

Dr Sandra Mandic, PhD, PMP

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Profile

I am a confident, energetic, adaptable and results-oriented leader. I have over 20 years of research experience in the transport and health sectors, including over 15 years of experience in initiating, growing, leading and managing a comprehensive research portfolio with diverse programmes and projects. In my academic and government roles, I have initiated and managed a wide range of projects and programmes. Throughout my career, I published 104 scientific articles, 5 books (available in four languages), 5 book chapters, 249 conference abstracts and 77 technical reports, secured over NZD \$2.5 million in research funding, and designed and taught 15+ university and professional training courses.

I am passionate about research, innovation, mentoring, project and programme management, and building bridges between people, sectors and cultures. Throughout my career, I have established and led several new successful programmes and initiatives, including the world-class, award-winning, interdisciplinary and cross-sector [BEATS Research Programme](#). I have a track record of building strong, meaningful professional relationships and bringing together professionals from different disciplines and sectors.

My professional training and experience span nine cities across five countries and three continents – including Europe, Canada, United States and New Zealand – and I speak four languages (English, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian and Russian). My professional activities in academia and government sectors have been inspired by interdisciplinary and multi-sector approaches to encourage active living and active transport with links to public health, built environment and sustainability. My professional endeavours in the private sector are focused on creating award-winning [Compass Guide Research Training](#) resources which link research and project management.

Transformational leader

Award-winning researcher and author

Experience working in academia, government and business sectors

Project and programme manager

Co-authored over 100 scientific journal articles

Secured NZD \$2.5+ million in research funding

Designed and taught 15+ training courses

Published award-winning books linking research and project management

Lived and worked in 9 cities, 5 countries and on 3 continents

Speaks 4 languages

Qualifications

2002 - 2007	Doctorate (PhD) (Clinical Exercise Physiology), University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada
2000 - 2002	Master of Science (Exercise Physiology), University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada
1994 - 1998	Bachelor of Physical Education, University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, Serbia

Selected Work Experience

2021 - Present	Founder and Director, AGILE Research Ltd., Wellington, New Zealand
2023 - Present	Team Leader Transport Strategy, Wellington City Council, Wellington, New Zealand
2021 - 2023	Principal Advisor Transport Strategy, Wellington City Council, Wellington, New Zealand
2020 - Present	Adjunct Professor, School of Sport and Recreation, Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand
2013 - 2023	Founder and Principal Investigator / Research Programme Manager, Built Environment and Active Transport to School (BEATS) Research Programme; New Zealand
2018 - 2020	Associate Professor, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
2009 - 2018	Senior Lecturer, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
2007 - 2008	Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Stanford University School of Medicine and VA Hospital Palo Alto, Palo Alto, California, United States

Languages

English (fluent)

Spanish (proficient)

Serbo-Croatian (fluent)

Russian (basic)

Certifications

02/2022	Certified Project Management Professional (PMP), Project Management Institute, USA
09/2008	ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist, American College of Sports Medicine, USA
04/2007	Certified Exercise Physiologist, Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP), Canada

Selected Leadership Roles

2025	Convenor, 2026 Project Management Institute of New Zealand Awards, New Zealand
2025	Co-Chair (Policy), New Zealand Chapter of Transport and Health Science Group, UK
2025	Deputy Convenor, 2025 Project Management Institute of New Zealand Awards, New Zealand
2020	Director, Transport Research Network, University of Otago, New Zealand
2019	Convenor, Working Group, Policy Recommendations for Active Transport, New Zealand
2018 - 2019	Convenor, Transport Research Network, University of Otago, New Zealand
2016 - 2019	Steering Group member, Centre for Sustainability, University of Otago, New Zealand
2013 - 2017	Member of the Technical Advisory Group, Ministry of Health, New Zealand
2013 - 2017	Board member, Clinical Exercise Physiology Association of New Zealand, New Zealand

