

Introduction

The Science & Technology Facilities Council is recognised as a leader in STEM engagement in the UK. We reach well over a million people every year with our engagement activities and training, including the work of our community that we support with grant funding, networking, and the sharing of best practice.

During the 2016/17 financial year, we published our refreshed [public engagement strategy](#). This was accompanied by an [evaluation framework](#) that helps us report, improve, and celebrate our work, and a review of the STFC community's prevailing attitudes towards public engagement: [the PEACE report](#). This short delivery plan outlines the key activities we will undertake during the 2017/18 financial year to develop towards the vision we have for the programme in 2021.

Public Engagement in STFC

Our public engagement programme uses the work of STFC's staff, facilities, and wider community to involve people with science and technology. We want people all across the UK be inspired by science and engineering, to understand its value to society, and to appreciate that science and engineering open doors to hundreds of rewarding careers.

Our public engagement team is based over four STFC sites – our three National Laboratory sites at Daresbury Laboratories in Cheshire, Rutherford Appleton Laboratories in Oxfordshire, the UK Astronomy Technology Centre in Edinburgh, and our Headquarters in Swindon. The team carries out a wide range of activities that deliver our strategy, including bringing the public onto our science and innovation campuses, providing grant funding schemes for public engagement, working with teachers and educators to incorporate STFC science as a context for their teaching, creating partnerships with national and international organisations that increase awareness and understanding of STFC's science and engineering, and networking together the STFC community to share ideas and best practice.

As one of seven UK Research Councils, STFC is committed to identifying appropriate opportunities for cross-Council partnership working that delivers more effective engagement outcomes, or allows us to undertake our work more efficiently.

Supporting the strategic development of STFC Public Engagement

All our activities are conceived and delivered in line with our public engagement strategy. This delivery plan provides a short outline of the major areas of work we will be focusing on during 2017-18. Each of these projects addresses, to some extent, all five of the strategic aims for public engagement that are listed in our strategy.

1. Supporting the development of UK Research & Innovation public engagement

The development of UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) is an important change to the UK's higher education landscape. We will work with the other Research Councils, and UKRI partners, to support the development of an appropriate strategy for UKRI public engagement with continues to champion and deliver leadership of public engagement.

2. A public engagement and communications campaign for the James Webb Space Telescope

The James Webb Space Telescope is a flagship project for STFC and the UK research community. We will work with partners across the UK to plan a strategy for a nationwide campaign that fully exploits the inspirational value of the Telescope and highlights the important role that the UK has played in the engineering, design, and scientific content of the mission.

3. STFC science & technology supporting formal STEM learning

Educators are key STEM influencers, and people with whom we want to work closely to understand how stories of STFC science & technology can be best used to enhance learning in schools. We will work to map our science & technology to national curricula, and improve and prioritise our communication with teachers.

4. Implementing STFC's evaluation framework for public engagement

We will continue to develop our approach towards effective evaluation, expanding our use of qualitative information to accompany quantitative data. We will also seek to apply the principles of our evaluation framework to our wider programme, including working with grant holders, and both national and international partners.

5. Understanding attitudes to public engagement within STFC peer review

The ability to secure project-specific public engagement funding via Pathways to Impact on STFC research and training grants is an important component of ensuring adequate engagement funding by STFC. We will examine the current degree to which this system is functioning effectively, and work with our review community to overcome existing barriers.

6. Better supporting STFC staff to participate in and deliver public engagement

Our hugely successful open events at Harwell, Daresbury, and the Royal Observatory Edinburgh have shown us how enthused STFC staff are to engage with their local audiences. We will undertake consultation with STFC staff to inform targeted support for them to ensure that the work of the engagement team translates into better engagement practice across the whole of STFC.

7. Raising STEM capital by improving our engagement with diverse audiences

We will build on our work that has previously focused on the gender inclusivity of our whole programme, and expand our focus to consider how to best tackle barriers to engagement with audiences from socio-economic backgrounds that we know we do not usually reach. Our initial focus will be on learning from existing best practice, before considering how to apply this learning to our own programme.

May 2017