

Guiding Principles for Science Media Centres (SMCs)

The following principles identify SMCs

The mission of an SMC:

- To inform public debate and discussion on the major issues of the day by injecting evidence-based science into headline news.

How SMCs make a difference:

SMCs

- Encourage critical and accurate reporting of science in the mainstream media by helping journalists understand and more effectively report on complex or controversial issues;
- Help the media, and ultimately the public, to access the best science more easily;
- Encourage, train and facilitate more scientists to engage with the media;
- Assist media officers to present their research in an accurate and responsible manner.

How SMCs operate:

- SMCs are not-for-profit independent organizations that work collaboratively with each other and with the media and scientific institutions within their own countries;
- SMCs work proactively, providing credible expertise and commentary on breaking news, and providing context to complex or controversial public issues.

The SMC ethos:

The philosophy of all SMCs includes

- Championing evidence-based science in media reporting;
- Encouraging and supporting research scientists and organizations to engage openly and proactively about their work even when it is complex and controversial;
- That the media will “do” science better when scientists “do” the media better;
- We acknowledge that public debate is fundamental to a healthy society and that science has an important role to play in informing public debate with evidence.

Independence:

- The unique feature of all SMCs is that they are independent of any one institution. An SMC can be hosted by another institution but must maintain operational independence through independent governance and editorial decisions.
- The remit of an SMC is to reflect the best available science; they do not have any specific agenda other than to promote the reporting of evidence-based science.
- A relationship with funders that protects independence is crucial in the operation of SMCs. Existing SMCs have achieved this through;
 - A multi-funder model, with a capped upper limit on donations;
 - A constitution or agreement that ensures the independence of the Centre.