Selected Honors, Prizes, Awards, Fellowships and Scholarships

2025	Winner of the 2025 New Zealand Academic Achievement in Project Management Award, Project Management Institute of New Zealand
2024	Finalist for the 2024 New Zealand Academic Achievement in Project Management Award, Project Management Institute of New Zealand
2022	National award: 1st place in XV Strategy Awards for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention [NAOS] for PACO & PACA Project Team; Associate Investigator (PI: Aznar); Spain
2021	National award: 3rd place in XIV Strategy Awards for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention [NAOS] for PACO Project Team; Associate Investigator (PI: Chillón); Spain
2019	University of Otago Research Group Award for the BEATS Research Team, New Zealand
2016	Community Engagement Award - Academic Staff, University of Otago, New Zealand
2010	International Research Fellowship, National Commission for Research, Science and Technology (CONICYT), Chile (Declined due to new parenting responsibilities)
2006 - 2007	Dissertation Fellowship, University of Alberta, Canada
2005	Student Research Award, Canadian Association of Cardiac Rehabilitation, Canada
2004 - 2006	Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship, University of Alberta, Canada
2002 - 2004	Canadian Institutes for Health Research / Tomorrow's Research Cardiovascular Health Professionals Research Fellowship, Canada
1999	Award for an Outstanding Achievement during Studies, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1998	Award for a Full-Time Student for Success in 1997/98, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1997	Plaque to the Best Student of the Faculty, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1997 - 2000	Republic Foundation for the Development of Scientific Offspring Scholarship, Serbia
1996 - 1998	Fund for Talented Students Scholarship, University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, Serbia
1996	Diploma to the Best Student of the Faculty, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1995 - 1998	Dean's Honor Award, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
1995 - 1996	Ministry of Education Scholarship, Ministry of Education, Serbia

PI = Principal investigator.

Research Activities

104	249	77	155	10	93	Extensive
Scientific journal articles	Conference abstracts	Technical reports	Seminars / Workshops	Symposia organised	Media reports	research collaborations
Secured over NZD \$1.9 million in research funding as Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Principal Investigator and over NZD \$0.6 million in research funding as Associate Investigator						
H-index: 28	2,353 citations	ORCID #: 0000-0003-4126-8874		Researcher ID: F-2689-2016		

Research Programmes Established and Led

2013 - 2023	Built Environment and Active Transport to School (BEATS) Research Programme
2015 - 2017	Cycle Skills Training Research Programme
2009 - 2012	Cardiac Rehabilitation Research Programme

Selected Research Grants

Selected BEATS Research Programme-related research grants:

2019 - 2023	Health Research Council of New Zealand - Project Grant; PI; NZD \$1,197,487
2018 - 2019	University of Otago Research Grant; PI; NZD \$37,909
2014 - 2018	Health Research Council of New Zealand Emerging Researcher Grant; PI; NZD \$149,941
2014 - 2018	National Heart Foundation of New Zealand - Project Grant; PI; NZD \$23,102
2014 - 2016	Lottery Health Research Grant; PI; NZD \$30,000

Selected other significant research grants:

2023 - 2025	Green Space Equity and Youth Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand: Lottery Health Research; Associate Investigator (PI: Melody Smith); NZD \$119,484
2020 - 2023	PACO & PACA Study: Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (Spain); Associate Investigator (PI: Susana Aznar Laín); €85,445
2016 - 2020	The PACO Project: Ministry of Economy & Competitiveness (Spain); Associate Investigator (PI: Palma Chillón); €70,000

*PI = Principal Investigator.

Research Students Supervision (2009-2023)

1	4	7	2	5	22	3
Postdoctoral fellow	Doctoral students	Masters' students	Postgraduate diploma students	Honours students	Summer research students	Internship students
12 Scholarships and awards won by supervised research students						

Selected Designed and Taught University and Professional Training Courses

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamentals of Leadership Training • Project Management Training • Research Project Management Training • How to Plan Your Research Project • Fundamentals of Writing Research Grants • Helping You Navigate Your Postgraduate Research Journey | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Your Supervision of Student Research Projects • Physical Activity / Active Living and Health • Active Living and Environment • Clinical Exercise Physiology • Cardiac Rehabilitation • Independent Study – Scientific Writing • Research Methods in Exercise Sciences (designed) |
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Selected Current and Recent Leadership Roles, Programmes and Projects

