

Public Engagement Strategy 2024-2028

1 – Public Engagement at the Babraham Institute

The Babraham Institute is a leader in public engagement with a number of long-running, impactful events and a wealth of experience in public dialogue engagement formats. Through our public engagement programmes we engage students, teachers, community groups, families and other public audiences with the goal of generating two-way, mutual benefits. We are committed to sharing our research and believe in the importance of listening to and understanding public views, hopes, concerns and aspirations about our research. We develop and implement equitable practices to ensure that all of society have a connection to research and benefit from it. Through connecting with young people, we showcase not only our research but also the diverse backgrounds of those working at the Institute to inspire the next generation of scientists.

Beyond the commitment to research excellence and discoveries that make a difference to human health, the Institute strives to be an exemplar of open, responsible research and two-way engagement. Stakeholder engagement with public and policy audiences is used to communicate and discuss the impact of our research, to align our work with societal values, and to underpin the importance of strategy-focused science in securing a successful, and healthy future.

1.1 - Strategic Approach to Public Engagement

Our new strategy defines the Institute's approach to public engagement and explains how we will deliver on our vision for effective public engagement. The strategy has been developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and brings together the views of Institute staff, funders and the wider public engagement sector.

This new public engagement strategy supports the delivery of the Institute's vision for social and economic impact, as described in the Institute's Directors Statement and in the three Institute Strategic Programmes. It also contributes to enabling the Team Science approach of the Institute and its vision for a culture of research excellence, inclusivity and wellbeing for all, as outlined in the Institute Research Culture Statement.

We have also developed this strategy in line with the UKRI Public Engagement Strategy, ensuring it contributes to UKRI's three aims of:

- Building a sense of shared endeavour by making research and innovation relevant and accessible to all.
- Making sure the benefits of research and innovation are shared widely by supporting collaboration and valuing diverse forms of knowledge.
- Creating opportunities for all by inspiring and engaging the next generation.

1.2 – Vision and Principles

The Institute's vision is of an open, transparent and accountable organisation that is leading in its contributions to science, culture, society, economic development and growth. The Institute's Public Engagement Team supports a varied and dynamic programme to enable researcher-led engagement with a wide range of audiences. This support includes operating a core programme of engagement opportunities, providing training in public engagement, supporting the development of new ideas and activities, and providing expertise to support external grant applications.

We tailor our public engagement activities to take into account the topic of research, public participant backgrounds, and availability of financial and time resources. Through tailored formats ranging from discursive workshops to curriculum-linked school enrichment sessions, we make our engagement impactful to the public and researchers alike. We also recognise the need to engage with public audiences across different levels of engagement to make research and innovation relevant and accessible to all, including:

- *Informing* – activities aiming to build public knowledge and understanding of science to enable further, informed engagement with our research.
- *Consulting* – speaking and listening to public audiences about our research to enable public views to feedback into research.
- *Involving* – building in-depth, mutual understanding of our research and public views to directly reflect this in project outputs.
- *Collaborating* – developing outputs together with public participants where all parties equally contribute to and share in the outputs.
- *Empowering* – equipping and supporting public audiences to undertake their own scientific research.

Research has shown that people living in areas of higher deprivation have lower levels of ‘science capital’, which is a measure of an individual’s access to and engagement with science. Cambridgeshire and East Anglia have areas with some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country. Many of the deprived areas are in rural locations which have traditionally been underserved by engagement programmes due to the tendency for research institutes and University departments to focus on Cambridge and other urban centres. Babraham’s public engagement work seeks to improve equitable access to science through the active targeting of audiences in traditionally underserved areas and building long-term relationships with them.

1.3 – Organisational Structures and Governance

The Institute places an emphasis on public engagement in its work. This is achieved through strategic leadership provided by a research-active Senior Group Leader as the Head of Public Engagement, by a public engagement committee with representation at all levels, and by close partnership with research and technical teams to ensure public engagement is embedded across the Institute. The core Public Engagement team sits within professional services, alongside the Communications and Knowledge Exchange and Commercialisation teams, and consists of a Public Engagement Manager and a Public Engagement Officer with additional administrative support.

