

Royal Society Te Apārangī

Expert Advice and Practice Framework

December 2019

Purpose

This framework sets out Royal Society Te Apārangī's approach to commissioning and publishing expert advice and research practice guidance.

The primary audiences for this document are the Council and staff (for clarity of roles and process alongside the Governance Charter and Rules), Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (for assurance about appropriate use of public funds) and the Society's Fellows and Constituent Organisations (for clarity about scope and their involvement).

Mandate

The Society operates under a private [Parliamentary Act](#) to advance and promote science, technology, and the humanities in New Zealand. Two of the Society's functions in the Act are:

- *"to provide expert advice on important public issues to the Government and the community"*
- *"to provide infrastructure and other support for the professional needs and development of scientists, technologists, and humanities scholars"* (includes research practice guidance)

The Society adopts a broad view of "community" that encompasses diversity in backgrounds and perspectives.

Scope

The Society's expert advice raises awareness and provides authoritative evidence-based resources for public and government audiences. The Society does not carry out original research.

The advice may inform government policy development. However, it does not advocate for particular policy options, recognising that government policy requires consideration of a range of factors, of which research knowledge is only one.

The Society does not normally prepare advice on topics that the government and public might perceive as driven by the self-interest of the research system, unless there is identified support within Government. Such advice is unlikely to be influential without that support.

The Society's research-practice work provides guidelines on codes of practice for researchers and research organisations undertaking research, engaging with their communities, and communicating the results of their research in ways that preserve and enhance the public's and government's trust in research and researchers.

The Society's strengths

The Society is a non-profit organisation, independent from Government, allowing it to provide a trusted independent voice on matters of research evidence.

The Society's convening power, along with its local and international networks, enables it to bring together groups, including early career researchers, to investigate issues.

The Society is in a position to acknowledge and learn from different knowledge systems, including Mātauranga Māori, and can leverage its connections through schools to access the younger generation.

The Society's single academy covering all disciplines facilitates convening multi-disciplinary expertise and evidence on a topic.

Interaction with Government

The Society engages with the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor and Chief Science Advisor Forum as a conduit for information flow on current projects and on potential future topics.

The Society consults with relevant government departments as part of its wider stakeholder engagement when developing its advice and guidance.

From time to time, the Society directly supports projects in the Prime Minister's Chief Science Adviser's office, for example by convening independent expert panels in support of their work.

The Society will consider doing Government-commissioned work if it is able to maintain its independence and can publish the advice in a transparent and timely manner.

The Society guards the independence of its expert advice, and the trust of Government and the community in that advice, carefully, and does not accept funding from sources that could compromise that independence and trust.

Resources

Part of an annual Government grant from Vote Science & Innovation, which enables the Society to deliver against the functions under its Act, provides funding for the Society's expert advice and research practice work.

A small team of 2-3 Society staff members supports the preparation of expert advice and research practice guidelines, with the help of experts. Experts offer their time voluntarily, with financial support for reasonable travel and related expenses.

The team also works with the Society's Communications and Outreach team to publish and distribute the advice.

Forms of advice and guidance

The Society tailors the process to the nature of the topic. The different forms of advice include:

- Advice and guidance on topics self-generated by the Society and its membership:
 - Fact Sheets - summaries of evidence on a relatively narrowly-defined topic, guided by an expert reference group
 - Deliberative panels – expert interpretation of research evidence on more complex topics
 - Research practice advice - written standards and guidelines prepared in consultation with the research sector
- Reports commissioned by government, either directly or in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Chief Science Adviser
- Interpretation and communication in the Aotearoa New Zealand context of other academies' reports of relevance to New Zealand, prepared by staff with guidance from local experts, in similar form to a Fact Sheet,
- Horizon scanning if called upon, potentially in collaboration with Australian or other academies, including staff secondment, identification of New Zealand experts and local communication and interpretation of outputs.

- Responses to government consultation processes - either in consultation with experts, or by Society staff, depending on the topic, timeframe and availability of existing material.

The Society also supports work through workshops and hui, special journal editions, sourcing experts for events, developing educational resources, and connecting people to experts and published advice and guidance.

Topic selection

Ideas for Society-generated expert advice topics can come from our Fellows, Constituent Organisations, Early Career Researchers, Council members and Society staff, the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor and network, government agencies, non-profit organisations, communities, overseas academies and organisations, and general intelligence gathered through the likes of publications and media reports.

The Society screens and prioritises potential topics against a set of criteria. Topics should:

- Be relevant and important to Aotearoa New Zealand
- Appeal to a broad public or government audience
- Have a peer-reviewed research or other trusted knowledge bases available
- Have a feasible and identified pathway to influence
- Be consistent with the Society's mandate and play to its strengths

Society staff work with Council to shortlist, prioritise and approve expert advice topics that meet these criteria, taking into account available resources, timing, opportunity, risks, diversity and balance across different disciplines.

Research practice topics arise from time to time from the Society's mandated functions (e.g. maintaining a Code of Professional Standards and Ethics for its members), the needs of the research community, or from government policy initiatives with implications for the research system and its public good objectives (e.g. Science in Society).

Connecting with communities

The Society canvasses ideas for advice topics from a range of research, Māori, public and other stakeholder communities as part of our day-to-day relationship building and engagement activities.

The Society develops its expert advice and research practice guidelines in consultation with stakeholders in the relevant sectors, our member organisations, our Fellows, and other experts. This includes hui specific to Māori and Pacific communities.

