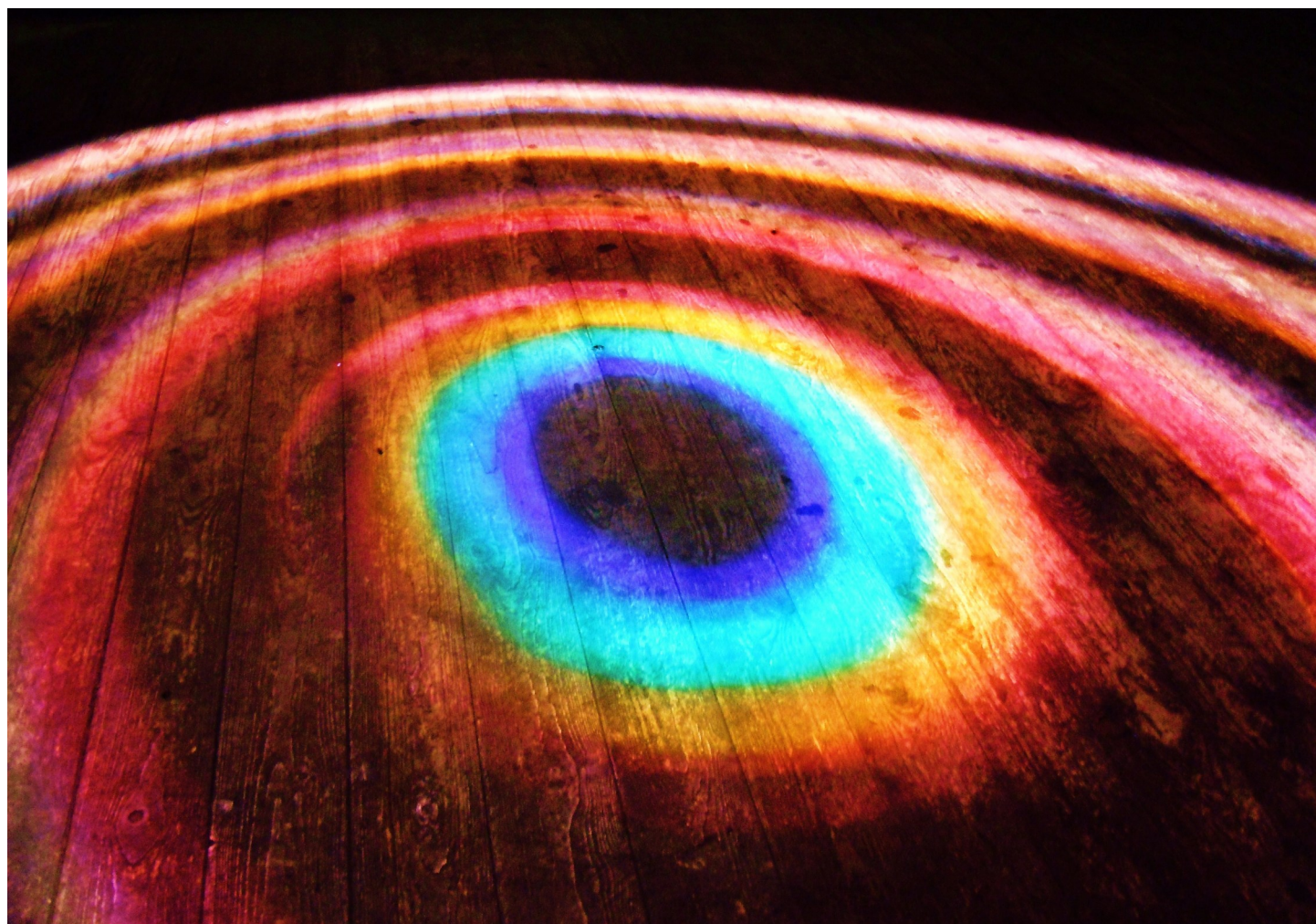


# Researcher's Guide to engagement



The 'Afterlife of Heritage Research' Training Programme

<http://www.heritageafterlife.com>



<http://www.facebook.com/groups/heritageafterlife/>



@HeritageAfter



# Afterlife of Heritage Research Project

## About

The 'Afterlife of Heritage Research' Skills Training Programme (2012-13) supported more than fifty research students and early career researchers (ECRs) in developing skills, capacity and profiles for professional careers in the heritage sector. The project's tailored training provision (including skills workshops, collaborative public engagement projects, work placements in cultural institutions and industrial mentoring) assisted students and ECRs in identifying, understanding and 'translating' the benefits of their heritage research in 'real-life' public, professional and business contexts.

