

Report on engagement conducted on behalf of Royal Society Te Apārangi

Updated insights report for the purpose of developing a long-term strategy



Introduction

Royal Society Te Apārangi (the Society) asked independent consultants, MartinJenkins, to gather feedback from a wide range of its Members. Our role was to create ways for people to contribute to a broad conversation, focused on the Society's continued relevance and impact for Aotearoa New Zealand in 20 years' time.

It was a privilege to be part of this process.

MartinJenkins thanks the hundreds of people who gave their time, knowledge and thoughts generously and with passion.

Gathering insights from the membership occurred in the context that the nature of research is becoming interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, with new fields emerging at the intersections of traditional sciences such as chemistry, physics, and biology. Scholars in Aotearoa New Zealand are making advances in knowledge systems such as mātauranga Māori, which are internationally recognised. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, are also changing the nature of the sciences and humanities. These trends have been accompanied by increasing collaboration between scientists and with the communities they serve, across institutional, geographical, societal, and cultural boundaries. At the same time, humanity faces challenges such as climate change, which require both innovative solutions and the ability to achieve consensus on implementing them.

Members of the Society include Professional, Associate, Honorary, and Student Members, Fellows, Honorary Fellows, Companions, Affiliate Organisations, Constituent Organisations, and Branches. Members of Royal Society Te Apārangi have achieved excellence in a range of disciplines across the sciences and humanities. Their work includes education, research, and translation of knowledge for practical purposes (for example by designing innovative technologies, or by providing expert advice on critical issues). The organisations

which they represent span the education, research, science, and innovation sectors, including schools, universities, wānanga, research institutions, government, and businesses.

Because of this complex and dynamic environment, Members' perspectives were wide-ranging, with divergent views on many issues. The topic with the most divergent views was regarding the appropriate balance between classical sciences and other knowledge systems within the education, research, science, and innovation sectors. This report focuses on where there were views that came through all engagement methods consistently.

Overall, many Members and other key stakeholders felt that early-career researchers will need to be able to see themselves in the future direction for the Society and feel a sense of ownership for carrying it forward. Therefore, it was necessary for them to be an important part of the engagement process.

From here we pass Members' insights to the Society, to inform development of a strategy to guide the next 20 years.



Engagement activities

MartinJenkins undertook a range of activities to engage with many different Members and other key stakeholders.

Process

Interviews | 11 people were interviewed, including Fellows and other Members, government stakeholders, and representatives of international counterpart organisations.

Online survey | More than 400 people responded to a survey sent to the Society's database of around 1600 people.

Face-to-face workshops | About 120 Members, including Fellows and Companions, gave their feedback in person, via sessions hosted in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Online workshops | 30 people joined one of two sessions.

Wānanga | Two wānanga and three group-interviews were held with Māori Members, including Fellows and Companions.

Early-career researchers conference | More than 40 early-career researchers, including a group of Māori and Pasifika researchers, gave feedback as part of a 3-day conference hosted by the Society.

Participants were assured of anonymity. They were not required to answer questions on all topics, and were able to share their views on areas outside of the themes.



Summary of key themes from engagement activities

Participants offered views on a broad range of topics, but one clear message came through. The membership called for the Society to be bold and courageous in the development of its long-term strategy and vision to deliver impact for the future.

They want to see the Society continue to play an important role in Aotearoa New Zealand now and look to how it can play an even more significant role in the future, using the full strength of its community.

A strong need for the Society in Aotearoa New Zealand

People see a strong need for the Society in New Zealand and that it was critical it maintains and upholds the principles of independence, curiosity and excellence. It should advocate for the importance of science and research in solving “the big issues” for society and continue to provide high-quality, evidence-based advice to decision-makers and the public.

Leadership and convening power

There was a clear view that the convening power of the Society was a unique and powerful asset and there is an opportunity to make more of that. The Society could show leadership by using its convening power to enable collaboration across traditional boundaries in the education, research, science, and innovation sectors.

Specifically, the Society is well positioned to provide safe spaces for debate and conversations, and this was widely seen as being an activity that would add significant value in the science system.

Importance of building a public profile

Building the public profile of the Society is seen to be a priority and the Society needs to increase visibility of the activities and achievements of the Society and its Members for the benefit of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Focusing on sustainability of the science system

There must be an ongoing focus on ensuring the sustainability of the science system and that involves supporting primary school teachers and students through to universities and supporting senior members of the Society. Ensure sustainability of the knowledge systems by

supporting students, teachers, and researchers from the earliest stages of their learning pathways and careers (e.g. through mentorship) and promoting STEM subjects in schools and universities.

