

Follow us


[Home](#)
[About us](#)
[News](#)
[Events](#)
[In your State](#)
[Science communication toolkit](#)
[Case studies](#)
[Other initiatives](#)

# TOOLKIT – FOR SCIENCE COMMUNICATORS

Science communicators take complex science and make it engaging and understandable for a range of different audiences. They typically work in universities and research institutions, museums, public health authorities and other scientific organisations.

There are also many more people who find themselves communicating science as a smaller part of their main job, for example, general media and communications people who have a project in which science is a key part of the story, or scientists who need to share their work.

If you're a science communicator in Australia, you should think about joining the **Australian Science Communicators (ASC)**, a diverse national association with over 500 members including scientists, teachers, journalists, writers, entertainers, students and other communicators who engage Australians (and people overseas) with science, technology and innovation.



Going to an ASC Branch event is a great way to meet like-minded people, discuss issues of common concern and learn some new things. Branch members are also heavily involved in major science communication activities like National Science Week.

Head along to one of their networking events and sign up to receive their newsletter to stay informed about the latest in science communication in Australia. [You can find out more about them here.](#)

## Resources

- **Introduce school students to science and the media**

A series of resources developed for school science students and delivered in class which discuss science and how it is covered in the media. These resources can be used as preparation to tackle a topic with students or as resources to engage students in science.

[riaus.org.au/all-programs/education](http://riaus.org.au/all-programs/education)

- **Research, data results**

Find information on science, science activities and attitudes to science with this compilation of data from peer-reviewed

literature, reports, census polls and attitudinal surveys.

[www.sciencengage.com.au](http://www.sciencengage.com.au)

- **Access images, footage and graphics for breaking news**

Science Media Exchange (Scimex) Multimedia Hub provides an online space for posting and sharing science-related visual material to enhance the messages of scientists, science communicators and journalists.

[www.scimex.org/multimedia-hub](http://www.scimex.org/multimedia-hub)

## Build success through strategy and collaboration

- **Approach science engagement strategically – national recommendations**

Learn how to align your support for science in Australia through the *Inspiring Australia* report. See what research agencies, education providers, the business sectors as well as cultural and community organisations have said about working together for a scientifically engaged Australia.

[Read the Inspiring Australia report.](#)

- **Align with best practice principles**

Shape best practice solutions for science engagement with the *Inspiring Australia Framework of Principles*. The Framework has been adopted by the Australian, state and territory governments to guide the development of science engagement initiatives.

[Read the Framework of Principles.](#)

- **A regional approach**

*Inspiring Australia* has state and territory officers in place to assist you in strengthening your science communication and networks. Identify partnerships and linkages by working with Inspiring Australia Managers, who can help you identify local and regional needs and provide up-to-date information about the state of science engagement locally. [Find your local contacts.](#)

- **Aligning with the experts**

Inform your science activities with expert recommendations on improving science engagement and operations in key areas throughout Australia. Six reports are available outlining the findings of the Inspiring Australia Expert Working Groups.

[Read the expert reports.](#)

Expert Working Group topics:

- Science and the Media: From Ideas to Action
- Developing an Evidence Base for Science Engagement in Australia
- Indigenous Engagement with Science: towards deeper understandings report
- Science Engagement and Tropical Australia: Building a prosperous and sustainable future for the north
- Marine Science: a story for Australia
- Inspirations from the Deserts: Science engagement in and about Australia's desert regions

## Planning your events and activities

- **Snapshot of science engagement and research**

Contribute to research in science communication while gaining visibility for your event or activity. You can now upload your data on science engagement, find potential partners for funding and collaboration or see how Australians respond to science engagement activities.

[www.sciencengage.com.au](http://www.sciencengage.com.au)

- **Science engagement survey results – interactive map**

When planning your next event, visit the interactive database of survey data from the *National Audit of Science Engagement*

*Activity.* The information can be used to identify gaps, groups, regions, and collaborative opportunities around Australia in science communication.

