

IAI/CoP-29/Info Science Technology Policy (STeP) Fellowship Program: Update July 2020 to June 2021

An important time to establish science advice mechanisms in LAC

Introduction:

The Covid-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on how important mechanisms for effective science advice are in every country as well as how valuable power skills are in scientists navigating the science/policy/diplomacy interface. The development of communication, leadership, and science diplomacy skills along with scientific excellence, mentoring and international networking make the STeP Program a strategic, innovative, low-cost/high-impact program that the IAI Directorate has developed for IAI Parties. STeP is flexible and draws from a strong global community of partners. For these reasons, several IAI Member Country representatives are working with the IAI Directorate to find creative ways to implement STeP and develop the human and institutional capacities urgently needed to synthesize and facilitate the uptake of scientific information to support the work of ministries, government agencies, and the private sector on issues of national and regional priority.

What's New: Fellowship Program Impact & Outcomes to Date:

Expansion & Diversification of Cohorts:

In addition to current cohorts in Mexico City and Argentina, we hope to implement 2-3 new cohorts, despite national budgetary challenges in 2021-2022 in potential areas such as Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Climate Change, and Natural Disaster Risk Mitigation based on discussions that are ongoing with interested S&T, Environment, and Foreign Affairs Ministries; Embassies, International/Regional organizations; Private Sector; Universities and Research Centers in several IAI Parties.

Professional Development for Early Career Scientists:

From September 2020 to date, the IAI Directorate has held 20 virtual training sessions as part of the STeP Professional Development Plan on Science-Policy, Science Diplomacy, Communication and Leadership and several more are planned for the period June-September 2021. Current STeP Fellow cohorts all fall within the IAI Science for the Sustainability of the Americas goals including sustainable agriculture (Fellows in Argentina) and sustainable cities (Fellows in Mexico).

This year STeP Fellows have joined with fellows from Mitacs Canada and the AAAS Science Technology Policy Fellowship Program in joint Science Diplomacy and communication training. This Inter-American group of 20 fellows is not just training together but also working on themes of regional and transboundary priorities and science diplomacy on topics like: 1) Science, security and diplomacy in the climate-fragile polar regions 2) Clean energy, 3) Circular economy 4) Sustainable agriculture and the food-water-energy nexus and 5) Sharing data at the global health-global change nexus. Despite the virtual challenges, this is a hands-on learning opportunity to build science-policy regional networks, identify cooperation priorities at the national and regional level, deepen their knowledge about their topics of professional interests that align with both their background and expertise and their fellowship host institutions, and elevate the issues to national and regional policy agendas.

Communication and leadership workshop sessions have been created to teach effective communication strategies in the design and dissemination of the science diplomacy projects; as well as train fellows how to use social media as a communication tool for expertise and thought leadership.

STeP Partners & Champions:

The STeP program is training future Latin American and Caribbean leaders to participate in the science-policy and diplomacy interface supported by professional development, mentorship, and international networking made possible through IAI’s strategic partnership agreements with organizations like the US AAAS, Mitacs Canada, and International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA).

The IAI Directorate is also in ongoing discussions to identify additional program champions, and collaborators. In Chile, IAI STeP is in negotiations with the Parliamentary Technical Advisory of the Chilean National Library of Congress (Asesoría Técnica Parlamentaria-ATP, de la Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile-BCN) to develop an interactive workshop on how to construct an effective policy brief. ATP has developed a unique methodology to facilitate scientific communication to policy makers, particularly to the members of the legislative branch. Central to ATP-BCN’s mandate is to inform on issues of parliamentary interest, and in particular, related to climate change and technology. Additional collaborations are being discussed with the US Department of State, through its Embassy in Peru, especially the Fulbright Fellowship Program to develop synergies with STeP.

Evidenced-Based Programming:

In such a short period of implementation, STeP has been mentioned and highlighted in peer reviewed journals and international publications as a strategic and unique program for the development of national and regional human and institutional capacity in **science-policy, science advisement, diplomacy, and communication**. These publications include:

1. “Closing the Gap Between Emerging Initiatives and Integrated Strategies to Strengthen Science Diplomacy in Latin America” <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frma.2021.664880/full>
2. “Bridging Policymakers to Science through Communication: a perspective from Latin America” <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frma.2021.654191/full>
3. UNESCO / CILAC Publication on Science Diplomacy that points to the STeP program as a regional collaboration tool for scientific diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean
4. “Science Diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean: Current Landscape, Challenges, and Future Perspectives” <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frma.2021.670001/full>

Outreach:

IAI staff has developed a number of outreach materials to showcase the program and increase awareness of the IAI mission. As a result the IAI STeP team has been invited to travel the virtual globe participating in several conferences, panels, and discussions. Many of these conferences have further promoted the program and fostered the development of more programmatic and institutional collaborations:

	<i>Event</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	University of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Scientific diplomacy: addressing challenges through research and innovation	June 26, 2020

2	UNESCO Colloquia CILAC - Inclusive science: Right to science	November 11, 2020
3	Canada's Mitacs Open Mic Session at the 2020 Canadian Science Policy Conference	November 17, 2020
4	Science diplomacy Affinity group from AAAS	December 16, 2020
5	AAAS Annual meeting	February 2, 2021
6	S4D4C Global Meeting EU Science Diplomacy Beyond 2020 - Addressing Global Challenges Together: The Role of Science Diplomacy *	March 17, 2021
7	The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) regional and national platforms/networks in the session for North, Central and South Americas and the Caribbean Region	June 4, 2021
8	DiploHub Barcelona. SciDip Talks: Science Diplomacy in the Global South. Challenges and opportunities	June 10, 2021
9	Future Leaders Collaborative Research Action (CRA) at the Sustainability Research Innovation - SRI2021	June 14, 2021
10	São Paulo School of Advanced Science on Science Diplomacy and Innovation Diplomacy (InnSciD SP) and The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) Latin American and Caribbean Regional Workshop on Science Diplomacy	August 4 and 13, 2021

*This conference 5 fellows representing each country were able to participate and share their insights and initial science diplomacy teamwork.

STeP Pilot Program Timeline and Milestones:

