

STEM Clubs: Piloting an Evaluation Framework

A user guide for a quick ‘health check’

An Inspiring Australia and University of Southern Queensland Collaboration

Background

In brief, *Inspiring Australia (Queensland)* and a project team from the *University of Southern Queensland (USQ)* have been collaborating this year to consider what constitutes quality practice in STEM clubs. A number of outcomes will eventuate from this partnership. One of these is a framework that STEM club facilitators can use to consider their overarching club structures and areas of practice to identify where they have strengths/capacity and the areas that would benefit from further consideration and discussion.

Purpose

The STEM club evaluation framework is an important and timely resource for Queensland STEM clubs. It embraces the Inspiring STEM vision:

- A society that is inspired by and values scientific endeavour
- A society that attracts increasing national and international interest in its science
- A society that critically engages with key scientific issues
- A society that encourages young people to pursue scientific studies and career

To this end, existing research documenting quality practices in STEM clubs has been utilised to develop the framework. It has been built around a number of key concepts, which requires STEM facilitators to use understandings of their local club context to evaluate current structures and practices to inform future planning.

We are thinking of it like a ‘health check’ - an opportunity to consider where your STEM club is at in its development and implementation based on a number of quality criteria.

Your valued input and insights

At this stage, we are looking to pilot this framework with a range of STEM clubs across Queensland who are at various stages of development from inception to well established.

In being involved in this pilot, we will be asking the following four actions from you:

1. To start, complete a ‘health check’ by responding to the framework based on where your STEM club is at now (e.g. not where you might like to be in the future);
2. We are also piloting an engagement questionnaire for club members that we hope will provide a quick and easy way of indicating engagement as well as help you fill in some sections of the framework;
3. Re-visit the framework towards the end of the term by conducting another ‘health check’ to see where changes have and haven’t happened; and
4. Participating in an online survey and/or interview to share your experiences of using the framework, any issues you faced and any suggestions you have to improve the usability of this resource.

Some clarifications

Most aspects of this framework and how to use it are self-explanatory, but we would like to provide you with some of our own insights into the four criteria - *not applicable*, *planning*, *developing* and *in place* - we have developed to guide this ‘health check’. This will assist in responding in a way that best represents where your STEM club is at.

Criteria	Definition
<i>Not applicable</i>	It is not a relevant consideration for your STEM club.
<i>Planning</i>	Suggests that you are considering this area, but it is not fully enacted yet
<i>Developing</i>	This area is part of your practice, but could be improved
<i>In place</i>	This area is embedded in your practice effectively

What happens next?

After you have completed a ‘health check’ of your STEM club, one of the USQ project team will be in touch to gauge your thoughts about the functionality of the framework as well as seek your suggestions for areas that could be improved. This will take place in two ways – (1) via an online survey and/or (2) as a conversation on the phone at a time that suits you. All participants in this pilot will be invited to complete the survey, while a smaller, representative group will be approached to take part in an interview.

Many thanks for your participation in this piloting process and we look forward to discussing your experience of using the STEM club evaluation framework in the near future.