

Partnerships for Public Engagement: Capturing learning and impact workshops report

Laura Grant & Lesley Paterson
www.lauragrantsassociates.co.uk

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Summary of learning, outcomes and recommendations

This report presents the findings from two *Capturing Learning and Impact* workshops held with current and previous Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Partnerships for Public Engagement (PPE) grant holders in January and February 2011. The workshops involved 21 participants representing at least 14 PPE projects (some attendees had received more than one PPE grant).

Key learning points

*Identify who your audience is and if you don't know find someone who does.
(Workshop participant)*

PPE grant holders captured five key learning points for other researchers embarking on public engagement projects:

1. **Good relationships with project partners** from the outset are important. Choosing people with similar motivations to work with and setting clear shared goals help foster these. Get partners involved early and be clear about roles and responsibilities.
2. **Understand your audience:** who they are and what they want, including the need for quality outputs, interactivity where possible, and ensuring their feedback is taken on board. Strike a balance between education and enjoyment. Simple approaches to engagement can be effective. Pilot the project. Work with your audience early on, be as interactive as possible.
3. **Build a strong project team** involving professionals and sub-contractors where appropriate. Recruiting the right Research Assistant (RA), project co-ordinator or manager is essential. External evaluators and mentors are also useful.
4. **Manage the project effectively.** Don't be over ambitious! Allocate core time, use outside help, understand this is different to a research project, be realistic in timescale and establish clear lines of communication. Be prepared to be flexible and listen to others and your mentor. Think about the legacy early. Expect problems to happen. Do not panic or give up! All the effort you put in is worth it in the end.
5. Make the most of **found resources** that are already in existence at your institution, on the web or elsewhere

These points are discussed in greater detail in Section 3 of this report.

PPE outcomes

*We have probably through these projects had incredible impacts but it's hard to know – [they are] embedded throughout, not sharp impacts. Things of this nature don't tend to have the sharp impacts in a similar way to the LHC for example. We need to work harder to create a bigger political impact from public engagement.
(Workshop participant)*

Outcomes were discussed for various different groups that were involved in PPE projects.

Public audiences had fun and interesting experiences with PPE projects and learned about EPSRC-funded research and its opportunities, limits, and current and future applications. Some described their projects as presenting opportunities for audiences to learn together, for example as families. Developing audiences' confidence in their own learning was also an important outcome. PPE projects were seen as a means for audiences to form opinions, or in some case as an opportunity for dialogue where their opinions could be listened to or where they could 'have their say'. Some projects developed teachers' skills through CPD.

When asked about **themselves and their teams**, participants cited the enjoyment and personal satisfaction they gained from public engagement, although they acknowledged it could also be tiring or hard work. A range of learning and skills were described as outcomes. These included: 'public engagement skills' related to understanding audiences and tailoring science and engineering messages accordingly; technical skills (e.g. programming); and transferable skills in project management, partnership working, and communication. Developing a better understanding of their research (and public ideas about it) and the opportunity to build links and networks were also highlighted as outcomes from PPE. Many projects had left a legacy in terms of skills developed or resources/materials that were used for subsequent public engagement activities. Participants felt that there was more evidence than they expected for outcomes in this section.

There were several outcomes for participants' **institutions**. As well as the funding itself, successful public engagement raised the profile of the individual university and the research area as a whole. One group felt the PPE project contributed to the institution's culture of public engagement.

A strong benefit for **partners** was access to experts and knowledge, but also to new partners, contacts and audiences. Partners were also seen to have benefitted from project outputs that could continue to be used after the period of funding, such as tools, exhibits and materials. A successful project was also seen as having a positive effect on partners' reputations.

Grant holders felt that **EPSRC** had also gained publicity, profile and reputation from successful PPE projects, which were seen to have supported the dissemination of and engagement with research outputs. PPE was seen as promoting a positive public perception of this research and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) more widely. Several benefits for research were also articulated. These included the provision of researcher training and developing researchers' skills leading to better future research, as well as inspiring future researchers. For individuals, there was an opportunity cost associated with the PPE scheme, in that the funding and time spent on public engagement is not invested elsewhere.

Few participants spontaneously suggested negative outcomes. When prompted, the groups said that this was not because their projects had all be unqualified successes, but because they tended to work through the challenges in order to gain positive outcomes. Participants also highlighted the difficulties in gathering evidence for the impact of PPE projects.

Further detail on the PPE project outcomes can be found in Section 4 of the main report.

Embedded model for public engagement

At the end of the workshops, participants discussed the new embedded model for EPSRC public engagement funding. They were asked to capture some messages for EPSRC and for other researchers about the model. These are summarised below, but a more detailed discussion is provided in Section 5 of the main report.

Messages to other researchers

Participants were asked what they would say to other researchers about the embedded model for public engagement and making it work. Some clear themes emerged:

- Researchers should **seek advice and support on public engagement**. This could be from others who are active in public engagement, by subcontracting or partnering with public engagement specialists, through PPE mentors or from a public engagement office within a university.
- It would be valuable to think about the **key learning points** presented at the start of this report.
- Colleagues should be aware that **panels or others may not value public engagement**. They suggested caution in the extent to which it should be written in to research grants.
- The new model could help **embed public engagement** into research grants. However some still emphasised that careful planning would be required to realise this.
- Some made comments related to the **quality** of public engagement, suggesting that colleagues should think carefully before applying and ensure they have allocated enough funds.
- There are **other challenges**, such as the fact that public engagement will not be relevant in all grants, that the focus on impact could undermine blue sky research and that academic staff whose remit is mostly teaching might be excluded from the funding.

Messages to EPSRC

Participants came up with several clear messages for EPSRC about the new model through their individual reflections at the end of the workshops.

- EPSRC should **consider the processes at application, reviewing and panel stages**. Clear guidance should be supplied to applicants, reviewers and panel members.
- EPSRC must **provide advice and support** for researchers that have successfully bid for public engagement funding through the new model, especially those new to public engagement.
- Some respondents felt that the new model would **limit innovation** in public engagement, by stifling interdisciplinary working, deterring researchers from writing in large sums for public engagement that might risk the success of the research grant, meaning it is not possible to respond to timely engagement opportunities.
- Some respondents went further and feared that the new model would mean many researchers would **omit public engagement altogether** from their proposals. Some felt this was understandable as it is not always appropriate to engage the public; others felt that if public engagement was omitted EPSRC should seek alternative routes to engage the public.

- Where possible, EPSRC should be **flexible** in the new model, by allowing additional proposals to respond to timely opportunities or appreciating that different types of research warrant different methods of engagement.
- Researchers felt that EPSRC and others should **support or promote better networks** for researchers to meet others doing public engagement, and support Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to incentivise public engagement.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) is the UK's main agency for funding research in engineering and the physical sciences. EPSRC's public engagement programme has two main aims:

- To foster engagement between the EPSRC-funded research community and the general public;
- To stimulate interest in research and its potential impact on society.

Until August 2010, the main funding activity is the Partnerships for Public Engagement (PPE) scheme, which was designed to provide EPSRC-funded researchers with support for public engagement activities. Between 2005 and 2010 EPSRC awarded up to 25 Partnerships for Public Engagement grants each year with a total value of approximately £2 million. As of October 2010 there were currently 53 active PPE grants. Prior to 2005 the scheme was called Partnerships for Public Awareness (PPA), which was changed from Partnerships for Public Understanding (PPU) at its inception in 1998.

EPSRC's stated PPE objectives (Graphic Science PPE evaluation Report, 2008)¹:

- stimulate public interest
- inspire future generations of researchers
- encourage public debate about the role of research
- build and sustain a community of researchers active in public engagement

Refined by November 2009 (PPE 14th call)

- To enable researchers to carry out high-quality public engagement projects related to their research interests.
- To provide learning and training opportunities in aspects of public engagement, and to build the capacity and capability for researchers to be active in public engagement.
- To stimulate the general public's interest in, and engagement with, research and its potential impact on society.

NB projects can last up to 36 months so current grant holders' projects may have responded to either of these sets of objectives.

In addition to the PPE awards, EPSRC also provided public engagement Stage Awards. Three of these platform grants were awarded to promote networks in public engagement. They finished in 2009 and 2010.

¹ This report is available online at www.epsrc.ac.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Publications/reports/PPE-EvaluationReport.pdf

1.2 PPE evaluation workshops

In 2008 an evaluation of the PPE scheme was carried out by Graphic Science Ltd and several recommendations were made. One of the concerns was that the learning from projects was not available (especially since the requirement to submit narrative reports was removed) and that evaluations should be shared; the recommendation was to develop an *'annual evaluation report that summarises the key learning outcomes from current and recently completed projects. These learning outcomes can be gathered and facilitated through a debriefing workshop'*.

