

**Conservative Party Policy Task-Force
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics 'STEM'**



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**House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA**
June 2006

Memo: Call for evidence

As you may know, the Conservative Party has embarked upon a policy review period. David Cameron has established six policy groups, one of which is focussed on the challenges facing Britain's economy. We have now started to examine the reforms required to make Britain's economy more competitive, to promote innovation and to remove barriers to business and wealth creation.

As part of this work, I am delighted to be chairing the Task-force on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). We are now calling for evidence, ideas and points of view for our consideration. As part of this I should appreciate hearing your views on the themes most relevant to you of those that are set out in the attached framework. Please make your response as succinct as possible bearing in mind we are looking for practical and radical policy suggestions.

Kindly send your responses by Friday 14 July 2006 to chilmans@parliament.uk

We may follow up with requests for more information or for a meeting. We shall take account of all views submitted (on a no names basis unless otherwise advised). The Task-force will analyse ideas and evidence so as to propose a set of priorities and actions for an incoming Conservative Government. Our interim report will be published around the end of the year.

I should be very grateful for your cooperation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Taylor." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Ian Taylor MP
Chairman, STEM Task-force**

**Conservative Party Policy Task-Force
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS “STEM”**

A Framework for Action

Guiding principle

The exploitation of STEM, including an increase in the related knowledge and skills base, is crucial to the success of the British economy. The purpose of the STEM Task-force is to recommend what main actions, in priority order, an incoming Conservative Government should take to maximise the contribution of STEM to the economic competitiveness of the UK.

STEM is important to the UK’s economic competitiveness

In the UK we cannot afford to be complacent about the resilience of our STEM base. Our accumulated expertise is at risk of being eroded by ever increasing international competition. Market incentives are moving highly skilled jobs abroad, where an exceedingly well educated work force can achieve a comparable or even better performance at a fraction of the UK labour cost. Universities are now competing in a global education and research environment.

As a result, we face an enormous challenge. An enhanced innovative approach to science, technology, services and manufacturing has to be central to our response in both the public and private sectors. Our economy should be in a position to capture benefits if we direct our efforts and resources productively.

What role can government and the private sector respectively play to increase the chances of this being achieved?

Themes for examination

- the scope of a national strategy for STEM
- the relative importance of applied science and ‘blue skies’ research
- the key research areas that need to be developed and/or retained
- the achievement and exploitation of STEM in a global market
- the most effective mechanisms for the successful exploitation of STEM
- the relative effectiveness of input funding versus government procurement
- the methods and mechanisms of attracting and retaining students/leading experts
- the role of Public Sector Research Establishments
- the remit, organisation and management of the Research Councils
- the impact of EU and international research collaboration in STEM

The work of the STEM Task-force is part of the Economic Competitiveness Policy Review Group. A fellow Task-force on Higher Education and Skills will look at personal skills development and transfer. This will include reviewing policy for attracting students, the state of vocational training and the comparative decline in student numbers in several STEM disciplines.

The STEM Task-force will take evidence from individuals, universities, professional societies and businesses. It will make an interim report at the end of this year.

For further details or submissions email: chilmans@parliament.uk