

Engaging key influencers

Best Practice Engagement: Recommendation 5



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

Science engagement does not happen in isolation. The attitudes, aspirations and career choices of young people are strongly influenced by those around them, such as trusted members of their communities.

This recommendation recognises that, despite the important role community science engagement programs play in inspiring interest in STEM, decisions about STEM study and career pathways are often shaped by the perceptions and advice of **key influencers** such as parents, teachers, peers, career advisors, industry mentors and the media.



Image: Beneath Our Feet Project with a visiting palaeontologist allowing school students to closely examine fossils, including ammonites, and learn about Earth's ancient history
Credit: The Rainforest School – Mission Beach



Image: First Nations STEAM Day, Minimbah, 2026
Credit: DeadlyScience - Deadly STEM in Schools, Gulong School, 2026

Relatable and authentic STEM role models can be powerful in challenging perceptions of who belongs in science and showing the diversity of STEM pathways and careers.

Programs should intentionally engage key influencers, both directly and indirectly. This may include parent-inclusive events, teacher professional development, peer mentoring initiatives, and partnerships with local scientists who reflect the cultural and demographic backgrounds of the target audience.



Case study: DeadlyScience

DeadlyScience demonstrates the power of engaging **trusted influencers** to improve STEM participation among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. Founded and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the organisation works with First Nations knowledge holders, scientists, educators and STEM professionals to deliver culturally relevant learning experiences in remote and regional communities.



Image: In the lab, DeadlyScience Pathways Program, 2025
Credit: [WEHI](#). 1G Royal Pde Parkville 3052 VIC Australia

Recognising that “you can’t be what you can’t see”, DeadlyScience connects students with **role models** who reflect their cultures, experiences and aspirations. Through school programs, STEM resources, workshops and career pathway initiatives, these influential voices help make science accessible, relevant and inspiring. By leveraging respected community leaders and STEM professionals as advocates, DeadlyScience has created a model that builds trust, strengthens cultural connection and encourages young people to see themselves as future scientists, engineers and innovators.



Image: Opening speeches and smoking ceremony, DeadlyScience Pathways Program, 2026

Credit: [WEHI](#). 1G Royal Pde Parkville 3052 VIC Australia

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.



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