Eco Submarine

NZ-first ocean STEM learning game for primary students

A free-to-adopt classroom game where kids explore the ocean, collect and classify materials, restore habitats, and build science confidence - then continue learning at home through optional family memberships.

Ocean | STEM | NZ-first | Free for teachers

KickStart Fund Pitch | Ask: NZ$60,000

Business model reference: Prodigy-style free classroom adoption funded by optional family memberships

2. Market problem & current solutions

Most products are either engaging or classroom-useful - rarely both, and almost never NZ-ocean-specific.

MARKET PROBLEM

1

Low emotional connection

Many classroom tools start with quizzes or worksheets, not a world children want to return to.

2

Weak local relevance

Ocean science, conservation and New Zealand marine life are usually taught through fragmented resources, not immersive gamification.

3

Teacher friction

Schools need low-cost, low-prep, curriculum-useful tools that work both in class and at home.

Gap in the market

There is no obvious NZ-first ocean STEM game that combines immersive play, teacher usability, and an ethical freemium model.

CURRENT SOLUTION CATEGORIES

Quiz & drill apps

Good for repetition and reporting, but light on world-building and emotional engagement.

Sandbox education games

Highly engaging, but often broad-purpose rather than locally relevant or science-specific.

Static classroom resources

Trusted by teachers, but hard to sustain attention or create repeat at-home use.

Eco Submarine's position

Immersive ocean adventure + STEM learning + NZ authenticity + teacher/parent pathways.

Why this matters for CODE: a commercially-minded educational game must show audience clarity, pathways to reach, and real market validation planning - not just creative intent.

3. Our solution & product

A playful underwater world where exploration, cleanup and science literacy reinforce each other.

CORE LOOP

1 Explore

Pilot a small submarine through reefs, caves and hidden zones.

2 Collect & classify

Gather debris, minerals and marine knowledge through tasks and discovery.

3 Restore & solve

Repair habitats, complete STEM missions and avoid underwater hazards.

4 Upgrade & return

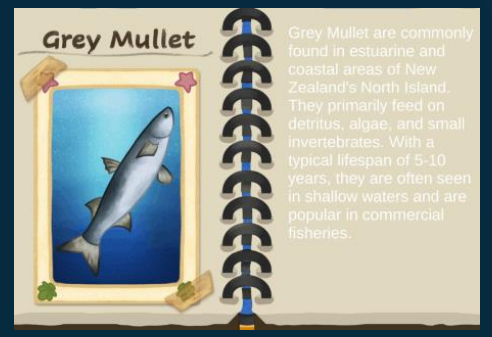
Unlock tools, improve capability and re-enter the loop with new goals.

Product stack

- **Student game**
- **Teacher dashboard MVP**
- **Parent progress + membership flow**

The classroom version stays free. Home use deepens through optional family memberships and printable activities.

Science **Restoration** **Tools**



Examples already visible in the current build: vacuum/magnet tools, marine life knowledge book content, and exploration scenes.

4. Why now?

Eco Submarine already has creative proof of concept and KickStart is built for teams at exactly this stage.

Playable

Prototype assets and gameplay already exist - this is not a blank-sheet concept.

KickStart fit

CODE is looking for innovative working prototypes that have "found the fun". At NZGDC 2025, we already proved it.

Teacher wedge

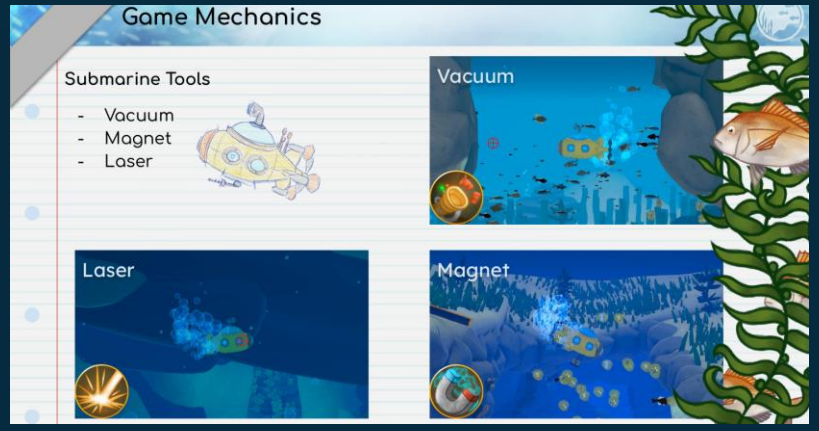
Prodigy proves free classroom adoption can be monetized ethically through families.

