

THIRD ISC GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Muscat, Oman 2025

Report from Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific

Document 12c

The following report was prepared for the ISC Governing Board in April 2024, and is supplemented by a summary of highlights since the establishment of the Regional Focal Point provided in October 2024 (p.8–12).

For noting



**International
Science Council**

وزارة التعليم العالي
و البحث العلمي والابتكار
Ministry of Higher Education
Research & Innovation



ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific

Establishment and Background

In October 2020, the International Science Council (ISC) issued a call to its membership seeking expressions of interest to host the ISC Regional Focal Point in several locations around the world, including Asia and the Pacific. In early 2021 the Australian Academy of Science (AAS) Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved the submission of an Expression of Interest, which was contingent on securing external funding.

Multiple government departments were approached and showed interest in the proposal.

Following meetings with the ISC and ongoing negotiations with the Australian government, the Australian Academy of Science (AAS) was selected as the preferred candidate in March 2022, subject to a successful bid for funding. A federal election in May 2022 delayed some of the ongoing negotiations but in October 2022 funding was officially announced by the Department of Industry, Science and Technology (DISR), amounting to a total of 10 million Australian dollars over five years.

The proposal to the Australian Government articulated some key benefits of establishing the ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific (RFP-AP) at the AAS. These benefits included enabling Australia to leverage its standing as a science leader and providing a platform to promote and drive Australia's scientific expertise and research leadership in the region. It also provides Australia with access to global and regional science and knowledge leaders, high-level officials, and other networks which can directly support policy development.

Regional neighbours' engagement with Australia, the ISC, and other international bodies will be enabled through the AAS.

Strategic plan

Defining the region

The RFP-AP encompasses current and future members active in, or from South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan), East Asia (China, Japan, Mongolia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea), South-East Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste) and the Oceania region (Pacific Island nations, New Zealand, Australia).