The training programme produced four self-completion training guides that were informed by the interaction between partners and the students' and ECRs' experiences in collaborating with cultural organisations and professionals. The guides as well as reflective blog posts and short documentary films (available on the training programme's website: <http://www.heritageafterlife.com/>) aim to: assist humanities research students and ECRs in exploring how public engagement and research placements can benefit them, their research, and the relevance of their research to non-expert audiences; help students and ERCs think creatively about possible business or enterprise prospects of their research; contribute to the training provision offered by Researcher Development teams at UK Universities; and enable cultural organisations design and run placements that benefit them, researchers and the public.

## Acknowledgements

With many thanks to:

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## An engaging researcher

is one that actively involves the public with their research

They create opportunities for others to get involved, provide new perspectives on their own work, stimulate people to be curious about the world of research - and how it might impact on their lives

This self-completion guide has been designed for researchers who are new to, or have some experience of public engagement. It will allow you to:

- explore how public engagement can benefit you, your research, and the public with whom you engage
- discover the range of activities you can use to engage the public with your research
- understand the benefits of working with cultural organizations
- investigate the needs of different publics, explore potential engagement challenges, and identify solutions for overcoming them
- put your knowledge and skills into action to design and plan a public engagement activity.

You can work through the guide independently or use it as a trigger for discussion with your supervisor or fellow researchers.

Activities are shown by



Useful resources are highlighted by



What do you hope to gain or learn by completing this guide?

# What is public engagement?

There are many definitions of public engagement depending on your research discipline. It can also be known by different names, for example knowledge exchange, public and patient involvement, science communication or participatory enquiry. Generally, most definitions involve the collaborative sharing of knowledge and experience between the researcher and the public.

**“Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interactions and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.”**

National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)

Public engagement covers a wide range of activities from the more traditional information-giving events (eg. public lectures) to more collaborative engagement (eg. research co-production). The NCCPE have categorised this range as:

**Informing:** inspiring, informing and educating the public, and making the work of Higher Education more accessible eg. talks, displays at open days, working with the media, providing advice to the public

**Consulting:** Actively listening to the public’s views, concerns and insights eg. public debate or dialogue, lifelong learning, consulting the public about your research

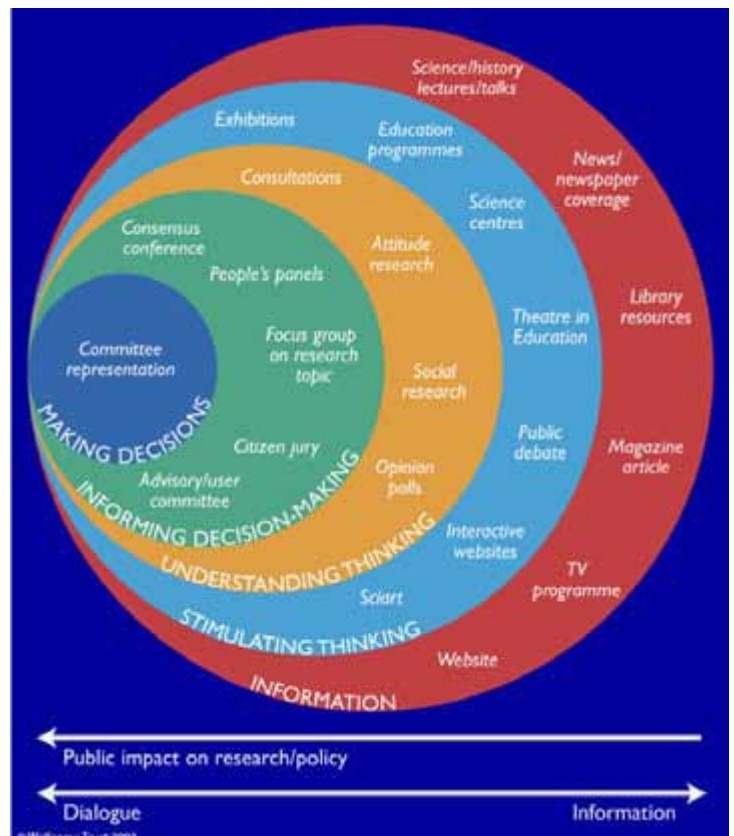
**Collaborating:** Working in partnership with the public to solve problems together, drawing in each other’s expertise eg. collaborative co-inquiry research, community shape research design.

