

Introduction to the AREA Program



Since 1995, the AALAS volunteers have conducted the Animal Research Education and Awareness Program in conjunction with the [AALAS National Meeting](#).

This enlightening and entertaining program has introduced thousands of high school science students and teachers to laboratory animal science and the vast array of career opportunities in biomedical research.

Fueled by the passionate financial support of [Pfizer](#), the AREA program is a prime example of how AALAS and the AALAS Foundation are striving to educate the next generation of leaders about the essential role of animals in research, education, and product safety testing.

Based on the success of the AREA Program at the AALAS National Meeting, many AALAS branches throughout the country have hosted similar programs at branch and district meetings.

This guide is designed to provide AALAS branches with the information and resources needed to conduct a successful AREA Program.

The Importance of Public Outreach

The health of laboratory animal science tomorrow depends on improved science preparation of our students today.

Nothing is more essential to the health of biomedical research than human resources — the people we are counting on to produce the next generation of knowledge and products in laboratory animal science.

We must, as an industry, continuously promote the benefits of biomedical research to preserve public support for animal research and maintain a steady flow of talent into the nation's science workforce.

The AREA program not only provides students with authentic information about the care and use of animals in research, but also gives students the opportunity to interact with dozens of passionate laboratory animal science professionals.

This interaction drives home the fact that AALAS members are compassionate professionals who are dedicated to providing the best possible care to the animals that are enabling us to advance human and animal health.

Participating in the AREA program is a great way to advance students' understanding, respect, and support for the critical role of laboratory animal science and the people who work in this field, and it's a fun way to make an impact on the lives of young people interested in science and medicine.

AREA Program Overview

The AREA Program at the National Meeting features a series of introductory presentations, a scavenger hunt in the AALAS exhibit hall, a complimentary lunch, and a Q&A session and the [Speaking Honestly: Animal Research Education program](#).

Introductory Presentations

The AREA Program begins with a series of presentations about the importance of using animals in research and the need for bright young students to enter the field of laboratory animal science.

Exhibition Hall Expedition

Following the introductory presentations, students are divided into small groups (four to five people) and led through the convention exhibit hall by volunteer tour guides.

On the tour, students answer research related questions submitted by participating vendors and watch booth demonstrations on various aspects of laboratory animal science.

Lunch – Q&A Session

The program continues with a complimentary lunch, a review of expedition findings, and a question and answer session.

Speaking Honestly: Animal Research Education

The program concludes with the Speaking Honestly: Animal Research Education (SHARE), an engaging program that facilitates student discussion on the use of animals in research.

The next section of this guide will detail each portion of the program and provide tips and tricks on how to perform a successful AREA Program.



Branch AREA Program Overview

The AREA Program presents your branch with a great opportunity to build quality relationships with students and teachers in your community.

This tried-and-true program not only educates young people about the essential role of animals in research, but also provides young people with valuable information about careers in laboratory animal science.

Your branch can contribute to our public outreach efforts by conducting the AREA Program at your local meeting. By conducting the program, you and your branch members will gain:

- Pride in knowing you will make a positive impact on the lives of children interested in science and medicine.
- Peace of mind that local teachers will use knowledge they learned from you to educate students in your area for years to come.
- Gratification in knowing you introduced potential future employees to careers in lab animal science.

Conducting the AREA Program

Is your branch committed to public outreach? Do you have branch members who are willing to contact high schools in your area? Are any of your branch members passionate about their work? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, your branch is well-positioned to host an AREA Program.

Build Your Team



The key to a successful AREA Program is having a dedicated core of volunteers. Here is a synopsis of the types of volunteers you’ll need:

Program Coordinator

The coordinator oversees all aspects of the AREA Program, including volunteer and school recruitment.

Emcee

The emcee welcomes students to the AREA Program and facilitates the program. The emcee delivers the introductory presentation, facilitates a Q&A session, introduces speakers and presenters, and ensures the program runs smoothly.

Program Presenters

Depending on the size and scope of your AREA Program, you'll need between one and three volunteers to give presentations on topics such as the role of animals in medical discoveries, animal welfare, and [careers in laboratory animal science](#).

Tour Guides

Tour guides serve a number of important roles throughout the duration of the AREA Program:

- Greet students upon their arrival to the meeting
- Sit with an assigned group of students during the introductory presentations
- Facilitate student-led conversations during the SHARE portion of the program

If your branch meeting is large enough to support the Expedition Hall Expedition portion of the program, guides will also accompany their group of students through your exhibit hall.

Vendors

Should your branch choose to incorporate the Exhibition Hall Expedition into your AREA Program, you'll need booth vendors who are willing to educate students about their role in advancing laboratory animal science.

Here are a few ways your branch's exhibitors can participate in the AREA Program:

- Submit a question for the scavenger hunt exam the students complete during their tour
- Provide promotional gifts (pens, stuffed animals, key chains) to students (less than \$5 value)
- Conducting short demonstrations or other interactive opportunities at their booth

Set Your Agenda

The AREA Program at the National Meeting can accommodate up to 150 students and teachers, requires dozens of volunteers, and relies on the participation of over 20 exhibitors.

Since branch and district meetings are traditionally smaller than the AALAS National Meeting, many AREA Program coordinators modify the program based on the number of meeting attendees and available volunteers.

The size and scope of your AREA Program depends on a number of factors, including the:

- Size of your branch meeting
- Number of available volunteers
- Venue where you are conducting your branch meeting
- Amount of exhibitors at your meeting
- Number of program participants you would like to attend the meeting

The chart below provides suggestions on how many program participants to invite based on the size of a branch meeting, available volunteers, and number of exhibitors.

Small Program

Students: 0-25

Volunteers Needed: 10+

Exhibitors Needed: 0-5

Medium Program

Students: 25-50

Volunteers Needed: 15+

Exhibitors Needed: 5-15

Large Program

Students: 50-150

Volunteers Needed: 20+

Exhibitors Needed: 15-25

Below are some suggested program itineraries for small, medium, and large programs. Sample program materials, talking points, and PowerPoint presentations are featured in the Gathering Resources section of this guide.

Small AREA Program

For smaller branches, we recommend inviting up to 25 biology students to participate in the program. The smaller number of students provides an opportunity for your volunteers to have meaningful, one-on-one interaction with each student who attends the event.

Below is a suggested itinerary for a Small AREA Program:

1. Introduction to Laboratory Animal Science
2. SHARE
3. Exhibition Hall Expedition (if possible)
4. Lunch
5. Careers in Laboratory Animal Science
6. Question and Answer Session
7. Student Survey

Exhibition Hall Exhibition

Just because your meeting features a few exhibitors doesn't mean you should skip the Exhibition Hall Expedition portion of the program.

If you have a dedicated group of exhibitors, we suggest allotting up to 10 minutes for each student group to visit each booth. Exhibitors can spend the extra time discussing their company's products, interacting with students, and discussing why they chose a career in laboratory animal science.

Medium AREA Program

If you have a larger meeting and a separate room at your meeting venue, we recommend inviting up to 50 students to participate in the AREA Program.

Of course, a larger AREA Program requires more volunteers and booth vendors. We recommend that you have a minimum of 15 volunteers and 6 exhibitors available for a program of this size.

Below is a suggested itinerary for a Medium AREA Program:

1. Introduction to Laboratory Animal Science
2. Careers in Laboratory Animal Science
3. Exhibition Hall Expedition (if possible)
4. Lunch
5. SHARE
6. Question and Answer Session
7. Student Survey

Managing Students

If you have the means to host more than 25 students, we suggest using AREA Program cards to organize students into animal-themed groups at the onset of the program.

The playing cards, which feature facts about animal roles in medical discoveries, are distributed to students as they enter the meeting room. Upon selecting a playing card, students find their animal-themed table and meet their assigned tour guides.

