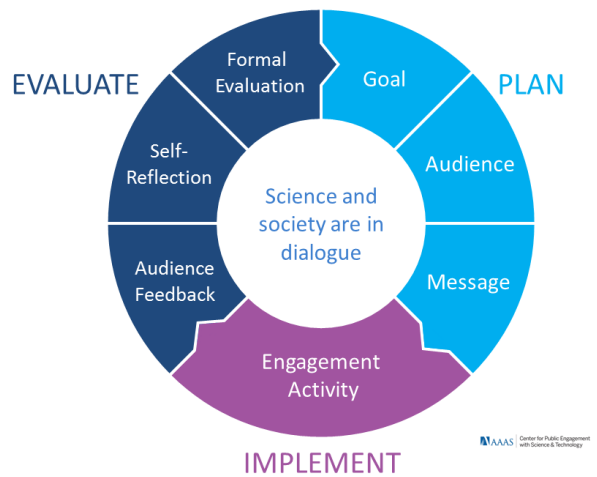


Developing a Public Engagement Plan

Because science is prevalent in all facets of our lives, the science-society relationship is complex, and there are many ways to approach it. Interaction between interested stakeholders is critical to finding common ground on scientific issues affecting society. Public engagement – intentional, meaningful interactions that provide opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning between scientists and members of the public – can provide a constructive platform to share public views and scientific expertise in a variety of contexts.

This template will help you think about a specific engagement goal, audience, and message, the types of activities or communication channels you'd like to use, and the ways that you might evaluate the success of your public engagement. The template is based on the AAAS public engagement framework (at right); more information about the framework and about public engagement can be found in the AAAS Center for Public Engagement Communication Toolkit, <https://www.aaas.org/comm-toolkit>.



The AAAS public engagement framework

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY YOUR GOAL(S)

Scientists may have a variety of goals related to science communication. Public engagement goals focus specifically on dialogue between science and society, and may range from short-term, individual-level goals (e.g., increasing skills in communication and engagement, humanizing and individualizing scientists and members of the public) to longer-term, big picture goals (e.g., building trust between publics and scientists, identifying and pursuing research that is responsive to societal needs and interests).

For this plan, be specific about a goal related to your project. Think about *why* you want to engage. What do you want your audience to do with the information you're sharing? What action do you want them to take? What do *you* want to get out of the engagement? You may also think about how multiple specific goals link to each other and to longer-term, big picture goals.

My engagement **goal(s)** is (are) to: _____

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STEP TWO: DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE

With your goal in mind, think about who you want to engage (who can help you meet your goal?), so that you can frame your big ideas (your message) in ways that are most relevant to them. You should be specific about your audience, and consider which audiences you will engage directly and which audiences you might engage indirectly (e.g., you may talk with journalists who then write articles about a science topic for newspaper readers, or you may envision your audience as state or national elected leaders, but the people you actually engage with are their staff members).

My intended **audience(s)** can be described as: _____

What might interest your audience about your topic? What level of understanding do they have already? What do you have in common with your audience? What questions might they ask? How can you learn more about your audience?

STEP THREE: DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGE

Your message should focus on a few key points you want your audience to remember. Think of these as the bottom line that you'll use to get your audience's attention, which you can elaborate on and use to engage your audience during conversation. For this plan, choose three points and develop them into short messages that will connect to your audience's values and interests. You might consider three focuses of your research, three results, three reasons your work is important, or three potential applications.



Adapted from *Escape from the Ivory Tower* AAAS Center for Public Engagement with Science & Technology

When communicating with members of the public, begin with the bottom line – what is the most important thing for your audience to know?

Use the “3Ms” to guide your messages – that is, create messages that are miniature, memorable, and meaningful. Verbal tools such as rhymes and alliteration can help your audience recall your bottom line after the conversation. Examples, stories, and analogies can illustrate key messages more clearly than overly technical information and will help your audience relate to what you are saying. Finally, your

messages should avoid jargon. Explain concepts using language that people outside your immediate field can understand.

The **three main points** I want to convey are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

STEP FOUR: FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE

There are many ways to engage public audiences. What you do will depend on your goal and audience, as well as your personal preferences and strengths. Think about where and how you might best reach your audience and what setting or interaction will be most conducive to achieving your goal. Do you want to use Twitter to engage your audience, if they're on Twitter? Participate in a science festival? Arrange one-on-one meetings with policymakers? Be realistic about how much time you can dedicate on an ongoing basis. You may also consider joining events organized by someone else, and later create your own activity or program.

One **way I would like to engage** my audience is: _____

What logistics might you need to think through for this type of engagement? What resources will you need? How will you incorporate this engagement into your current workload? Do you need a group to partner with?

A few next steps I can take are: _____

STEP FIVE: PLAN YOUR EVALUATION

How will you know that you are achieving your engagement goal? Your plan should consider metrics that will help you evaluate the impacts of engagement on both your intended audience and on yourself and other scientists involved. These metrics might include such things as gaining insight into the concerns people have about science, making connections between science and everyday life, making more informed decisions using science, or other outcomes related to your project goal(s). Some of these metrics will be possible to evaluate immediately, while other metrics may need to be measured over a longer term.

The **impacts on my audience** that I'd like to measure are: _____

The **impacts on myself and other scientists** that I'd like to measure are: _____

Depending on the type of engagement, you might consider ways to gather both informal and formal feedback. You might consider face-to-face conversations, online surveys, or other ways to learn from your public engagement experiences.

The **ways that I plan to gather feedback** are: _____

How will you **use the results of your evaluation** to adjust your approach to public engagement in the future? _____

The AAAS Center for Public Engagement with Science and Technology also offers additional resources for science communication, including public presentations, media interviews, and online engagement:

www.aaas.org/pes/communicatingscience