NZ-first

Local pilots, local content, local spend.

12-MONTH PATH

Now	KickStart build	Classroom pilots	Follow-on funding
Art direction, mechanics, levels, and a complete gameplay loop already exist.	Polish loop, content, dashboard MVP and pilot package.	Run NZ teacher playtests and capture validation evidence.	Use prototype + pilot data to pursue partners, grants or publishers.



Why funders should care now

The current build already shows a coherent creative direction, and we validated the fun with over 50 kids at NZGDC 2025.

KickStart funding would convert that into a market-validated prototype rather than just a passion project.

5. Market opportunity / size

Start with a clearly defined NZ primary-school beachhead, then expand to Australia and other English-speaking markets.

1,927

Primary schools in New Zealand (1 July 2025).

526,794

Primary regular school roll in 2024.

US$64.54B

Global game-based learning market projected by 2030.

BEACHHEAD STRATEGY

New Zealand primary schools → **Australia selected pilots** → **English-speaking home learning**

A narrow NZ-first entry point creates credibility, curriculum fit and partnership proof before broader scale.

ILLUSTRATIVE NZ REVENUE POTENTIAL

~NZ$2.1M

Annual family-membership potential in NZ primary alone at a 5% conversion rate and NZ$79/year pricing.

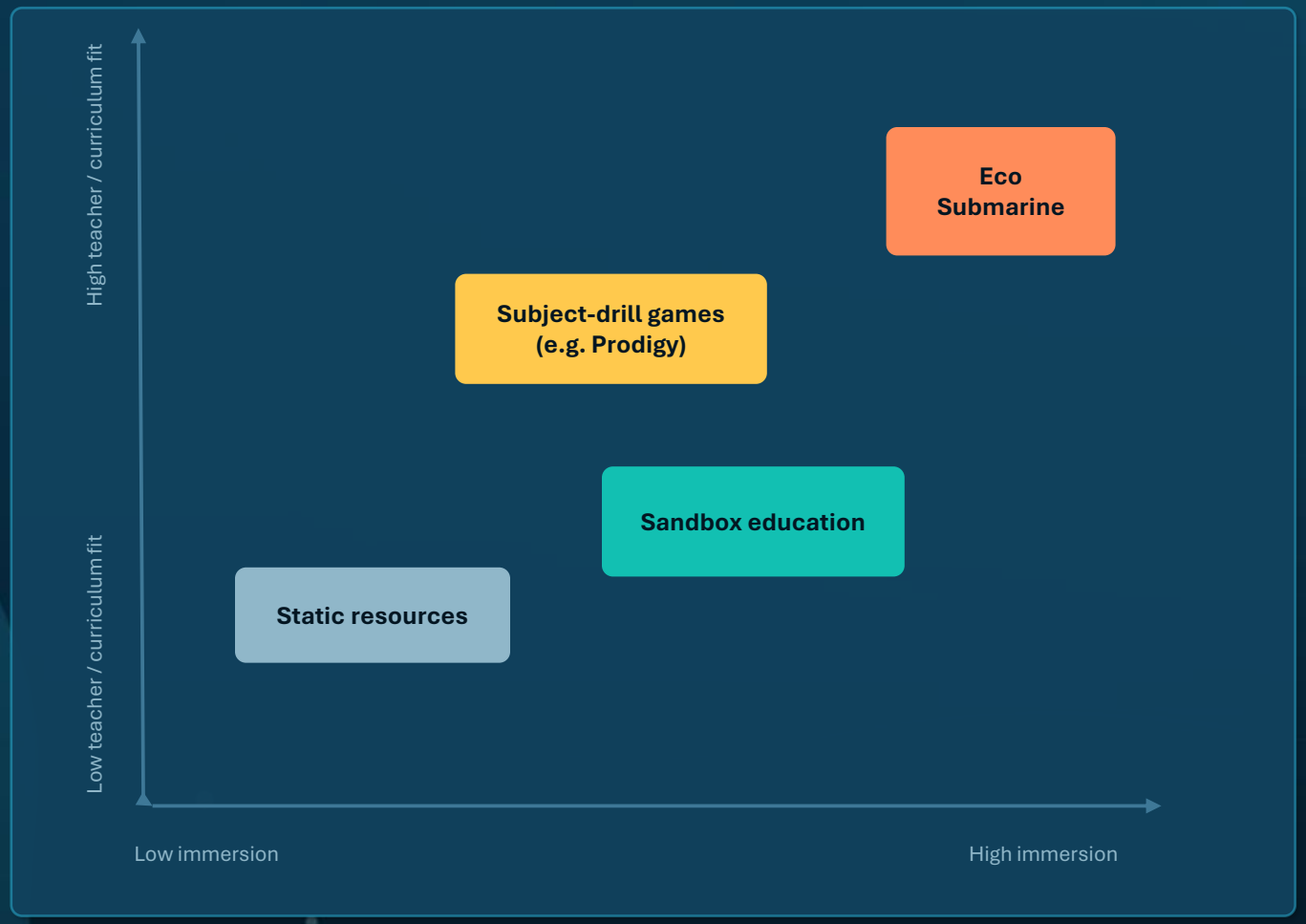
This is before secondary revenue from optional school implementation packs, DLC, partnerships or Australian expansion.