Inclusivity and a range of knowledge systems

Continue efforts to make the Society more inclusive and open, in part by continuing to support a broad range of disciplines, including the humanities and mātauranga Māori. Consider how to meaningfully engage with te ao Māori and to incorporate tikanga Māori ways of operating into the Society's approach.

Involvement and engagement of the broad spectrum of the membership

We heard a strong call for the Society to remember that its strength was in its membership.

People were passionate to be involved and wanted to be called on to help bring this strategy to life and help realise the full impact of what could be achieved for Aotearoa New Zealand and the world. The membership saw this could happen through leveraging the passion, expertise, and experiences of the Society's diverse membership, by actively involving Members in development and implementation of the strategy.



Structure for the engagement process

The initial engagement process asked people to contribute to a number of areas. People did not have to contribute to all areas, but could contribute where they felt they could add the most value.



Role of Royal Society Te Apārangi

The Society is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, constituted under an Act which sets out a broad remit. Members had a range of ideas on how this role could have more impact over the next 20 years, so the Society remains active and engaged on the issues that matter to Aotearoa New Zealand and the world.

Role

Members affirmed that the Society has an important role to play in Aotearoa New Zealand. They see that it could play more of a leadership role in the education, research, science, and innovation sectors, by advocating for evidence-based knowledge, and creating spaces for debate and discussion.

Knowledge

Participants want the Society to be a trusted source of accessible evidence-based knowledge. The concept of public access was prominent, as well as relevance.

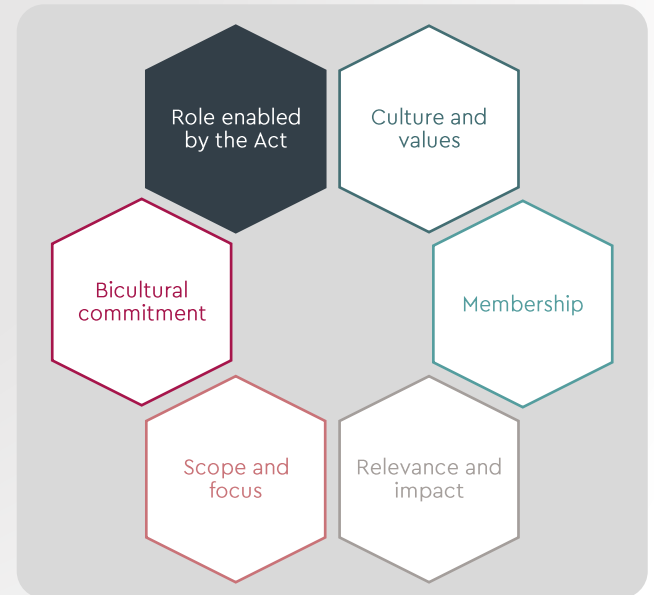
Being multidisciplinary was seen to be a strength – but not one that was being made the most of.

Leadership

Leadership was a theme that came through in the feedback in a variety of ways. There were comments that the Society should lead, convene, advocate, foster, engage, promote, and safeguard. The overwhelming feeling was that the Society should be at the forefront of championing knowledge, and its application of real-world issues. Leading strategic conversations, providing evidence-based advice, advocating for the education system, and promoting critical thinking all came through as important.

People and partnerships

There was an emphasis on the Society's work to support people from all walks of life to access knowledge and think critically. Ideas included engaging young minds and fostering interest in Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects, promoting diversity and supporting researchers from across disciplines, and a particular focus on early-career researchers and supporting them in their research journeys. This could be through mentoring, providing access to funding, and advocating for them where possible.



Scope and focus

The Society's role encompasses activities to advance sciences, the humanities, and technology. This includes activities to promote public awareness and knowledge, advance education, support scholars and researchers, set professional standards, uphold ethical conduct, and celebrate excellence. The Society is also charged with providing expert advice to the government and the community on important issues.

Activities

While the activities that the Society was involved in were largely seen to be the right ones, many people weren't aware of the full breadth of programmes the Society already has underway, or if they were aware, thought that there needed to be more of them with greater profile and impact.

Knowledge systems

There is an ongoing debate among some Members on whether the Society's remit should extend beyond the classical sciences to other disciplines, including the humanities and applied technologies. Most Members see the importance of the new fields which are emerging at the intersection of traditional sciences, as well as knowledge systems such as mātauranga Māori.

