deployment opportunities.

System-level engagement and advocacy
Providing coordinated, evidence-based engagement to address structural barriers affecting deployment and company scale, grounded in founder insight.

Activities remain focused and selective to maximise impact and complement existing ecosystem efforts.

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7. What We Will Not Do

Sphere will not:

• become a general-purpose accelerator or provider of startup education services already available within the sector
• raise or deploy a venture capital fund
• build or own shared physical infrastructure
• provide lobbying or representation on behalf of individual companies in matters of private commercial interest
• duplicate the operational roles of existing government agencies or innovation programmes, but will complement and, where appropriate, improve upon existing approaches

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8. Governance

Sphere operates as an independent charitable trust serving public and environmental benefit.

The board will initially consist of five directors, including experienced founders alongside independent skills-based directors.

The Chair will be appointed by the board.

All directors act in a fiduciary capacity in the interests of the trust and do not represent individual organisational interests.

Funding does not confer governance control.

The board maintains a balance of founder experience and independent expertise to ensure decisions remain grounded in the realities of scaling New Zealand-developed technologies.

A Founder Advisory body provides ongoing sector input into strategy, deployment priorities and systemic barriers affecting company scale.

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9. Participation & Contribution

Sphere brings together member companies and sector contributors to strengthen the commercial success and global reach of New Zealand-developed technologies.

Membership

Companies developing New Zealand-based technologies form the core membership of Sphere.

Member representatives typically include founders and company leaders responsible for scaling these ventures.

Membership contributions remain accessible and proportionate, ensuring participation is not constrained by company stage or geography.

Member companies contribute through participation, expertise, mentorship and sector leadership, with companies encouraged to contribute back as they grow.

Sphere encourages participation from a diverse range of founders and contributors across regions, industries, genders, ethnicities and backgrounds.

Sector Participation

Corporates, investors, agencies, philanthropic organisations and other partners participate through defined roles — Anchor, Delivery, Ecosystem and Affiliate — reflecting the contribution they make to strengthening coordination and commercial pathways.

Participation does not confer governance control.

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10. Funding & Independence

Sphere operates through diversified funding sources aligned with its purpose.

These may include public or agency funding, philanthropic contributions, corporate sponsorship and membership contributions.

Funding sources must not compromise the organisation’s integrity or reputation.

Where contributions are directed toward specific initiatives or aligned activities, such funding will be managed transparently and separately from core operational funding. This ensures Sphere’s core coordination capability remains independent and that partner contributions are applied consistently with their intended purpose.

Where appropriate, surplus funding may support shared common-good initiatives that strengthen the innovation pipeline or address sector-wide barriers to scaling.

The Board is responsible for ensuring that all funds are applied in a manner consistent with Sphere’s purpose and long-term integrity.

Funding relationships will not influence organisational positions on issues affecting the sector’s long-term development.

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11. Measuring Progress

Sphere will assess its effectiveness through indicators reflecting the strength of pathways enabling companies to scale, from early insight through to capital, deployment and global outcomes.

These may include:

- participation of founders and company leaders in Sphere activities
- capital connections and deployment opportunities established
- progress in addressing systemic barriers affecting company scale

Over time, these are expected to contribute to increased investment, successful deployment, and the global growth of New Zealand-developed technologies.