

STEM Ambassador 2020 Program Outline

Background

Research into [science literacy](#) has indicated that an increase in literacy can result in more politically polarized opinions on topics such as climate change. This research leads us to believe that making people more informed about science is not enough to ensure effective consideration of science in policy and decision making. The relationships that are built between scientists and the community is what ensures [true science engagement](#) which has been demonstrated by the continuing success of events like Science Meets Parliament.

Overview

The STEM Ambassador Program is born from the highly successful Science meets Parliament event run by Science & Technology Australia each year. Bringing together scientists, technologists and Parliamentarians has been extremely successful in the past, but the number of enduring relationships that result from Science meets Parliament could be increased. In order to facilitate this, the STEM Ambassadors Program has been created,

The STEM Ambassador Program aims to:

- create long-term relationships between parliamentarians and STEM professionals;
- increase understanding of, and participation in, politics and policy among scientists;
- increase understanding and application of science among parliamentarians;
- create a network of scientists that are engaged in the public discourse around STEM policy; and
- increase the profile and value of science and technology amongst decision makers.

A program like this not only benefits the Parliamentarians involved by giving them regular access to experts in science and technology but also provides scientists and technologists with the chance to use their work to enhance and inform better policy.

STEM professionals will gain an understanding of the political landscape, the power of their work to make positive change, and how to translate findings in to tangible benefits for all Australians. While the Parliamentarians will better understand the importance of evidence-based policy, stable and long-term support for science, and an understanding of the people that live and work in their electorate can be obtained.

Information for Parliamentarians

What we will provide

- Full program brief and ability to highlight areas of interest during Ambassador selection process and matching;
- 4 meetings with a leading scientist or technologist with ties to your electorate; and
- Biography on your electorate's Ambassador;

What are the benefits of having a STEM Ambassador for your electorate?

- Forge direct links with Australian experts that work or live within your electorate;
- Access to advice and information to inform a range of policy issues;
- Contacts within the STEM sector to advise on issues facing Australian science and technology;
- Public relations opportunities with STEM professionals (site visits etc.);
- Opportunities to attend research seminars and other special events;
- An opportunity to learn about some of Australia's world class research and research facilities;
- The opportunity to connect with your Ambassador's colleagues and peers; and
- Establish a relationship to the Ambassador's employer, funder or collaborators.

Information for Ambassadors

Your Role as Ambassador

- Attend 5 training sessions (provided online);
- Organise and attend a minimum of 4 meetings with your parliamentary colleague;
- Read and discuss briefings on national STEM related matters with your parliamentarian at meetings;
- Provide updates to Science & Technology Australia on matters discussed in your meetings; and
- Do extra research into ideas or topics that your parliamentarian colleague wants to discuss.

What we will provide

- Background information on your parliamentarian;
- Professional development training by experts in the fields of policy, communications, and lobbying;
- Regular briefings on issues facing the STEM sector in Australia;
- Facilitation of introductory meetings; and
- Support to organise media opportunities with your parliamentarian colleague;

Selection Process

Ambassadors

Ambassadors will be chosen based on the availability of the parliamentarians that have expressed interest in the program. Ambassadors will have to either live or work in the electorate of the participating parliamentarians and will be selected through a competitive application process. The following will also be taken into consideration when selection ambassadors:

- Experience and skill in science presentation to the general public
- Stage of career (early-mid career STEM workers preferred)
- Previous attendance of Science meets Parliament

The application process is outlined [here](#).

The Program

Training

A 1.5-hour induction and training session and Four hour-long webinar-based training sessions will be provided by STA for the ambassadors based on these topics:

1. Introduction & How to speak to politicians;
2. Building and engaging with a local STEM network;
3. National Science policy & politics;
4. Media Training; and
5. Maintaining a network;

These webinars will be compulsory for all ambassadors and ensure they are prepared for a productive relationship with their parliamentarian.

Materials

Ambassadors will be provided with a weekly political and policy updates including links to appropriate reports. Ambassadors will also be provided with reading and meeting material before each of the scheduled meetings. While the material provided intends to guide the ambassador and the discussion they are not intended to be prescriptive as the idea of these meetings is to guide the creation of an organic relationship between the ambassador and parliamentarian. Meeting materials will include:

- Profile on Parliamentarian, including links to recent speeches or press conferences;
- A copy of the Science & Technology Policy Vision Statement; and
- As-they-happen updates or news regarding the parliamentarian

Meetings

Four meetings throughout the year will occur with support from STA. Ideally the meeting locations will be a combination of the workspace of the ambassador and the office of the parliamentarian. It will be the responsibility of the Ambassador to organise meetings with parliamentarians as well as extra invitations to events that may be of interest as they arise.

While the topics of meetings will depend on the Ambassador and parliamentarian meetings with specific goals and agendas are typically more successful. With that in mind ideas for meetings can include:

1. Introductory meeting (must be first meeting);
2. National Science Policy Meeting;
3. Visit to a scientist workspace;
4. Group meeting with research/workspace group; and
5. A discussion forum with local STEM professionals within the electorate

A short report back after each meeting from the ambassadors will allow us to continue to assess the effectiveness of these meetings as well as assess the effectiveness of the pilot study.

Measuring the Program's success

One of the key requirements of this program will be to sustained participation by all parties and an enduring relationship between ambassadors and parliamentarians. After each meeting a very short summary will be provided to STA from the ambassadors about what was discussed and any feedback on the program so far (a form will be crafted for this purpose). These summaries will be used to measure the success of the meetings, to keep the membership up to date on the program and may be used for future promotion of the program.

At the completion of the pilot study a review will be undertaken to examine the effectiveness of the program in influencing and educating parliamentarians about science.

Data to be collected

- 3 surveys of the ambassadors
 - Start, middle and end of program