We suggest utilizing round tables at your meeting to facilitate discussion amongst students and tour guides.

Large AREA Program

If you have a large branch and meeting facility, we encourage you to invite up to 150 students to participate in your AREA Program.

The larger the meeting, the more time you'll need to prepare. But, don't worry, we've got you covered! Later sections of this guide will provide you with tips and tricks on how to conduct a successful program.

We'll also provide you with sample preparation timelines and free resources you can use to bolster your AREA Program.

Below is a suggested itinerary for a Large AREA Program:

1. Introduction to Laboratory Animal Science
2. Careers in Laboratory Animal Science
3. Exhibition Hall Expedition (if possible)
4. Lunch
5. SHARE
6. Question and Answer Session

7. Student Survey

Program Flexibility

The AREA Program is designed to be flexible. If you have an engaging speaker at your meeting, incorporate their presentation into the program. If your meeting is at a research facility, work with the host to arrange a tour of the vivarium.

The possibilities are endless!

Set a Date, Time and Location

Once you've made the commitment to conduct the AREA Program, you'll need to begin putting together your program. The first step in this process is identifying a date, time, and location for the event.

Date

It's important to host the AREA Program when school is in session. Avoid holding the event:

- At the beginning or end of the school year
- Near the holiday season
- During standardized testing periods
- Over Spring Break

Time

We suggest holding the AREA Program between the hours of 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. This timetable enables students to meet at school before being bused to the meeting center. Ending the program by 2:00 p.m. allows students to return to school in time for the end of the school day.

Location

As noted earlier, it's best to conduct the AREA Program in a meeting room that is separate from your regular branch meeting. It's also important to find a room that has sufficient audiovisual equipment to conduct an effective meeting.

We suggest utilizing a laptop and overhead projector in all meetings to enable presenters to showcase PowerPoint presentations. We also recommend setting up the room with round tables to facilitate conversation between students and tour guides.

If your branch intends to conduct the Exhibition Program Expedition portion of the program, it's important to ensure that there is enough space around booths to accommodate up to 8 students and guides.

Your meeting venue determines the size and scope of your meeting. Be sure your meeting space can accommodate the AREA Program before conducting the program.

Craft Your Message

Now that you've got your volunteers lined up and identified a meeting date, it's time to start constructing your meeting materials.

This section will provide you with detailed suggestions on how to effectively educate students about the importance of quality laboratory animal care and research.

Subsequent sections of this guide will provide you with sample resources you can incorporate into your program.

Introduction to Laboratory Animal Research

Regardless of the size of your AREA Program, it's important to provide students with an overview of laboratory animal science, highlight the essential role of animals in research, and encourage students to accept the challenge to care.

It's critical to select a program emcee that can immediately engage students in a conversation about the essential role of animals in research and set the stage for the remainder of the program.

Based on past AREA Programs, it's helpful for the emcee to tell his or her story, speak about what they know, and describe what they've experienced throughout their career in laboratory animal science.

It's also a good practice for the emcee to ask rhetorical questions to the students rather than deliver a traditional lecture. A key tenet of a successful AREA Program is audience participation, and posing questions to program participants is a great way to guide the conversation.

Some sample questions to ask students include:

- How can we use science to develop cures and treatments for injuries and diseases?
- Why do you think scientists need animals for research?
- What types of animals do you think are needed in research?
- Why do you think mice and rats are the most commonly needed animals in research?
- How many of you know somebody who has had cancer, diabetes, or heart disease?
- How many of you have pets at home?
- What are some of the ways animal research has improved human and animal health?

Incorporating Stories

Storytelling is a great way to highlight the benefits of the responsible care and use of animals in research, education, and product safety testing.

While it's important to highlight past research success stories, students are much more interested in the future than most adults. Thus introductory speakers are well-served to make future statements and invite speculation about the future:

- What will the world be like when they are 20? 30? 50? 90?
- How might human and animal medicine improve thanks to animal research?
- How are your parents and grandparents benefitting from research discoveries?