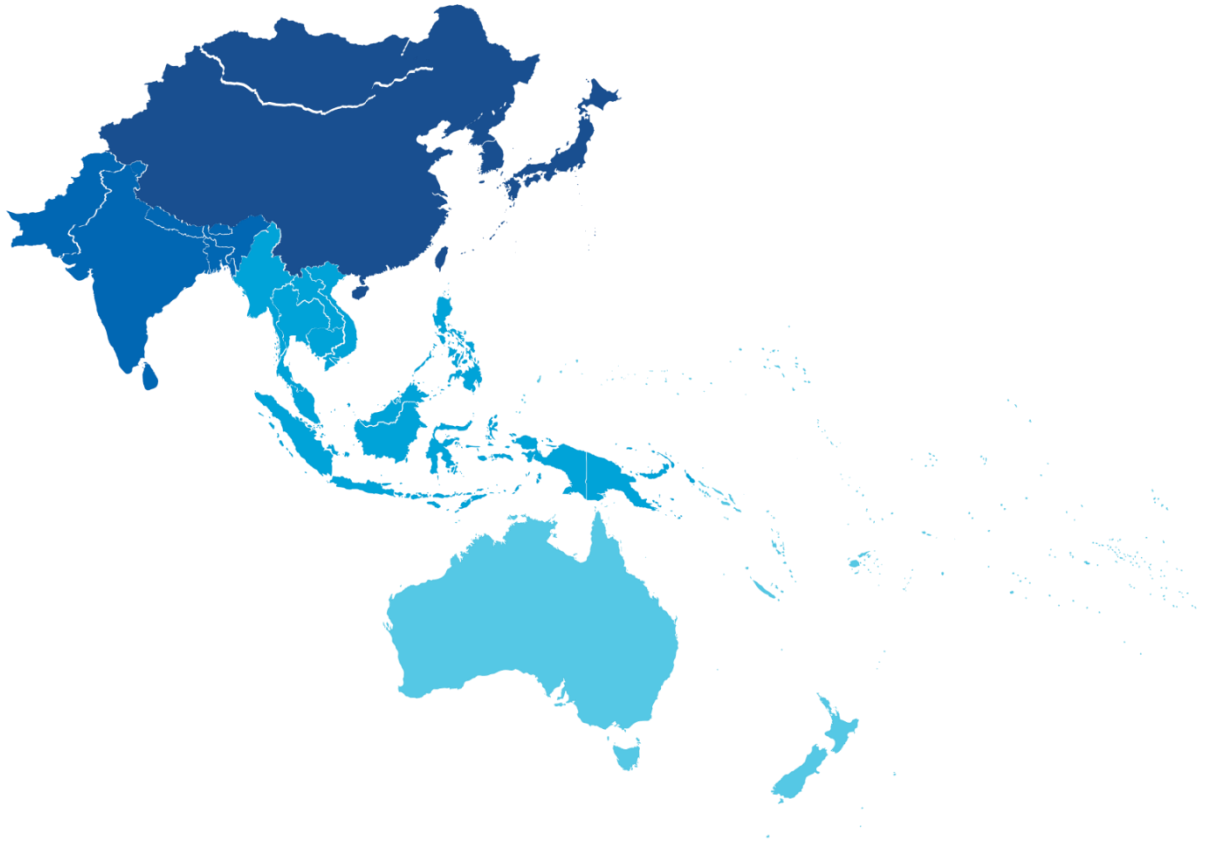


Figure 1: Map illustrating the four sub-regions of the ISC Regional Focal point for Asia and the Pacific.

Themes

The ISC RFP-AP will determine and pursue objectives that are mutually beneficial to Australia, Asia and the Pacific region, and the ISC, using a framework that brings together stakeholders, enhances cohesion across scientific activities, and provides a forum for navigating diverse interests and priorities.

Programs and activities will be organised around three pillars:

Knowledge generation: including Indigenous, civil and science knowledge systems.

Capacity building: including strengthening knowledge systems, supporting women in science, societal impact, and transdisciplinary research practice.

Science communication and translation: involving evidence informed decision making, connecting policy with science and science with policy, creating trust in science, and fighting misinformation.

Programs, project, and activity design

The five-year program plan includes the development, design, and execution of two major flagship programs tailored to Asia and Pacific Island nations' priorities, capabilities, and resources. Flagship programs are being co-developed with the ISC members and regional stakeholders.

In addition to the larger flagship programs, the Regional Focal Point is developing projects and activities focusing on capacity building in areas such as science communication, science for policy and strengthening of science and knowledge systems.

Governance and staff



Figure 2: Members of the ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific Advisory Council. A new Co-Chair is yet to be appointed by the ISC.

The ISC RFP-AP secretariat consists of a director and four staff members and operates under the advice and guidance of a nine-member Advisory Council (including two co-chairs, four subregional members, two strategic members, and the RFP-AP Director as ex-officio member). The Advisory Council is co-chaired by a delegate from the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the Australian Academy of Science (AAS) and a delegate from the Board of the ISC

The Advisory Council was selected after a call for nominations among the region's ISC members. A short list of 12 candidates was presented to a selection committee comprising of members from the AAS EXCOM and Executive team and the ISC Board and Executive team. Candidates were selected based on their engagement with regional bodies, policy makers and the multilateral system and to represent proper diversity across disciplines, gender and geography. The Advisory Council meets four times per year, of which one meeting is face to face. In addition to the quarterly meetings, the director engages the council members in one-on-one meetings to facilitate continual engagement and to discuss sub-regional priorities. The AC members are appointed on a staggered three-year term, where two members will leave at the end of 2024 to commence the process.