Increasing public profile

Feedback suggested the Society should increase its public presence and take a more prominent role by engaging on key issues and challenges facing the country, while maintaining its independence.

In times of misinformation, the Society has a role in providing independent evidence-based information to the public, and in advocating for the importance of research to generate this knowledge and then use it to solve challenges.

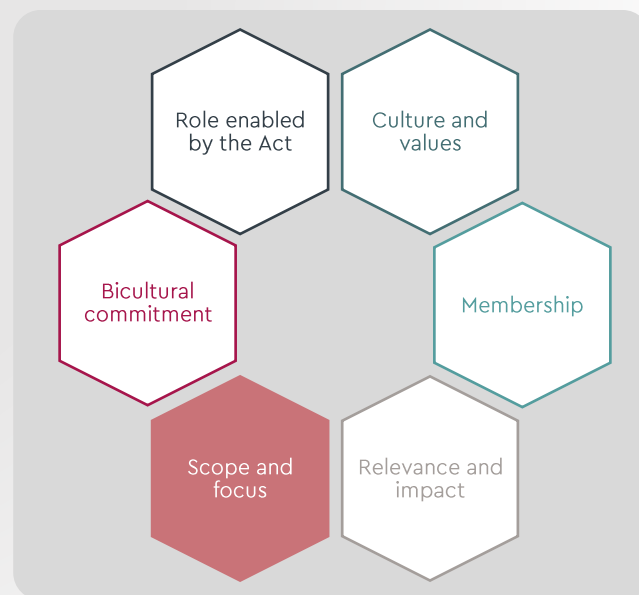
Expert advice

The Society has a role in providing independent evidence-

based information to decision-makers on the complex issues of the day. Decision-makers also benefit from an informed public when assessing options and addressing the challenges facing the country.

Research, science, and innovation sector

The research, science and innovation community benefits from an advocate for evidence-based knowledge, and a convener that takes a whole-of-system view from the youngest learners in schools through to senior academic experts.



Culture and values

The Society's current values are to be independent, trustworthy, inspiring, knowledgeable, open and inclusive.

Members agreed broadly that these values are appropriate, but expressed concern that these need to be lived as well as said. Participants, especially early-career researchers, want the Society to incorporate more diversity into its culture.

Culture

From across the engagement, there was a theme that for the Society to deliver on its role and purpose, it will need to foster a culture that reflects Aotearoa New Zealand society. This means a commitment to encouraging diversity and inclusion in its membership (including Fellows), as well as the science and research it supports and champions.

Early-career researchers, in particular, want the Society to have a more inclusive culture that supports and encourages its Members to engage on issues of social justice. There is a desire to move away from the perception of an elitist or distant and removed Society, to one that is inclusive, engaged and relevant in the big issues of the day.

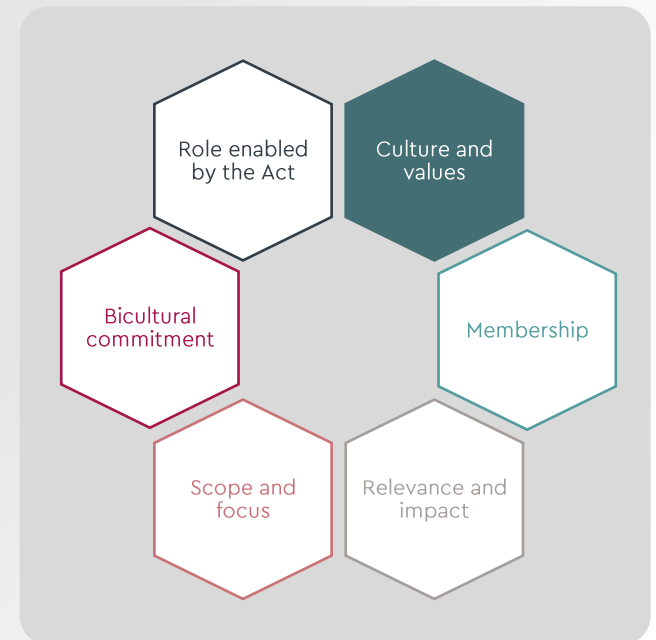
Inclusiveness

There was desire to see a more diverse and inclusive Society that makes space and advocates for increasing the voice of a range of groups in New Zealand, including those that have traditionally been under-represented.