It's also helpful to illustrate how animal research has led to cures and treatments of common diseases impacting young people.

Key Messages

The key objective of the introductory presentation is to engage students in the program, highlight key facts about animal research, and refute common myths surrounding the care and use of animals in research.

The [AREA Program Talking Points document](#) features key messages speakers, tour guides, and vendors should convey to students throughout the course of the AREA Program.

Contact Schools and Teachers

It's never too early to recruit schools and teachers to participate in the AREA Program. The AALAS Foundation offers [sample invitation letters](#), emails, and [application forms](#) you can use to contact science teachers and coordinators in your area.

Here are some suggested ways to establish relationships with schools in your area:

Use your personal resources

- If you have a student in high school, contact their biology teacher or principal.
- If you have a friend or neighbor who is a teacher, invite them to participate in the program.
- Determine if any of your co-workers or colleagues has a personal connection to schools in your area. It always helps to know somebody who knows somebody.
- Work with your institution's public relations department. They often have established contacts at area high schools.

Contact school district science coordinators

- Contact the science coordinators at school districts in your area. They oftentimes are willing to send program invitations on your behalf to science teachers at area high schools.

Contact science teachers directly

- School websites typically list the contact information of the science teachers.
- If the school does not list science teachers, call the school's main line, introduce yourself, and request the contact information.
- Once you've secured the contact information of local science teachers, send them an introductory email and follow-up with a phone call a few days later.

Contact science teacher organizations

- If you're not having any luck securing participants, contact your local affiliates of the [National Science Teachers Association](#) and [National Association of Biology Teachers](#) to inform them of the field trip opportunity.

Building Your Contact List

You'll likely have to contact several schools in order to secure participants for your AREA Program. Therefore, it's important to build a spreadsheet to track teacher contacts and program participants.

The AALAS Foundation's sample spreadsheet includes the contact information for schools, principals, and science teachers. This sheet is utilized to keep track of when schools were contacted, how they were contacted (phone call, email, letter), and whether or not they've responded to our invitation.

The accompanying participant spreadsheet includes the contact information of participating teachers and chaperones. It also includes the list of students who are attending the event.

The next section features a variety of resources you can use to conduct your branch AREA Program.

Gather Resources

Thanks to the generous support of Pfizer, the AALAS Foundation offers free AREA Program resources to AALAS branches who conduct the program.

[Teacher Application Form and Survey](#)

- A program application form aimed at high school science teachers
- Includes survey questions to learn more about the students attending the program and the teachers' thoughts on animal research

[Student Application Form and Survey](#)

- A program application form aimed at high school students
- Includes survey questions to measure students' thoughts on animal research

[Letter to Parents](#)

- An optional letter teachers can send to parents that describes AALAS and the AREA Program

[Teacher Correspondence](#)

- Sample letters, emails, and call scripts to recruit schools to participate in the AREA Program

[Tour Guide Correspondence](#)

- A sample letter to recruit branch members to participate in the AREA Program

[Vendor and Tour Guide Registration Form](#)

- A program registration form aimed at recruiting booth exhibitors and tour guides
- The form provides suggestions on how branch members can participate in the program AREA

[AREA Program Playing Cards](#)

- A series of laminated, 8.5" x 11" playing cards featuring facts about how animal research advances human and animal health
- The cards can be used to randomly assign students to animal-themed groups AREA Program

[AREA Program Logo](#)

- A high-resolution graphic of the AREA Program logo for use on promotional materials

AREA Program Backpacks

- Colorful string backpacks embroidered with the AREA Program logo that are given to students
- The backpacks are filled with public outreach resources, a notebook, and a pen.

