Despite considerable impediments such as time, funding, and institutional disincentives, early career scientists show a growing appetite for communications training. At the same time, leaders within government and academia are increasingly aware of the critical importance of empowering these researchers to communicate widely and effectively. While communications trainings for scientists have proven successful in small networks or on an institution-by-institution basis, “scaling up” to serve the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) community at a system-wide level presents a grand challenge.

OUR GOAL
With support from the National Science Foundation, COMPASS is working to catalyze the development of a collaborative and strategic vision for building systemic communication capacity among STEM graduate students. The result will be a roadmap that provides guidance for 1) implementing best practices in communications skills training, 2) integrating communications as core curriculum, 3) encouraging institutional support and reward for outreach efforts, and 4) identifying funding streams required to effect lasting change.

OUR PROCESS
Beginning in November 2012, we are scoping the current state of communications training for STEM graduates. We are undertaking a broad and intensive series of informational interviews to map the knowledge landscape and identify those organizations and innovators shaping science communication trainings nationwide. In late 2013, we will convene a workshop of thought leaders, scholars, and practitioners to create a national roadmap for systematically building the communications capacity of next-generation scientists. Following the workshop, we will collaborate with workshop participants to disseminate the roadmap through publications, talks, and panel discussions at relevant venues.

OUR ASK
We welcome your feedback, suggestions, and introductions to other interested or useful parties. We are particularly eager for your insights on key network nodes in the knowledge landscape. We are gathering information in three main categories: practitioners of science communication training, scholars of science communication, and financial and institutional levers for systemic change.

ABOUT COMPASS
For the last decade, COMPASS has worked as a boundary organization, helping build communications capacity within the academic community through targeted training and skill building and in helping scientists understand and effectively engage with policymakers and the media. In addition to serving as the lead trainers for the Leopold Leadership Program since its inception, the COMPASS team has led more than one hundred communications trainings reaching thousands of scientists.