

NATIONAL FORUM FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN STEM

MEETING / ACTIVITY SUMMARIES

2016

Forum Activity and Outputs - 2016

Key activity	Key outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Forum Networking Event• Sector Survey exploring priorities for the Forum• Publication of Factors Affecting Public Engagement by UK Researchers• National Forum Response to HoC Science and Technology Select Committee• Input from expert speakers on engaging underserved audiences:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Jo Reilly, Head of Participation and Learning, Heritage Lottery Fund○ Professor Louise Archer, UCL• Supporting the Professionalisation of Public Engagement: Commissioning SW Pilot Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Factors Affecting Public Engagement by UK Researchers¹• National Forum Networking Event Report²• National Forum response to Networking Event³• Written evidence submitted to House of Commons Science and Technology Committee's Inquiry into how government, scientists, the media and others encourage and facilitate public awareness of and engagement in science⁴.

February 2016

The sixth meeting of the National Forum focused on:

- The results from the Factors Affecting Public Engagement by Researchers
- Plans for the National Forum Networking Event and Sector Survey
- Progressing Forum activity in the areas of evaluation, engaging underserved audiences and greater coordination across emerging areas of Science and Technology.

¹ <https://wellcome.ac.uk/news/what-are-barriers-uk-researchers-engaging-public>

² https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/national_forum_networking_event_report_march_2016.pdf

³ https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/national_forum_networking_event_update_september_2016.pdf

⁴ https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/national_forum_pe_stem_response_to_the_house_of_commons_science_and_technology_committee.pdf

Summary of Discussion:

- Clare Matterson tabled the National Forum's response to the Government Chief Scientist's Public Engagement roundtable. A key aspect of the Forum's response was to establish working groups – focused on achieving greater coordination in the areas of Machine Learning and Genomics and Gene Editing.
- The engaging underserved audiences working group put out a call for members to share working definitions for 'underserved audiences' and their purposes for engaging with these groups. Members noted that they wanted to move beyond case studies of 'what works' to interventions that provide insight and drive behaviour.
- The findings from the evaluation scoping study were presented. Through discussions three key areas were identified where the Forum could contribute:
 - Improve evaluation literacy,
 - Offer evaluation support and expertise,
 - Commission summary work to draw on learning from evaluations focused on particular audiences/ participants or particular subject areas.
- The findings from the Factors Affecting Public Engagement with Research were shared and explored. Members felt there was a need to keep addressing the structural incentives and rewards for engagement (e.g. by writing it into grants and awards etc.). They felt the sector may need an inspiring vision to mobilise change, i.e. asking where we want to get to in 10 years' time. It was agreed that the Forum would have important role to play in translating that vision into reality.

June 2016

The seventh meeting of the National Forum focused on:

- Reflecting on the feedback from the networking event and sector survey and ways the Forum can respond
- Input from expert speaker Jo Reilly, Head of Participation and Learning, Heritage Lottery Fund - looking at the HLF model for funding/broadening audience engagement
- Reviewing a proposal which was triggered by the networking event in March for a South West Pilot - Professionalising Public Engagement with STEM
- Considering the wider policy context for the Forum and how to leverage the collective Forum responses to the select committee inquiry

Summary of Discussion:

- Of the eight additional Forum priority areas suggested at the networking event, members agreed on three which would inform future Forum activity:
 - Training, professional development and resource sharing;
 - Making the Case for Public Engagement with STEM;
 - Commissioning research and thinking.
- A proposal from Helen Featherstone (University of Bath and freelance consultant), Colin Johnson (ex CEO Techniquest) and Justin Dillon (University of Bristol) for a South West Pilot exploring professionalisation of Public Engagement. The pilot was commissioned and seeks

to explore ways in which providers in the region could collaborate with a long-term vision to:

- Develop skills;
 - Advance practice through sharing of expertise and resources;
 - Improve content;
 - Increase reach (numbers of publics reached);
 - Increase the size and diversity of the audiences reached, for example, by better marketing, and reducing duplication of provision;
 - Evidence the value of learning in out-of-school settings.
- The Forum's response to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee's Inquiry was discussed. The full response [is available online](#).

November 2016

The eighth meeting of the National Forum focused on:

- Finalising proposals for a Genomics Coordinating Group
- Next steps for the Forum
- Science capital, Brexit and the future of Public Engagement with STEM, with expert input from Professor Louise Archer
- Audience insight and data – reviewing proposals from the Secretariat to galvanise a step change in how the sector draws on and shares audience data.

Summary of discussions:

- BEIS and Wellcome presented a joint paper reviewing the work of the Forum to date, inviting members to comment on future of the Forum. Members expressed a desire to work on a small number of strategic projects and to work more closely with the secretariat and working groups in-between meetings. They noted the limited time and resource for Forum activity and welcomed the meetings as a space for reflection and joining-up across a diverse sector.
- Professor Louise Archer introduced a sociological lens for understanding engagement and science capital, highlighting new work to develop an index for adult science capital and a survey tool to support evaluation. It was agreed that the Forum would embed Science Capital across its work and a working group was established to oversee this.
- Members explored the implications of Brexit for Public Engagement, considering in particular – (i) what practical steps the Forum should be taking to respond to the Brexit debate? And (ii) how Science capital could inform that response? Members raised the possibility of a social responsibility charter for the STEM Sector.
- The secretariat put forward two proposals for improving the tools available to embed audience insight into public engagement activity. The proposals looked at existing tools in use in other sectors including for example the [Arts Council Audience Finder](#), the [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#), and [Culture Counts](#). It was agreed that further work was required to align how we use and collect data across the sector (taken forward by the evaluation working group) before investigating the feasibility of developing new tools.