



New Zealand Science Media Centre Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Building on the SMC's proven performance and sustained, trusted relationships during a period of significant transformation across media, research and technology sectors

Our purpose

Increasing public understanding of science, innovation and technology by enabling researchers to work effectively with the media

Our values

- Independent | Motuhake
Impartial, evidence-based and trusted
- Relevant | Whai take
In step with the news cycle, emerging issues and technology trends
- Trusted | Pou whirinaki
A reliable partner for journalists and scientists
- Inclusive | Manaaki tangata
Valuing diverse perspectives and equitable access
- Influential | Whakaaweawe
Helping shape a culture where science is part of everyday public conversation

Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

We commit to demonstrate the principles of partnership, participation and protection in the ethics and practice of our work. We recognise and value the contributions of mātauranga Māori, Māori perspectives and expertise to the science, innovation and technology sector.

We work in partnership with Māori-led organisations to support quality media coverage of science and related issues that meets the needs of Māori communities. We involve Māori journalists, scientists and researchers across our range of our activities, building strong, reciprocal and enduring relationships.

Strategic context: an essential service in changing times

This plan takes effect during significant change for New Zealand's science and media sectors, including economic pressures, restructuring of the science system and rapid shifts in how news is created and consumed, including the advent and integration of generative AI.

The need for independent, trusted scientific expertise is high, and the SMC's role is to provide quality, evidence-based information to news media and the public.

Key drivers:

- A media ecosystem in transition: consolidation and contraction in newsrooms make ready-to-use, high-quality resources from trusted sources more critical.
- A science system in reform: refocusing the science, innovation and technology system, including the creation of new public research organisations and changes to tertiary education funding, increases the need for effective engagement with the public.

Our strategic aims: 2025–2028

1. Support quality, evidence-based reporting on science

We will adapt our services to support a more resource-constrained media sector, ensuring science stories remain prominent as newsrooms embrace digital transformation. Despite media sector consolidation, demand for SMC's core services remains strong, with recent media uptake of its activities reaching its highest recorded level.¹

- Strengthen core services to help journalists to cover complex topics on tight deadlines
- Adapt content delivery for evolving digital channels, refining video and audio offerings
- Anticipate emerging issues linked to advancing technology, global uncertainty and societal changes to provide critical context
- Provide evidence-based analysis that serves to counter hype and misinformation

2. Strengthen researchers' media and public engagement

In a complex world, equipping scientists to communicate effectively is crucial to maintaining public trust in science. Our training programmes have a proven track record², giving researchers greater confidence and a more strategic outlook.

We will be a valued partner as researchers and their organisations navigate system reforms, building capability and confidence to engage with the public and media. Researchers overwhelmingly report positive experiences with the media when initiated by the SMC.³

¹ NZ SMC Full year report for MBIE 1 June 2024 - 31 July 2025, Snapshot reporting results

² [2025 SMC Evaluation survey results](#) (PDF)

³ Ibid.

- Raise the profile of effective media skills as a valued part of public outreach
- Target training and outreach to priority areas, including advanced technology and bioeconomy innovation
- Expand support for researchers working on contested topics, building on existing partnerships and exploring ways to embed resources within institutional policies
- Collaborate to expand resources that support researchers facing challenges such as online harassment and abuse
- Champion the value of public engagement on complex and controversial topics

3. Foster diverse voices

We will continue to assess our practices to ensure the expert voices we share with the media reflect the diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand, strengthening trust and relevance.

- Prioritise targeted outreach and capability programmes for researchers from under-represented communities, building on existing partnerships
- Continuously improve our expert database and address representation gaps
- Partner with sector initiatives that promote equitable participation
- Further strengthen engagement and support for media outlets dedicated to Māori and Pacific audiences

4. Broker new relationships and foster collaboration

We create opportunities for journalists and scientists to collaborate beyond deadlines, acting as a trusted broker across dividing lines. We provide a catalyst to enable new initiatives, and respond nimbly to national and international opportunities where we can add value.

From in-lab visits to co-designed multimedia projects, these interactions help translate complex research and technology advances into stories that resonate with the public and underscore science's value to society.

- Initiate collaborations on high-impact science, innovation and technology themes
- Seed innovative science-media projects that forge new partnerships between researchers and media producers
- Maintain strong connections with research groups and media organisations to reduce loss of connectivity during system change
- Strengthen collaboration within our global network of SMCs, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region

5. Innovate to support changing practices in newsrooms and research organisations

The SMC is recognised by journalists for our ability to innovate effectively to meet the changing needs of the media.⁴ We stay ahead of shifts in technology, the media's changing needs and new research priorities.

We will pilot new ways to support digital storytelling, help researchers navigate a fast-paced and evolving media environment, and keep science visible, relevant and trusted in a fragmented information sphere.

- Anticipate emerging needs; update core resources for news media and support this with targeted outreach to pressured newsrooms
- Explore potential for greater collaboration with digital and social media content producers to reach fragmented audiences
- Integrate practical digital communication skills into researcher training programmes
- Influence and support at all levels by engaging senior leaders while investing in early-career journalists and researchers
- Celebrate excellence in innovative science reporting through annual awards

Strategic plan overview

(See overleaf)

⁴ [2025 SMC Evaluation survey results](#) (PDF)

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Support quality, evidence-based reporting on science

Strengthen researchers' media and public engagement

Foster diverse voices

Broker new relationships & foster collaboration

Innovate to support changing practices in newsrooms & research orgs

Strengthen core services to help journalists to cover complex topics on tight deadlines

Adapt content delivery for evolving digital channels

Anticipate emerging issues

Provide evidence-based analysis to counter hype and misinformation

Raise profile of effective media skills as a valued part of public outreach

Target training and outreach to priority areas

Expand support for researchers working on contested topics

Champion value of public engagement on complex and controversial topics

Prioritise outreach to researchers from under-represented communities

Continuously improve expert database & address representation gaps

Partner with sector initiatives that promote equitable participation

Further strengthen engagement & support for media dedicated to Māori & Pacific audiences

Initiate collaborations on high-impact themes

Seed innovative science-media projects that forge new partnerships between researchers and media producers

Maintain strong links to facilitate connectivity through system changes

Strengthen collaboration within global SMC network

Anticipate emerging needs

Explore options to support emerging media to reach fragmented audiences

Integrate practical digital communication skills into researcher training

Influence & support at all levels

Celebrate excellence in innovative science reporting through annual awards

Independent

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