The Society is actively working to increase its engagement with Māori and Pacific communities with a view to identifying and better acknowledging the opportunities within Mātauranga Māori and using Rangahau for the Society's expert advice and practice work.

Effective packaging of information and ongoing communication are important parts of maximising the sharing and impact of the Society's advice. The Society uses a variety of channels, tailored to the situation, including publishing, website data, infographics, pamphlets, interactive websites, social media campaigns, follow-up meetings and workshops with government stakeholders, and public lectures and debates.

The Society also sometimes develops specific resources for schools aimed at children/tamariki. The Society occasionally prepares documents in te reo Māori or other languages to facilitate uptake within our diverse communities.

The Society publishes all advice and guidance under a creative commons licence when finalised to facilitate its use and uptake.

Governance and decisions

Council

Royal Society Te Apārangi's Council approves this framework, and approves topics, convenors of deliberative panels and project draft terms of reference.

Council members have an opportunity to provide input into deliberative panel and reference group memberships in their individual capacity.

Expert Advice & Practice Committee

The Council delegates establishment and day-to-day management and quality assurance of advice projects to the Expert Advice and Practice Committee of Council (EAPC). This committee consists of the Society's President (chair), a Māori member of Council, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Academy Executive Committee, and one other from Council. The CEO is an *ex officio* participant.

The committee, under delegated authority, shortlists and makes recommendations on potential topics, determines the appropriate form of process, approves final terms of reference, and approves the experts and reference group members.

The committee satisfies itself that due process is followed, that quality standards are met, that risks to the Society are managed, and informs Council on these matters.

The primary staff member supporting the committee is the Director – Expert Advice and Practice.

Panel and reference group selection criteria

The committee works with the Council and the Society's networks to identify convenors for deliberative advice panels and expertise for panel and reference group membership, based on criteria including:

- Skill mix, including leadership and communication of complex societal-science issues characterised by multiple world views
- Expert technical knowledge
- Knowledge of Mātauranga Māori
- Diversity and breadth of perspective
- Capacity and capability building, including development opportunities for emerging researchers

In identifying expertise for fact sheets, EAPC focuses on sourcing the relevant technical expertise required to provide credible information for public and government use.

Terms of reference

Each advice or research practice project has a Terms of Reference, informed and approved in draft by Council, which sets out:

- The working title of the project
- The scope and objectives of the project
- Relevant context
- Intended¹ form of outputs and publication
- Time frame
- Consultation and peer review expectations
- Guidelines around payment of expenses if relevant
- Any other relevant information

EAPC agrees the final terms of reference with the convenor of a deliberative advice panel, or project leader in other cases.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance is overseen by EAPC, to ensure independence and credibility of advice and guidance. This includes ensuring appropriate consultation occurs, and that independent peer review of advice takes place before finalisation and publication.

The Council expects there to be wide consultation with stakeholders in the preparation of deliberative Expert Advice. Council members, Fellows of the Society and Constituent organisations also have the opportunity to provide comment prior to finalisation and publication.

In other processes, the Society tailors the consultation to reflect the timescales of advice turnaround and availability of time and resources to support it.

Peer review of Expert Advice is undertaken by respected independent national and international experts prior to finalisation and publication, and is limited to:

- the framing, coverage and completeness of evidence
- the defensibility of any inferences and conclusions made

The project leader and authors ensure that all feedback is properly considered, and decide if and how any content feedback is incorporated into the final advice.

The committee approves advice or guidance for publication once it is satisfied that:

- The intent of the Terms of Reference has been met;
- There has been independent peer review and all feedback has been considered and addressed
- The advice is presented in a way that will be accessible to the intended audiences
- Risks and opportunities around publication are manageable without further recourse to the committee.

Neither the Council nor the committee are responsible for the technical content of expert advice; this remains with the experts and authors. However, Council and EAPC members have an opportunity to provide feedback on draft advice content in their individual capacity as members of the Society, alongside Fellows and other reviewers.

¹The details of outputs and publications are finalised towards the end of the process in line with the outcome and context of the final advice, and in consultation with the Society's communications experts.

Representing the Society's position

The Society accesses appropriate experts to speak publicly on its advice. This will generally be members of a deliberative panel, or the guiding reference group for fact sheets. The Society will continue to access these experts as needed beyond the project itself.

The Society requires members of expert panels to adhere to its Code of Professional Standards and Ethics. Panel members are required to be clear when they are publicly commenting on an issue in their individual capacity rather than representing a Society or Panel-agreed view.

In some cases it will be appropriate for the Society itself to comment publicly where there is an established position from previous work. Our approach will follow protocols in the Governance Charter.

Evaluation

The Society often augments its advice and guidance with a range of communication resources intended to facilitate awareness and uptake by New Zealand communities and researchers, following publication. However, the impact of the Society's projects will often be difficult to attribute and will be manifested over long time scales. The advice may also be an input into the processes of other users such as conferences and workshops, or resources for schools. This makes formal point-in-time evaluation difficult.

The Society therefore takes a pragmatic approach, and collects data on website hits, document uploads, social media, conventional media mentions and Government/stakeholder referencing of the work, and monitors these trends over time. This complements a range of subjective feedback. This information informs Council and reporting to Government.

The Society may also choose to review deliberative advice processes, with input from panel members, Society staff and stakeholders, 6-12 months after completion subject to priorities and resource availability. These reviews inform future deliberative panel processes.