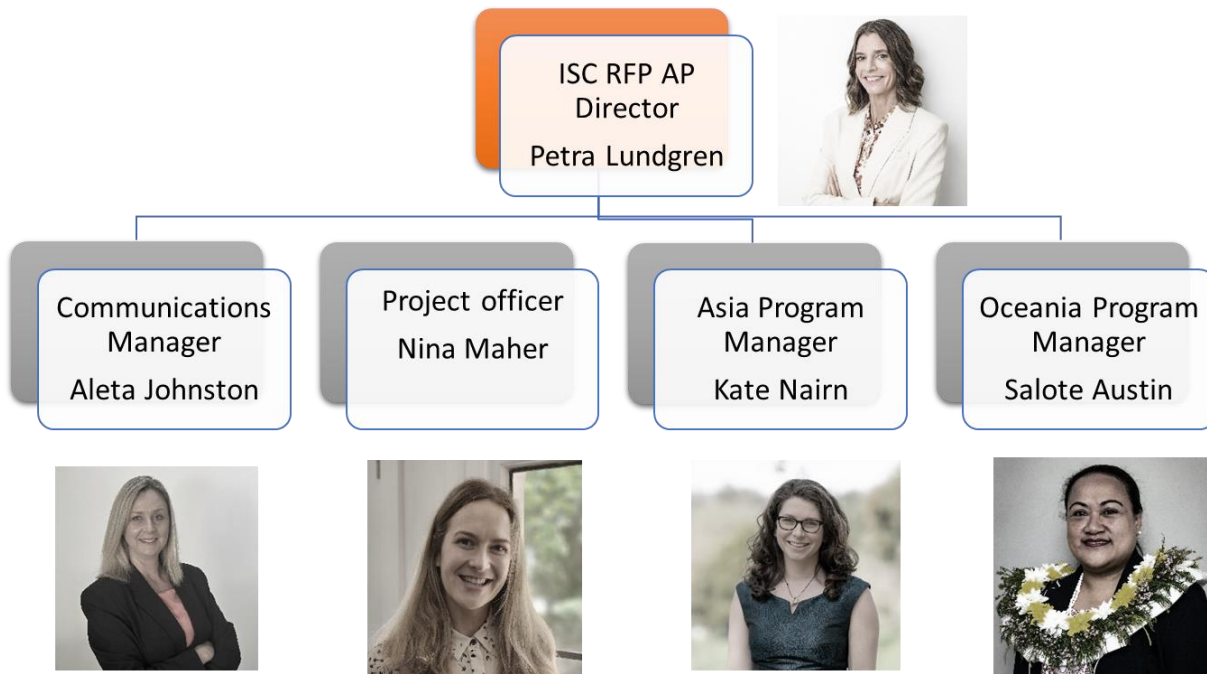


Figure 2 Staff of the secretariat

Progress report on a page

In addition to setting up our Governance structure and recruiting the secretariat staff, we put effort into engaging with member organisations in the region around priorities and drafted our five-year [Strategic Plan](#) that is mentioned above. We co-hosted the [Global Knowledge Dialogue](#) with the Malaysian Academy of Sciences and the ISC in October, which provided good insights into the region’s priorities that influenced the development of the strategic plan and will guide our future annual work plans.

Flagship program Oceania

There is currently no agreed mechanism for the knowledge of Pacific scholars to be gathered and used to inform decision-making regionally and internationally, even though the Pacific region stands to be most impacted by the rapidly changing environment. Establishing a learned academy in the Pacific would provide an avenue to elevate the voice of science and cultural knowledge from Pacific Islands scholars.

In October 2023, the plan to co-design and establish a Pacific islands academy of sciences and humanities gained strong support from more than 60 Pacific scholars at a meeting in Samoa.

An [Establishment Committee](#) was formed and tasked with progressing the work with a view to launch the Academy in October 2024 in conjunction with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa. The Establishment Committee progressed matters including drafting a constitution, determining the structure (Charitable Trust) and agreeing on a legal domicile (Samoa). The Establishment Committee has been supported by advice from the Australian Academy of Science and the Royal Society Te Apārangi (New Zealand) and gained legal advice from Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu, a Samoan commercial lawyer and former Attorney-General of Samoa.

Supporting the establishment and future work of the Pacific Islands Academy will be the basis of our Flagship program for the Pacific region.

Flagship program Asia

As stated in the Strategic Plan, our knowledge-building flagship program will be developed in line with

the recommendations outlined by the ISC Global Commission on Science Missions for [Sustainability](#). There is an opportunity to pilot the Science Mission model in Asia around at least one of the critical areas identified by the report: water, urbanisation, or energy and climate. Recognising the need for actionable knowledge and creative solutions for sustainability challenges, Future Earth Asia has already begun formulating a roadmap for identifying intertwined challenges, and formulating co-designed, systems-level solutions that meet the regional and sub-regional needs of Asia.

A proposal has been developed by Future Earth Asia outlining a two-stage process to develop the Asia Mission Science program. The program development involves a phase of deliberate and active co-design through a series of transdisciplinary workshops, followed by the establishment of a hub focusing on an agreed science mission. The proposal was endorsed by the ISC RFP-AP Advisory Council in March 2024 and workshops are due to commence in early-mid 2024.

