

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH

Thirty-second meeting

Videoconference

22-23 May 2024

Presentation Notes

About the IAI Science Technology and Policy (STeP) Fellowship Program

1. STeP aims to build human and institutional capacities in IAI member states to provide expert scientific advice for public policy development on global change. IAI STeP fellows are early to mid-career scientists and policy makers interested in how science can help address national and regional challenges and support sustainable development. IAI facilitates their training, mentorship, and connection to an Inter-American network of science-policy fellows to exchange information, experiences, best practices, cross-border collaborations, and international career opportunities.
2. The program-specific objectives are: a) to encourage practical experience for early career scientists in policy and decision-making; b) to build expertise in the provision of scientific advice in different IAI countries; c) to promote TD approaches to problem-solving as a more effective strategy to address complex global change problems; d) to facilitate the use and incorporation of scientific knowledge in government work; e) to develop a platform for professional development and networking for Fellows and IAI Alumni to enhance lessons learned and to share science-policy experiences and best practices; and f) to promote the work of the IAI in host organizations and countries.

Intersessional Activities and Achievements

3. The main achievement of the 2023-2024 intersessional period, as measured by the retention and demand for Fellows by member and non-member states, includes the expansion of the cohort to a total of 67 Fellows from 14 countries, 24 males and 43 females over 40 different advanced degrees/disciplines, 30 public (executive and legislative branches) and private host institutions.
4. The 2024-2025 cohort (fourth generation of fellows) is currently open for call with an estimated 22 new fellows. 28 Generation 3 Fellows will also have the option to renew participation for their second year. New partners include FAPESC (Brazil) and Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) Central America Chapter. Ongoing partners include AAAS STPF (USA), ANII (Uruguay), AMEXAC (Mexico), Belmont Forum, CREA (Argentina), Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy (USA), Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation (Chile), STeP/Mitacs Alumni (Canada), SENACYT (Panama), University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus, Barbados).
5. Professional Development Program 2023-2024: The growing number of regional STeP fellows continued capacity building in communication, science diplomacy, and leadership with 16 virtual training sessions from 2023 to 2024, plus an in-person conference. The training and community of practice of early career researchers and policymakers provide valuable insight into using the transdisciplinary approach, providing context-relevant

knowledge, tools, and practical skills to tackle transboundary issues of global change (GC). Through adaptive program management, sessions organized under the training pillars (science diplomacy, communication, and leadership) are updated yearly in combined virtual and in-person experiences. The program also aligns with the priorities of the IAI as defined by decisions from the 31 CoP, the regional assessment, and the EDI policy.

Virtual Sessions:

- Introduction to Multilateral Organization (April 2023)
 - International Decision-Making Process (May 2023)
 - Transdisciplinary Approach to Science and Life (May 2023)
 - Virtual Mixer (May 2024)
 - Introduction to Science Diplomacy (August 2024)
 - Science Diplomacy Tools + Project Brainstorm (August 2024)
 - Introduction to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (September 2024)
 - Theory of Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building (September 2024)
 - Diplomatic Protocol for Scientists (October 2024)
 - Mentorship & Mentoring Information Session (November 2024)
 - Scientific Research Documents for Decision Making (November 2024)
 - Technical Considerations for writing a scientific evidence note (December 2024)
 - UNFCCC Mock Negotiation Prep Sessions (4 sessions March-April 2024)
6. The 2023-2024 program, which had 47 active fellows, ended on 24 April 2024, with the culmination of the STeP Leadership Conference: Consensus and Inclusion for Informed Decision Making (<https://www.iai.int/en/news/detail/STeP-Leadership-Conference-2024:-Consensus-and-Inclusion-for-Informed-Decision-Making>)
7. The IAI supported 29 fellows from 19 nationalities to attend the STeP Leadership Conference to learn and interact with each other alongside local and global experts. In-person sessions included:
- Field Trip Iximche: Welcome Mayan Kaqchikel ceremony & Presentations by Sotz'il Association researchers (Indigenous knowledge and climate change)
 - Introduction to the IAI Science Diplomacy Curriculum
 - UNFCCC Mock Negotiation
 - Action STePs: Daily opportunity to share/learn what each Fellow is doing in their country/host institution. This session was also communication training not just for the Fellow presenting but also for the Fellows in the audience, who synthesized and drafted social media posts based on flash talks from each Fellow.
 - Group Work and Project Presentations
 - Mentorship Mapping & STeP Leadership Statement: How to put words into action
 - Science Diplomacy Group Project Presentation Training and Preparation
 - Strengthening the nexus of climate change, health and public policy: Evidence from Lancet Countdown Latin America and the IAI, Universidad del Valle Guatemala: Fellows presented science diplomacy projects to local decision-makers, the academic

community, and the IAI Science Diplomacy Center Advisory Board. Project topics included:

1. Comparative Analysis for the United Nations Oceans Stakeholder Conference (UNOC) 2024
2. El Niño and Agriculture in the Caribbean and Central America: Exploring the Implications for Food Security
3. Analysis of Local Community and Indigenous Peoples (LCIP) Committees in international/multilateral organizations
4. Science Diplomacy and Emerging Issues Affecting Climate Change
5. Limited healthcare access in rural Oaxacan indigenous communities: One Health recommendations for addressing non-economic losses and damages
6. Where is the climate? Missing motivations and linkages in urban green development in the Americas
7. Analysis and Impact of Climate Governance
8. Impact of The Belem Declaration on Indigenous Communities and the Use of Natural Resources

General comments from Fellows about the in-person conference:

“In truth, this experience has been the best I have ever had in my life, in many ways./ La verdad, esta experiencia ha sido la mejor que he tenido en mi vida, en muchos aspectos.”

“The field trip was an enriching learning experience and, at the same time, gave us an opportunity to bond as a group. The mock negotiations were a whole course in itself, and one of the best trainings I have ever had.”

“I really enjoyed having the opportunity to meet and share with colleagues from the STeP program. The spaces designed to exchange and share our views and experiences seemed to me extremely rich./ Me gustó mucho tener la posibilidad de encontrarme y compartir con colegas del STeP program. Los espacios pensados para intercambiar y compartir nuestras miradas y experiencias me parecieron sumamente ricos.”

8. In April 2024, the STeP Program graduated the second cohort of Alumni (19 Fellows from Generation 2). The program currently has 39 alumni. An impact assessment and alumni engagement strategy has been co-developed with the Fellows and will be implemented during the 2024-2025 intersessional period.
9. For the first time, a supervisor engagement strategy was implemented to create a community and network for fellow host institutions to share strategies for institutionalizing STP fellowship programs. Three quarterly meetings were held with Fellow supervisors, including spotlight sessions, where supervisors were invited to share their perspective on 1) how their fellowship programs are structured and 2) share policy or other impacts fellows have.
10. A Mentorship Program was also implemented for the first time to strengthen the individual network of the STeP Fellows so they may better align skills needed to thrive in the science-policy interface. Eight mentorship circles were assigned with volunteers from IAI SAC/SPAC/STeP Alumni/SDC Advisory Board and other global institutional experts.

Mentors were matched with one of the eight science diplomacy group projects. An expert on evidence-based mentorship also led virtual and in-person training for volunteer mentors and for Fellows on peer-to-peer (horizontal) mentorship and professional ecosystem mapping.

Recommendation

14. The Conference of the Parties is invited to take note of this information document.