<p>Trustee and Co-Chair (Policy) for New Zealand, Transport and Health Science Group (THSG) United Kingdom (2025)</p>	<p>The Transport and Health Science Group (THSG) is an independent group of global public health and transport practitioners and researchers.</p> <p>The THSG aims to identify and promote the evidence base for policy and advocacy objectives that will enable a healthier and sustainable transport system. THSG is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and it operates globally.</p>	<p>Within first few months of serving in this role, I organized the Transport and Health Symposium 2025 in Auckland, New Zealand in June 2025 to reinvigorate the New Zealand transport and health community.</p>
<p>Director, AGILE Research Ltd. Wellington, New Zealand (2021 - Present) https://agileresearch.nz/</p>  <p>AGILE Research</p>	<p>At AGILE Research Ltd., our vision is to help organisations grow their research capacity, strengthen their research training, successfully manage research projects and deliver high-quality outputs research reports and presentations.</p> <p>Our efforts are focused on making research training and resources exciting, delightful, understandable and accessible.</p> <p>We design and publish Compass Guide Research Training resources – including books, courses and videos – which link research and project management.</p> <p>We work with a wide range of organisations and professionals from various sectors across the globe to design and deliver customised research and project management training and research consulting.</p> <p>We provide our services in English and Spanish.</p> <p>AGILE Research Ltd. is a member of the New Zealand’s Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) All of Government Consultancy Services panel in a sub-category Policy, Research and Development (Tier-3).</p>	<p>I established this research consultancy to work with organisations and teams around the globe and share my knowledge and expertise with others to help them unlock their research potential.</p> <p>I initiated, conceptualised and created all Compass Guide Research Training books, courses and videos published to date. (See page 6 for details.)</p> <p>Note: Development of the Compass Guide Research Training resources was not requested, sponsored, contracted or paid for by any external organization and did not involve the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, “ghost” writers, graphic designers or paid book reviewers.</p> <p>Copyright © 2021-2025 Sandra Mandic. All Rights Reserved.</p>
<p>Team Leader Transport Strategy (2023 - Present) Principal Advisor Transport Strategy (2021 - 2023) Wellington City Council Wellington, New Zealand</p>	<p>In these roles, I have been responsible for working with local, regional and central government partners to deliver and influence transport programme in the capital city of New Zealand, facilitate evidence-informed (data and data analysis driven) decision making, and lead the transport strategy programme, planning and policy development for Wellington City.</p> <p>As part of these roles I have been responsible for drafting Council’s submissions on new transport legislation proposed by the New Zealand government.</p>	<p>I led the development of the strategic plan for an approach for the speed management programme and developed the strategic context for the Wellington City Transport Plan.</p> <p>I have also led the design, implementation and analysis of the annual Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey as an ongoing research project to enable long-term monitoring of residents’ perceptions of the city’s transport system and support evidence-informed decision making.</p>

Founder and Principal Investigator / Programme Manager, BEATS Research Programme
New Zealand
(2013 – 2023)



[Built Environment and Active Transport to School \(BEATS\)](#) was an interdisciplinary and multi-sector transport research programme founded as a partnership between academia, schools, local government and the wider community. The programme spanned disciplines of exercise sciences, public health, transport, environment and education, involved investigators and collaborators from around the world, had an advisory board from the local community and trained a number of research students, research staff and volunteers.

The programme grew into a world-class example of a successful community-academia research collaboration. Six years after the inception, the BEATS Research Team won the [University of Otago Research Group Award](#) for the best research team. The final project, BEATS Natural Experiment, was funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (NZD \$1.2 million; 2019-2023). Both BEATS studies conducted in the Dunedin city achieved 100% school recruitment rate (12 secondary schools).

BEATS Research outputs included 48 published scientific journal articles, 162 conference abstracts, 57 technical reports, 1 book chapter, 117 research seminar presentations, 27 research talks, 6 BEATS Symposia, 2 international TALES Symposia, 4 conference proceedings and 56 media reports.

As the founder and the principal investigator, I developed the vision for the BEATS Research Programme, established it in 2013 and then nurtured, grew, lead and managed it - from the first to the last day 10+ years later.

I was responsible for conceptualising, designing, implementing, managing and leading the programme, building the research team, securing funding, managing stakeholders, training research staff, managing risks, monitoring budget, preparing project reports and leading the delivery of research outputs.

