RSB's Outreach and Engagement Quality Control Roadmap (June 2023)

Aims

This document aims to provide advice and signposting to useful external online resources to assist members of the Society in creating new high quality outreach and engagement activities, events and resources. It is intended that all applicants to the RSB outreach and engagement grant scheme consult this guidance before preparing their application for grant funding.

A Quality Control Roadmap

The RSB and its outreach and engagement working group committee have identified the following features and attributes that would be helpful or needed to create successful and impactful outreach and engagement activities, events and resources. To engage a diverse range of public and, or school audiences with the science and wonder of biology:

- Challenging stereotypes with unexpected and thought-provoking ideas and topics can be very impactful as these make your audience think and really engage with the biosciences
- Good and inclusive outreach and engagement features a diverse range of role models, people and collectively across the biosciences a diverse range of bioscience specialisms. So everyone can see 'people like them' represented in a range of roles and opportunities, so everyone sees something that could appeal to themselves or someone they know. This provides audiences with realistic and diverse role models, real people doing real science and able to share this with their own authentic voices
- Consider what change your engagement is trying to achieve and how this might follow on from your outreach and engagement intervention
- What follow up activity or reminders of your activity, event or resource will you include to provide lasting impact?
- Try to include a follow up activity or give away item to trigger positive and more long-lasting memories of your engagement activity or event
- Consider what barriers need to be overcome by your intended audiences and put in place measures to make your outreach and engagement more accessible for these audiences
- Who is your audience? Consider this in advance and think about barriers. For example if you are working with schools ask a teacher what issues they face and help them overcome these factors
- Do some research in advance perhaps by setting up a focus group or making contact with potential audience members early on in planning to help inform your final plans
- Try to work with people in your principle audience (for example your local community) at the planning stage. If possible invite and actively include people from your intended audience in the full activity or event planning process. Listen to their input and act on their advice to ensure your planned activity, event or resource is accessible, suitable for the audience and fit for the outreach and engagement purpose you are aiming to achieve
- As much as possible try to work in partnership with your audience making them part of the planning team
- Try to be inclusive and consider how to increase accessibility at each step of your planning
- What is the core idea? Make sure this is clear in your planning
- Think how to make science relevant to your intended audience, make it interesting and fun for them to engage to create positive and lasting memories for them and for you
- Be welcoming to your audience, sometimes it's the little thoughtful gestures, details and actions that make all the difference

- Consider the dimensions of science capital in your planning to encourage your outreach audience to feel that science is for them, they are part of it and will be welcomed for their talents and abilities and will be accepted for being who they are
- Also try to engage with people who don't think science is for them (not just those who do)
- Myth busting false assumptions people may have made is really important to give your audience informed choice, and helping them feel connected to and welcomed in science settings or by scientists
- Use short videos on social media where possible taking care of safeguarding of participants
- Storytelling is not just for use in schools. It works well for anyone at any age or career stage
- Capture and feature a variety of outreach volunteers' authentic voices
- If you are applying for a grant to cover the costs of an outreach or engagement activity, event or resource be sure to check the eligibility of your proposal before applying. Make sure you will be able to meet the application criteria and the grant schemes' terms and conditions. Read these criteria carefully in advance of submitting any application so you can target applications at funding opportunities, which are most likely to award you grant funding. If in doubt, contact the grant funder in advance to check your eligibility before applying for a grant
- When applying for a grant make it clear in your application, how and why you meet the grant's purpose and application criteria and how your project will have a positive impact on the audience you aim to reach. Clearly identify your audience and how your project is going to be tailored to this audience and the aims, impact and participation numbers you hope to achieve
- Use your outreach or engagement activity, event or resource to create positive memories that associate with the biosciences (and STEM subjects)
- Carefully consider what your project will achieve if it is successful and how you will measure and gain evidence of this success
- Include as many details as possible for your planned post event or activity evaluation process and aims in any grant applications you make

External resources you may find useful

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) is an organisation that aims to support universities to engage with the public. The advice and resources the organisation produces and signposts to can be used to inform and increase the quality of anyone's engagement with any public audiences.

The NCCPE has an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) online hub. This includes resources and a starting guide to support engagement through developing inclusive practice.

Evaluating your outreach and engagement activities, events or resources is important to ensure you are able to engage with your intended audiences and make an effort to measure the impact of your intervention. This helps you improve and increase the impact of your project over time because it provides data to help inform your plans, activities or future grant applications. The NCCPE provide links to useful engagement evaluation resources, tools and advice to help you start to think about how to evaluate and measure the impact of your outreach and engagement. The NCCPE has an online collection of resources to help you to deliver outreach and engagement and is worth checking this on a regular basis to learn about the latest recommendations for good practice and for new and useful tools, advice and guidance.

The UK wide STEM Ambassador scheme run by STEM Learning is open to anyone with a passion for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) to join or to help find someone to help you deliver a STEM activity aimed at schools. The STEM ambassador programme is for you if you want to share your passion for STEM and to inspire the next generation of bioscientists. You can become a STEM ambassador and join a growing community of like-minded people who want to make a difference.

26/05/2023