SOM target (base case, year 3)
250 schools | 90k student MAU | 3,600 paying families

6. Market fit / competition

Eco Submarine sits where immersive play, curriculum relevance and local authenticity overlap.

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE



WHY WE FIT

- Target audience is already defined: NZ primary learners aged roughly 8-13.
- Theme is distinctive: ocean restoration, marine species and underwater discovery.
- Learning loop is broader than a drill game: exploration, tools, observation, classification and problem-solving.
- The business model is differentiated: free classroom entry with optional family conversion.

Positioning statement

Not just a better worksheet - a New Zealand-born game universe with classroom utility.

7. Competitive advantages

Eco Submarine is strongest where product, content and business model reinforce each other.

NZ-first authenticity

Marine life, conservation and classroom relevance begin in Aotearoa before broader expansion.

Ocean + STEM hook

The emotional story is bigger than subject practice: exploration, cleanup and stewardship create memorable motivation.

Three-sided product

Student game, teacher tools and parent continuation create stronger retention than a single-surface app.

Ethical monetisation

Core learning stays free; memberships enhance play and support home use rather than gate essential progress.

Hard-to-copy combination

Most competitors can copy a theme or a quiz mechanic. Fewer can combine game feel, local ocean IP, teacher usability, and a parent-funded go-to-market model in a single product.

8. Business model

Free classroom adoption drives engagement; families opt into paid depth at home. Prodigy proves the pattern can scale.

GROWTH FLYWHEEL

1. **Free teacher adoption**
   Teachers get full classroom access at no cost.
2. **Student engagement**
   Game loops and missions create repeat and fun use.
3. **Home continuation**
   Parents see progress and support play at home.
4. **Family membership**
   Optional paid depth funds more free classroom access.

ECO SUBMARINE REVENUE DESIGN

Primary

Family memberships
Proposed: NZ$9.99/mo or NZ$79/yr.

Secondary

Optional school implementation packs, partner missions and future DLC.

Design principle: Memberships enhance exploration, cosmetics, progress tools and printable home-learning support - but do not paywall the core learning loop.

PRODIGY SUCCESS STORY

Free for teachers	Optional parent memberships keep educator use free.
CAD$159M Series B	Prodigy announced a CAD$159M Series B in 2021.
100M+ registered users	The 2021 funding release said Prodigy had grown to more than 100M registered users worldwide.

What we copy: **Teacher-free adoption, family-funded growth, multi-sided product.**
What we avoid: **Aggressive child-directed upsell optics.**

Reference model **Not a copy-paste clone**

9. Traction & validation

For a prototype-stage title, the strongest proof points are product progress, classroom access and credible learning input.

Gameplay exists

A playable prototype and gameplay vertical slice already exist.

Core tools visible

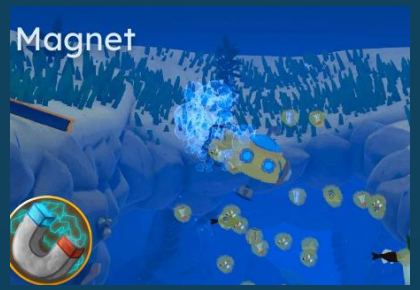
Vacuum, magnet and laser mechanics are already expressed in the build.