Final report: [BEATS Research Programme 2013-2023: The Power of Vision, Teamwork, Perseverance and Project Management](#)

The programme achieved 10 times higher research productivity per NZD \$1 million in research funding compared to the New Zealand average.

Convenor, Working Group for the Development of Active Transport Policy Recommendations
New Zealand
(2019)

The ["Turning the Tide" report](#) considered the health and environmental benefits of walking and cycling and defined a clear set of actions to get us out of our cars and living healthier lives. The development of this report and policy recommendations was a multidisciplinary and cross-sector endeavour and one of the outcomes of The Active Living and Environment Symposium (TALES) 2019.

I initiated and led this project.

Full report: ["Turning the Tide - from Cars to Active Transport"](#)

Brief report: ["Key Policy Recommendations for Active Transport"](#)

Founder and organiser of eight interdisciplinary and cross-sector symposia
New Zealand
(2014 - 2023)



The Active Living and Environment Symposia (TALES) 2017 and 2019 were designed to facilitate and grow an international, multidisciplinary and multi-sector dialogue related to active living and environment.

These symposia brought together researchers, policy makers, health promoters, urban designers, transport experts and members of the public to network and exchange ideas.

One of the outcomes of the TALES Symposium 2019 was the [development of key policy recommendations for increasing active transport in New Zealand](#) (see details above).

BEATS Symposia were used as one of many avenues to communicate the BEATS Research findings to the wider community and to engage with stakeholders. Shared findings were relevant to academia, government, public health, urban design, the transport and environment sectors.

I was the chair of the organizing committee for all six BEATS Symposia: 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2023.

Development and Publishing of the Award-Winning Compass Guide Research Training

Created by Dr Sandra Mandic | Available from the [AGILE Research Ltd.](https://www.agileresearch.com) website



**Compass Guide
Research Training**
By AGILE Research Ltd.

Designed to help teams and individuals navigate the research process, successfully plan and manage their research projects and deliver high-quality research reports and presentations.

Check out our [catalogue](#) (available in English, Spanish and Chinese).

<p style="text-align: center;">Award-winning Compass Guide books</p> <p>Content focused on how to navigate the research process and how to successfully plan and manage research projects.</p> <p>Two books received recognition from Project Management Institute of New Zealand</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Compass Guide courses and workshops</p> <p>Customised research and project management training designed and delivered based on clients' needs.</p> <p>We deliver online courses in real time and in-person in English and Spanish.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Research training videos</p> <p>A series of free short research training videos based on the content of the Compass Guide books</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AGILE Research YouTube Channel</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Research consulting services</p> <p>We work with clients to assess their needs and co-design and deliver customised training and advice.</p> <p>We offer consulting services in English and Spanish.</p>

How to Navigate the Research Process	How to Plan and Manage Research Projects		How to Share Research Findings	
<p style="text-align: center;">Compass Guide for Beginners</p> <p>Book (41 pages) Beginners / novice level</p> <p>Available in English, Spanish and Chinese</p> <p>Short book video</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Compass Guide for Postgraduate Students (and Their Supervisors)</p> <p>Book (150 pages) Advanced level</p> <p>Available in English and Spanish</p> <p>Short book video</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Compass Guide: How to Plan Your Research Project</p> <p>Book (55 pages) Beginners / novice level</p> <p>Available in English, Spanish and Portuguese</p> <p>Short book video</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Compass Guide for Research Project Management</p> <p>Book (187 pages) Advanced level</p> <p>Available in English (Spanish in late 2025)</p> <p>Short book video</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Compass Guide: How to Write Scientific Journal Articles</p> <p>Book (72 pages) Advanced level</p> <p>Available in English, Spanish and Portuguese</p> <p>Short book video</p>

Selected Co-Authored Publications

Selected Scientific Journal Articles Published in the Last Six Years

Mandic S, García Bengoechea E, Coppell K, Keall M, Smith M, Hopkins D, Sandretto S, Wilson G, Kidd G, Flaherty C, Mindell JS, Stephenson J, King K, Kentala K, Rolleston A, Spence JC. Travel to school patterns and perceptions of walking to school in New Zealand adolescents before versus during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Transport & Health* 2024; 36:101803. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2024.101803>

Mandic S, Khan A, García Bengoechea E, Spence JC, Coppell K, Smith M. Physical activity, screen time and dietary behaviours in New Zealand adolescents prior to and following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. *BMC Public Health*. 2024; 24:188. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-17688-7>

Mandic S, Sandretto S, Hopkins D, Wilson G, Kidd G, García Bengoechea E. School choice, distance to school and travel to school patterns among adolescents. *Journal of Transport & Health*. 2023; 33:101704. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2023.101704>

Mandic S, García Bengoechea E, Hopkins D, Coppell K, Smith M, Moore A, Keall M, Ergler C, Sandretto S, Wilson G, Kidd G, Flaherty C, Mindell JS, Stephenson J, King K, Spence JC. Examining the transport to school patterns of New Zealand adolescents by home-to-school distance and settlement types. *Journal of Transport & Health*. 2023; 30:101585. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2023.101585>

Mandic S, Hewitt J, Dodge N, Sharma N. Approaches to speed management in New Zealand's capital. *Journal of Road Safety*. 2023, 34(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33492/JRS-D-22-00047>

Mandic S, García Bengoechea E, Hopkins D, Coppell K, Spence JC. Adolescents perceptions of walking and cycling to school differ based on how far they live from school. *Journal of Transport and Health*. 2022, 24, 101316. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2021.101316>

Khan A, **Mandic S**, Uddin R. Association of active school commuting with physical activity and sedentary behaviour among adolescents: a global perspective from 80 countries. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*. 2021;24(6):567-572 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2020.12.002>

Mindell JS, Ergler C, Hopkins D, **Mandic S**. Taking the bus? Barriers and facilitators for adolescent use of public buses to school. *Travel Behaviour and Society*. 2021;22:48-58; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tbs.2020.08.006>

Sandretto S, Hopkins D, Wilson G, **Mandic S**. Competing Tensions: Active Transport to School, School Choice and Policy Making. *Journal of Transport & Health*. 2020; 18:100908; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2020.100908>

Mandic S, Hopkins D, García Bengoechea E, Flaherty C, Coppell K, Moore A, Williams J, Spence JC. Differences in Parental Perceptions of Walking and Cycling to High School According to Distance. *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour*. 2020; 71:238-249; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trf.2020.04.013>

Mandic S, Jackson A, Lieswyn J, Mindell JS, García Bengoechea E, Spence JC, Wooliscroft B, Wade-Brown C, Coppell K, Hinckson E. Development of key policy recommendations for active transport in New Zealand: Multi-sector and multidisciplinary endeavour. *Journal of Transport & Health*. 2020; 18:100859 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2020.100859>

Mandic S, Hopkins D, García Bengoechea E, Moore A, Sandretto S, Coppell K, Ergler C, Keall M, Rolleston A, Kidd G, Wilson G, Spence JC. Built environment changes and active transport to school among adolescents: BEATS Natural Experiment Study Protocol. *BMJ Open*. 2020;10:e034899 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-034899>

Selected Technical Reports Published in the Last Six Years

Mandic S. BEATS Research Programme 2013-2023: The Power of Vision, Teamwork, Perseverance and Project Management. 2024. (20 pages) Available at: <https://agileresearch.nz/beats/>

Wellington City Council. Wellington City Council. Residents' perceptions about travel to work in Wellington city. Findings from Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey 2023. July 2024. [Full report](#) (30 pages) | [Brief report](#) (6 pages)

Wellington City Council. Wellingtonians' opinions about road safety. Findings from Pōneke / Wellington Transport Survey 2023 and 2024. (Full report) June 2024. [Full report](#) (40 pages) | [Brief report](#) (10 pages)

Mandic S, Jackson A, Lieswyn J, Mindell JS, García Bengoechea E, Spence JC, Wooliscroft B, Wade-Brown C, Coppell K, Hinckson E. (2019) Turning the Tide - from Cars to Active Transport. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago (28 pages) Available at: <https://agileresearch.nz/active-living>

[Click here to access a complete list of publications co-authored by Dr Sandra Mandic](#)

[Click here to access Dr Sandra Mandic's academic curriculum vitae](#)