As such, EPSRC commissioned Laura Grant Associates in May 2010 to develop and run PPE workshops to provide the time and space for PPE grant holders to share learning in an informal environment.

In October 2010 EPSRC announced that PPE grants would no longer be awarded, and that researchers could apply for funds for public engagement in their regular research grants, and therefore develop into a new 'embedded model'.

It was noted that the workshops would still provide a valuable opportunity to gather learning from PPE before all the existing projects came to an end. In addition the workshops would be able to gather views that could inform the new embedded public engagement funding model.

The workshops were held in early 2011 and aimed to create the time and space for PPE grant holders to share learning in an informal environment. Participants discussed the impact the projects had made, shared learning and best practice, considered the challenges that were faced along the way and discussed the resulting project outcomes. The workshops are also an opportunity for grant holders to share their thoughts on EPSRC's future embedded model for public engagement.

This report draws together the findings of two of these workshops.

2 The workshops

2.1 Workshop development

In order to help make sense of the wealth of information that the workshop generated, a framework was developed ahead of the workshops. This was based on the initial brief to include both outcomes of PPE projects and reflections on processes and learning. We noted that there are a large number of frameworks already in existence to describe the potential outcomes of public engagement – for audiences, researchers and institutions. There were fewer existing resources to draw on related to project processes and these overlapped with broader practice in the area of project management.

The framework was developed in consultation with EPSRC. It was also piloted at a meeting with three of the PPE mentors², where the ways in which the different sections of the framework could be applied to workshop sessions was discussed.

The framework centres on three sets of questions that were developed following feedback from EPSRC and the mentors, and were used as the basis for the workshop structure.

- **What are the key learning points for researchers involved in PPE projects?** What were the successes and challenges with project delivery? How did this depend on the type of engagement and audience? What external factors helped and hindered the projects? How does this translate into advice for other researchers involved in PE, and how can this advice be shared?
- **What were the main outcomes for different stakeholder groups across the PPE scheme?** Which were expected and unexpected? Which were short-term and which emerged over the longer term? How strong is the evidence for these outcomes?
- **How can we apply the learning from PPE to benefit the new embedded model for EPSRC public engagement funding?** Is there a leadership role for PPE Principal Investigators (PIs)? What might this look like?

2.2 Workshop delivery

Two workshops were delivered in 2011:

1. London, 29 January, attended by 13 grant holders
2. Edinburgh, 5 February, attended by 8 grant holders

In total, at least 14 PPE projects were represented. Some attendees had received more than one PPE grant, and although they were asked to focus on a single project for some parts of the workshop while in other parts they were able to draw on the experience of multiple projects. The London workshop included some 'Starter' grant³ recipients.

The PIs from 42 PPE projects that had finished (or were due to finish) between January 2009 and January 2011 were invited to take part in one of the two workshops. Each PI was also invited to bring an academic colleague (such as the RA) from their project to participate, in order to gather a range of views.

The workshops were facilitated by Laura Grant and Lesley Paterson, in addition to a PPE mentor that had been involved in the framework development as they already had a deep understanding of the workshop aims and activity plans.

² EPSRC assigned a mentor to each of the PPE Awards to offer advice and guidance on all aspects of the project's development. More detail on the mentoring aspect of the scheme can be found at www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/grants/pe/ppe/Pages/mentors.aspx

³ Starter grants were smaller PPE Awards aimed at researchers with little or no previous experience in public engagement. Three calls were issued between 2009 and 2010.

An outline agenda from the workshops is given below:

10.30: Coffee and registration
11.00: Welcome and introduction
11.15: Workshop overview & project summaries using posters provided by participants
11.40: Capturing project outcomes exercise
12.45: Lunch
13.30: Success and challenges; highs and lows; lessons learnt: developing individual project narratives and sharing highs and lows.
15.00: Tea-break
15.15: Looking forward to the new embedded model for PE funding: structured discussion
16.00: What would you say to... EPSRC/other researchers about the new model?
16.30: Close, networking

A copy of the full agenda is provided in Appendix 2.

3 Findings: learning

3.1 Summary of learning points

In their discussions about the highs and lows of their projects, workshop participants were asked to reflect on, share and prioritise learning from their PPE projects.

Four strong themes emerged:

1. Working in **partnership**
2. Understanding **audiences** and tailoring the engagement appropriately
3. Developing a **project team**
4. Effective **project management**

In addition, there was some discussion of **networking and resources**. The remainder of this section discusses each theme in turn, and illustrates them with vignettes from individual projects.

3.2 Working in partnership

Working in partnership was easily the strongest theme to emerge during the session on project processes. This was seen as one of the most challenging aspects of a PPE project, but potentially the most rewarding. For some, the project could not have happened without the partner.

Partnership with [partner] opened many doors, we could not have done the project without them

The success of a PPE project was seen as strongly dependent on partners' involvement and on developing an effective working relationship from the outset. Some grant holders described how they broke off a partnership near the start of a project and forged a new one with another organisation – stressful at the time but the right thing to do for the project in the long run. Others described the process of developing mutual understanding with partners at the start of the project. This was more straightforward for some than for others.

They [the partner] had different aims and goals, hidden agenda. The grant holder is the one ultimately responsible so even if it is your project partner who is causing problems for the project they do not get the blame. Therefore, [you] need clear understanding before you begin.

For a few projects, partners were unable to fulfil their requirements, either due to lack of commitment or changes and cuts at the organisation (this was especially problematic if the main contact moved on or lost their job). This then added extra work for the research team, either in finding another partner or fulfilling the requirement themselves.

In discussions, it emerged that partners for public engagement projects are likely to be more different in organisational culture than other partners that researchers might work with. This was suggested as a reason for some of the steep learning in this area. These differences could be in terms of non-hierarchical organisational structures, or that the partner is staffed by volunteers. The extent to which a successful PPE project depends on effective partnership working was highlighted in all the discussions.

If partners have problems then the PPE project will have problems.

Workshop participants suggested a few enablers and barriers to good partnerships. Identifying a point of contact was important, as was choosing an appropriate partner to support the project and add credibility. Building on existing relationships with trusted partners was an enabler, as was working with a partner that was geographically close for frequent face-to-face contact. Where partners were not located nearby, some found it difficult to build effective working relationships. Others found that tools such as Skype enabled this.

Some also felt that PIs needed to be willing to take a risk by working in partnership for a public engagement project.

Partnership involves risk: not everything is under the PI's control – especially the nearer you get to the 'real world'.

Working together to articulate clear, shared goals for the project from the very start was seen as essential for a successful PPE project.

Vignettes: partnerships

Two projects illustrated the ways that partnerships can enhance a project or cause setbacks.

One PI's science centre partner had lost funding and as a result the named contacts had lost their jobs. The centre was still committed to the project, but the responsibility went to someone in a higher position, who proved to be less of a 'details' person, and communications decreased during the time of change for the centre. This issue was exacerbated by the fact that the partner was geographically far away from the academic team. In the end, a new partner was sought that was closer geographically.

Communication was a big problem as the partner was a long way away physically ... The exhibit was not as productive as it could have been. They kept promising to allow [university] remote access through the internet – but it was always next week.

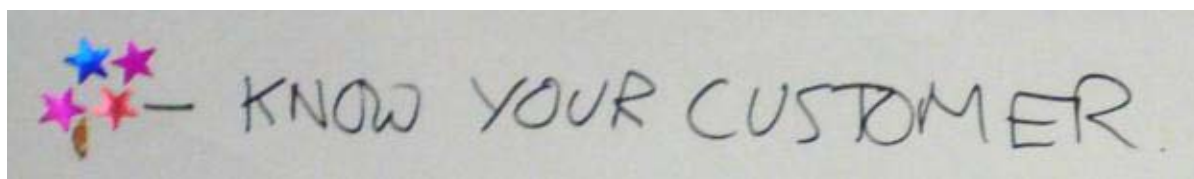
A different project wanted to work with members of the older community and had identified several partners with expertise in engaging with these groups. The project plans were greatly revised following advice from partners at the kick-off meeting and the project was able to achieve a great deal in a fairly short amount of time thanks to their support. This PI said:

Project partners have a great deal to contribute, not only in the material sense; they give the project credibility if you are working alongside an established body.

Participants' recommendation to other researchers embarking on public engagement projects:

Good relationships with project partners from the outset are important. Choosing people with similar motivations to work with and setting clear shared goals help foster these. Get partners involved early and be clear about roles and responsibilities.

