

SMC Advisory Board - Terms of Reference



Purpose

The Science Media Centre's Advisory Board provides strategic guidance, editorial oversight and acts as a sounding board for the SMC.

The SMC operates according to Terms of Reference agreed between Royal Society Te Apārangi and the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment (see Appendix I).

Safeguarding the SMC's independence

The SMC Advisory Board helps ensure:

1. That the SMC remains independent and that the public and media perception of the SMC is that of an independent agency.
2. That the SMC adheres to the objectives, scope and operating principles outlined in the Terms of Reference.
3. That the SMC stays true to its mission:

Mission

We aim to foster better public engagement with science by helping journalists and scientists work more effectively together, improving the depth, breadth and quality of media coverage of science-related issues.

Advisory Board makeup

The SMC Advisory Board comprises six to eight members selected to reflect expertise across the following groups:

- The science sector
- The media industry
- Technical, management, legal expertise – any other areas that may prove useful to informing SMC activities.

Selection is by the Council of Royal Society Te Apārangi in consultation with the Society's CEO, the SMC Director and existing Advisory Board members.

Members of the Advisory Board serve in their individual capacity for a term of three years, with the possibility of renewal for further terms if invited to do so.

If, due to job changes or attrition, the Advisory Board loses links to important networks or key organisations, the Council will prioritise filling vacancies on the board before the next round of appointments to maintain the full complement of members.

Advisory Board members' responsibilities include:

1. Act as stewards of the SMC's mission and help ensure that the work of the SMC staff appropriately advances its mission.

2. Consult as required with Royal Society Te Apārangi's Chief Executive to ensure the SMC functions effectively as an operationally independent unit within the Society.
3. Participate in at least two meetings or conference calls per year to discuss and review the performance and strategic direction of the SMC.
4. Proactively seek opportunities to advance the goals and mission of the SMC through networking, public speaking, professional activities and outreach to contacts.
5. Provide advice to the SMC Director and other staff of the SMC when requested.
6. Engage in a reflective, self-evaluative process to improve advisory board effectiveness.
7. Through the Chair, provide feedback regarding the performance of the Director of the SMC to Royal Society Te Apārangi's CE.

Responsibility for programme implementation lies with the SMC Director, but the Director takes a serious commitment to operationalise and reflect the views, opinions and recommendations of the advisory board.

Although the Advisory Board is not a formal board of directors and does not have fiduciary responsibility for the SMC, one of its roles is reviewing budgets to advise whether they are sufficient to meet the remit from MBIE.

Editorial complaints guidelines

The Advisory Board plays a role in ensuring the SMC adheres to its Terms of Reference by:

1. Providing strategic advice on editorial and operational activities as required.
2. Regularly evaluating the output of the SMC to determine whether it is both maintaining an independent editorial policy and conforming to the SMC's operating principles (see Appendix I).
3. Hearing and providing guidance on complaints or queries relating to the SMC's editorial output*.

** Editorial output relates to all material published on the Science Media Centre website, Sciblogs and Scimex websites as well as any material issued in press releases, social media messages or any other channels controlled or relating to the SMC.*

An editorial committee of up to three Advisory Board members is appointed to deal with editorial matters such as: complaints, advising the SMC Director on contentious issues, balance, expert selection policies and publication standards.

Complaints received about the SMC's editorial content which cannot be resolved by the SMC's Director are reviewed by the editorial committee of the Advisory Board, (or a subset if an urgent editorial decision needs to be made).

All formal complaints must be in writing and will be dealt with in a timely and transparent manner.

The editorial committee will consider the content and circumstances of publication and will direct the SMC's Director to act on its recommendations, which may include measures to correct or remove content.

Royal Society Te Apārangi, as the body responsible for the SMC, will be notified of all complaints and updated on the decisions of the editorial committee through the Society's chief executive.

Should complaints be directed to the Society, they will be passed to the SMC's Director and notified to the editorial committee of the Advisory Board.

In the case of editorial issues that have a high likelihood of resulting in legal action, the Society's chief executive will be notified immediately and legal counsel sought via the Society. The Advisory Board should not be called on to adjudicate in matters where there is a threat of litigation.