Public engagement activities are included in ‘line-of-sight to impact’ strategies embedded in the Institute’s Strategic Programme Grants, with clear resource allocation for these activities.

The Public Engagement Team reports biannually to the Institute Director and the senior leadership team (Babraham Executive Committee).

2 – Pillars of Work

The following programme supports the Institute’s public engagement vision through five main pillars of work.

2.1 – Empower Institute Staff

We will continue to move towards staff-led public engagement with researchers empowered to undertake engagement work and enrich their research.

Reward and Recognition

We will develop reward and recognition initiatives to offer tangible benefits to staff leading on public engagement work. This work will celebrate staff efforts and raise awareness of the importance of public engagement within research.

Training and Support

We will equip staff to undertake their own public engagement by providing access to training opportunities that meet their needs and enhance their practice. This will sit alongside a core programme of engagement events and activities, coordinated by the Public Engagement team, to allow researchers to gain experience of public engagement. We will administer seed funding programmes to reduce financial barriers to researchers looking to develop new engagement initiatives and will develop on-demand toolkits and information to help ensure good practice is followed in their work.

2.2 - Embed Public Engagement at the Institute

To ensure public engagement remains at the heart of the Institute's work, we will align public engagement work with research to enable the greatest impact of research outputs.

Public Engagement in Grants

We will support the inclusion of public engagement activities in research grant applications. This enables project-specific engagement programmes to be developed and ensures that resources are available for the public engagement activities. This also provides a clear means to achieve and maximise impact from the research, thereby contributing to the competitiveness of the grant application, and aligning with the expectations of the funders. We will achieve this through the development of tools, resources and processes to support grant applicants and the Grants Office.

Communication

By building on existing communications platforms and channels, we aim to raise awareness of public engagement work at the Institute, to internal and external audiences, so that staff successes can be recognised and celebrated. This work will also help to develop the public's awareness of opportunities to engage with the Institute.

Wider Institute Initiatives

Our work also supports wider Institute initiatives, such as:

- *The equity4success programme* – by enhancing equitable access to careers for traditionally underserved audiences and contributing to early steps on the bioscience career pathway.
- *The Concordat on Openness on Animal Research* – by providing a platform for staff to engage public audiences with this often-controversial part of research.
- *The Technician Commitment* – by enhancing the visibility of technicians to audiences beyond the Institute and engaging young people with these career routes.
- *The Green Labs initiative* – by supporting community engagement work on sustainable approaches to research, which contributes towards the Green Impact Award.

2.3 – Evaluate Impact of our Work

We follow best practice and always strive for the highest quality, impactful public engagement. To achieve this, we will evaluate our programme through a combination of periodic and continual analyses.

Internal Audiences

We will evaluate our impact internally by analysing who is carrying out public engagement at the Institute and what impact it is having on their research or role. We will do this following principles and measures established in the ‘Beacons for Public Engagement’ EDGE tool. We will benchmark the Institute’s public engagement at the beginning of this strategy against the tool and then measure progress over the course of the strategic period. We will also track where our public engagement feeds into wider work such as recruitment to the next generation of science careers at the Institute.

External Audiences

We will also evaluate the impact of our programme externally. We will record who we engage with and the impacts that our initiatives have on them. We will engage individuals at multiple points throughout their lives to build a better understanding of the longitudinal impact of our programme. Through collecting feedback and building case studies of our work, we aim to continually identify ways to improve our programme and build examples of good practice that we can share with others.

2.4 – Engage with Stakeholders and Public Engagement Sector

We will engage a wide range of stakeholders to ensure our work is aligned with expectations of funding bodies and the wider sector and raise the profile of the Institute’s public engagement work.

BBSRC/UKRI

We will continue to engage with BBSRC and UKRI, as well as other funders, to support their public engagement strategies and contribute to the wider UK research community. We will also engage with programmes, such as UKRI Sciencewise, and relevant grants and impact accelerator schemes to further align our work with that of funding bodies. We will leverage the opportunities provided by working on the Babraham Research Campus to involve on-site companies in our public engagement activities, which will expose participants to a different career paths in science.