3.3 Understanding audiences



Understanding your target audience was deemed to be crucial by participants. For some, this understanding came through partnerships, while for others piloting and early evaluation were strong success factors.

Very important to know exactly who the customer is; you adapt to your customers; not expect them to change for you.

Identify who your audience is and if you don't know find someone who does.

There was some discussion of the level of 'finish' (also framed as 'artistry', 'quality', 'looking good') that is required for a public engagement project, and that this is different to a

‘normal’ research project which might be more open-ended in nature. PPE grant holders understood that public audiences were discerning in what they engaged with, and that project outputs needed to compete with a wide range of other sources of entertainment or provision.

*Need to have something of high quality – otherwise kids just turn off in a second
If it’s a research project – you work round it. But with a PPE project – you are committed to concrete set of outcomes and need to ensure a good standard of professional product. Everybody has to perform.*

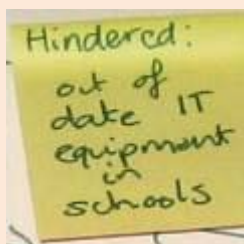
One group described ways in which they had created a ‘hook’ for their audiences. Collaborations with artists were seen as especially effective in this regard.

Generate an initial emotional response in [an] audience then you can build interest and knowledge from that.

Some participants ‘wished they had had’ various resources related to engagement. These included more time or energy spent on making the engagement more interactive, more thought about online support/websites and independent evaluation. In contrast, they were ‘glad they had’ linked activities to the curriculum where appropriate and responded to audience feedback (e.g. by reducing group sizes).

Vignette: working with school IT systems

Several researchers had developed web-based projects for use in schools and had come across many problems with IT infrastructure, for example that it is often not possible to access external sites like YouTube from the school system. School computing systems were also often many years behind home or other systems, so did not have the capacity to run certain types of software.



[Our] software needs a particular specification but school computers don’t necessarily have it. We anticipated this was a problem and got schools to sign off to say they had the right specs. Unfortunately some signed the form but did not have the specs! Therefore we invested time and training for particular schools – but they did not have the infrastructure to take part in the project.

For these projects, a strong lesson was to thoroughly explore the web or IT capability that the target audience has access to. One project purchased their own laptops to get around this; others adapted software to run on more basic machines.

Participants’ recommendation to other researchers embarking on public engagement projects:

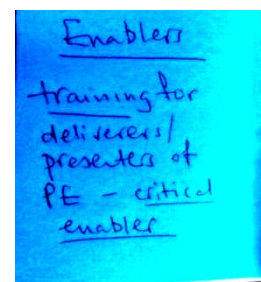
Understand your audience: who they are and what they want, including the need for quality outputs, interactivity where possible, and ensuring their feedback is taken on board. Strike a balance between education and enjoyment. Simple approaches to engagement can be effective. Pilot the project. Work with your audience early on, be as interactive as possible.

3.4 Developing the project team

There was some discussion about the make-up of the project team for PPE. For a couple of projects especially, a diverse team with a broad collective skill set was a big advantage for the project. For others, the mix of personalities was as important as skills.

On paper - the team CVs were very similar – but the personalities were so different – the chemistry of people – in my case this is what made project a success; but can you plan for it?

We employed two people with complementary skills - strong technical skills and someone good with kids and evaluation and presentations. Very complementary skills set.



Enablers
training for
deliverers/
presenters of
PE - critical
enabler

The RA on a PPE project was seen as a particularly crucial role. Where a competent RA was employed they were invaluable, while other projects struggled with staff changes in the role. The particular challenges of working with volunteers who might be less reliable than paid staff was also raised.

Grant holders were frank in their discussions about bringing on experts in various areas, specifically graphic design. Some were very strong in their opinions that you had to get design professionals in. Others felt that while these team members brought useful skills, considerable work was required to ensure the research was accurately represented. Some had accessed this support in-house at their university, while others had contracted it out.

External people – artists and designers – very different view. An academic view – is “we can do anything” – but you do need professional people - you really needed this support.

Grant holders offered some advice about managing a PE team. Good communication and clear goals and roles were seen as crucial. One project had run a bonding exercise early on which had helped the team get to know each other and develop a shared vision for the project. Another project had run training to build a pool of ‘public engagers’ from junior research staff. These staff were then able to help step up project delivery.

Unfortunately, good support was not always on offer for participants. Some (especially those with less senior positions in their institutions) reported feeling isolated, while others drew support from various parts of the university and outside, including PPE mentors, technicians, public engagement officers and others including teachers or partners. Senior support such as that from a Head of Department was seen as especially valuable.

Vignette: working with contractors

Several participants expressed disappointment with the efforts of their university press offices in gaining coverage for their projects. However one project contracted an external PR team who generated a great deal of coverage that was seen as a very good return on the investment made, but came with a warning:

Getting a professional PR company was invaluable. It got us coverage, whereas [university] PR department was not really engaged with the project. Increased coverage meant increase engagement from a wider range of publics. Warning: if you get a media hit you need to be ready for it as you will get lots of interest in a short period of time.

Participants' recommendation to other researchers embarking on public engagement projects:

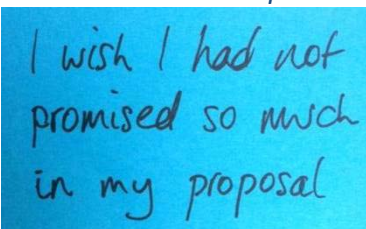
Build a strong project team involving professionals and sub-contractors where appropriate. Recruiting the right RA, project co-ordinator or manager is essential. External evaluators and mentors are also useful.

3.5 Effective project management

In addition to the points related to the project team, participants highlighted a number of other aspects of project management as successful or challenging.

Many found that completing the funding application was a useful tool to focus and plan their work. Flexibility from EPSRC in negotiating changes (and encouragement from mentors to be flexible) was another success factor.

Planning worked well, writing the proposal is useful for early focus and plan. There was some experience in team and support of mentor



I wish I had not promised so much in my proposal

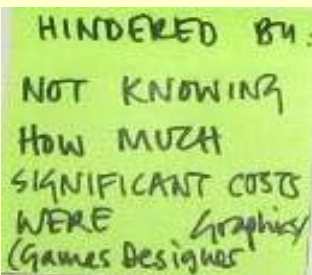
The biggest challenge discussed by all the groups in this area was meeting the targets they had set themselves in the time available. Almost all of the participants felt they had overestimated what they would be able to deliver, and underestimated how much time it would take.

Clearly, effective project management was a strong factor in the success of PPE projects. However, for some this led to further challenges beyond the project's funded period, when it was no longer possible to fully meet demand from audiences.

The inability to resource the continuing demands for PE events ... e.g. people hear of the project after it is completed, want you to do an event, etc – but there is no longer the time/money to respond

Vignette: budgeting for public engagement

Accurately budgeting for the various elements that are needed for an effective PPE project was challenging, especially as grant holders were unaware which external contractors they might need and how much this might cost.



HINDERED BY:
NOT KNOWING
HOW MUCH
SIGNIFICANT COSTS
WERE Graphics
(GAMES DESIGNERS)

One project involved graphics and games design which had been under-budgeted for in the proposal. Involving experienced partners in developing the proposal was a way to avoid some of these pitfalls. Their advice to other researchers was:

Subcontractors cost more than you think.

Participants' recommendation to other researchers embarking on public engagement projects:

Manage the project effectively. Do not be over ambitious! Allocate core time, use outside help, understand this is different to a research project, be realistic in timescale and establish clear lines of communication. Be prepared to be flexible and listen to others and your mentor. Think about the legacy early. Expect problems to happen. Do not panic or give up! All the effort you put in is worth it in the end

3.6 Resources and networks

Some grant holders felt that building on existing resources was a helpful way to get started or develop a public engagement project. 'Resources' fell into two main types: those that were specifically related to the project (e.g. linking to similar education resources published elsewhere) or more generic resources or collaboration tools such as Skype and Dropbox.

Participants suggested the following resources that had been or would be useful for others.

- A repository of outputs and resources from PPE projects
- Templates for evaluation (the evaluation toolkit from the Royal Academy of Engineering was seen as useful)
- High resolution images
- Advice or resources for public engagement generally, different audiences etc. (the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) material was seen as useful)
- Guidelines on costings for subcontractors
- Make best use of university services e.g. outreach officers, web development, design, IT
- Make use of (free) online tools e.g. Google collaboration tools, alerts and analytics; Skype; Dropbox; SurveyMonkey.