Communications and outreach

The first year of the ISC RFP-AP has focused on building our presence and getting our key messages out. A communications network is being established among ISC member organisations in the region, which now involves over 30 regional contacts. Our social media following has doubled across Facebook, X (Twitter) and LinkedIn with up to a 500% monthly increase in LinkedIn post impressions.

The ISC RFP-AP March members meeting achieved 244 registrations with 109 online participants and was well received across the region. There are 2000 subscribers to the quarterly newsletter.

Blogs and success stories are continually posted on the [ISC news page](#).

2024 Annual work plan and beyond

Over the coming years we will continue to support our two flagship programs. In addition, we are developing a range of capacity-building programs around science communication, developing and delivering science advice to inform decision making, and science diplomacy. In 2024 the following programs are being contracted:

The New Zealand Science Media Centre (NZ SMC) will deliver workshops specifically for Pacific Island scholars and journalists on science media training throughout 2024. The workshops are expected to cover:

- For scholars: Practical strategies for engaging news media and communicating research for impact.
- For journalists: Covering science issues in day-to-day news reporting (e.g. climate, health, natural disasters)

In addition to the workshops above, NZ SMC will also deliver the following:

- A talanoa (sharing of ideas) session with journalists and media academics at the Pacific Media Conference in June 2024.
- A session focusing specifically on training science journalists in Apia, Samoa during CHOGM in October 2024
- Provide access to the Science Media Exchange newsfeed and platform (Scimex.org).
- Benefits to ISC member institutions include:
 - Access to Science Media Exchange portal to publicise new research publications and expertise, providing direct visibility to regional and global media.
 - Advice and training sessions for media communications teams at member institutions.

- Access to online resources and training modules.

The workshops will involve approximately 30 - 50 participants in total. Support for increased Pacific Island participation in the Science Media Exchange (Scimex.org) platform, alongside online distribution of resources developed for these workshops, will expand the reach of this initiative.

The ISC RFP-AP will partner with the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA) and its regional hub, INGSA-Asia, to deliver activities to support scientists to convey research to policy makers. This will be executed through specialised training and support for INGSA-Asia in its mission to foster the science advice capability in the region by raising awareness, supporting training, and encouraging operational research on advisory principles, processes, and practices. The ISC RFP-AP will provide support towards:

- INGSA-Asia Grassroots Science Advice Workshops

On a competitive basis, provide the opportunity for six scientists, researchers, academics, and science-policy practitioners drawn from RFP-AP countries to organise science advice workshops in their respective home countries. This builds on highly successful science advice workshops conducted in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

- Regional Workshop on the Role of Science Diplomacy in the Sustainability of the South China Sea

ISC RFP-AP will partner with INGSA-Asia (and their Southeast Asia Science Advice Network (SEA SAN)) and the International Institute for Science Diplomacy and Sustainability (IISDS) based at UCSI University in Malaysia to address issues that significantly impact the Southeast Asian region. The initial focus will be to organise a regional workshop on the pivotal role of science diplomacy in fostering sustainability within the South China Sea.

Financial report for the past financial year and forecast budget for 2024.

Table 1: Financial year report 1 July 2023–31 March 2024 (AU\$). Noting that grant income covers the financial year of 1 July 2023- 30 June 2024

Opening balance				149,768
23/24 Grant income including ISC funding				1,844,799
Total income				1,994,567
Expenditure				
Project expenses		DISR	ISC	Total
	Contracts (capacity building, conferences, bursaries, grants)			
	Labour	290,818		290,818
	Labour oncosts	42,047		42,047
	Office expenses	37,500		37,500
	Travel		50,358	50,358
	Other (major program funding)	1,839	1,211	1,211
Total expenditure		392,454	51,579	440,033
Ending balance		1,325,546	75,220	1,400,766
Carry over balance				1,550,534

Reflections

Membership growth and engagement needs to be done in close collaboration with ISC HQ, especially regarding the value statement of the ISC membership.

Defining what Regional Focal Points are, purpose, intent, and governance in relation to ISC members has been more challenging than expected. Members are confused and struggle to see the distinction between a Regional Focal Point and membership in general.

Support from, and engagement with, the ISC HQ works very well. Weekly meetings with key staff from both offices keeps everyone informed.

ISC Three-Year report – highlights for RFP-AP

Prepared October 2024

1. Internal Communications

Communication point of contact in country to reach Members in the region to develop capacity building i.e. online media/policy training webinars, share information, source stories and respond to media enquiries.

- 57 Members in the comms network
- 46 Members on the Asia Pacific WhatsApp group

2. Stakeholder communications

Members meetings

- March Members Quarterly Meeting:
 - 244 total registrations
 - 109 online participants.
 - 72 identified Member organisations
 - Government/policy: United Nations, Embassy of France in Indonesia, Australian High Commission New Delhi (Department of Industry, Science and Resources)
 - Media: Asia Research News, World Science Tech Review, Science Media Centres: Australia, Taiwan, Japan

Feedback

“I attended the Quarterly ISC Regional Focal Point Asia and the Pacific meeting yesterday, and it was a very informative and well organized meeting.” Sun Yue, Director, Expert Service, China Centre for International Science and Technology Exchange (CISTE) & China Association for Science and Technology (CAST)

“Thank you very much for your intimation regarding the ISC RFP meeting for AP region. It was quite informative to get to know about RFP key players and their new initiatives after the GKD 2023,” Dr. A. Senthil Kumar | Chair, Financial Commission ISPRS

“This is completely new to me, and I was impressed by the professionalism and enthusiasm felt in the event.” Wen-Ping CHEN, International Astronomical Union, National Central University, Taiwan

“Thank you very much for the invitation, I loved it and I want to participate in many conferences since I am a researcher.” Juan Camilo Velasquez Perez Teaching researcher

- June Members Quarterly Meeting:
 - 80 total registrations
 - 50 online participants.
 - 50 identified Member organisations

Newsletter

- 2,445 Subscribers
- April edition - 1858 opens.
- June edition - 523 opens.
- September edition - 626 opens.

Building capability in communicating science

NZ SMC

- Contract signed with New Zealand Science Media Centre (NZ SMC)
- 4-6 July NZ SMC Talanoa session at Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) annual conference in Suva.
- 23 October NZ SMC media training for Pacific Academy of Sciences Foundation Fellows

Online media and communications training for scientists

- (13 June) Storytelling in Science: Science Communication and the Media workshop. Invitation to register was sent to ISC EMCR network and the ISC RFP newsletter mailing list (2197 contacts). Recording posted on ISC website and emailed to all registrants. Feedback was positive with interest to be notified for other events.
 - 404 registered
 - 105 attended
- (4 Sept) Navigating the social media landscape as a scientist in 2024. Invitation to register was sent to ISC EMCR network and the ISC RFP newsletter mailing list. Recording posted on ISC website and emailed to all registrants.
 - 311 registered
 - 110 attended
- (16 Oct) Developing a social media strategy for scientists. Invitation to register was sent to ISC EMCR network and the ISC RFP newsletter mailing list.
 - 350 registered so far

3. External communications

• Media engagement

- a. There were 162 mentions of the October 2023 Pacific Meeting across earned and social media with a potential reach of 89.5 Million. The press release was picked up across Pacific and Oceanic media organisations including [RNZ](#), [Cosmos Magazine](#), [Samoa Observer](#), [Island Business](#), [SCOOP](#), [The Australian Academy of Science](#), [Live News NZ](#), [531 Live radio](#) - Pacific Media, [Open Forum](#), [The National Tribune](#), [Mirage News](#)
- b. Secured a 30-minute slot at the SPREP media briefings on CHOGM for Tuesday 23 July at 11:15am to brief local journalists on the Pacific Academy.
- c. Pacific Academy stories have so far run across a range of media outlets including ABC Pacific, RNZ, [Cosmos Magazine](#), [Samoa Observer](#), Science (Magazine – Japan), 360info and [Pacific Islands Report](#)
- d. Science in Times of Crisis media release - > 30 media mentions
- e. (28/3) New report highlights global strategies for accelerating AI in science and research – stories ran on Asia Research News and Tech Xplore.

