

NZ SMC Advisory Group -Terms of Reference



Purpose

The Science Media Centre's Advisory Group provides strategic guidance, editorial oversight and acts to safeguard the independence of the SMC.

Safeguarding the SMC's independence

The SMC operates in accordance with a work programme agreement contracted between the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment and its host, Royal Society Te Apārangi. This agreement acknowledges that editorial and operational independence are critical to the success of the SMC.

The SMC Advisory Group helps ensure:

1. That the SMC remains independent and that the public, media and research sector perception of the SMC is that of an independent organisation.
2. That the SMC adheres to the objectives, scope and operating principles outlined in its own Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1).
3. That any formal public complaints concerning the SMC's editorial practices are considered and resolved in a professional and transparent manner, in accordance with relevant media industry standards.

SMC Advisory Group membership

The SMC Advisory Group comprises eight to twelve members selected to reflect expertise across the following groups:

- The research, science and innovation sector
- The media industry
- Māori and Pacific organisations and other relevant organisations that represent the diversity of communities within Aotearoa New Zealand
- Any other areas that may prove useful to informing SMC strategic direction

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

Members of the Advisory Group 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 Group loses links to important networks or key organisations, the Council will prioritise filling vacancies on the advisory group before the next round of appointments to maintain the full complement of members.

Advisory Group 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 objectives 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 group 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 work programme implementation and operations lies with the SMC Director, but the Director takes a serious commitment to reflect the views, advice and recommendations of the advisory group.

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

1. Providing strategic advice on its activities as required.

2. Regularly evaluating the output of the SMC to determine whether it is maintaining an independent editorial policy and conforming to the SMC's operating principles (see Appendix I).
3. Considering and resolving formal complaints relating to the SMC's editorial output*.

** Editorial output relates to all material published on websites maintained by the NZ Science Media Centre, 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 Group 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 Group, (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, guided by relevant media industry standards and practice.

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 Apārangī Council, as the body responsible for governance of 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 Group.

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 Group should not be called on to adjudicate in matters where there is a threat of litigation.

Resolution of issues between SMC and Royal Society Te Apārangī leadership

Should issues arise between the SMC Director and Royal Society's Chief Executive concerning the editorial and operational independence of the SMC, the Chair of the SMC Advisory Group can contact the Society's President to help facilitate resolution of the issues.

Updated July 2022

Appendix I

Terms of Reference New Zealand Science Media Centre 1 July 2022

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 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 RSI information related to science;
- proactively providing timely information and material on RSI;
- working to develop and maintain RSI reporting capability within the New Zealand media;
- assisting scientists, researchers 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; 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 RSI.
- The NZ SMC will primarily deal with New Zealand based RSI. International RSI 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 RSI sector.
- The NZ SMC may co-ordinate, facilitate, enhance and/or complement but not duplicate the communication activities undertaken by other RSI 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 tāonga.)
- 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 Annual Work Plan as approved by the Ministry annually.

July 2022