## The Public Engagement Onion

The Wellcome Trust’s model shows public engagement methods and activities as a series of layers, like an onion. With each layer the focus moves from two-way dialogue and decision-making to information-giving. Hence the impact on your research or on influencing policy decreases as you move towards the outer layers of the onion.

When thinking about the types of public engagement activities you wish to get involved in, use the Onion model to consider how you could create a meaningful experience for both yourself and the people involved in that activity. Depending on your discipline, some activities may have a more natural or obvious fit with your own research.

Image courtesy of the Wellcome Trust



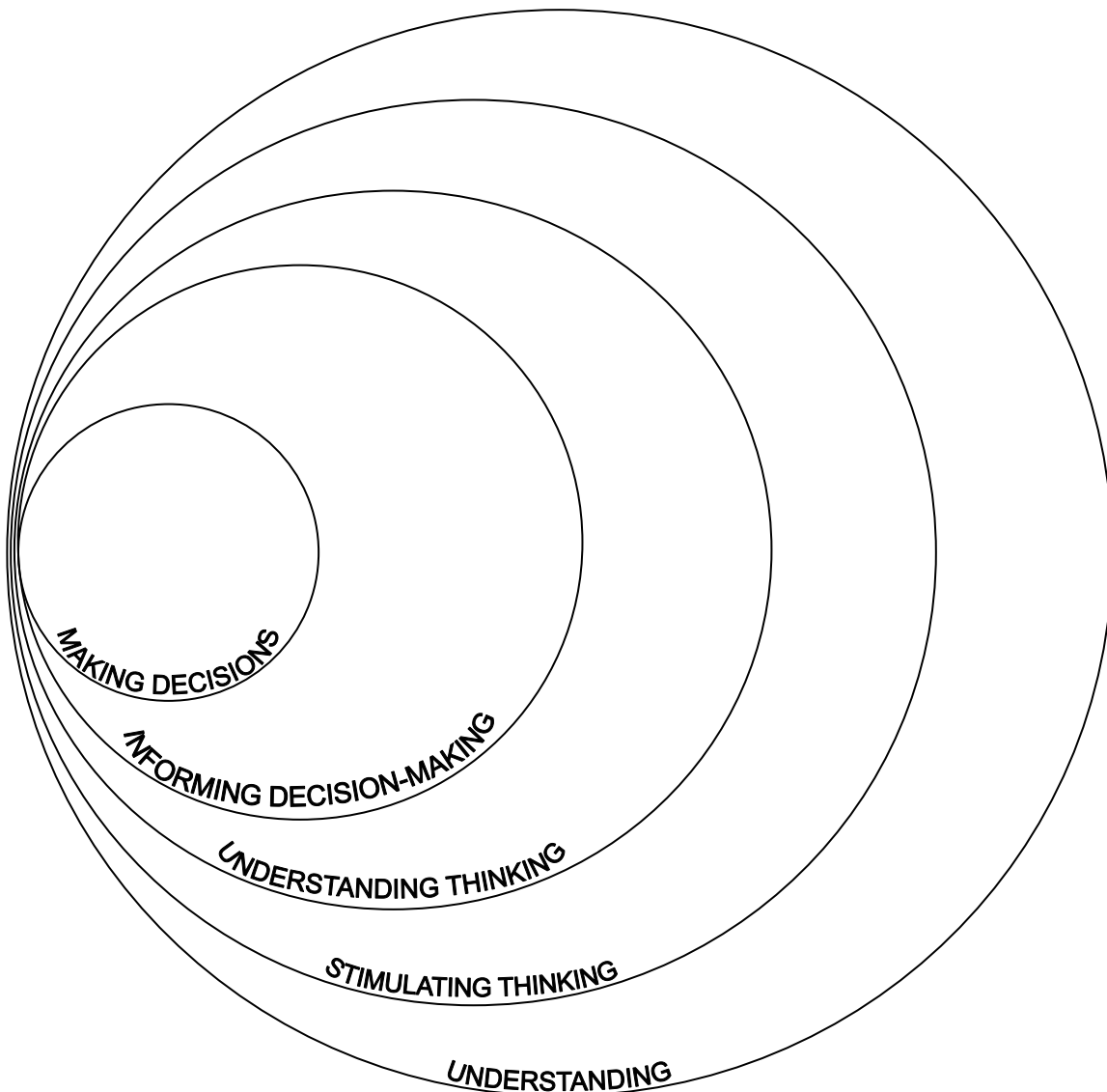


There are a number of different **engagement activities** you can run in partnership with cultural organisations



Brainstorm as many different types of public engagement you can think of. What activities have you been involved in? Which ones have you seen? Heard about?

Write your activities on the Onion diagram below placing it in the layer you feel reflects the nature of the activity.



# Engaging the public with your research

There are many benefits to engaging the public with your research and universities are increasingly encouraging you to undertake public engagement.

## So why should you...?

The funders of your research are encouraging you to engage. The Research Councils UK is committed to supporting and rewarding researchers who engage with the public. It's Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research provides guidance for research funders to foster a culture that values, recognises and supports public engagement.



<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/policy/Pages/perConcordat.aspx>

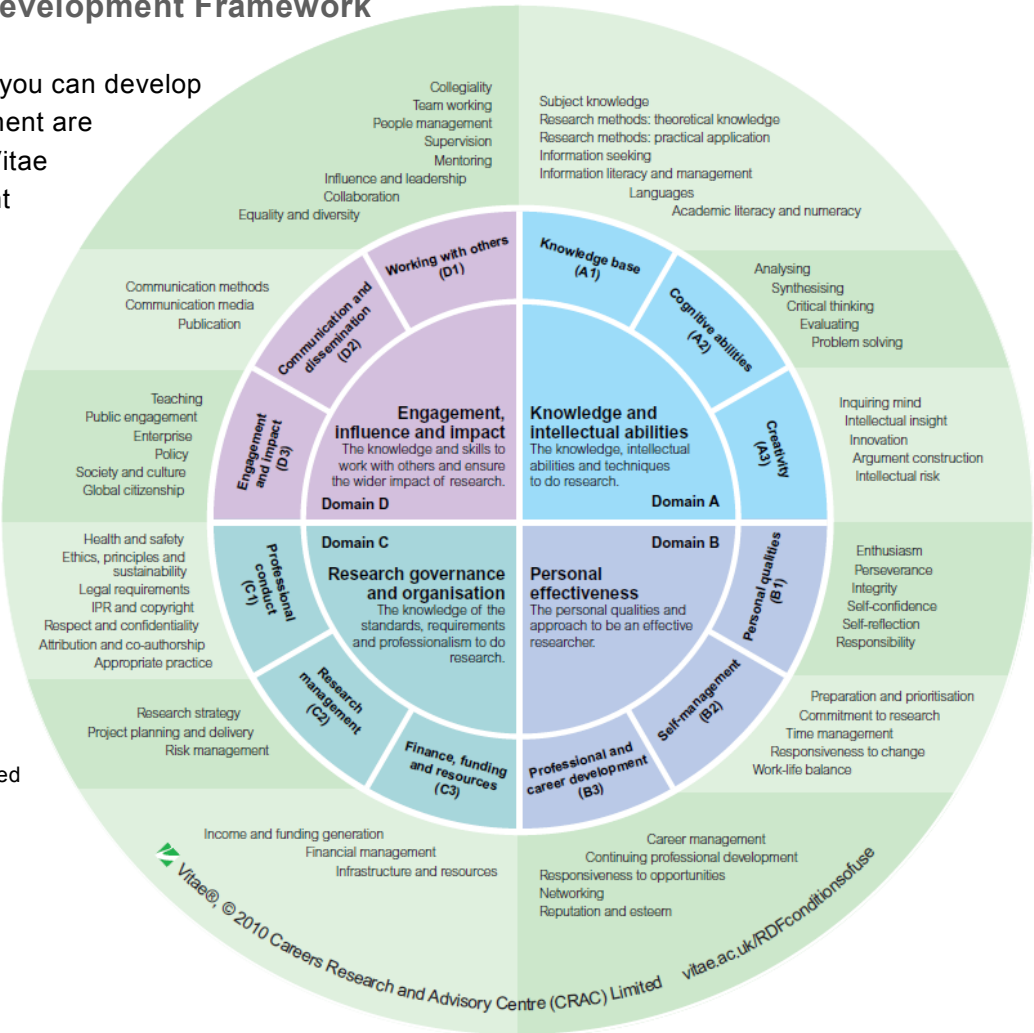
*“quote to be added here”* quote from Afterlife Project researcher

## Vitae Researcher Development Framework

The skills and attributes you can develop by doing public engagement are now recognised in The Vitae Researcher Development Framework or RDF ([www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)).

This new approach to researcher development outlines the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers including a domain on engagement, influence and impact.

Image courtesy of Vitae®, © 2010 Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited





Identify 5 skills from the outer circle of the RDF that you consider important to being an engaging researcher.

Which of these skills do you feel you are experienced in and which do you need to develop?



<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/scisoc/RCUKBenefitsofPE.pdf>



There many good reasons for participating in public engagement activities. It's important to think about why you want to engage the public with your research as this will impact on what you do and who you engage with.

Here are just some of the reasons shared by other researchers. Circle which ones motivate you. If any of your reasons are missing, then add write them in the blank spaces.

Developing your skills

Stimulating research creativity and innovation

Enriching your career

Inspiring you & your research

Enhancing your research quality & its impact

Gaining new research perspectives

Raising your personal & institutional profile

Enjoyment & personal reward

Accessing more funding

Increasing awareness of the value of research

Increasing student recruitment

Inspiring the next generation of researchers

.....

.....



<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/guides/working-museums-libraries-and-archives>

The NCCPE has outlined the benefits of working with cultural organisations. Museums, archives, libraries and other cultural venues make excellent partners. They have a lot to offer and often have unique attributes which can enhance your engagement activity. They also have highly skilled staff who are experienced in engaging their audiences.

The benefits of working with cultural organisations include:

- They provide a venue for your engagement activity
- They may be able to provide equipment and objects of interest
- You can benefit from the support of staff who do this day to day
- They can provide you with a ready-made audience
- Visitors are more likely to be willing to engage with your activity than people in other public venues, such as shopping centres
- They use a range of different and creative approaches to engagement delivery that you can learn from
- They have very strong community links, helping you to gain access to some harder to reach groups
- They can help with requirements that you might be unfamiliar with such as risk assessments
- They often have clear frameworks for evaluating success. They can talk you through mechanisms of capturing data about your own activity.

BUT do remember:

- Make the most of the expertise of the staff – take their advice
- Respect the fact that the staff may have their own agendas with their own responsibilities and targets. Talk to your potential partner early in the planning to ensure that your engagement activity ties into your partners' priorities
- Some venues, particularly museums, have long lead times in preparing for an exhibit or activity. Make sure you prepare well in advance.

## Who are the public?

We are **all** the public



When we engage with others, we inevitably have to make an assessment of how to communicate with them. To engage with any particular public audience you need to build up a picture of their characteristics. Aim for accuracy rather than assumptions and stereotypes, and start to put yourself in their shoes. The more you understand your audience the more successful your activity is likely to be.

Possible ways to get started?

- Work with a public audience you feel you already know something about
- Find a public audience champion who will partner with you
- Seek advice from colleagues, your supervisor or other university staff
- Volunteer to work on an activity being run by a colleague
- Go along to an event visited by your possible public audience and observe what happens.

Family group comprising Mum, Dad, 3 children aged 3-13 years and Grandma

Specialist adult group on a half-day visit

Choose one of these public audiences. If you have an actual public engagement activity planned, then substitute your public for the ones above. Complete the audience profile sheet below for your chosen public.

**My Audience Profile**

<p>What are your expectations of this public?</p>	
<p>What are their expectations of you?</p>	
<p>What might be the challenges in engaging with this public?</p>	
<p>Identify one key issue which will influence the way you plan your engagement with this public</p>	

# What is engaging about my research?

You might know why your research is important but to be an engaging researcher it is crucial that you can also explain the broader context of your research area. Remember your audience and discuss what is important, relevant and interesting about your research area from their perspective.



**You will be very familiar with your own subject matter and will probably use your own research language. To anyone that cannot communicate in this language you are speaking in jargon. To engage the public in your research, it's important to minimise your use of jargon without oversimplifying your research or patronising your public.**

**Devise a sentence that uses all these words. You can use the blank to denote any word. It does not have to be a perfectly formed sentence.**

participatory      transformational      incentivising      improvement levers      taxonomy  
exchange      programme      impact      grassroots      transactional  
and      of      roundabouts      [      ]

Read the sentence out loud. What does it sound like? Can you explain what it means? Is this what your public may experience if you use jargon?

You may need to use technical terms. In this case it is essential that you explain clearly what the term means from the outset, and that you give it context and relevance. Try to describe your work in ways that can be easily visualised. Use analogies and metaphors to help explain complex processes and relate them to everyday situations. Also use plain English, for example use “wrong” instead of “erroneous” and “process” instead of “methodology”.



## Your Research Statement

Write a research statement of 50 words, which captures the essence of your research project. Identify what is important and relevant about your research. It must be written without jargon and intelligible to people outside of your subject field.

When writing the statement consider the following:

- What is important and relevant about your research?
- Would your chosen public audience (selected on page 10) be interested in your research?
- How much do they know about your research area?
- What would your public gain from knowing more about this research area?

Read your statement out aloud or to a fellow researcher. Step into the shoes of your chosen public. Challenge your statement by asking:

- What are the important, relevant and interesting points of my research?
- Have I used jargon?
- Is the context missing?
- Why should my public care about this research?

# Designing a public engagement activity

In designing a public engagement activity, you need to be realistic about the amount of time it will take you to prepare and run the activity as well as what resources you have available.

## What do you need to think about when devising your engagement activity?

### Understanding Learning Styles

People learn in different ways. Most of us have a main preferred learning style. When devising your activity, it is worth considering a mix of approaches to take into account all the possible learning styles of your participants.

The **VAK (Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic)** learning styles model suggests that most people can be divided into one of three preferred styles of learning. These three styles are:

- Visual learners who have a preference to see or observe things, including images, demonstrations, exhibitions and films
- Auditory learners who have a preference to absorb information through listening to sounds and others speak
- Kinaesthetic learners who have a preference to touch, feel and experience.



### Want to know your own learning style?

Try completing this multiple-choice questionnaire created by Chislett & Chapman (2005) available for download from <http://www.businessballs.com/vaklearningstylestest.htm>

### Having a Wow Factor

When doing activities in an open public space it is essential to have a 'Wow' element to encourage people to stop and engage. This can be achieved by having an exciting title for your activity or by having objects that people can relate to or be intrigued by, for example the activity title—Histonauts: A digital treasure hunt.

### Evaluating Your Activity

Evaluating your activity can help you learn from your experience. Like research itself, it is a process of collecting evidence and reflection. The benefits of doing evaluation include:

- Helping plan your activity
- Providing you with evidence of the benefits
- Producing a record of your achievement
- Providing lessons learned for the future
- Making you reflect on your approach and how to improve it.



## Devising a Public Engagement Activity

You have been asked by The Museum of Camberwick to devise and run an activity for your chosen public audience (selected on page 10) at their museum.

The Museum of Camberwick is a brilliant place to spend a couple of hours and to discover the real history of Camberwick. The Museum is run by the local authority and comprises a museum, local studies library and record office archive. It's collection also includes objects and documents donated by local people. The Museum has a small staff with a curator and part-time education officer. Exhibitions and activities can take place in the following areas:

- Main gallery: tells the story of the history of Camberwick
- Art gallery: exhibits paintings and sculpture either depicting local areas or created by local artists
- Ethnography gallery: displays the items collected by a local Victorian traveller
- Outside event space: the Museum faces the town square which can be used for events
- Small display areas in the local studies library and record office
- Temporary exhibition gallery: this small area is next to the main entrance.

When planning your activity consider what you have looked at previously – what you know about your public; what about your research might be interesting; how you will engage people with different learning styles; and what is your Wow factor?

If you have an actual public engagement activity planned, then substitute your venue for the one above.

### Need help to think of a creative idea?

You could use the Disney Creativity Strategy. This is a tool for facilitating creative thinking. It was created by Robert Dilts from his observations of Walt Disney who used different thought processes to do different things. There are three distinct stages:

**Dreamer (WHAT?)** – be open to any ideas. Freely associate and think outside the box. During this stage there are no restrictions. Wouldn't it be great ...

**Realist (HOW?)** – how can you balance your ideas with the resources you have available? Make your creative idea happen

**Critic (WHY?)** – Look critically at your idea. What are its strengths and weaknesses? Pick holes in it. Refine it.

Work through each stage to refine your creative idea. Don't be afraid to dream!

### My Engagement Activity

# Evaluating your activity

Whichever data collection techniques you decide to use when evaluating your engagement activity, it is likely to involve asking questions. Therefore, it is important that you ask the right question.

## Asking the Right Questions



The questions below highlight some of the mistakes that you can make when writing questions for evaluation. What do you think is wrong with each question? How would you improve them?

1. To what extent do you think PCR techniques have revolutionised forensic archaeology?
2. What kind of car do you have?
3. Why did you come to the event today and what did you think of it?
4. Would you agree with the UK's leading academics that people who study science are more intelligent than those who don't?
5. What do you earn?
6. Will you visit again?

Answers at bottom of page

## Important things to remember when writing effective questions

### Avoid questions that:

- Use jargon or assume knowledge
- Are unclear or ambiguous
- Use double negatives
- Ask multiple/double-barrelled questions
- Lead or are biased
- Offend or ask for sensitive information
- Are too general and vague
- Ask for memory recall
- Are hypothetical and ask people to predict the future
- Force people to rationalise their actions/feelings.

### Ask yourself:

- Do you need to know this information?
- Will your questions provide the information?
- Can the question be misunderstood?
- What assumptions does it make?
- Is it time specific?
- How personal is the wording? Is it too direct and threatening?
- Will respondents answer truthfully?
- Is the question relevant to the respondents?
- Does it contain unclear terminology?
- Will your questions collect data in a reliable and valid way?



Ben Gammon, *Effective questionnaires for all: A step by step recipe for successful questionnaire*, Dana Centre [http://www.danacentre.org.uk/documents/pdf/questionnaire\\_recipe\\_book.pdf](http://www.danacentre.org.uk/documents/pdf/questionnaire_recipe_book.pdf)

- Answers:
1. Uses jargon/assumes knowledge
  2. Unclear/ambiguous/misunderstanding
  3. Multiple/double-barrelled
  4. Leading/Biased
  5. Offensive/unnecessary
  6. Hypothetical/predicting



## My Evaluation Plan

Complete your evaluation plan for your activity. Remember to keep it simple and achievable.

Aim: What I want to achieve

Objectives: What I need to do to achieve my aim

Evaluation questions: What I want to know

Methodology: Which strategy I will use

Data collection: Which data collection technique(s) I will use

Data analysis: How I will analyse the data

Reporting: Who will be reading my report





# Top tips for effective public engagement

## What is public engagement?

- Public engagement describes the numerous ways in which the benefits of research can be shared with the public. It is a two-way process and done well can have a huge impact on all participants.

## Engaging the public with my research

- Be clear about why you are engaging with the public, both in your own mind and in your communication with potential participants.

## Who are the public?

- We are all the public
- When planning your public engagement, consider who you wish to engage and why, their interests and why they might be interested in your research area. This will help you choose a suitable approach
- Consider the needs, expectations, and knowledge of those you wish to engage with. Be aware of your own assumptions and start thinking yourself into their shoes
- Don't forget to think about how you might overcome any challenges you may face when engaging your public.

## What is engaging about my research?

- What is the broader context of your research area?
- What is important, relevant and interesting about your research area from your public's perspective?

## Designing a public engagement activity

- Allow enough time to plan public engagement thoroughly
- Consider how different learning style preferences can be incorporated into your activities
- Be creative and fully explore a range of possibilities but remember you don't have to reinvent the wheel, sometimes you can re-purpose tried and tested activities from other disciplines
- Consider the logistics and practicalities including, time, budget, venue and health and safety.

## What does an engaging researcher look like?

- Engaging researchers go out of their way to involve the public with their research
- Think about the key skills you may need and plan your own professional development accordingly
- Consider your own preferred communication styles and skills. Your engagement activities will be far more successful if you are comfortable delivering them
- Think about your public engagement role as one that is ongoing - this will allow you to build your expertise and develop a rapport with the groups you are engaging with.

