Research Councils UK
Public Engagement with Research

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Our focus is on **excellence with impact**

**Public Engagement with Research:** “The myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of research can be shared with the public”.

Engagement is a **two-way process**, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating **mutual benefit**.
RCUK strategic aims:

The **RCUK PER strategy**:

- To encourage the research community to engage with the public
- To help public views to inform policies and research strategies
- To help secure a supply of future researchers and ensure they can act as informed citizens.

We believe that engaging the public with research helps empower people, broadens attitudes and ensures that the work of universities and research institutes is relevant to society and wider social concerns. We also believe that research can be enhanced through dialogue and coproduction.

We are seeking to embed public engagement throughout the research life cycle and Higher Education sector.

Public Engagement is included within the [Council’s Royal Charters](#) and in the [Mission and Statement of expectations on Economic and Social Impact](#).
What are the benefits of PER?

**Public Engagement with Research**

- Broadens attitudes
- Empowers
- Influence the direction of research
- Act as informed citizens
- Inspires the next generation of researchers

**Public**

- Networking opportunities
- Improved transferable skills
- Securing funding
- Benefit from fresh perspectives and insights
- Awareness of ethical impacts

**Researchers**

- Data collection
- Enjoyment
- Improve research (quality and impact)

**Schools**

- Support the future research base

**Benefits**

- Improve research (quality and impact)
- Benefit from fresh perspectives and insights
- Awareness of ethical impacts
- Enjoyment
- Data collection
- Securing funding
- Improved transferable skills
- Networking opportunities
- Act as informed citizens
- Inspires the next generation of researchers
- Influence the direction of research
- Broadens attitudes
Working Collaboratively: Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

In 2010, UK funders of research joined together as signatories of the **Concordat for Public Engagement with Research** to ensure that public engagement is valued, recognised and supported across the research and higher education sectors.
Embracing structural and cultural change: Embedding and signposting PER across the sector

**RCUK aim: Stimulating a reflexive and responsive research community that engages the public within the research process**

  - Building capacity for PE through support, recognition and reward.
- The **Catalysts Initiative** (2012-2015);
  - Embed PER within policies, procedures and practices
- **Catalysts Seed Fund** (2015/16, 2016-17); 10 “seed” Catalysts (inc. the University of Oxford)
- The **National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)**
  - Managing and co-ordinating initiatives
  - PE training and resources
  - Annual Engage conference
Capacity Building: School programmes, public dialogue and support for researchers

RCUK aim: “To secure and sustain a supply of future researchers and enable the next generation to act as informed and involved citizens”

- The School-University Partnerships Initiative (2013-2016): 12 HEIs
  - Schools programmes; Teacher CPD (Myscience), online teaching resources (Schoolscience.co.uk), student research placements (Nuffield Research Placements).

RCUK aim: “Enabling public views to inform policies and research strategies across Research Councils and the broader community”

- Public Dialogue
  - Ensures transparency and enables public views to shape policy and future research

RCUK aim: “Stimulating a reflexive and responsive research community that engages the public within the research process”

- Supporting researchers and skills development
  - The PE component of the Vitae Research Development Framework
Supporting Researchers: Public Engagement in *Pathways to Impact*

- Research funding proposals to the Councils now include a statement on the potential economic and social impact that research will make, via a *Pathway to Impact* statement.

- Public engagement activities are regarded as pathways to impact.

- Researchers can also request resources to fund these PE activities.

- PE activities can happen throughout the course of a research grant.

- Allows researchers to explore potential benefits of PER from the outset.

- This will help embed public engagement with both researchers and their host institutions.
Supporting researchers? Public Engagement in Pathways to Impact

All grant applicants are required to submit a PToI document- maximum two sides to include Knowledge Exchange and Public Engagement.

Guidance is in the grants handbook and the FAQ section of the RCUK website.

http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/brief/impactcase/pe/
Public Engagement Support

Pathways to Impact, across all Councils…also

**AHRC**: Connected communities. Pathways to Impact. Follow on funding

**ESRC**: Festival of Social Science, resources, guidance and tools

**EPSRC**: Follow on funding. Impact Acceleration Accounts

**MRC**: Public Engagement in Science Activities - Seed Fund

To encourage and support engagement with the public and other stakeholders, funds are available to enable MRC-funded scientists to pilot new activities and develop innovative engagements.

**NERC**: Some PE funding for specific Initiatives- new strategy launch

**STFC**: Provides a range of funding support for PE including small, local or 'pilot' projects and large award grants of up to £100,000 for Public Engagement projects.
Professor Sarah Whatmore has good reason to value highly local knowledge on the kind of flood risks that have recently led to disastrous consequences in parts of the UK. For her, the benefit from the public has been a direct contribution to delivering improved research results for new flood risk models tailored to local water catchment areas. Her innovative approach to public engagement enabled those affected by flooding to collaborate in the whole research process sustained over a year. It involved natural and social scientists in the research team working closely with volunteers from communities in Yorkshire and Sussex.
Future direction of PER: UKRI

- Continued commitment to supporting PER, through transition period and beyond
- Synthesising recent and emerging evidence to inform future policies and provisions
- Anticipate further work to embed public engagement within the research lifecycle and institutional structures, policies and procedures
Thank you for listening

- Factors Affecting Public Engagement by researchers survey:
  - http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/pe/persurvey/ and www.wellcome.ac.uk/PERSurvey
- The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement: http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/
- Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research: http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/policy/perConcordat/
- Teacher CPD: https://www.sciencelearningcentres.org.uk/