[www.asc.asn.au/science-engagement-in-australia](http://www.asc.asn.au/science-engagement-in-australia)

- **Organise and promote your National Science Week event**

Find out how to run an event during National Science Week by downloading a practical guide on *How to run a public event* and *How to generate publicity*. You will also find helpful templates for media releases, surveys and posters.

[www.scienceweek.net.au/get-involved/organise-an-event](http://www.scienceweek.net.au/get-involved/organise-an-event)

- **Measure and evaluate the success of your activities**

Use our [event and activity evaluation tool](#) to measure the impact and success of your science engagement events.

## Promoting your events and activities

- **National Science Week**

Get involved in National Science Week, our annual celebration of science in Australia. With some 1.5 million Australians of all ages participating, this is a great place for you to promote your science.

[www.scienceweek.net.au](http://www.scienceweek.net.au)

- **Share your science on Facebook with ScienceAlert**

Connect via ScienceAlert which provides credible, defensible and accurate science news and content, drawn from Australasian universities, science centres and agencies, to over 8 million followers around the world.

[www.facebook.com/ScienceAlert](http://www.facebook.com/ScienceAlert)

- **Promote your scientist and gain recognition**

Nominate a scientist or science educator to be recognised on Australia's biggest stage. The Prime Minister's Prizes for Science are the nation's most prestigious award for excellence in the sciences and science education.

[science.gov.au/pmscienceprizes](http://science.gov.au/pmscienceprizes)

- **National and State support for your science activities and events**

State and territory Inspiring Australia Managers are in place to facilitate effective and efficient collaboration amongst organisations involved in science communication and engagement. The Inspiring Australia Managers have avenues to help you gain publicity and promote your science activities.

- ACT: [inspiringtheact.org.au](http://inspiringtheact.org.au)
- NSW: [sydney.edu.au/science/outreach/inspiring](http://sydney.edu.au/science/outreach/inspiring)
- NT: [www.inspirednt.com.au](http://www.inspirednt.com.au)
- QLD: [inspiring-australia.com.au](http://inspiring-australia.com.au)
- SA: [inspiringsa.org.au](http://inspiringsa.org.au)
- TAS: [whysci.org.au](http://whysci.org.au)
- VIC: [re-science.org.au](http://re-science.org.au)
- WA: [sciencewa.net.au](http://sciencewa.net.au)

## Evaluating your events and activities

These resources are designed to help you develop an effective and efficient evaluation strategy, tailored to your event.

They include generic survey templates that will be appropriate for a variety of events and target audiences, and which represent the middle ground, aimed at maximising feedback and comparability across the range of events.

We've also included suggestions for other methods of more detailed evaluation for those who want greater depth, or simpler evaluation which sacrifices depth in order to achieve a higher response rate.

The following advice on event evaluation can also be downloaded for use offline:

[Inspiring Australia Evaluation Resources \[PDF 566 KB\]](#).

There are many different ways to collect evaluation responses. What you choose to do will depend very much upon your event and your audience. Some of the options for collecting evaluation responses are:

- **Paper-based surveys**

Paper surveys are arguably one of the easiest ways to evaluate an event. Five survey templates are provided, to cover different audiences.

- **Online surveys**

You may wish to use an online survey instead. We provide an example, and can help create an online survey specifically for your event.

- **Observations**

Observations are subjective, but they can provide rich insights into who is in your audience and what they're doing at your event.

- **Bean polls**

If an evaluation form is inappropriate for your event, you can use a simple bean poll where you ask people to rate their opinion on a single question. A bean poll can also be used in conjunction with other evaluation methods like surveys.

## Frequently asked questions

# Principles for science communication

Download the [National Framework of Principles For Science Communication Initiatives \[PDF 137 KB\]](#)

Australia aspires to be an innovative society with a scientifically engaged community and a technologically skilled workforce. The Inspiring Australia strategy aims to build a strong, open relationship between science and society underpinned by effective communication of science and its uses.

