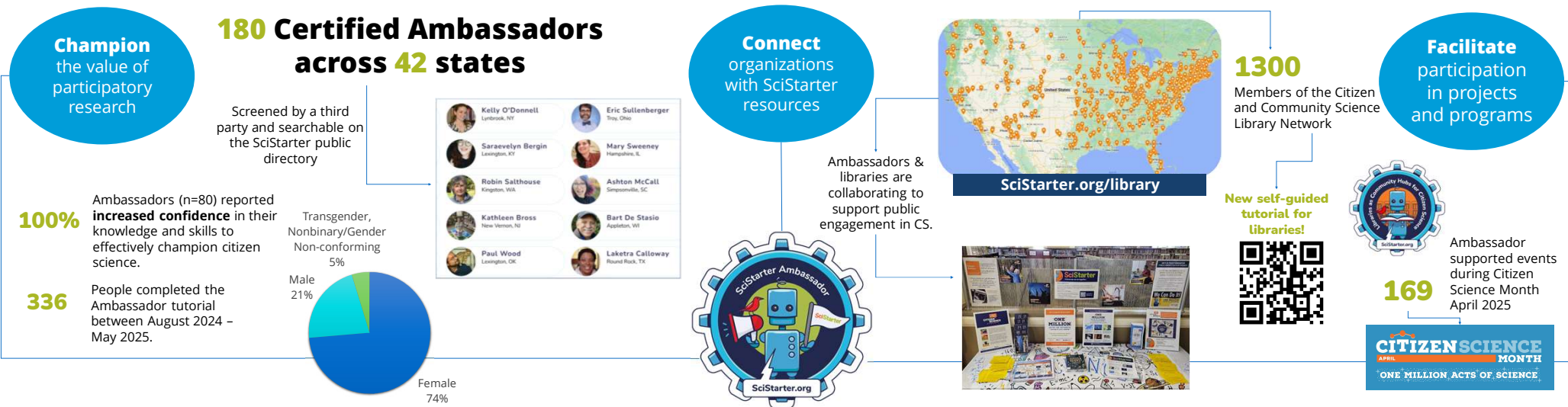


# The SciStarter Ambassador Program

**A volunteer training program designed to increase champions, connectors, and facilitators of participatory research and SciStarter resources across the US.**

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## Program Overview

**Overview:** A selective initiative offering free training and support to individuals who want to introduce citizen science and SciStarter to local organizations like public libraries, museums, and schools.

**Vision:** To expand and sustain the Citizen and Community Science Library Network, increase participation from diverse communities, and support scientific research.

**Current Stats:** 1,300 library network members, 209 Certified Ambassadors, 127 SciStarter Champions

**Dates:** Pilot (Oct 2023 – May 2024), Launch (July 2025), Cohort 1 (Oct 2024), Cohort 2 (Dec 2024), Cohort 3 (Jan 2025), Cohort 4 (March 2025), Cohort 5 (May 2025)

**Goal by 2028:** 2,000 libraries, 4,000 Ambassadors (500 Certified Ambassadors, and 3,500 SciStarter Champions)

## Rationale and Need

Our research has shown that while librarians are well-positioned to lead public engagement efforts, they often **face challenges to sustain programming**, including:

- Access to sustained professional development
- High staff turnover
- Lack of awareness of turnkey and customizable resources

The SciStarter Ambassador program is **designed to bridge that gap** by equipping volunteers with the knowledge, skills, and professionally developed resources to spark and sustain engagement.

## Key Strategies

- 1. Pilot Program:** Launched model with 11 libraries and pilot Ambassadors. The pilot confirmed a strong proof of concept.
- 2. Accessible, Free Training:** Developed self-guided training module available to anyone on SciStarter. Requires completion of the Foundations training as a prerequisite.
- 3. Cohort-Based:** Onboard Ambassadors in cohorts of 50, allowing time for iteration between cycles and fostering a sense of community among participants.
- 4. Turnkey and Customizable Resources:** Ambassadors receive ready-to-use materials that can also be tailored to fit local needs.
- 5. Leveraging the Citizen Science Month April 2025 (CSM):** Ambassadors are encouraged to align events with CSM for increased visibility and engagement.
- 6. Ongoing PD/Community Building:** Maintain active FB group, monthly webinars, and ongoing communication to share insights and foster collaboration.

## Findings and Impact\*

### SUCCESSSES

#### Outreach:

- **100+ more** events added to SciStarter compared to the previous year
- **58%** (n=54) Ambassadors supported **1-2 events**, and **42%** supported **3 or more events**.
- **63%** of reported event attendees were youth and adults; **25%** were adult-only

#### Engagement:

- **85%** (n=53) reported that their participants **learned how to participate** in a specific citizen science project
- Reports of **high engagement and enthusiasm** from children and adults, especially in small communities, and **sustained engagement** (e.g., multi-week programs, returning participants).
- Reports of **increased institutional interest** and **new partnerships** because of programming

#### Ambassador Benefits:

- **PD & Skill Building:** Improved confidence and abilities in science outreach, recognition as local experts, and enhanced career prospects.
- **Personal Fulfillment & Growth:** Increased joy, pride, sense of purpose, and opportunity for creative expression and satisfaction from inspiring others.
- **Tangible Impact:** Created lasting institutional change, expanded library resources, and contributed to scientific research.

### CHALLENGES

- **Difficulty connecting with partners**, due to staff turnover, limited resources, and lack of awareness of citizen science
- **Low attendance**, despite extensive promotions, especially in areas where cs was less familiar
- **Time constraints**, particularly for new Ambassadors navigating the requirements.
- **Balancing messages**, with Ambassadors noting the challenge of concisely explaining citizen science while tailoring to audience knowledge levels

\*All findings are based on an independent evaluation conducted by Dr. Brenda Britsch, Director of Evaluation and Research at the National Girls Collaborative Project.