[Name Tag Template](#)

- Template used to create name tags for program participants and volunteers AALAS Foundation

Public Outreach Resources

- The AALAS Foundation offers a number of free resources aimed at students and teachers
- These resources are pre-stuffed into AREA Program backpacks

Student Packets

[Animal Roles in Medical Discoveries \(PDF\)](#)

[Careers in Biomedical Research \(PDF\)](#)

[Product Safety Testing Poster \(PDF\)](#)

[If There Is No Research, There Is No Cure \(PDF\)](#)

[Frogs: A Course for High School Students](#)

[Kids 4 Research "Frog" Punch Out Card](#)

[Kids 4 Research/Whyville Flyer](#)

Teacher Packets

[Animal Roles in Medical Discoveries \(PDF\)](#)

[Careers in Biomedical Research \(PDF\)](#)

[Product Safety Testing Poster \(PDF\)](#)

[If There Is No Research, There Is No Cure \(PDF\)](#)

[Frogs: A Course for High School Students](#)

[Kids 4 Research "Frog" Punch Out Card](#)

[Kids 4 Research/Whyville Flyer](#)

[Caring for Animals in the Classroom](#)

[Public Outreach Order Form](#)

[Discussion Points](#)

- A variety of discussion points on topics such as the importance of animals in research and careers in laboratory animal science.

Careers in Laboratory Animal Science

- A comprehensive PowerPoint presentation highlighting Careers in Laboratory Animal Science

Program Schedule

- Suggested program itineraries featuring a detailed schedule of events Vendor Questions
- Sample laboratory animal science questions vendors can ask students during the Exhibition Hall Expedition

Exhibition Hall Expedition Questionnaire

- A sample exhibition hall expedition questionnaire and answer key

Small AREA Program Checklist

- A comprehensive task list for branches conducting small AREA Programs.

Medium AREA Program Checklist

- A comprehensive task list for branches conducting medium-sized AREA Programs

Large AREA Program Checklist

- A comprehensive task list for branches conducting large AREA Programs

Post-Event Survey

- A comprehensive student survey to measure the impact of the AREA Program after the event

Thank You Letters

- A series of thank you letters aimed at our guides and booth exhibitors

Prepare for the Program

Now that you've completed the preliminary planning for your AREA Program, you'll need to tackle some basic tasks to ensure you have a successful event.

Prepare Name Tags

Prior to the meeting, you'll need to utilize the AREA Program name tag template to prepare name badges for students, teachers, chaperones, and program volunteers.

Some program facilitators choose to assign students to animal-themed groups prior to the meeting. Other chose to utilize the AREA Program playing cards to randomly assign program participants to groups at the National Meeting.

If you chose to assign students to groups prior to the meeting, be sure to include the student's animal-themed group name on his or her name tag. This will help the tour guides keep track of their students during the Exhibition Hall Expedition.

Below is a list of team names for your consideration:

- Armadillos

- Cats
- Chickens
- Chimpanzee
- Chinchillas
- Dogs
- Ferrets
- Frogs
- Fruit Fly
- Guinea Pigs
- Horseshoe Crab
- Mice
- Mini Pigs
- Quails
- Rabbits
- Rats
- Sheep
- Woodchucks
- Zebrafish

Group Assignment Tips

- When grouping students, do your best to separate participants from the same school.
- If possible, assign no more than five students to groups with one guide with no more than eight students to groups with two guides.
- If you chose to assign students into groups prior to the meeting, provide students with the AREA Program playing card that corresponds with their group.
- Encourage your tour guides to have fun with their group. Past tour guides have dressed up like animals and provided students with animal-themed trinkets and stuffed animals.

Order Lunch

No matter how students are participating in your AREA Program, you'll need to set aside time to feed your ever-hungry teenagers.

Depending on your venue, you may be required to purchase box lunches from the facility. In our experience, you can expect box lunches from your meeting venue to cost between \$15 and \$20 apiece.

If your meeting venue allows you to bring in food, box lunches from sub sandwich shops typically run between \$8 and \$15 apiece.

Lunch Tip

- Be sure to have vegetarian options available for lunch. Approximately 15% of the lunches you order should feature vegetarian-friendly food.

Order Foundation Resources

Through the financial support of Pfizer, the AALAS Foundation offers free AREA Program backpacks, notebooks, and pens to local AREA Programs.