Values

The current values resonate as being the right ones for now, but could benefit from including te ao Māori values and practices.

Also seen as important is for the Society to role-model the behaviours it wants to see, as well as championing the importance of critical thinking and evidence-based knowledge more generally.



Bicultural commitment

Feedback suggested the Society will need to actively embrace Te Tiriti o Waitangi and indigenous Māori perspectives and knowledge systems to fulfil its bicultural commitment.

This will require a considered process of exploration and engagement with iwi, hapū, Māori and Māori institutions as part of the Society's journey into the future.

We observed a range of views from participants of what was meant by bicultural commitment. Some people questioned why there was a focus on bicultural commitment and a better focus would be multi-cultural. We have covered this in the section on membership. There were also a range of views around the inclusion of mātauranga Māori knowledge system. This is covered under the scope and focus section. Some participants recommended actions for the Society to consider such as a Māori strategy.

Feedback from the wānanga sessions with Māori participants highlighted the need for the Society to define and agree where biculturalism in the organisation sits in relation to Rangatiratanga and te Tiriti o Waitangi. There was a desire to see the Society move beyond rhetoric and take a visible leadership role in this space.

The feeling was that the Society is relatively early in its journey in this space, and the first steps should be to engage with Māori and Māori institutions to develop a strategy and set of actions to enact te Tiriti o Waitangi.

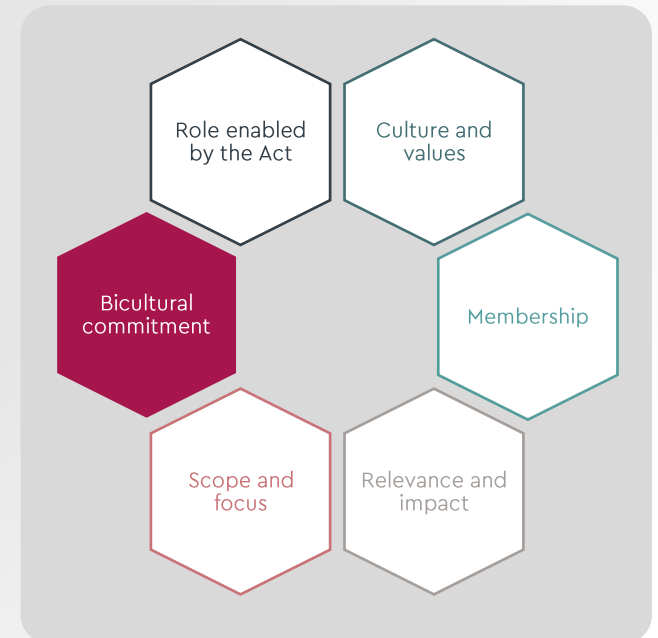
Developing closer and more active relationships with Māori institutions, facilitating funding, exploring mentoring and development programmes, and supporting Māori in roles across the Society were all touched upon.

Participants saw opportunity for the Society to use its purpose and role to have a transformational impact on the Māori science and research community, as well as take a leadership role in Aotearoa New Zealand and

internationally in the space of indigenous knowledge systems.

Engagement and partnership

Participants felt there is a lack of engagement with, and knowledge of, whānau, hapu and iwi. For the Society to genuinely fulfil its bicultural commitment, it will need to develop a strategy and set of actions as part of its 20-year plan. This should look at the Society's role in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the culture and values in its approach.



Membership

The feedback suggested there is a desire for a clear and updated understanding of expectations around the role and engagement of Fellows, Companions and Members.

The membership of the Society want to be more actively involved and offered their time and expertise to help deliver greater impact.

Early-career researchers are seeking more value from the Society, both for their careers and for supporting the value of research more generally.

Membership

There were a number of comments around the role of Fellows in showing leadership, maintaining standards, providing advice, and mentoring early-career researchers. There was a feeling that Fellows could be disconnected from the wider Society, and there would be value in finding ways to build stronger links between Fellows and other groups.

There was a strong feeling that the membership and leadership should reflect Aotearoa New Zealand society (noting that the research community isn't representative) and that there should be a drive for diversity (gender, age and ethnicity).

There is a perception that involvement offers low value at present because it is not offering what the membership want and need. Fellows and Companions feel they can offer more value and Members are seeking a more active Society that uses its convening ability to lead discussions on important issues to Aotearoa New Zealand, and that offers opportunities to network and connect. They want to feel proud to be a Member.

