

STEM Ambassador 2021 Program Outline

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, but the number of enduring relationships that result from Science meets Parliament could be increased. To deepen these connections, STA created our STEM Ambassadors Program.

Science & Technology Australia's STEM Ambassador Program seeks to:

- create long-term relationships between Parliamentarians and STEM professionals;
- deepen scientists' understanding of, and participation in, policymaking processes;
- deepen Parliamentarians' understanding and application of science;
- create a network of scientists engaged in STEM policy; and
- increase the profile and value of science and technology among decision makers.

A program like this not only benefits Parliamentarians by giving them regular access to experts in science and technology. It also provides scientists and technologists with the chance to use their work to enhance and inform 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 into tangible benefits for all Australians. Parliamentarians will deepen their understanding of STEM fields, develop closer ties with the STEM community in their constituency, and see even more closely the benefits of evidence-informed policy and stable and long-term support for science.

Information for Parliamentarians

What we will provide

- A program brief;
- 4 meetings with a leading scientist or technologist with ties to your electorate; and
- A biography on your electorate's STEM Ambassador;

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

- Forge direct links with Australian STEM experts who work or live in your electorate;
- Access to advice and information to inform a range of policy issues;
- Contacts in 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

STA STEM Ambassadors

Ambassadors will be chosen based on the availability of the Parliamentarians who 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 selecting ambassadors:

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

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 engage with Parliamentarians;

2. Building and engaging with a local STEM network;
3. Science policy & how decision-making institutions and processes work;
4. Media training; and
5. Maintaining a STEM network;

These webinars are compulsory for all Ambassadors to ensure they are prepared for a productive relationship with their Parliamentarian.

Materials

STEM Ambassadors will be provided with politics and policy updates including links to reports released that may be of interest and relevance. Ambassadors will also be provided with reading material before they commence their meetings. While the material provided intends to guide the ambassador and the discussion, they are not intended to be prescriptive. The idea of these meetings is to guide the creation of an organic relationship between the Ambassador and Parliamentarian. Meeting materials will include:

- A profile on the 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 about the Parliamentarian

Meetings

Four meetings throughout the year will occur with support from STA. Ideally the meeting locations will be a combination of the work location 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, meeting topics could include:

1. Introductory meeting (the first meeting);
2. National science policy meeting;
3. A site visit to the scientist's work location;
4. Group meeting with research/work group; and
5. A discussion forum with local STEM professionals in the electorate

A short report back after each meeting from the Ambassadors will enable STA to continue to assess the effectiveness of these meetings as well as assess the effectiveness of the program.

Measuring the program's success

One of the key aims of this program is to sustain participation by all parties and forge an enduring relationship between STEM Ambassadors and Parliamentarians. After each meeting, a very short summary will be provided to STA from the Ambassador 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.