This list suggests that many of the resources participants found or would have found useful are available from other sources e.g. the NCCPE or Google. The exception is the repository of PPE outputs.

Participants' recommendation to other researchers embarking on public engagement projects:

*Make the most of **found resources** that are already in existence at your institution, on the web or elsewhere.*

Alternatively, some mentioned drawing on staff or students at their institution as a resource. It was felt that some institutions were better set up than others to offer researchers support in developing public engagement projects, and that EPSRC and others could do more to promote networking.

Participants' recommendation to EPSRC:

*EPSRC and others should **support or promote better networks** for researchers to meet others doing public engagement. Incentivise HEIs to support public engagement.*

4 Findings: project outcomes

During the workshops, participants were invited to list the outcomes of their projects for several groups: audiences, me and my team, project partners, my HEI, my Research Council (i.e. EPSRC). They were also asked to note which outcomes they considered successes, which were lasting impacts, which were unexpected and which were well-evidenced.

Interestingly, few participants spontaneously suggested negative outcomes. When prompted, the groups said that this was not because their projects had all be unqualified successes, but because they tended to work through the challenges in order to gain positive outcomes.

Have dealt with problems in the project by the end, so ultimately there is a success – speaking to people at different stages, [you] might see more of the problems.

Participants also highlighted the difficulties in gathering evidence for the impact of PPE projects. This was highlighted when they were asked to denote areas of 'lasting impact' with a sticker.

The most difficult sticker to put down was impact. Seems too much of a wishy washy term. We have probably through these projects had incredible impacts but it's hard to know – embedded throughout, not sharp impacts. Things of this nature don't tend to have the sharp impacts in a similar way to the LHC for example. We need to work harder to create a bigger political impact from public engagement

The findings of this exercise are discussed in this section.

4.1 Public audiences

Outcomes for public audiences map onto the Generic Learning Outcomes in the Inspiring Learning for All framework⁴, which uses five broad categories to describe learning in informal settings: experiences, knowledge and understanding, attitudes and beliefs, skills, and behaviour/progression.



Audiences were felt to have enjoyable and inspiring **experiences** with PPE projects. Several felt that fun was the most important aspect for audiences, but the need to balance this with meaningful engagement was also discussed.

Slightly negative if enjoyment is top priority as this can make it superficial but obviously cannot be boring. Have to get balance between entertainment and beneficial engagement.

All of the groups reported significant outcomes for their audiences' **knowledge and understanding**. This included learning about EPSRC-funded research and its opportunities, limits, and current and future applications. Some described their projects as presenting opportunities for audiences to learn together, for example as a family. Developing

⁴ See www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/genericlearning/

audiences' confidence in their own learning was also an important outcome. Participants noted that it was more difficult to collect evidence against learning outcomes than it was for audiences' experiences.

In terms of **attitudes and beliefs**, grant holders did not aim to change opinions in the same way that they aimed to promote understanding of their research. Instead, PPE projects were seen as an opportunity for audiences to form opinions, or in some case as an opportunity for dialogue where their opinions could be listened to or they could 'have their say'.

Skills were an important component of projects that provided Continual Professional Development (CPD) for teachers. Areas for development that were identified during the workshops were: subject knowledge, support, confidence and cross-curricular working. One group noted that CPD was a useful element of a PPE project and could help extend its impact. There was concern that it would be difficult to fund this type of work in the new embedded model.

CPD for teachers is a good way to propagate public engagement projects and resources and could be built into a PPE project; it may be more difficult to justify this under Pathways to Impact.

A few projects aimed to promote careers in their field, which comes under the heading of '**behaviour and progression**' in the GLOs framework. While this goal was expressed, participants felt that progress towards it was difficult to evidence.

[I] wanted to influence uptake of computer science, but how can you expect to see that after an 18 month project?

Understandably, the outcomes for target audiences were often framed as 'successes' for PPE projects. They were also among the outcomes that were best-evidenced, as they tended to be the focus of project evaluations.

Audience is the metric by which performance is measured.

In one group there was a discussion about the importance of measuring the quality of interactions, as well as the quantity. This moved on to a broader discussion about some of the challenges with evaluating PPE projects.

Evidence collection and evaluation can be 'squeezed' because this is usually done as the project comes to an end. Collected data may sit in files once the project funding comes to an end.

Evidence may be delayed or take a while to develop/become apparent.

4.2 Me/My Team

Participants described a large number of outcomes that related to themselves and their teams at their institutions. One of the group's flipcharts (below) gives an indication of this.



Public engagement was seen as a fun, interesting and rewarding **experience**; although it could also be tiring, sometimes boring, or lacking in recognition. Grant holders felt that public engagement enabled them to make a positive contribution to society, or to 'give something back'.

There was considerable discussion of the **learning and skills** that participants and their colleagues had gained through their PPE projects. Participants described developing 'public engagement skills' related to understanding audiences and tailoring science and engineering messages accordingly. Some described gaining technical skills (e.g. programming) while

others had built up their transferable skills in project management, partnership working, people management and communication.

Public engagement was seen as an opportunity to be creative, gain valuable engagement experience and build confidence. It was described as useful professional or career development – a few had benefited directly from the kudos associated with receiving the PPE grant or from the publicity their PPE work had brought.

Developed [my] own career in a whole new direction

There is gravitas attached to the EPSRC name.

As well as skills, some researchers felt that PPE had enabled them to develop a **better understanding of their research**, including the wider context of their field as a whole. It was felt that this was a unique insight gained through explaining their work to non-specialists, and that they also gained a deeper appreciation of public needs and concerns.

The opportunity to build **links and networks** through public engagement was valued by researchers. These included links within their institutions (e.g. to the press office) and links with other organisations. In a number of cases these links had led to new ideas or opportunities. Public engagement also gave researchers the opportunity to learn more about their colleagues, and to learn from them.

Networking, dealing with some familiar people but discovering their breadth of knowledge.

For some projects, the engagement had left behind a tangible **output** that had benefited the team. The most common example was an exhibit, resource or demonstrator that could be used by others for public engagement. Data that could be used for research was another example of this. For one project, the output had been commercialised. Building on the outputs, some participants framed the **legacy** of their work as ‘continued engagement’. This was expressed in many ways, including the setup of groups within and outside HEIs to continue the work, or building capacity among others.

Participants set up a ‘green group’ or ‘recycling scheme’ and came back for advice

Trained people, perhaps as many as several hundred, who were engaged in the project, and who are continuing to do PE in their own right

It is clear that there are considerable outcomes to be gained for individuals and teams from public engagement work. However, workshop participants were frank about the **opportunity cost** of public engagement: that is, what else was not achieved because the time and energy was invested in the PPE projects. The biggest opportunity cost was the time taken away from research. This was also problematic due to departmental priorities (i.e. research publications). Some participants felt that poor support for public engagement in their departments meant that the time spent on public engagement was longer than necessary. This was discussed in greater detail in Section 0 earlier.

Overall, participants felt that there was more evidence than they expected for outcomes in this section. It appeared that some had not fully reflected on these types of outcomes for

their projects, and that these outcomes were less likely to be included in project evaluations.

More stuff that's evidenced than I would have expected – communication skills, professional development, materials and resources, publicity and reputation

4.3 My HEI/university



The obvious outcome for the universities where PPE recipients worked was the **cash** that the grants provided. However several other outcomes were identified.

Successful public engagement provided institutional outcomes related to **publicity, profile and reputation**. It was seen to raise the profile of the individual university as well as the research area as a whole. This was seen as good PR that could have a knock-on effect for recruitment.

There were some outcomes listed that related to public engagement itself: participants re-stated the importance of developing tools and materials for public engagement as well as building public engagement skills among staff. One group felt the PPE project contributed to the institution's **culture of public engagement**. As at individual/team level, links and networks were seen as important.

Public engagement is just getting going in [our] University and the PPE project was an opportunity to 'launch' PE within the community.

The workshops yielded evidence that much PPE work is continued beyond the funded period, including by linking with other structures in the HEI to increase impact.

[I was glad we] involved university outreach department (widening participation office), who at least will know about the project for the future, even if it is not actually continued in the same form

However a few felt that some of their colleagues did not value public engagement, or that it would be squeezed out by other priorities for institutions or research communities.

The "what's in it for me?" problem – reluctance of the wider research community to become involved, not seeing public engagement as a proper use of their time

For one project, creating an interactive demonstrator funded through a PPE award has become of interest to others in the HEI, which was an unexpected outcome.

Projects may evolve. Demonstration of technology for use in schools has become of interest to the University as a means to talk to policy-makers. 'University people' did not respond to the project until they saw for themselves the demonstrator, they then recognised its potential and as a result it has opened up new and unexpected audiences.

4.4 Project delivery partners

Workshop participants outlined several types of outcome for project delivery partners, but these were not discussed in as much detail as the previous two groups.

A strong benefit for partners was described as **access**: to experts and knowledge, but also to new partners, contacts and audiences. Researchers acknowledged the expertise (as well as the time, funding and energy) that they brought to the partnership, as well as the expertise they gained from partners and described in Section 3.2. Access to these resources could help partner organisations achieve their goals.

Partners were seen to have benefitted from project **outputs** that could continue to be used, such as tools, exhibits and materials.

Finally, successful projects built partners' **reputations** through the kudos of working on a PPE project and through the publicity that some projects attracted.

4.5 My Research Council (EPSRC)

Grant holders felt that EPSRC had also gained **publicity, profile and reputation** from successful PPE projects. However this was framed slightly differently to the similar theme for institutions. The dissemination of and engagement with research outputs (internally and externally) was seen as something core to the goals of EPSRC, that PPE projects had supported. PPE was seen as generating positive publicity for EPSRC research, and promoting a positive public perception of this research and STEM more widely.

Several **benefits for research** were also articulated. These included the provision of researcher training and developing researchers' skills leading to better future research. The role of PPE projects in inspiring future researchers was also highlighted.

One group expressed the view that Research Councils are there to serve the public, so should look for **public outcomes** as well as or instead of their own. These public outcomes could include creating opportunities to engage with EPSRC-funded research, and the development of a community of researchers that are ready and willing to engage with the public. In return, EPSRC also has the opportunity to learn what the public thinks about the research it funds.

Finally, as for individuals, there is an **opportunity cost** associated with the PPE scheme, in that the funding spent on public engagement is not invested elsewhere.

5 Future public engagement

5.1 Discussion of the future embedded model for EPSRC public engagement.

Researchers participated in facilitated discussions about the new embedded model for EPSRC public engagement.

Prior knowledge of the new model

Most of the workshop participants (with the exception of one or two who were relatively new to public engagement) were aware of the new model. They had gained this information from different sources; some through colleagues or direct interaction with the EPSRC public engagement team. Some found out through the website, where they were checking for details of the new call.

Because we were looking to fund a follow-up, [we] kept checking the website... coming soon... cancelled. Then some verbiage that it would continue through pathways to impact, [that was the] first I'd heard of it

There was some confusion and considerable frustration at the decision to move away from the PPE model, and about how suddenly the decision had been taken.

Since then PPE has been cancelled with no consultation; the community was not told; it even took the internal EPSRC office by surprise.

Reactions to the new model

Most participants felt that the new model would be detrimental to researchers or to the goals of public engagement. We circulated a statement (provided in Appendix 3) about the new model that was prepared for the workshops and there was a feeling that EPSRC were not being fully clear about the motivations behind the change, or that they were not fully aware of the negative implications for the research and public engagement communities.

I have an issue with [the statement saying that] public engagement is not diminished 'merely' the mechanism has changed. Not merely, [it's] a critical change to what public engagement might be. It reflects that somebody thinks it's not important. [EPSRC] need to be more open about what they're trying to achieve

There was also some negativity towards Pathways to Impact more generally, and confusion between pathways to impact and impact as measured through the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

Participants felt they were receiving mixed messages from EPSRC, with the impact agenda and the Concordat for Public Engagement⁵ being seen to send a supportive message, and the cancellation of PPE seen as seriously undermining this. Participants felt frustrated and some were angry with the decision.

⁵ The Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research was developed by the UK's research funding bodies to create a greater focus on and help embed public engagement with research. For more information see www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter/concordat

Implications, advantages and risks

A number of implications of the new model were discussed, some positive but mostly negative.

There were fears that the new model would lead to fragmentation of engagement activity, with limited scope for larger, broader and more innovative projects; or involving a whole group of research laboratories in one field. Instead there was seen to be a risk of public engagement becoming a 'box-ticking exercise' or be 'bolted on'.

How many of the current PPE projects would have got off the ground in this model?

On the other hand, the potential for the new model to encourage more researchers to engage the public with their work was recognised by some.

We discussed earlier that its part of a different skill set, chances are it's the same people doing the research as public engagement, like an end activity that people are obliged to do, but we all chose to do public engagement because it's something we wanted to do. I'm in two minds – too much research goes on behind closed doors, but it could be a step backwards

An important implication related to the timing of public engagement. This was seen as needing to come near the end of a research project, rather than being embedded throughout. This was felt as carrying two risks: the risk of the research being unsuitable for engagement and the funds wasted, or there being no mechanism for engagement with unexpected research outcomes that would be of great interest to the public. In addition, some participants were now unable to apply for funds to roll out successful pilot activities.

If there are unexpected outcomes from the research that would be brilliant for public engagement, you can't then apply for a PPE to make the most of that.

Researchers were concerned that embedding public engagement in research funding would limit the opportunities for engagement with broader areas of science and engineering. This was especially a concern for those that had public understanding and inspiring future generations as their motivations for engaging the public. Furthermore, some felt that at the moment public engagement was audience driven (which helped ensure quality) but that it would become 'provider driven' by the research itself.

There is a divide or difference between research being subject specialist discovery and outreach or public engagement [being about] general inspiration. For example it is vital for public engagement to increase understanding of statistics and probability but there is no general research project that would cover this. Therefore, if research drives public engagement then this could limit the range of public engagement undertaken.

For others, the fact that engagement would be more closely aligned with research was seen as a positive aspect.

Some participants were clear that PPE is not an ideal model itself, and that it and the new model will both have advantages and disadvantages. For others the success of the new

model was dependent on how seriously it is taken by PIs and panels. The groups were unsure whether public engagement would be expected in every proposal. They were clear that not all research projects are appropriate for PE. They were also concerned that reviewers and panels would not pay the necessary attention to the PE element of the proposal.

Other risks included losing the skills and experience in public engagement built up by PPE grant holders, and reducing the opportunities for the development of these skills in new researchers. One group also highlighted that the PPE model allows for public engagement to be the specialist skill of one person on the research group, but that in the new model the research skills will take precedence, which could exclude the public engagement specialist from contributing to the relevant aspect of the grant.

The groups also noted that the part of the proposal related to public engagement would be much shorter than for PPE and less time spent writing the proposal meant the activities could be poorly planned.

We had to write full proposals for PPE – pathways to impact is much shorter, so how will it be assessed? Quality control at reviewing stage [will be] very difficult based on a couple of paragraphs.

Next steps

Participants were guided to suggest actions that could be taken to help the future model be as successful as possible.

Support for researchers with less engagement experience was an important theme. Discussions identified that some universities have a public engagement officer in post to support researchers in writing public engagement into their pathways to impact plans.

...to say we would work with our local coordinator, it gives some confidence that not every researcher is going to start out without support. Could be a way to retain the expertise we have developed.

Some felt that EPSRC could or should provide support in the form of workshops or case studies, but it was acknowledged that insisting researchers attend workshops about public engagement would probably not go down well in the community.

Can you imagine running a workshop for researchers that don't want to go but have to?

The current mentoring provision was seen as valuable. Researchers saw the need for leadership, but noted that they are not paid to mentor colleagues in public engagement and questioned the sustainability of a model that relied on the goodwill of others. Writing colleagues into proposals as co-investigators or on a consultancy basis was seen as a more realistic approach to sharing expertise.

If that grant application builds in the need for goodwill from others that's not good. Could build colleagues in as co-investigators or on a consultancy basis.

A clear need for guidance on application, reviewing and panel procedures emerged. Some participants also discussed alternative ways of funding public engagement, for example through the funding of doctoral centres or public engagement fellowships for early to mid-career researchers.

Following these discussions, participants were asked to suggest three things they would say to other researchers, and three things they would say to EPSRC about the new model. These ideas are summarised in the next two sections.

5.2 Messages to other researchers

Participants were asked what they would say to other researchers about the embedded model of public engagement and making it work. They reflected on these individually and wrote them down. Some clear themes emerged. Responses are presented in full in Appendix 1.

The strongest recommendation to other researchers was to **seek advice and support on public engagement**. This could be from others who are active in public engagement, by subcontracting or partnering with public engagement specialists, through PPE mentors or from a public engagement office within a university.

Look for and accept advice from people who have worked on public engagement projects previously

A couple of respondents suggested writing a colleague who is experienced in PE into the research proposal.