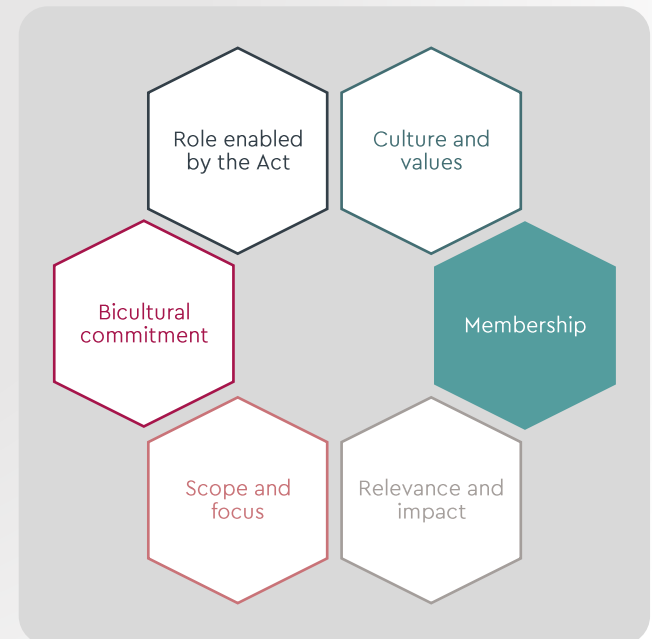
Early-career researchers

A strong theme was the need for more to be done to support and recognise early-career researchers, and that diversity of thought and the views of younger and emergent thinkers are critical.

Early-career researchers are seeking opportunities to access mentorship from more experienced researchers, as well as funding through the Society for their work.

Constituent Organisations and Branches

There were a lot of comments about the value the Constituent Organisations and Branches could add. There is a feeling that they could be better supported and have the opportunity to offer more value.



Relevance and impact

There was a strong feeling that the Society needs to actively and deliberately work to maintain and grow its relevance and impact by focusing on the issues that matter, advocating for evidence-based knowledge, and by working across the education and research community to foster the next generation.

Significant potential

The Society is viewed as having the potential to be hugely relevant to Aotearoa New Zealand society and to have great impact over the next 20 years.

To do this, there is a clear sentiment that the Society needs to have a trusted public profile, be an advocate for research and play an important role in providing trusted, credible information.

The Society could also take an important role in promoting researchers who can help transform the world, and also it could be more active role in facilitating debate in public forums.

Current feeling is that the Society is losing relevance and impact for Fellows, Members and the country more generally, and that it could be doing more.

Advocate for a healthy system

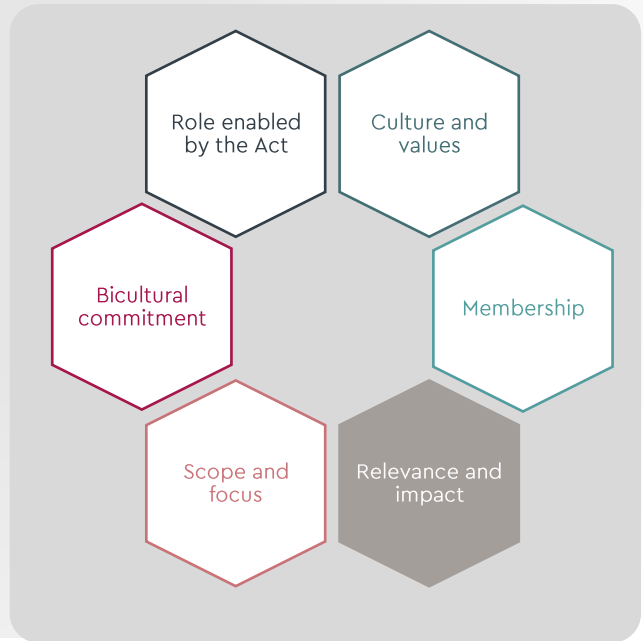
There is significant opportunity for the Society to be a strong advocate for a healthy research system. This could involve commenting on public issues such as university attendance, or the research sector reforms, or funding parameters, and promoting research and critical thinking in schools, or countering misinformation.

Education

The Society has a significant role in promoting research at all levels of education.

Reaching school children and getting them excited about science is seen as a critical role that the Society should facilitate.

Working with universities and supporting early-career researchers is seen to be of vital importance. The opportunity to be seen as a leader that improves professionalism in the research community is regarded as significant and important for today's society and even more so in the future.





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