We will further develop relationships with other BBSRC-funded institutes and seek collaborations to enhance our individual engagement programmes. We will also ensure our work is aligned to BBSRC’s strategic direction. We will do this through a variety of mechanisms including regular BBSRC networking meetings, which we currently coordinate, and are attended by public engagement staff from across the BBSRC institutes and members of the BBSRC public engagement team.

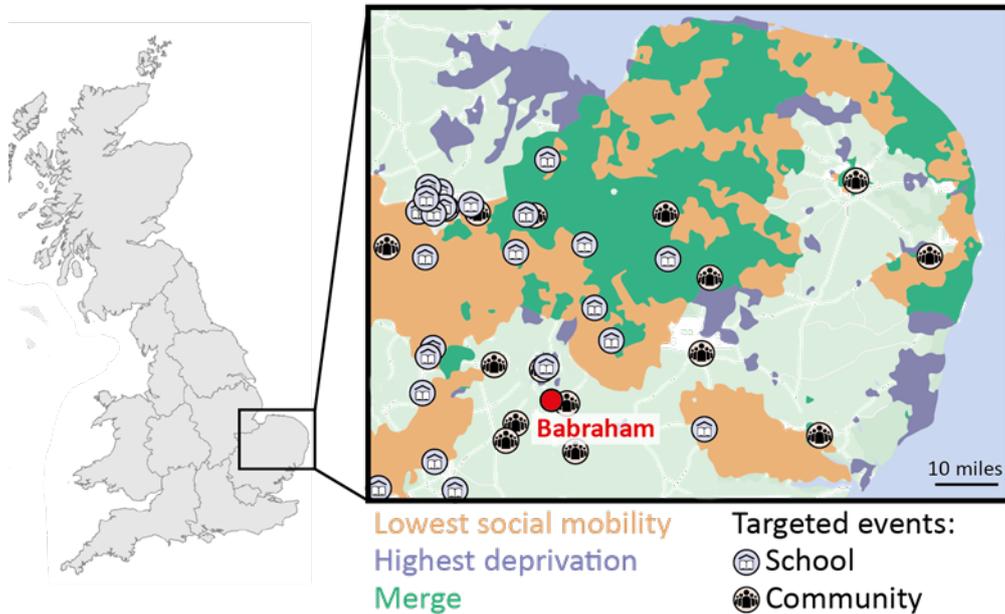
Public Engagement Sector

We will continue to share our learnings and expertise with others, whilst also learning from them, to enrich the public engagement sector. This will be done through presenting at and engaging with public engagement conferences (such as the NCCPE’s Engage Conferences) and striving to publish articles and case study reflections on our work. We will also regularly engage with local and national engagement networks to build collaborations and continue to broaden our expertise.

2.5 – Expand our Audience Reach

We will engage diverse audiences by targeting our engagement efforts towards communities in areas of high deprivation and/or low social mobility. We define these areas as those scoring in the top 40% for deprivation (using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) and/or the lowest 40% for social mobility (using the Social Mobility Index). For more information about the IMD, please see: [“What](#)

[are the Indices of Deprivation?](#)"; for more information about the SMI, please see: "[The Social Mobility Index](#)". There are many of these areas in our local region as shown in the map below:



Map showing our local region and areas of high deprivation / low social mobility. Icons show targeted events that have taken place over the last 5 years to begin establishing relationships with school and community audiences in these areas.

Through pro-actively approaching school and community audiences in these areas, we aim to build long-lasting relationships that will generate mutual benefit for the public audiences and our research alike. We will also work with these partners to identify and remove barriers that prevent them and similar audiences engaging with the Institute. This approach will enable us to achieve more equitable access to Institute programmes and to bring diverse voices and knowledge into our work.

