

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 2018/19 financial year, we launched our [Wonder initiative](#) across all aspects of our programme, designed to increase our focus on engaging underserved communities in socioeconomically-deprived areas of the UK. We published [Pathways to Excellence in Public Engagement](#), our review of how STFC's community plan, assess, monitor, and report impact via Pathways to Impact. We also launched the fourth phase of our highly-successful [Explore Your Universe](#) programme in conjunction with the Association for Science and Discovery Centres, and continued to implement new approaches to local engagement surrounding our national laboratories. This short delivery plan outlines the key activities we will undertake during the 2019/20 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. The team's work also supports the wider STFC research community in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of public engagement by sharing good practice and learning from our funded programmes, and providing advice on the creation of high quality funding applications.

As part of UK Research and Innovation, STFC is committed to identifying appropriate opportunities for 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 development work we will be focusing on during 2018/19. Each of these projects addresses, to some extent, all five of the strategic aims for public engagement that are listed in our strategy.

1. The Wonder initiative: improving our engagement with underserved audiences

We strongly believe that STEM is for everyone, regardless of background. Drawing on best practice from within the STFC community and beyond, we are committed to moving the focus of our public engagement programme to more effectively and appropriately engage with low STEM capital audiences in socioeconomically-deprived areas of the UK. This year, every strand of our programme will continue activities as part of this transition.

2. 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. Having undertaken work to understand how our science & technology maps to national curricula, we will develop a more structured approach to working with teachers, educators, and sector bodies across our national programme.

3. 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 continue to lead partners across the UK to implement 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.

4. Developing actions to support Pathways to Excellence in Public Engagement

The Pathways to Excellence in Public Engagement report details the results of our investigation into the peer review behaviours of the STFC community. The accompanying action plan sets out short-, medium-, and long-term targets for change: we will begin to implement these changes, focusing initially on improving our processes and associated guidance, and working with our community on longer-term changes to behaviour.

5. Supporting STFC staff and early career researchers to deliver high-quality public engagement

We benefit from the enthusiasm of our own staff, and researchers in the wider STFC community, to participate in and lead excellent engagement activities. Our consultations and reviews have made us aware of a range of barriers and challenges that make it more difficult than it should be for people to undertake this work, and so we will continue to develop and arrange approaches that help to support people increase their engagement knowledge, skills, and networks.

6. 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 seek to apply the principles of our evaluation framework to our wider programme, including working with grant holders, and both national and international partners. Importantly, we will also look to ensure that the learning we gain from this evaluation data demonstrably feeds into our programme and the wider engagement community.

April 2019