

## Public Engagement at Cambridge: why, who and why again!

Public engagement is increasingly seen as an important part of any research career. It can inform and inspire and, when done in collaboration with others, it can improve research and make it more relevant. As part of the Open Research Conference, we looked at what public engagement is and outlined how we support it across the University.

No one researcher journey is the same and public engagement professionals in the central team and across the University are here to support the public engagement priorities of everyone, whatever these might be. We do this in a number of ways but the most important first step is yours!

Step one is the 'Why' and the 'Who' of public engagement! So we ask you to consider why you want to engage, who you want to engage with and why should they want to engage with you? It is only once you have considered these questions, can we help you meet these aims.

Step two involves getting started and building your confidence. The best and most useful public engagement happens when you plan and have the skills and experience to engage well. Our [Engaged Researcher training courses](#) provide introductory level courses and masterclasses concentrating on stakeholders and formats to help. We're here to advise, to act as a sounding board for ideas and to signpost you to others with relevant experience so you can determine what would work for you and for the people you want to engage with.

Step three is about trying it out! We provide platforms and resources to increase your skills and so you can test out new ideas and activities. Our [Public Engagement starter grant](#) provides small amounts of funding to kick-start projects and we can help with grant and fellowship applications. You might consider also taking in our interdisciplinary [Cambridge Festival](#) through departmental activities or as an individual researcher and gain the experience and skills you need to engage.

Step four, if appropriate, involves moving into more consultative and co-produced public engagement with individuals, community groups or stakeholder partners whose own expertise are directly relevant to your research. We provide training, including how to work with external partners and how you might address any barriers for engagement that exist.

Step five is about embedding public engagement and moving to engaged research that has the potential to have economic, cultural and societal impact locally and globally. We can provide further support and broker contacts with other professional services staff to support your work. The best engaged research is recognised through our [Vice Chancellor's Awards for Research Impact and Engagement](#).

We hoped that this short talk proved a useful introduction to public engagement and, importantly catalyses the start of much more in-depth conversations. If you are interested in finding out more about doing, or supporting public engagement, or would like to take part in the Cambridge Festival, please get in touch. We love to talk (lots!).

Dr Lucinda Spokes

Head of Public Engagement, Office of External Affairs and Communications,  
University of Cambridge.

### Additional resources

**University of Cambridge Public Engagement**

Web: [www.cam.ac.uk/public-engagement](http://www.cam.ac.uk/public-engagement)

Email: [publicengagement@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:publicengagement@admin.cam.ac.uk)

Twitter: @CamUniEngage

The Cambridge Festival

Web: [www.festival.cam.ac.uk](http://www.festival.cam.ac.uk)

Email: [cambridgefestival@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:cambridgefestival@admin.cam.ac.uk)

Twitter: @Cambridge\_Fest

Instagram: CamUniFestivals

**National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement**

Web: [www.publicengagement.ac.uk](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk)