

# The Cornell BEST program in 5 Q&As



**Q: What is the Cornell BEST program?**

**A:** BEST (Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training) is an **NIH-funded initiative** supported in 17 universities.

It is a resource available for **graduate students and postdocs** to develop skills not conventionally taught in academic life.

Knowledge and skills trainees acquire with the BEST program are useful in **all careers within and beyond academia**, and might satisfy their passion to use their research to have a **broader impact**.

**Q: I'm concerned that BEST may take too much time and divert my trainees from their primary research goal...**

**A:** In our last survey of **129 faculty members**, **75% of PIs** with a graduate student or postdoc participating in the BEST program **responded that their trainees benefited from BEST**.

Why is that? Because the skills trainees acquire are often directly **beneficial to their research**. A science communication course can help them do **better presentations**. Following a Lean Six Sigma certification can help them become **more efficient**.

*We stress to all participants that their research work is their first priority.*

**Q: Is it really necessary? My trainees already have the skills to become a successful academic.**

**A:** Surveys show that a **majority** of Cornell STEM PhDs **will find a job outside academia**.

Our mission is to **enhance training opportunities** for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to prepare them for careers that could take them beyond conventional academic research.

Many of our participants also **come full circle** and decide academia is where they want to be. A **successful career** outcome is based on an **informed choice**.

**Q: What happens when grad students and postdocs enroll in BEST?**

**A: Flexibility is key.** We offer opportunities in four tracks that trainees can choose from: Industry, Entrepreneurship & Management; Science Policy; Science Communication; Governance, Risk & Compliance.

Over 350 trainees have taken part, and **involvement varies for each participant**. Some might attend one career panel discussion per semester; others might take part in hands-on opportunities and internships.

We always encourage trainees to discuss their level of commitment with you.

**Q: I like the idea! How can I help?**

**A:** Whether you have experiences outside academia or you know other PhDs who have, **we welcome your input!** We would love to have you speak to groups of students interested in your career path, with all of its twists and turns. **Please contact us** to initiate this conversation.

We are happy to talk to you about any concerns you may have about your trainees participating in BEST.

Check out our website  
[www.BEST.cornell.edu](http://www.BEST.cornell.edu)



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