In approaching the issue of science engagement together across industries and sectors, the goal of a scientifically engaged Australia will be far more attainable.

To that end, the *Framework of Principles* has been developed to support a unified and consistent approach to policy development and program implementation by Australian organisations, businesses and governments towards advancing science engagement in Australia.

## Principles essential for quality science communication

The principles recognise these key features as essential for quality science communication:

1. **strategic** direction and goals;
2. **relevance** to Australians;
3. **credible** science;
4. defined **target audience**;
5. **evaluation**; and
6. program **design** which enables effective delivery.

**These principles are expanded on here.**

# How do I become a science communicator in the first instance?

Do you like talking about science as well as, or maybe even more than, doing science? Perhaps you love the challenge of explaining science to a range of different audiences, from work colleagues to your great uncle. If so, maybe you should consider a career in science communication.

Science communicators take complex science and make it engaging and understandable for a range of different audiences. They typically work in universities and research institutions, museums, public health authorities and other scientific organisations.

There are also many more people who find themselves communicating science as a smaller part of their main job, for example, general media and communications people who have a project in which science is a key part of the story, or scientists who need to share their work.

Science communication is a small industry, but there are a few different ways you can learn the skills, get qualifications, build your networks and gain some experience. Below we've outlined university degrees and subjects, internships, and professional societies for those interested in becoming a science communicator.

## Degrees and courses

Universities in most states in Australia offer degrees and short courses in science communication.

[You can view a list of them here.](#)

## Internships and work experience

### Science in Public

Science in Public is a small science PR firm based in inner-west Melbourne. Niall Byrne and Sarah Brooker run the show with their core team of six, working for clients including the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Prime Minister's Prizes for Science, the Australia-Indonesia Centre, Monash University, and the National Stem Cell Foundation of Australia.

Work experience and internships are offered at Science in Public to help give you a feel for what they do, and to help you gain some experience in the science communication industry.

For more information or to apply, email Toni Stevens on [toni@scienceinpublic.com.au](mailto:toni@scienceinpublic.com.au).

### The Conversation

The Conversation is an independent source of news and views, sourced from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public.

The team of professional editors works with university, CSIRO and research institute experts to unlock their knowledge for use by the wider public.

The Conversation offers editorial internships in their office in Melbourne. They generally advertise on the [Jobs Board](#) on their website and via [Facebook](#) when looking to take on new interns.

## COSMOS magazine

Cosmos is a leading literary science magazine, published in Australia but with a global reach. It makes the world of science accessible to everyone.

Cosmos accept interns for a minimum of four weeks and a maximum of six months; internships are typically full-time and you must be able to go to their offices in Sydney. They prefer applicants with university-level experience and some training, or at least a keen interest, in science.

Keep an eye on their [website](#) for more information.

## Become a member

### Australian Science Communicators

ASC is a diverse national association, with over 500 members including scientists, teachers, journalists, writers, entertainers, students and other communicators who engage Australians (and people overseas) with science, technology and innovation.

Going to an ASC Branch event is a great way to meet like-minded people, discuss issues of common concern and learn some new things. Branch members are also heavily involved in major science communication activities like National Science Week.

More information at [www.asc.asn.au](http://www.asc.asn.au).

### Australasian Medical Writers Association

The Australasian Medical Writers Association is the professional association for medical writers from around Australia, New Zealand and Southeast Asia.

Members include writers and editors who specialise in health and medical articles for the mainstream press, electronic media and publications for health professionals. They also have writers and public relations practitioners who work for hospitals, government departments, health promotion organisations, pharmaceutical companies and a range of other groups with an interest in health and medicine.

More information at [www.medicalwriters.org](http://www.medicalwriters.org).

## Other things you can do

If writing about science is your thing, consider pitching an article to Lateral Magazine, an online magazine run by young science communicators.

[Read more about Lateral Magazine](#) or [pitch your idea for an article](#).

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