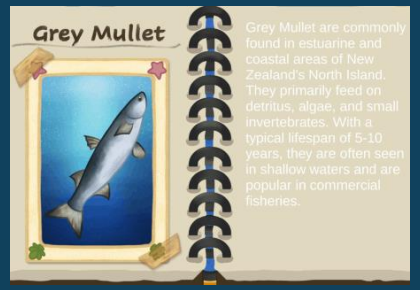
School pathway

A local primary school has been identified for playtesting conversations.

Learning input

Content has been informed by Royal Society-linked expertise.





Current proof is creative and directional - not vanity metrics. That is exactly what a KickStart prototype should show at this stage.

Pre-award stage

No major awards are being claimed yet; current traction is prototype quality, pilot readiness and gameplay testing with 50+ kids at NZGDC, proving the fun is real.

Validation plan during KickStart

- Teacher interviews and classroom observations
- Pilot playtests with NZ primary-age students
- Parent onboarding test for the home-learning flow
- Evidence pack for follow-on partners, investors or publishers

This aligns directly with CODE's emphasis on market validation planning, target audience clarity and go-to-market realism.

10. Team, advisors & future hires

The current team covers prototype delivery; the next layer adds curriculum, science and classroom-scale capability.

CURRENT CORE TEAM

Hannah Nicholson
Lead Artist
UI & 2D Artist

Nova MacCourt
Project Manager
Lead Programmer

Aidan McCallion
3D Modeller
VFX Artist

Johann Fajardo
3D Environment
Props Artist

Josh Taylor
Technical Artist
UI & Frontend Programmer

ADVISORS & NEAR-TERM HIRES

Amir Shojaei

AAA Industry Veteran Gaming Advisor
https://linkedin.com/in/amir-shojaei-37791020/

Chris van Tonder
Royal Society Member
& K-8 Science Teacher
https://royalsociety.org.nz/chris-van-tonde-k-8

Future hire: Curriculum Writer

Future hire: NZ School Liaison

Future hire: Community Mgr.

Prototype delivery thesis

This team already covers art direction, gameplay engineering, technical art and environment creation - enough to build a compelling prototype while supported by industry veteran advisors and royal society & science curriculum input.

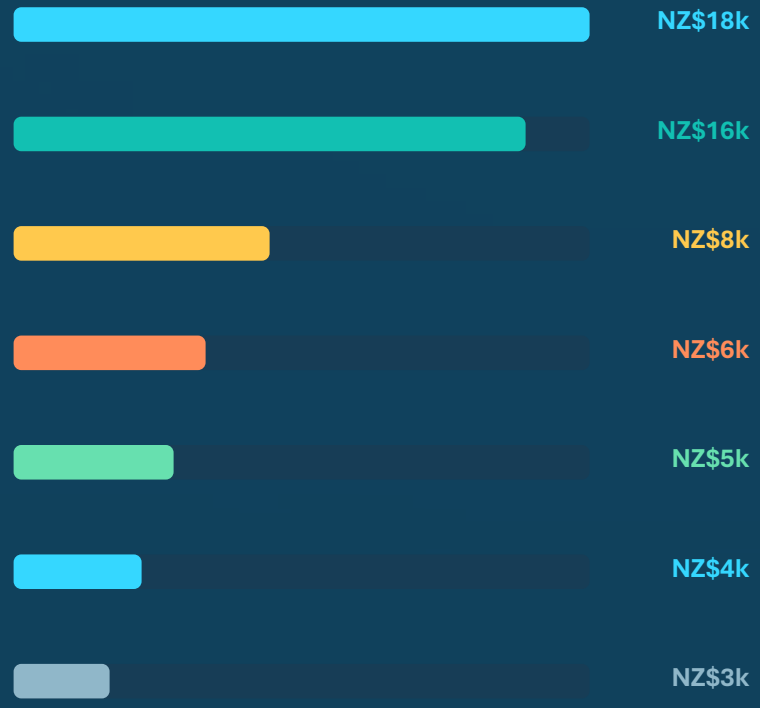
What this unlocks

Stronger classroom fit, safer child-directed design, better marine-science credibility, and a cleaner path from prototype to commercial product.

11. Expense model

The NZ$60k ask is concentrated on prototype-building work that aligns with KickStart rules and market-validation expectations.

USE OF FUNDS



Total ask: NZ$60,000

Budget is intentionally weighted toward labour, content and validation - not hardware or overhead-heavy spend.

90%+
Planned NZ spend

0%
Hardware ask

- Matches KickStart priorities: prototype labour, contractors, software, validation and content.
- Supports market validation work rather than treating GTM as an afterthought.
- Keeps the scope focused on the working prototype most likely to unlock follow-on funding.

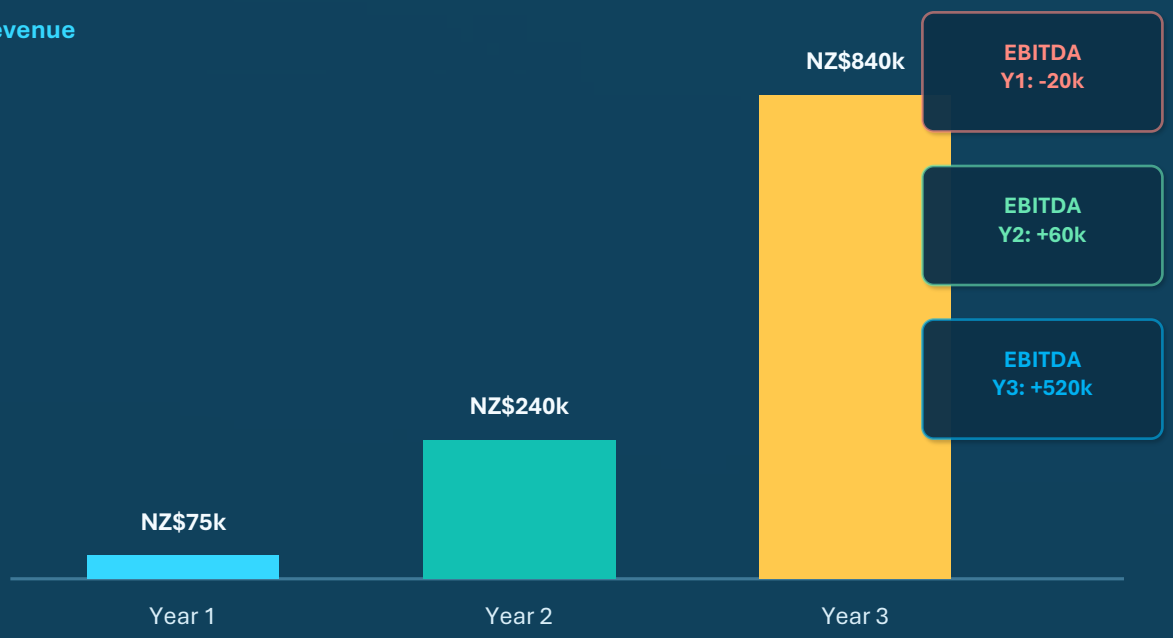
Funding discipline — A lean prototype budget is more credible than a full-scale production ask at this stage.

12. Financial projections

Base case: use a teacher-led classroom wedge to build recurring family revenue, then expand from NZ into ANZ.

BASE-CASE 3-YEAR VIEW

Revenue



By year 3, the base case assumes family memberships become the dominant revenue driver, with secondary revenue still supporting growth.

Illustrative only - not guaranteed results.

OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS

- Year 1: 25 schools, 5,000 student MAU, 350 paying families
- Year 2: 100 schools, 25,000 student MAU, 1,500 paying families
- Year 3: 250 schools, 90,000 student MAU, 7,200 paying families
- Blended family ARPU assumes a mix of monthly and annual memberships
- Secondary revenue includes school support packs, partner missions and DLC

Investment logic	The product can run at a loss during validation and still become sustainable once classroom scale compounds into family conversion.

13. Ask

NZ$60,000 to turn an existing creative foundation into a validated working prototype with a classroom pathway.

Ask: NZ$60,000 KickStart Fund

What this funding delivers in 6 months

- Core loop polish: exploration, cleanup, restoration and upgrade progression
- Teacher dashboard MVP with basic classroom reporting and assignment flow
- NZ marine-life and STEM content pack for pilot use
- Teacher / student playtests with evidence for market validation
- Pilot-ready build and a stronger case for follow-on partners or investors

Outcome A New Zealand-born educational game IP with enough product proof to raise the next round of support.

Why fund it?

Eco Submarine is commercially-oriented, locally grounded, and already visually differentiated. It aligns with CODE's goal of helping NZ teams move from idea to working prototype - with a clear path to audience and monetisation.

Found the fun

Market validation

NZ studio growth

Eco Submarine can become a New Zealand-first STEM success story: a game that helps children love the ocean while helping a local team build sustainable IP.