Add a co-investigator with experience in public engagement whose main responsibility will be leading the PE activity

Further to suggesting others seek advice and support, twelve of the comments offered various pieces of **advice about public engagement** echoing the discussions of the workshop. These included understanding your audience, being realistic with time and budgets, involving PhD students, taking an interactive approach etc.

Know your audience and be enthusiastic.

Eight of the comments reflected the idea that **panels or others may not value public engagement**, and suggested caution in the extent to which it should be written in to research grants.

Concentrate on getting the research aspect of the proposal as good as you can, as it will be judged on that, and the PE component will carry little weight in the final analysis of which grant wins.

However seven comments felt that the new model would help **embed public engagement** into research grants. However some still emphasised that careful planning would be required to realise this.

A very worthwhile addition to some research projects though careful planning is required

One comment also hinted at ways researchers might pool their public engagement funding.

Combining public engagement of research by theme / geographical region may help create a meaningful communication process with the public, so future bids may need to reflect this.

Three respondents made comments related to the **quality** of public engagement, suggesting that colleagues should think carefully before applying and ensure they have allocated enough funds. Another three identified **other challenges**, such as the fact that **public engagement will not be relevant in all grants**, that the focus on impact could undermine blue sky research and that academic staff whose remit is mostly teaching might be excluded from the funding. Two comments referred to the **link between PE and other elements of Pathways to Impact**.

Keep your local Director of Research for your school informed about the content of your Pathway to Impact plan. This will help them assess the balance of approaches taken (commercialisation, public engagement, social/policy impact)

5.3 Messages to EPSRC

Participants came up with several clear messages for EPSRC through their individual reflections written down at the end of the workshops. These are presented in full in Appendix 1.

Firstly, they felt that EPSRC should **consider the processes at application, reviewing and panel stages**. It was felt that clear guidance should be supplied to applicants, reviewers and panel members. One respondent suggested that researchers should be able to pool their public engagement money from research grants to work across a department or institution. There was a concern that public engagement expertise would not be effectively represented at peer review and panel stages. Some felt that all proposals should be reviewed by a public engagement expert and all panels should have an expert on board; a couple advocated a separate process entirely. Others felt that the involvement of public engagement specialists should only be necessary for larger research grants, or for those with a significant public engagement component.

There would need to be separate application procedures and separate panels to rank proposals including significant engagement activities

Please make sure that any significant PE components to applications are reviewed by competent knowledgeable reviewers e.g. previous PPE reviewers

Allow EPSRC grant holders in a single establishment to pool their PPE money. In general, better funding gives better outcomes

Further to guidance in the application and funding process, many respondents felt that EPSRC must **provide advice and support** for researchers that have successfully bid for public engagement funding through the new model, especially those new to PE. One felt that without the full application process of PPE, the public engagement aspect of the proposal would be less developed. Provision of training or mentoring for researchers was suggested, potentially using the 'developing leadership' programme or the existing PPE mentoring

scheme. A few respondents were concerned that the community of practice around public engagement with EPSRC research could be fragmented without the opportunity to work with mentors or foster partnerships that PPE provided.

Could become fragmented if no mentoring or no way of maintaining a community of academics with PPE interests

There needs to be consideration under the 'developing leadership' programme for the development of PE leaders: they are generally not equal to other leaders the RC is (rightly) supporting/developing.

If everyone is required to carry out PE as part of their funding a lot of support and guidance will be needed to help those researchers who have not done much PE yet

Find some good early case studies to use as exemplars. If none or few emerge from the first rounds, work with the research applicants to develop them.

Some respondents felt that the new model would **limit innovation** in public engagement. Some felt the new model would stifle interdisciplinary working, deter researchers from writing in large sums for public engagement that might risk the success of the research grant, or mean that it was not possible to respond to timely engagement opportunities.

Large, innovative PPE grants will not be funded because they would be disproportionate to the main EPSRC funding for the grant

The strength of the PPE model was its interdisciplinarity and openness to partnerships – this will undoubtedly be lost in the new model

Some respondents went further and feared that the new model would mean many researchers would **omit public engagement altogether** from their proposals. Some felt this was understandable as it is not always appropriate to engage the public; others felt that if public engagement was omitted EPSRC should seek alternative routes to engage the public.

If researchers choose not to build public engagement into their projects, don't take this as a sign that they regard it as unimportant. It probably means that they do not want to take their focus off the quality of the research within the particular project they have designed

Two respondents felt that EPSRC should be **flexible** in the new model, by allowing additional proposals to respond to timely opportunities or appreciating that different types of research warrant different methods of engagement. Two participants felt positive about the new model and its potential to **get more researchers involved in public engagement**. However another two said that EPSRC should **rethink the model** as they feel it will be unsuccessful. Two felt that universities should be encouraged to reward public engagement.

Appendix 1: Messages to EPSRC/other researchers

What would you say to EPSRC about the future embedded public engagement funding model and making it work?

Consider application, reviewing and panel processes

- Need to give clear guidance to people applying for funding, panellists, reviewers to ensure PE continues. May even need to audit decisions to check that changes are taken on board
- There would need to be separate application procedures and separate panels to rank proposals including significant engagement activities
- Large grants (>£1m) should go to a referee to assess PE component
- Please make sure that any significant PE components to applications are reviewed by competent knowledgeable reviewers e.g. previous PPE reviewers
- Please ensure that panels have someone with specialist PE knowledge on them
- Ensure embedded PE in proposals can be properly evaluated by 1. Getting specialist PE reviewers to evaluate that aspect, 2. Ensuring that there is enough space in the proposal (or form) to properly explain planned PE activities/ impact sought
- Get suitable reviewers for the PE part of a proposal
- Consider have one or two (or three) categories of level of PE within a grant, so that applicants can specify that their PE activity will be at a specific level (e.g. 'basic', 'standard')
- Ensure there is public engagement experience/expertise on the research grant review panels e.g. PPE mentors
- Treat the PPE element of a proposal as a separate entity. This might mean different people leading (PI)/ involved (external). Also approval to carry out PPE might be linked to successful project milestones or extended quality review.
- Allow EPSRC grant holders in a single establishment to pool their PPE money. In general, better funding gives better outcomes
- From some research PE needs to be done near the end, not simultaneously

Risk of limiting innovation

- Large, innovative PPE grants will not be funded because they would be disproportionate to the main EPSRC funding for the grant
- Won't foster bold ideas.
- It may lead to very conservative projects because PPE tends not to be a high priority when writing grant applications
- This potentially ties PE to research which eliminates general PE work thus limiting subjects covered – is it better to cover more subjects in less depth or fewer subjects more thoroughly?
- The strength of the PPE model was its interdisciplinarity and openness to partnerships – this will undoubtedly be lost in the new model
- The new model appears to diminish the opportunity for quality PE projects which are any of:

- Timely: many projects will be opportunistic and not feasible to plan years in advance as part of a mega-research project
- Broad: many projects will draw on a wide variety of strands of research both current and past, and as such will not fit easily as part of a single research project
- Led by a talented PE expert who is not necessarily going to be sufficient of a lead researcher to win the research grant

Provide advice and support

- Could become fragmented if no mentoring or no way of maintaining a community of academics with PPE interests
- Ensure research teams get proper training to be able to do PE effectively
- Allow sufficient levels of funding dedicated to the PE activity & encourage using a CI responsible for leading the PE activity
- Make clear to researchers that their best approach could be to work with an experienced engagement / delivery partner
- Equally, the lead researchers are not necessarily going to be dedicated and talented PE exponents; indeed, given that grants are presumably going to be judged principally on quality + relevance of research, the PE component is not going to get all the critical development a separate funding model could deliver. EPSRC needs to fund methods in its new model to address these issues. Maybe this is already being addressed, but there needs to be consideration under the 'developing leadership' programme for the development of PE leaders: they are generally not equal to other leaders the RC is (rightly) supporting/developing.
- If everyone is required to carry out PE as part of their funding a lot of support and guidance will be needed to help those researchers who have not done much PE yet
- Give advice on approaches to PPE activity
- Provide a pool of 'mentors' who can provide advice, contacts etc.
- If a project has been given significant PE funding please appoint a mentor to help them spend the funds wisely. The mentors are the hive mind containing the expertise and skills the 13 previous PPE calls built up and it would be foolhardy to let it go to waste
- Issue clear guidelines for applicants about a) how to do PE and b) what a grant proposal should include about PE
- Find some good early case studies to use as exemplars. If none or few emerge from the first rounds, work with the research applicants to develop them.
- Care will need to be taken to ensure high quality PE is done on suitable topics

Proposals may omit PE

- If researchers choose not to build public engagement into their projects, don't take this as a sign that they regard it as unimportant. It probably means that they do not want to take their focus off the quality of the research within the particular project they have designed
- If the new funding mechanism has the effect that future proposals omit public engagement, the EPSRC must find another way to educate the public at large of the value (and values) of both pure research and applied research that is not near market. Engaging with the public on scientific matters is becoming more important, not less.

