

SouthSci and WeSTEM – STEM Partner Role Description

Participatory science platforms (PSP) connect STEM experts with school and community groups, to explore a research or design question and engage youth in STEM. There are currently 3 PSP programmes in Auckland:

Programme	Funder	Description	Typical project duration
SouthSci	MBIE Curious Minds	Targets south Auckland only, projects funded up to \$20k each	6 – 12 months, expected start dates Mar – May
WeSTEM Pico Projects	Ministry of Pacific Peoples	Targets Pasifika youth in west Auckland, short term projects funded up to \$4k each	6 – 12 weeks, expected start dates in April – June
WeSTEM Science in Action	Ministry of Pacific Peoples	Targets Pasifika youth in west Auckland, longer-term projects funded up to \$10k each	Up to ~6 months, expected start dates in April – June

The PSP Project Team

Each PSP project is a partnership between STEM experts/educators, youth participants and community groups. Sometimes, schools or community groups identify a project idea but do not have links with experts that can provide technical knowledge and support.

This is where the PSP programme manager (Ying Yang) seeks to match up these schools with **enthusiastic science and technology professionals** – and hopefully that’s where you come in! We are looking for a wide range of role models with experience in science, technology, engineering, maths or mātauranga Māori.

Benefits of being a STEM partner

Being a STEM partner is a fantastic opportunity to utilise or improve your existing technical and research skills in a whole new environment and support a worthwhile initiative in the process.

STEM partner benefits include:

- See how your skills and knowledge can support students to engage with STEM subjects, inspiring curious minds and fostering our future STEM professionals
- Feel pride in being a role model for other project participants and youth
- Develop your skills in a unique, collaborative and science-based environment outside your usual day-to-day job
- Gain work experience that can be transferred directly to your studies or job
- Gain teaching and communication skills, and an opportunity to train and support others
- Make new connections within and outside your industry
- Network with other PSP projects, educators, scientists and STEM experts
- Reimbursement on mileage and expenses
- Potential financial contribution for time costs (to be agreed with project team).

STEM partner role and expectations

As a STEM partner, you will support the project team to educate teachers and/or students in their research area. This may involve elements of teaching/ sharing knowledge, experimenting, prototyping or training people in practical skills.

Skills and qualities that may be useful in this role include:

- Expertise in the project research field
- Technical skills/experience in technologies or research methodologies (depending on research area)
- General design thinking and research skills
- Problem solving
- Communication and Flexibility
- Enthusiasm to share your skills
- Enthusiasm to promote STEM

The following skills/experience is ideal but not required:

- Experience training others
- Experience working with schools/teachers/kids
- Basic project management skills (milestone tracking)

Time commitments depend on the project, but will typically include:

- Initial project planning and startup meeting with project lead
- Regular meetings with project lead (recommend monthly)
- Design / science research activities – either at school or project site. Activities will likely be in the form of short workshops on a semi-regular basis. Site visits to labs and workplaces are also encouraged.

Activities and timeframes will be planned in conjunction with the project team; the earlier a STEM partner joins the team, the greater flexibility there can be for planning activities to fit everyone's busy schedules. Ideally, the STEM partner must be willing and able to stay with the project for its duration and should have good flexibility.

What sort of projects do we fund?

In short, anything that has to do with science, technology, engineering, maths or mātauranga! We encourage our school and community groups to identify research questions or problems that are relevant to them and their whānau. Current projects include designing water-efficient gardens, modelling affordable housing, researching biodiversity in our local awa and building solar suitcases to address energy poverty.

To see more past projects, read our [project showcase](#) or follow our [Facebook page](#).

What next?

Keen to be involved in a SouthSci or WeSTEM project? [Register your interest today](#) and we will add you to our STEM expert database. Please share this opportunity with your schools and communities too – if they have a big science question, we can help them answer it!

For more information, contact **Ying Yang**, STEM Project Manager.

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The PSP programmes are managed by Te Hononga Akoranga – COMET, an Auckland Council CCO and charitable trust whose mission is to drive systems change to make education and skills more effective and equitable for all. To find out more about what we do, [visit our website](#).