If you contact us at least three weeks prior to your meeting, we will stuff the backpacks with AALAS Foundation outreach resources and send them to you free of charge.

The AALAS Bookstore is another source of free Foundation outreach resources. Please order these resources at least three weeks prior to your meeting in order to ensure they arrive on time.

Prepare Tour Guide Packets

Once you have your tour guides lined up, it's crucial to provide them with the information they need to successfully conduct the program. Tour guide packets include:

- A detailed agenda of the event
- A list of participating schools, teachers, chaperones, and students
- A list of participating vendors illustrating what exhibitors will ask questions, provide promotional items, and conduct demonstrations at their booth.
- Copies of the AREA expedition questionnaire
- A map of Exhibit Hall with AREA vendor booths highlighted
- Copies of the AREA Program Survey
- Talking points on the essential role of animals in research

Packet Tips

- Send an electronic copy of the packet to tour guides prior to the meeting
- Provide tour guides with a manila folder at the meeting containing the packet materials, AREA Program playing cards, and their name tag.

Provide Directions

When following up with teachers, provide them with detailed directions on how to get to your meeting venue.

Direction Tips

- Be sure to identify locations for the school buses to drop off students.
- Note where buses can park after dropping off the students.
- Be sure to note any parking fees that may apply and work with teachers to identify who will pay for parking expenses.

Conducting the AREA Program

The big day is finally here. Here are some last minute tips and tricks you can use to make your program a success:

- Conduct a briefing prior to the meeting to ensure your volunteers are on the same page.
- Place tour guide packets and name tags at their assigned table prior to the meeting. Have a volunteer available to check in volunteers and direct them to their table.

- Have your tour guides stationed at their table when the students arrive. Place a placard at the center of each table with team names to help students find their seat.
- If you ordered AREA Program backpacks, place them at the tables. Try to give each group the same colored backpack. This will make it easier for guides to keep track of students during the Exhibition Hall Expedition.
- Bring a number of blank nametags just in case extra students show up.
- Secure the cell phone numbers of teachers and chaperones attending the meeting. Be sure to provide all participating schools with your cell phone number should they have any questions.
- Organize student nametags alphabetically prior to the meeting. Have the students pick up their nametags before entering the meeting room.

Checklists

We've prepared a series of step-by-step checklists to ensure program facilitators have the tools and knowledge they need to conduct a successful AREA Program.

The checklists are broken down into three categories:

- [Small AREA Program](#)
- [Medium AREA Program](#)
- [Large AREA Program](#)

Planning for Next Time

Immediately following the AREA Program, it's important to survey students to measure the success of your program and identify opportunities for improvement in future programs. The AALAS Foundation offers a post-meeting sample survey to help you measure how student attitudes shifted as a result of the program.

Funding Opportunities

The AREA Program is a relatively low-cost event. Most branch AREA Program expenditures are limited to lunch for program participants, printing (i.e. name tags, meeting agendas), and meeting room expenses.

Some branches chose to recruit sponsors to cover these expenses. Others go the extra mile and reimburse schools for transportation expenses related to the event.

We understand that branch budgets are tight, so we wanted to let you know about two other potential funding source for your AREA Program.

Pfizer Branch AREA Program Fund

Thanks to the generous support of Pfizer, the AALAS Foundation is able to provide a limited number of grants to AALAS branches interested in conducting the AREA Program.

A total of \$5,000 is available annually to cover local program expenses.

For information about how your branch can apply for a Pfizer Branch AREA Program Fund, please contact AALAS Foundation Administrator Vicki Campbell or AALAS Foundation Administrative Assistant Corrine Mokake at foundation@aalas.org.

Program Assistance

The AALAS Foundation staff is available to help you plan your AREA Program. Please contact Foundation Administrator [Vicki Campbell](#) or AALAS Foundation Administrative Assistant [Corrine Mokake](#) at 901-754-8620 if you would like help planning your AREA Program.