The scientific method is not the only claim to truth acknowledged by the public. Scientists have to compete with unqualified bloggers, poorly presented TV news, hysterical newspaper articles, pseudo-scientific marketing from powerful commercial interests, new-age thinking from strange religious groups and more besides.

- Not all research is suited to PE. I can guarantee that the general public will not appreciate the significance of some fundamental science work unless it is put in such simple terms as to be completely removed from the subject. What do you want us to do?

Be flexible

- PPE opportunities are not always evident at the start of grants (e.g special events) – this route may not be sufficiently flexible unless you allow PPE funding to be added to grants say at the half way stage
- Different types of research will merit different approaches to (public) engagement i.e. audience – schools; general public; policy makers; etc. also the aim of PE activity will link with research in many different ways. It might be informing or transforming/ reactive.

Good to get more researchers involved in Public Engagement

- Good to get more researchers involved in PE
- Increasing the engagement of the public in research may be extremely positive in increasing the relevance of the research and encouraging useful outputs.

Review this change

- I do not believe that this funding model can work in practice – the quality and quantity of engagement activity will deteriorate
- I think EPSRC should review this change and consider what is fit for purpose

Recognition in HEIs

- There needs to be some sort of mechanism for encouraging PE (e.g. have a small part of REF attributed to PE)
- Universities encouraged to reward researchers doing PE

Other

- Organise public 'town-meets' where local research can be showcased
- It would be a big help if EPSRC could release funding according to the schedule announced in the call, so that any public engagement that is planned to take place at a scheduled event (whose timing cannot be changed) is not compromised by a late start.
- The new funding model is NOT just 'merely' changing the way that PPE is funded.
- Carefully monitor the embedded PE aspect of projects. You could ask groups to fill out a short web based questionnaire each year.

What would you say to other researchers about the future embedded PE funded model and making it work?

Seek advice and support

- If you do want to carry out PE as part of your proposed research, seek advice from those experienced in PE and plan it carefully to minimise the influence of factors that you cannot control.
- Make use of researchers at your HEI who have PE experience
- Look for and accept advice from people who have worked on PE projects previously
- Collaboration between those experienced in research and those experienced in PE may be important
- Consider hiring a specialist for the PE component if you are new to it
- Contact your local public engagement office for advice on PE in the Pathway to Impact plan
- Seek advice from the PE office on costings for the PE activity proposed – not just the office providing research costs
- Add a co-investigator with experience in PE whose main responsibility will be leading the PE activity
- Ensure you have partners who know about your intended audience
- Be realistic. Talk to individuals who have done PPE type work. If you do get funds for PE, then make as much use as you can of contacts with mentors and current and past PE projects that you are able to find.

Panels or others may not value Public Engagement

- It'll depend on panels and perceived value of PE component
- There is a high level of uncertainty how subject panels will view public engagement activities
- It is unlikely that any substantial public engagement costs will be looked at favourably
- Would I encourage people to include it in their proposals in the current climate – definitely not
- Of the possible forms of 'impact' don't choose PE unless you are really sure, and have thought it through in great detail
- Concentrate on getting the research aspect of the proposal as good as you can, as it will be judged on that, and the PE component will carry little weight in the final analysis of which grant wins.
- If you plan to carry out PE as part of a research project, ensure that it is fully integrated with the science/engineering in the project so that it is justified by the research method and not seen merely as an 'add-on'.
- If you not want to carry out PE as part of your proposed research, don't worry because it will not harm your bid if you choose to ignore PE.

Advice for public engagement activities

- Make use of PhD students to support PE work. This provides them with additional training/expertise and improves their confidence
- Budget time carefully to ensure good, valuable PE, try not to leave it to the last minute and then not have enough time

- Scale down PE if no extra people/hours are provided by the funding. Still cover the material but be efficient i.e. online resources instead of 'in person' demos etc.
- Only include a PE component to your research if you are willing to put in a lot of energy/time/budget to make it work. Better not to do it than to do it badly as a tick box activity
- If you are intending to work with children, a lecture format isn't suitable. Interactive is the key!
- Under-promise. In PE, even quite small goals can take immense amounts of effort. Don't commit yourself to very much.
- Devise PE that is less dependent on skill and expertise in specialist areas such as graphic design, video production. Stick with activities that won't need you to acquire vast amounts of skill in a short time.
- Understand what sector of the public is to be targeted – who they are, what they need/want from the research.
- Be prepared to have to modify your message to fit in with your target audience
- Put your PPE obligation as an agenda item on your list and on all meetings.
- PPE is different to research. It needs strong people, graphic and communication skills
- Know your audience and be enthusiastic.

Embedding PE within research grants

- It doesn't treat PPE as a discrete activity, but something we should consider as a pathway to impact in all grants
- It reminds us that PPE is important for all grants – not just special activities carried out by the few
- One of its strengths is that it ties engagement directly to EPSRCs funding portfolio
- A very worthwhile addition to some research projects though careful planning is required
- It's about making public engagement integral to research, rather than standalone communication to engage the public on specific issues.
- Combining public engagement of research by theme / geographical region may help create a meaningful communication process with the public, so future bids may need to reflect this.
- Consider extending grant timeline e.g. 3 years research + 1 year to promote the research through PE

Quality

- Ask for enough funding to properly finance PE activities
- Think very clearly about the value / type of PE and how it might add value to the research. Don't add it in just for the sake of it. It does require considerable skill/time/money
- Difficult road ahead. Quality of PE needs to be retained.

Challenges

- The potential challenges include the fact that some research may not be particularly relevant/understandable for the public, and that the results are unknown at the bidding stage. Therefore public engagement may only be appropriate for certain projects.

- Is there still room for blue sky research – does there have to be an obvious impact, and a conversation with public etc?
- Those academic staff whose remit is predominantly teaching need to go and find funding to spread the understanding of science somewhere else

PE as part of the impact plan

- Seek clarity on distinction between PE dissemination and impact (if any)
- Keep your local Director of Research for your school informed about the content of your Pathway to Impact plan. This will help them assess the balance of approaches taken (commercialisation, public engagement, social/policy impact)

Appendix 2: Full facilitators' guide

Purpose

EPSRC commissioned Laura Grant Associates to provide a platform to:

- share best practice and learning in public engagement activities
- allow EPSRC to gather learning outcomes which could benefit current PPE holders and those researchers undertaking future public engagement activities
- enable the production of a live document of lessons learned and points of advice will be generated and made available online following on from the workshops

N.B: Public engagement within EPSRC will continue to be funded, but the mechanism has changed – from a dedicated funding stream to encouraging researchers to apply to do public engagement as part of their research proposals.

For information

Pre-workshop task: Each workshop participant has been asked to prepare 4 printed slides or A2/ A3 poster of their project for display at the workshop to include the following information:

- aims
- how they did it
- biggest success and biggest challenge
- conclusion
- project legacy

These will be displayed throughout the day; they will also be forwarded to EPSRC after the workshop and will be a useful resource for capturing outcomes/ key learning points.

Facilitators/ Event Management Guide

10.30 – 11.00

ARRIVAL and REGISTRATION

11.00 – 11.15

WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS

WORKSHOP INTRODUCTION

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| <p>11.15 – 11.40</p> | <p>WORKSHOP and PPE PROJECTS OVERVIEW</p> <p>Aim of session: to provide brief workshop overview and for participants to provide brief project summaries and to capture some PPE project outcomes.</p> <p>Format: Overview followed by short project presentations from the participants.</p> <p>11.15 – 11.20: WORKSHOP OVERVIEW/ AGENDA</p> <p>11.20 – 11.40: PROJECT SUMMARIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ask each project representative to point out their poster and give the group a 3 minute summary of their project. · Only one presentation <u>per</u> project. · Need to be strict in timings · Time for questions and chat more to each other about projects in the lunchtime, breaks and after the workshop. |
| <p>11.40 to 12.30</p> | <p>CAPTURING PPE PROJECT OUTCOMES</p> <p>Aim of session: to capture PPE project outcomes and to theme and categorise the outcomes</p> <p>Format: Flipchart, post-it notes, clustering followed by discussion</p> <p>11.40 to 11.55 FLIPCHARTS & POST-IT NOTES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 5 flipcharts on the wall with the following headings (and post-it notes/pens laid out on the table) of different groups of stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - me/ my team - project delivery partners - project audiences (public) - my university/ institution - my research council (EPSRC) · Introduce task as a way to capture the outcomes (positive and negative), outputs and impacts of the project on various groups; · Ask the participants to consider - 'what did each of these groups get out of the project?' (me/ my team; etc); · Participants to use one post-it note per point |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Put post-it notes up on appropriate flipchart – next to similar ones · Mention that this includes learning outcomes – such as “what did I/ they learn”. <p>11.55 to 12.15: CLUSTERING</p> <p>Get groups to work in pairs and cluster post-its into groups/ themes and label.</p> <p>12.15 to 12.45: GROUP DISUCSSION - PROJECT OUTCOMES</p> <p>Prompt the group on the outcomes/ clusters (and mark - coloured labels with appropriate letter):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of these would you consider the most important successes (S) for your project? Why? • Which of these were unexpected (U)? Why? • Which of these have a lasting impact (I)? Why? • What outcomes do you have evidence for (E)? What kind of evidence is there? • Any negative (N) outcomes? |
| <p>12.45 to 13.30</p> | <p>LUNCH, NETWORKING AND VOX-POPS</p> <p>Vox-pops: “What do you think is the most important or interesting outcome to come out of your PPE project?”</p> <p>Digital photos of the flipcharts</p> |
| <p>13.30 to 15.00</p> | <p>SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES; HIGHS AND LOWS; LESSONS LEARNT</p> <p>Aims of session:</p> <p>To identify success, challenges, capture lessons learnt and recommendations to disseminate to other researchers embarking on PE projects by getting participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about and record the successes and challenges along the way and identify the highs and lows; hindrances and enablers; support wanted and received. • Capture a ‘narrative’ of how projects developed and progressed <p>Format: Post-it notes to capture successes and challenges; mapping</p> |

project narratives, paired and group discussions, written recommendations, lessons learnt and advice.

13.30 to 14.00: CAPTURING SUCCESSES and CHALLENGES and MAPPING

Participants work individually or together (if in a project pair) and write on post-it notes:

- successes
- what helped/ enablers
- what hindered/ barriers
- what you were glad you did/ had
- what you wished you did/ had
- project milestones

Single and finished? Pair them up to discuss what worked well; what did not work well.

Once everyone finished: map onto flipchart paper to give a narrative of the project in a way of their choosing but **must separate into hi's and lows**.

Show example of one way to do it (with the following categories: getting started; project development; project delivery; evaluation; legacy; whole project)

14.00 to 14.45: FACILITATED GROUP DISCUSSION – PROJECT NARRATIVES

Prompt an individual on the following and then open up discussion to whole group; rotate opening prompt round different people in the group.

- What worked well? What factors helped and why?
- What hindered the project? How were these overcome?
- Where did you get support? Where did you need extra support?
- Any gaps/ what was missing (eg time/ support; skills)?
- What role did partnerships play?
- Did your project have a legacy? Why? What can you do to ensure your project has a legacy?

Optional prompts:

- Reaching target audiences
- Media coverage
- Support – Mentors; HOD; EPSRC
- Did your objectives shift? How/why?

| | |
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| | <p>14.45 to 15.00 : KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND ADVICE</p> <p>Ask participants to work in pairs or threes.</p> <p>Using flip-chart paper - each group writes down (up to) their top five that would benefit current and future researchers embarking on pub eng:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lessons learnt - recommendations/ advice that you share with others (including do's and don'ts) - 'generic' resources/ templates/ tools that could be useful <p>As each groups finishes; give participants 3 coloured stars to label the most important in the tea break</p> <p>Collect A3 narrative maps; post completed lessons learnt/ recommendations/ generic resources onto poster boards or walls.</p> |
| <p>15.00 – 15.15</p> | <p>TEA BREAK, NETWORKING AND VOX-POPS</p> <p>Vox-pops: <i>"What advice would you give to a researcher that was embarking on their first public engagement project?"</i></p> |
| <p>15.15 to 16.00</p> | <p>LOOKING FORWARD</p> <p>Aim of session: To allow participants to express their thoughts and feelings about the new model before exploring what can we learn from previous PPE projects and how can we apply this knowledge and experience to benefit the new embedded model for PPE funding embedding.</p> <p>Format: Two facilitated discussion groups with stimulus material and prompts</p> <p>Set-up a flipchart with 'questions for EPSRC'. Participants write Q's onto post-it notes as they arise and 'park these' onto the flipchart paper.</p> <p>Use a "Focused Conversation Method" to open up discussion with the groups (more info: http://www.ica-uk.org.uk/images/stories/mgilbraith/ToP_method_overviews/ToP_method</p> |

[overview - FC.pdf](#)

Focused conversation method:

Objective (get the facts; sensory impressions) – move through quickly (< 5mins).

Find out what people already know about the new model embedded model?

How did they find out?

What information they received?

PASS round EPSRC statement for consideration.

Reflective (personal reactions; emotions; images): move through fairly quickly (6 - 8 mins).

What do participants think about the new model?

How do participants feel about the model?

What do they think the new 'embedded PE funding model' will 'look like'?

Interpretive (meaning, values, significance, purpose, implications): (8 – 10 mins)

What will it mean?

How will things change?

What are the implications?

How will things differ in the future?

What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Decisional (Resolution; Action; Future Direction; Next Steps) (+20 mins):

Explore:

What should the future direction and next steps be re: embedded model?

What actions should EPSRC take to help ensure success?

What actions should researchers take?

Is there a mentor role to be played by PPE awardees? What is it?

What should the role of previous PPE mentors for the future be?

| | |
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| | |
| 16.00 to 16.25 | <p>WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO:</p> <p>Stay in groups with facilitators As people finish - vox-pops (asking one of the 2 questions below)</p> <p>Aim: So that we can capture what participants would say to EPSRC and researchers regarding the new funding model in their own words:</p> <p>Have double sided A4 template to fill in 3 answers each for the following questions.</p> <p>Individual working/ quiet time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • important that this “what would you say to...” session is focused on what we can do with the embedded PE funding model to help make it work <p>What would you say to EPSRC re: the future embedded PE funding model and making it work?</p> <p>What would you say to other researchers re: the future embedded PE funding model and making it work?</p> <p>Collect completed A4 sheets.</p> |
| 16.25 | <p>THANK YOU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thank you • survey monkey feedback • reiterate plans for workshop findings/ reports etc; next steps; learning outcomes compiled in a report and published on a website for benefit of current and potential researchers wanting to do PE. • invite people to pub for networking |
| 16.30 | <p>CLOSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • networking, drinks and nibbles at nearby pub. |

Appendix 3: Workshop statement

The logo for EPSRC, consisting of the letters 'EPSRC' in a bold, purple, sans-serif font. Above the letters is a horizontal teal line, and below them is a horizontal purple line.

Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council

Statement for evaluation workshops

From April 2008, narrative final reports for all grants, including PPE grants, were no longer required by the Research Councils. This has meant that PPE grant holders are no longer obliged to submit their evaluation reports or comment on the lessons learned during their project, beyond the standard report form. Even before the changes were made, the reports were only submitted to EPSRC and most projects did not make them freely available for other applicants to read. As a result, relatively little learning from projects is available either to EPSRC, the researchers involved or the wider community. In response to this we are requesting all PPE award holders who have finished their projects to attend an evaluation workshop.

The workshops will provide a platform for PPE award holders to share best practice and learning in public engagement activities. It will also allow EPSRC to gather learning outcomes which could be of benefit to current PPE holders and those undertaking public engagement as part of future research projects. A live document of lessons learned and points of advice will be generated and made available online following on from the workshops.

EPSRC recently announced a change in the way it funds public engagement in the future. Rather than submitting to a dedicated public engagement call, researchers will be encouraged to apply for public engagement activities as part of a research proposal. This may be as part of the Pathways to Impact plan or as an integral work package within the project. The learning outcomes gathered from the evaluation workshops will be used to provide invaluable advice for those researchers interested in including public engagement activities in their future research projects. As such, we would appreciate it if those who have concluded PPE projects would endeavour to attend one of these workshops. The workshops are designed to be of benefit to the researchers attending, EPSRC and researchers considering including PE as part of research applications in the future.

The importance EPSRC places on high quality public engagement with research has not diminished, merely the mechanisms for funding it have changed. We will continue to

support a strong, embedded public engagement portfolio, more closely linked with and adding value to the research we fund.