

Developing strategic alliances

Best Practice Engagement: Recommendation 2



The review on Best Practice Principles for Community Science Engagement Programs identified seven recommendations for effective and impactful community science programs.

To assist in the design of a community science engagement program, the second recommendation focuses on developing strategic alliances to build program capacity and capabilities, and facilitate program sustainability.

This principle recognises the value in **establishing strategic collaborations** with a range of partners (for example, government, education and industry). Collaborations enhance the effectiveness of community science programs through **increased program capacity and capability**. They can also be crucial to support the **ongoing sustainability** of science activities within communities.



Image: Clairvaux MacKillop College SuperGEMS at Queensland Raceway for the Ipswich 440
Credit: Anita Brant

Whether through co-design, financial support, knowledge-sharing or logistical assistance, strong cross-sector community alliances enhance all aspects of program design, delivery and evaluation.



Image: Gia/Ngaro Traditional Owner Robert Congoo shares with students from Moranbah East State School how the boomerang works as part of the Healthy Rivers to Reef Ripple Effect STEM Schools program.

Partnerships require ongoing effort—they are evolving relationships that need continuous attention. It is important to regularly review what's working, address any challenges, and adapt goals, roles and activities as community needs change.

Partnerships and strategic collaborations are essential for science engagement programs to scale effectively and continue to add value to communities over the long term.



Case study: Suzie the Scientist and Millie the Mathematician

Griffith University's *Science on the GO!* outreach program provides a strong example of **developing strategic alliances** through its collaboration with Rotary and Queensland Parents and Citizens Associations (P&Cs QLD) to create the *Suzie the Scientist* and *Millie the Mathematician* early literacy series. These two 24-book STEM-themed collections were designed to build foundational reading skills while fostering engagement with science and mathematics among young learners across Australia.



The alliance with Rotary was built on a history of collaboration and a shared commitment to education. Griffith University led content development, while the Rotary Steering Committee – comprising experienced educational leaders – ensured strong curriculum alignment and quality. Both partners prioritised strengthening early literacy and STEM engagement, creating a unified strategic focus. Through this collaboration, the partners leveraged Rotary's extensive national networks to distribute sample packs to every primary school in Australia. Continued oversight by the Steering Committee sustained integration, maintaining project momentum and accountability.



A complementary partnership with P&Cs QLD strengthened the program's focus on parental engagement, recognising that the books were designed as take-home readers. P&Cs QLD enabled direct access to parents and school communities, supporting co-design through feedback, testing and refinement. This relationship was highly interdependent, as Griffith University relied on P&C networks to ensure the materials were practical and relevant for families.

These alliances have led to more than 160,000 books being distributed, alongside significant digital engagement. The initiative has successfully improved early science literacy, increased interest in STEM and promoted positive female role models.

Overall, these enduring partnerships illustrate how strategic alliances can generate sustained, scalable benefits through shared vision and complementary strengths.

For further detail about *Best Practice Principles for Community Science Engagement Programs*, read the full report, which includes case studies and other resources, at www.chiefscientist.qld.gov.au.