3 – Delivery Plan

The following table outlines the deliverables and actions we will take to realise this strategy:

Strategic Pillar	Objectives	Deliverables	Actions	Measures of Success	Timelines
1. Empower Institute staff	1.1. Enable staff-led development of public engagement activities through the reduction of financial barriers	Public engagement seed fund	<p>Administer annual support of projects up to a value of £6000</p> <p>Provide support and guidance for funded projects to enhance against Institute strategic public engagement aims</p> <p>Develop a new scoring framework to evaluate project proposals against Institute public engagement strategic aims</p> <p>Evaluate project applications and project end points to assess development of researcher skills and impact of projects</p>	<p>An increase of applications to the fund year-on-year</p> <p>A minimum of 2 projects per ISP to be developed through this fund over the strategic period</p> <p>Projects supported by the fund to also include representation from scientific facilities teams</p> <p>Projects to show development against evaluation framework over the course of the project development and implementation</p>	<p>Fund to be run annually</p> <p>Support for projects to be ongoing</p> <p>Scoring framework to be produced in 2024</p>
	1.2. Reward and recognise staff contributions to public engagement work of the Institute	Public engagement prize	<p>Administer an annual public engagement prize</p> <p>Develop a new scoring framework to evaluate contributions to public engagement against Institute public engagement strategic aims</p>	<p>A minimum of 3 nominations for the prize per year</p> <p>An increase in staff perception of public engagement work being recognised and rewarded</p>	<p>Prize to be run annually in line with Institute Lab Talks event</p> <p>Scoring framework to be produced in 2024</p>

	1.3. Raise understanding of public engagement principles and equip staff to undertake public engagement activities	Public engagement training programme	<p>Develop a suite of public engagement training based on staff need</p> <p>Provide a mix of in-person, online, and on-demand training available for all staff</p> <p>Align this training with wider Institute training programmes</p>	<p>Public engagement suite to be produced and accessible via Institute intranet</p> <p>Staff undertaking training reporting an increase in skills and confidence for undertaking public engagement activities</p>	<p>Public engagement training suite to be developed and launched by October 2024</p>
2. Embed public engagement at the Institute	2.1. Increase inclusion of public engagement to enhance grants and fellowship applications and provide resource to meet funders expectations in this area	Review of public engagement grant process	<p>Contribute to developments within the grant and fellowship process at the Institute</p> <p>Develop a menu of activities to build awareness of public engagement activities and costings for applications</p> <p>Provide bespoke support to applicants to develop and deliver public engagement plans in grants</p>	<p>Public engagement work to be referenced and costed in 50% of grant and fellowship applications by 2028</p>	<p>Publication of new guidance around grant and fellowship process to happen in 2024</p> <p>Menu of public engagement activities for inclusion in grant applications to be complete and available to staff by October 2024</p> <p>Support for applicants to be ongoing and delivered in line</p>

					with grants pre-submission team processes
	2.2. Contribute to wider Institute initiatives and strategic goals	Support wider Institute Initiatives such as e4s, Green Labs, and Concordat on Openness in Animal Research	<p>Continue to develop and evaluate the equitable access to our programmes and the effect they have on the bioscience career pipeline</p> <p>Support engagement with our local community to raise the profile of the Institute's work in sustainable practices</p> <p>Provide opportunities for staff to engage audiences with our work involving the use of animal models and the regulations that govern that work</p>	<p>See an increase in PhD applicants being from traditionally underserved backgrounds by 2028 linked with elements of the public engagement programme</p> <p>At least one event per year to be held with a local community partner that includes a focus on the Institute's sustainability work and for this work to be references in the Green Impact Award submission</p> <p>At least 3 events per year to be held with a focus on our work involving the use of animals in research and the regulations governing the work and for this work to be referenced Understanding Animal Research Concordat annual reporting</p>	<p>Events to be held annually</p> <p>Reporting to happen annually in line with reporting timelines</p>
	2.3. Improve communication of public engagement	Review of public engagement communications	Review and update information on Institute website to reflect and celebrate the breadth of our	An increase in enquires around our public	Reviews and updated of Institute website