Issues between SMC and Royal Society Te Apārangi management

Should issues arise between the SMC Director and Royal Society's chief executive over the governance or operation of the SMC, the Chair of the SMC Advisory Board can contact the Society's President to help facilitate resolution of the issues.

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Appendix I

New Zealand Science Media Centre – Terms of reference

OBJECTIVES

The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is responsible for implementing the Government's "A Nation of Curious Minds – A National Strategic Plan for Science in Society" (the Plan), via initiatives funded from the Engaging New Zealanders with Science and Technology Appropriation.

The Science Media Centre (the Centre) will contribute to the outcomes set out in the Plan, by facilitating and strengthening links between the media and the science community.

Its Objectives are to:

- work with the media to improve the quality, depth and breadth of coverage of science related issues (particularly coverage of New Zealand science and innovation);
- improve the accessibility of science to the media;
- work with the media to improve public awareness and debate about the role science and innovation can play in society and emerging issues;
- provide training and resources to support scientists and research organisations to respond to the media's queries, and to communicate science more effectively (including raising awareness about the available communication channels);
- provide training and resources to support journalists to produce responsible and insightful science news reporting and analysis that is relevant to the New Zealand public;
- build networks and manage relationships between the key components of the science system and media;
- develop tools and resources to improve public access to New Zealand science content.

The Centre will achieve the Objectives above by;

- providing a first port of call for media requesting information related to science and innovation;
- proactively providing timely information and material on science and innovation topics;
- working to develop science and innovation reporting capability within the New Zealand media;

- assisting scientists and research organisation to become better able to deal with the media's queries, and to communicate their science effectively, using a range of mechanisms;
- assisting journalists to produce responsible and insightful science news reporting and analysis that is relevant to the New Zealand public;
- building networks and managing relationships between the key components of the science system and media; and
- developing tools and resources to improve public access to New Zealand centric science related content.

Centre Operation

Scope

The Centre will assess the needs of the media and the science community, and identify ways to improve their respective capabilities and linkages. It will structure its operations to ensure these improvements can be made.

The focus of the Centre will be solely upon matters related to science and innovation.

The Centre will primarily deal with New Zealand based science and innovation but international science and innovation can be included where there is a strong connection with or relevance to New Zealand.

The Centre needs to add unique value over and above the activity already occurring within the science and innovation sector. It may co-ordinate, facilitate, enhance and/or complement but not duplicate the communication activities undertaken by other science-based organisations.

Where the Centre is addressing issues that reasonably appear to lie within the realm of another institution or institutions, the Centre should focus on cross-sector issues rather than on topics the individual science based organisations can, or should be, promoting themselves.

The Centre will not provide a service for the public, or for the education community, although some resources will be able to be accessed and used by them.

The Centre will provide training and resources to assist scientists and their institutions to become better able to deal with the media's queries, to communicate their science effectively.

Operating Principles

- The Centre will not take any particular standpoint or position on science and innovation issues.
- The Centre will not lobby on behalf of the government or the science and innovation sector.
- The Centre will be neutral in matters of policy and politics. It will not act in a way that could reasonably be perceived to be supporting or opposing any aspect of government policy or any other issues subject to political debate.

- The Centre will be open and transparent about its funding sources.
- The Centre will operate to the highest ethical standards.
- The Centre will operate in a way that is responsive and transparent.
These principles will apply to the Centre and any other activities funded by the Centre.

Independence

- The Centre will operate as an operationally independent unit within the Royal Society, responsible for its own strategic direction, operational matters (including the delivery of the services to MBIE) and its communications and branding activities. The Society's name and brand will not form any part of the activity that relates to the Centre.
- The manager of the Centre will report to the chief executive or nominee of the Society and will be editorially and operationally independent from the other operations of the Society.
- In its work the Centre will be editorially independent from: the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE), and any other government agency; the Society; and from any organisation that funds, provides content to or in any way supports the Centre.
- Reflecting the taxpayers' investment in the Centre, the Society will be accountable to MBIE for the efficient operation of the Centre.
- The Centre will ensure it does not appear to favour any particular medium, media outlets or institutions.

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