- **Social media**
 - f. **August:** Held 3 briefing session and send a survey to canvas relevance and culturally appropriate online training course
- **Events/Conferences**
 - a. INGSA2024 : worked with four bursary delegates (from Vietnam, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Kiribati) to produce social media content and web blogs.
 - b. SIDS4: Worked with Pacific academy and ISC SIDS Liaison committee delegates to support ISC communications plan to share regional stories and amplify release of the ISC Small Island Developing States (SIDS) declaration.
 - c. [CHOGM: comms plan](#)

Projects

Pacific Academy of Sciences

- October 2023: The inaugural [ISC Meeting of Pacific Scholars](#) brings over 60 scientists to Apia, Samoa. They resolutely agree on the need to establish the Pacific academy and mandate the ISC to proceed.
- December 2023: As the first crucial step, the [Establishment Committee](#) is formed. Representing different subregions of the Pacific and drawing from diverse expertise of established and early and mid-career scholars, it is tasked to set the foundation of the future academy and mobilize necessary support.
- February 2024: Gathered in Auckland, New Zealand, the Establishment Committee members and advisors make progress on resolving foundational issues around the academy's legal status, location, membership and constitution.
- May 2024: A delegation from the Pacific region was sponsored to attend the [4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States](#) (SIDS4).
- August 2024: [Call for nominations for Foundation Fellows](#)
- October 2024: We are excited to announce the [launch of the Academy](#) will be an official side-event at the [Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting](#) in Samoa.

Asia Science Mission

- July 2024: The Meta-Network Hub for SDGs in Asia (MHA) is shortlisted for the [International Science Council Pilot Science Missions for Sustainability](#)
- 19 September 2024: First of three inception workshops to officially commence co-design of the **Meta-Network Hub Asia** with consortium partners from across Asia (including Australia and Future Earth Asia)
- 21-23 October 2024: Second co-design workshop of the **Meta-Network Hub Asia** with consortium partners from across Asia to be held at [Research Institute for Humanity and Nature](#).
- November 2024: Third co-design workshop of the **Meta-Network Hub Asia** with consortium partners from across Asia.

Asia-Pacific Academic Mentoring Program

- Successfully launched the program in September 2024, with 10 Pacific EMCRs as mentees and 10 mentors
- Mentees are from Fiji, PNG, Vanuatu, Samoa and New Caledonia

- Mentors are from Australia and New Zealand (two mentors are also ISC Fellows)
- In total there were 48 mentee applicants and 42 mentor applicants

INGSA-Asia Science Advice Workshops

- 23 proposals for the grass roots workshops INGSA Asia (stat for ISC maybe?)
- August 2024: [Call for applications](#) for INGSA-Asia grassroots science advice workshops. [Download the application guideline here.](#)
- September 2024: Successful applicants notified
- Ongoing 2024-25: INGSA-Asia grass roots workshops facilitated across countries in Asia

Media and Communications Training

Online media and communications training

- May 2024: [Storytelling in Science: Science Communication and the Media online workshop](#)
- July 2024: Social Media Module briefing sessions
- 4 September 2024: Social media training module 1 – [Navigating the social media landscape as a scientist in 2024](#)
- 16 October 2024: Social media training module 2 – [Developing a social media strategy for scientists](#)
- 13 November 2024: Social media training module 3 – Crafting content about scientific research
- March 2025: Social media training module 4 – Using video to communicate science
- April 2025: Social media training module 5 – Encouraging and managing interactions with online communities
- May 2025: Social media training module 6 – Measuring impact and engaging with stakeholders
- Ongoing 2025-2028: Media and Communications Training workshops

New Zealand Science Media Centre collaboration

- 4-6 July 2024: A talanoa (sharing of ideas) session with journalists and media academics at the Pacific Media Conference 2024.
- October 2024: A session focusing specifically on training science journalists in Apia, Samoa during CHOGM in October 2024
- June 2025: A joint training of scientists and journalists at the bi-annual meeting of the Pacific Islands Universities Research Network
- Printed and online resource guide for workshop participants, which can be shared
- Pacific Academy of Sciences member institutions gain access to the Science Media Exchange newsfeed and platform ([Scimex.org](https://www.scimex.org)). Benefits to ISC member institutions include:
 - Access to Science Media Exchange portal to publicise new research publications and expertise, providing direct visibility to regional and global media.
 - Free advice and training sessions for media communications teams at member institutions.
 - Access to online resources and training modules.