	work of the Institute to raise the profile of said work and to make the programme more accessible to staff		<p>public engagement work making it clear how audiences can access opportunities</p> <p>Review and update information on Institute intranet reflect and celebrate the breadth of our public engagement work making it clear how staff can access opportunities</p> <p>Produce monthly summaries of public engagement work and opportunities to be displayed around the Institute</p> <p>Produce a monthly public engagement bulletin</p> <p>Contribute to the monthly Babraham Institute Newsletter</p> <p>Develop and implement a communications plan for public engagement work outlining where resource will be put to social media, media, and other promotion / celebration of public engagement activities</p>	<p>engagement work through the website year-on-year</p> <p>An increase in views of the public engagement pages on the intranet year-on-year</p> <p>Staff reporting increased awareness of public engagement opportunities and resources / support available</p> <p>An increase in external media / social media articles featuring reference to our public engagement between 2024 and 2028</p>	<p>and intranet to be completed by October 2024</p> <p>Monthly public engagement summaries, bulleting, and newsletter contributions to be produced monthly</p> <p>Public engagement communications plan to be developed and published by January 2025</p>
3. Evaluate impact of our work	3.1. Build a clear understanding of the impact of the public engagement	Internal audience impact evaluation report	Develop an evaluation and data collection plan based on this strategy	Report to be referenced and influence development of future Institute strategies	Evaluation plan to be developed by October 2024

	programme on internal audiences and provide a basis for future strategic development		Produce an interim evaluation report of the impact of the public engagement programme on internal audiences Produce a final evaluation report of the impact of the public engagement programme on internal audiences	Data to contribute to other reporting such as funders reporting and board of trustee reporting	Interim evaluation report to be written and published by October 2026 Final evaluation report to be written and published by April 2028
	3.2. Build a clear understanding of the impact of the public engagement programme on external audiences and provide a basis for future strategic development	External audience impact evaluation report	Develop an evaluation and data collection plan based on this strategy Produce an interim evaluation report of the impact of the public engagement programme on internal audiences Produce an evaluation report of the impact of the public engagement programme on external audiences	Report to be referenced and influence development of future Institute strategies Data to contribute to other reporting such as funders reporting and board of trustee reporting	Evaluation plan to be developed by October 2024 Interim evaluation report to be written and published by October 2026 Final evaluation report to be written and published by April 2028
4. Engage with stakeholder and public engagement sector to raise	4.1. Develop our practices in line with expectations of our funders and raise the profile of the	BBSRC/UKRI	Coordinate monthly networking meetings of public engagement professionals from across BBSRC institutes with representation	Monthly networking meetings to happen At least one collaborative event to be held with	Networking meetings to be ongoing

	impact of the Institute's work		from BBSRC public engagement team Collaborate with other BBSRC institutes on an event to collectively develop our public engagement practice and raise the profile of our sciences	other BBSRC partners over the strategic period	Collaborative event to take place in 2026 or 2027
	4.2. Develop our practices through learning and sharing good practice across the public engagement and education sectors as well as raising the profile of the Institute's work in this area	Public engagement sector	Support and facilitate networking meetings through the Cambridge Public Engagement Network Attend and present at relevant sector conferences such as the NCCPE Engage conference Engage teacher and education provider audiences through events such as the Association for Science Education's annual conference	Facilitate one networking meeting per year for the Cambridge Public Engagement Network Ensure the Institute is represented at least one public engagement conference per year with at least one to have work presented at it Attend or host one event for teacher and education provider audiences per year and present Institute public engagement work every two years	Networking meetings to be ongoing Attendance of conferences / sector events to be annual in line with conference scheduling (typically January and May each year)
5. Expand our audience reach	5.1. Engage diverse audiences through festival activities to enable raise the profile of Institute science and generate	Festival events	Have Institute science featured at the Cambridge Festival as our local audience event Have Institute science featured at the Royal Norfolk Show or other non-science cultural event to	Have Institute science represented at least two festival events per year Proportion of collective festival audience being from traditionally	Events to take place annually Cambridge Festival to take place in