# Engagement planning template

Public engagement plan	
<b>Why? (Aims and objectives)</b>	<b>Who? (Public audience)</b>
<b>What? (Title of your activity)</b>	<b>How? (The activity)</b>
<b>Reaching your public (marketing your activity)</b>	
<b>Have you been successful? (Summary of your evaluation plan)</b>	

# Engagement activity checklist

	✓ x
<b>ACTIVITY PLAN</b>	
State your objectives clearly/what you want to achieve	
Identify your public	
Create an public profile	
Secure funding (if required)	
Are you working alone or in partnership? Who would be your partner(s)?	
Compile a budget	
Time plan with dates and milestones (when you hope to achieve various actions)	
Evaluation strategy	
How you will record your activity e.g. photographs, video	
<b>VENUE</b>	
Conduct a site visit to see size and location of space within venue	
Check accessibility of space for buggies/people in wheelchairs/etc.	
Find out what the venue's procedures are for first aid, fire evacuation, child protection	
Ask if venue staff will be available to help set up/take down your activity	
Discover the location of the toilets, catering facilities, your named venue staff member	
Car parking – where can you drop off your equipment, park your vehicles	
See if venue staff can give you any advice or tips	
<b>RESOURCES</b>	
Recruit people/volunteers to help	
Brief helpers prior to activity date	
Book transport to get resources to venue	
Identify and source equipment required	
Construct or acquire equipment, signs, activity sheets, etc.	
Source any free giveaways	
<b>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</b>	
Sort out DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checks if required (Your university's HR Department or Widening Participation Team should be able to help)	
Complete a risk assessment (Required for any public event. Your university should have a form)	
Source a copy of public liability insurance (Required for any event held in a public space. You will be covered by the university's policy)	
Ensure any electrical equipment is PAT tested (Any portable electrical equipment older than one year must have been tested. It is likely to have a sticker indicating the test/retest dates)	
Have a procedure for gaining consent from the public if taking photographs/video (This should be covered in your university's child protection policy if not ask the advice of the venue)	
Sort out DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checks if required (Your university's HR Department or Widening Participation Team should be able to help)	
<b>PUBLICITY</b>	
Include in your public profile how they like to hear about activities. Use this to target your marketing	
Free advertising – find out how your venue can help you advertise your activity (eg. include in What's On guide, send out a press release, display posters, etc.)	

# Evaluation plan template

Evaluation plan	
<b>Aim: what I want to achieve</b>	<b>Objectives: What I need to do to achieve my aim</b>
<b>Evaluation questions: What I want to know</b>	
<b>Methodology: Which strategy I will use</b>	
<b>Data collection: Which data collection technique(s) I will use</b>	
<b>Data analysis: How I will analyse the data</b>	
<b>Reporting: Who will be reading my report</b>	

## Additional resources

Below are a few examples of various resources available to help and support your public engagement activity. The advice and ideas in these resources can be transferred from one discipline area to another so try not to limit yourself to those within your own research area.

### Guides & Online Resources

Communicating with the public: guidance notes (BBSRC)  
Community Engagement PH9 (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)  
Impact Toolkit (online from ESRC)  
A guide to successful communications and communicating science: A scientist's survival kit (European Commission)  
Dialogue with the public: practical guidelines (RCUK)  
Raising the profile of your research through the media (ARHC)  
Social Media: A Guide For Researchers (Research Information Network)  
Association of British Writers  
Vidiowiki (a community of researchers from around the world talking about their work and in 3 minutes or less)

### Online (podcasts & blogs)

Geek Pop (a free online music festival featuring artists inspired by science and celebrating geek culture)  
Cancer Research UK Blog  
Social Science for Schools (ESRC)

### Evaluation resources

Practical guidelines: a guide for evaluating public engagement (RCUK)  
Making a difference: a guide to evaluating public participation in central government (INVOLVE)  
Evaluating participatory, deliberative and co-operative ways of working (Interact Working Paper)

All titles available in the series:

Researcher's guide to:

engagement

placements

enterprise

Cultural Partner's guide to:

placements

# Researcher's Guide to engagement

## About the author

**Suzanne Spicer** is the Social Responsibility Manager at The University of Manchester. She has over twenty years experience of working in museum and heritage learning including roles at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, English Heritage and MOSI in Manchester. In 2008 she joined the University as project manager for The Manchester Beacon for Public Engagement. She is the joint author of the Vitae 'The Engaging Researcher' booklet and regularly runs training workshops on public engagement.

## Contact

If you are interested in finding out more about public engagement opportunities and training at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Manchester, please contact **Dr Louise Davies**, PGR Placements and Partnerships Officer, [Louise.Davies-2@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Louise.Davies-2@manchester.ac.uk).

ISBN:

The 'Afterlife of Heritage Research' Training Programme



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