



How can more scientists engage more effectively in nontraditional venues?

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About

The STEM Ambassador Program guides scientists to engage outside traditional informal science education (ISE) venues to connect with those who cannot or do not access science in traditional ways.



Approach

- Grounded in the impact identity framework (Risien and Storksdieck, 2018)
- Integrates three ISE models: Design Thinking, the Research Ambassador Program, and Portal to the Public
- Scientists identify a “focal group” that resonates with their impact identity, learn about the group through immersion, design engagement activity specific to group, and engage in group’s venue



Outcomes

- Over **50 scientists trained**
- Over **2,000 members of the public reached** through **116 events in over 45 venues**
- Training online and in-person
- Cohorts at Univ. of Utah, Univ. of Washington, and online
- Currently training scientists at NSF-funded Center for Chemical Innovation
- Publication in BioScience (2019)



Evaluation

Ambassadors

- 95% rated experience as valuable/highly valuable
- 90% reported gaining new skills

Focal Groups

- Over 95% reported Ambassador did a good job communicating
- 90% reported learning something new



Engagement

Microbiology & Cooking

Microbiologist partnered with chef to teach fermentation cooking class at a grocery store



Urban Planning & Corrections

Researcher studying water conservation discussed xeriscaping with inmates in a horticulture training program at a jail



Ornithology & Music

Ornithologist drew on her skills as a musician to deliver a musical performance inspired by birds



Future Work- Input Invited

How can a public engagement program sustainably support engagement with diverse focal groups at a larger scale?

- Explore new formats
- Streamline evaluation
- Assess value to scientists and institutions
- Develop funding and organizational structure