	<p>conversations around research topics</p>		<p>engage audiences not specifically looking to engage with science</p> <p>Have Institute science featured at the Peterborough STEM Festival to engage traditionally underserved audiences in an accessible venue / event</p> <p>Work with organisers to increase equitable access to these events for traditionally underserved audiences</p>	<p>underserved areas to increase year-on-year</p>	<p>March/April each year</p> <p>Royal Norfolk Show to take place in June each year</p> <p>Peterborough STEM Festival to take place in October each year</p>
	<p>5.2. Develop lasting relationships with traditionally underserved community groups to build support for Institute science and provide a platform for public input into research strategy through deliberative dialogue approaches</p>	<p>Community engagement events</p>	<p>Hold events with community groups from traditionally underserved areas in the region</p> <p>Have multiple interactions with the same community group / audiences over time</p> <p>Hold an event to enable community group discussion of, and contribution to, Institute research strategy</p>	<p>A minimum of one community group event to be held each year</p> <p>Community audiences reporting an increased understanding of Institute research</p> <p>At least one community group to have a minimum of two interactions over the strategic period</p> <p>At least 25% of participants of Institute research strategy event to have previously engaged with the Institute</p>	<p>Community events to be annual</p> <p>Institute research strategy event to be held in 2027</p>

				<p>A majority of participants of Institute research strategy event to report feeling enabled to influence research direction</p> <p>Clear reference to the impact of community group views on Institute research to be included in next institute research strategy documentation</p>	
	<p>5.3. Develop lasting relationships with traditionally underserved school audiences to provide curriculum enrichment, build understanding of Institute research, and inspire the next generation of researchers</p>	<p>BiInspire schools' initiative</p>	<p>Annual sponsorship of five student cohorts to undertake the Youth STEMM Award (YSA)</p> <p>Sponsored YSA cohorts to undertake a programme of Institute focused activities</p> <p>Schools Mailing list to continue to be developed with active reaching out to schools in traditionally underserved areas</p> <p>Institute opportunities to be included in monthly YSA newsletter</p> <p>Schools from traditionally underserved areas to receive in-school visits from Institute staff</p>	<p>An increase of Institute sponsored students completing their YSA year-on-year</p> <p>Institute sponsored cohorts to have a minimum of three engagement sessions with the Institute throughout the year</p> <p>Schools mailing list to include contacts at more target schools year-on-year</p> <p>An increase in reported use of our online / on-</p>	<p>All work to be annual / ongoing</p>

			<p>Schools from traditionally underserved areas to be hosted at Institute for visits</p> <p>Online /on-demand school resources to be reviewed and updated to ensure in line with curriculum and career development needs</p>	<p>demand school resources year on year</p> <p>At least one new resource to be developed and made available to schools and teachers to support curriculum learning or awareness of bioscience careers each year</p>	
	5.4. Engage wide ranging school audiences with Institute research to raise the profile of the Institute and to equip students with skills needed to undertake careers in bioscience	Larger scale schools' events	<p>Hold annual Schools' Day event to engage students and teachers from across the UK with Institute science and bioscience careers through hands-on experiential learning</p> <p>Hold annual 6th Form / Youth Conference to engage further education students with Institute science and bioscience careers whilst enabling them to develop scientific conference skills</p> <p>Active engagement of schools and students from underserved areas to enable equitable access to these events</p>	<p>Students report an increased understanding of Institute science and bioscience careers</p> <p>An increase of attendance by students from underserved areas year-on-year. With both events achieving a 50% proportion of audience being from underserved areas by 2028</p>	<p>Schools' Day event to be held annually in March</p> <p>6th Form / Youth conference to be held annually in November</p>
	5.5. Provide research experience placements for students from underserved	Student placements	Host undergraduate students through the Research Access Programme	All students reporting an increased awareness of bioscience careers and improved skills to enable	Placements to be run annually over the summer period

	backgrounds to enable equitable access to Insitute science and research experience		<p>Host further education students for summer placements</p> <p>Develop collaboration with In2Science to deliver programmes in partnership with their In2Research and In2STEM programmes</p>	<p>them to pursue next-step career goals</p> <p>Research Access Programme students reporting increased awareness of PhD opportunities</p> <p>A minimum of 4 students hosted on each programme per year</p>	
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