

Terms of Reference

New Zealand Science Media Centre

OBJECTIVES

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (the Ministry) is responsible for implementing the Government's 'A Nation of Curious Minds – A National Strategic Plan for Science in Society' (the Plan). Initiatives supporting the Plan are funded from Vote Business, Science and Innovation: Science in Society Appropriation, which includes the New Zealand Science Media Centre (NZ SMC).

The NZ SMC will contribute to the outcomes set out in the Plan, by facilitating and strengthening links between the media and the science community.

While the NZ SMC does not operate at the media/public interface directly, the expected impact from the NZ SMC's activities includes:

- Increased public awareness about the role research, science and innovation (RSI) can play in society;
- An informed public when new science issues emerge;
- Improved public access to New Zealand science content;
- Increased public visibility of Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori research;
- Improved information access to diverse communities with inequitable access to science reporting;
- Informed public debate on research, science and innovation issues; and
- Enhanced connections between media and Kaupapa Māori researchers in the RSI sector.

The Objectives for the NZ SMC are to:

1. Enhance the quality, depth and breadth of media coverage of science-related topics.
2. Improve the accessibility of research, science and innovation to the media.
3. Enable scientists, researchers and research organisations to work effectively with media.
4. Encourage responsible and evidence-based science news reporting from journalists.
5. Strengthen links between the key components of the science and media sectors, including Māori and Pacific researchers, Māori and Pacific organisations, and other relevant organisations that are representative of the diversity of communities within New Zealand.

The NZ SMC will achieve the Objectives above by:

- Providing a first port of call for media requesting information related to research, science and innovation;
- Proactively providing timely information and material on research, science and innovation;

- Working to develop and maintain research, science and innovation reporting capability within the New Zealand media;
- Assisting scientists, researchers and research organisations 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; and
- Establishing and maintaining networks and managing relationships between the key components of the science system and media.

NZ SMC'S OPERATION

Scope

- The NZ SMC will assess the needs of the media and the science community, researchers and research organisations, 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 NZ SMC will be solely upon matters related to research, science and innovation.
- The NZ SMC will primarily deal with New Zealand based research, science and innovation. International research, science and innovation can be included where there is relevance to New Zealand.
- The NZ SMC must add unique value over and above the activity already occurring within the research, science and innovation sector.
- The NZ SMC may co-ordinate, facilitate, enhance and/or complement but not duplicate the communication activities undertaken by other research, science and innovation organisations.
- The NZ SMC 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 NZ SMC will provide training and resources to assist researchers, scientists, and journalists to become better able to communicate science effectively.

Operating Principles

- The NZ SMC will not take any particular standpoint or position on RSI issues.
- The NZ SMC will not lobby on behalf of the government or the RSI sector.
- The NZ SMC will be neutral in matters of policy and politics and will not support or oppose government policy or any other issues subject to political debate.
- The NZ SMC will be open and transparent about its funding sources.
- The NZ SMC will operate to the highest ethical standards.
- The NZ SMC will operate in a way that is responsive and transparent.

- Where the NZ SMC is sponsoring activities it must acknowledge the Ministry as the source of funding.
- The NZ SMC must give effect to The Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti) through its work programme and activities (For example, work in partnership with Māori when appropriate, and confirm that Māori have had a say or been involved in decision making when research concerns them or their taonga).
- The NZ SMC will work inclusively, where appropriate, with media that delivers to Māori and diverse audiences.
- The NZ SMC, as a signatory to the Global SMC Charter, should abide by the principles of the Charter.

Independence

- The NZ SMC will operate as an operationally independent unit responsible for its own strategic direction, operational matters and its communications and branding activities.
- In its work the NZ SMC will be editorially independent from:
 - the Ministry and any other government agency;
 - its host; and
 - any organisation that funds, provides content to or in any way supports the NZ SMC.
- Reflecting that public funds are invested in the NZ SMC, the host of the NZ SMC will be accountable to the Ministry for the efficient operation of the NZ SMC.
- The NZ SMC will use an independent Advisory Group to help provide strategic guidance and editorial oversight for the NZ SMC. The Advisory Group will be appointed as determined by the host of the NZ SMC. The Advisory Group will not direct the operations of the NZ SMC.
- The Advisory Group will be responsible for hearing and resolving any public complaints concerning the NZ SMC. The host of the NZ SMC and the Ministry will be informed of any complaint received.

Annual Work Plan

The NZ SMC will operate in line with its Work Plan as approved by the Ministry annually.

Updated 1 July 2022