

# Science communication and public engagement – what are we trying to achieve?

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## THE ISSUE

Direct “public outreach” by scientists forms a critical component of public engagement with science... **but it is rarely critically examined, least of all by the scientist communicators.**

## THE CURRENT MODEL

Many scientists who engage in public outreach do so simply because “it’s a good thing to do”, usually on their own time.

**The ideas are developed based on “what feels right”, “sounds like a good idea”, opportunism, previous audience response, and media interest.**

## A METRIC OF SUCCESS?

Success, if defined at all, is usually related to audience attendance or experience. Such evaluation of outreach is therefore not connected to either the motivations of the scientist communicators, or scholarship in public engagement with science. It is also not being shared with the wider community for critical examination.

## OUR APPROACH

Through a range of methods, including **surveys, workshops, interviews, and focus groups**, we are investigating the motivations of scientists to engage in public outreach and communication; associated barriers and rewards; and potential options for increased reporting and evaluation.

“How can we evaluate a communication activity to find out if there is a connection between what scientists are doing, why they are doing it, and what the audiences are getting out of it?”

“What incentives might be helpful for scientist-communicators who critically evaluate, report, reflect upon, and improve their outreach efforts?”

Please rank the reasons why you conduct science outreach with the public?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is required by my employer.					
It is required by my funder.					
I think that outreach is important.					
I think that outreach is a part of my job as a researcher.					
I feel that I have a responsibility to communicate my research because it is publicly funded.					
To challenge public perception of science and scientists.					
It makes me feel good.					
It is a good resume builder.					

“Why do busy scientists put time and energy into outreach, an activity that is often time-intensive, professionally unrewarded, completed outside of normal work hours, and of no measured value?”

Online survey being launched and promoted at scientific conferences and workshops

Have you ever received any professional teaching or science communication training? If yes, please describe.

Do you get professional credit for the outreach events you conduct? If yes, please explain.

Would it make a difference to your professional career if you could publish the results of your outreach? If yes, please describe.

**[Why] Do You Do Outreach?**

A STUDY BY: Heidi Roop & Rhian Salmon

This interactive poster explores the MOTIVATION for scientists to ENGAGE in communication activities, the professional INCENTIVES – or DIS-INCENTIVES for these activities, FUNDING options, and EVALUATION of these activities. This poster will be used to COLLECT DATA for a study on this topic. By contributing to this poster you agree that any RESPONSES can be used in this study and discussed in the science communication workshop\*.

Are you a scientist? **NO** → Do you work in a science organisation? **NO** → **NO**

**YES** → **Do you do outreach?**

**YES** → **What?** (Why? / If applying my skills...)

**NO** → **Why not?** (I lack professional training...)

Do you get professional support? **NO** → Would you like professional support? **NO** → **NO**

**YES** → **What form does/would this take?**

PLEASE TAKE OUR SURVEY: [TINYURL.COM/AADOUTREACH](http://TINYURL.COM/AADOUTREACH)

\* This study meets ethics approval requirements.

## OUR RESEARCH AIMS TO:

- Illuminate attitudes towards outreach by scientists in different countries and scientific disciplines
- Encourage greater reflexivity by scientist-practitioners about why they do outreach
- Inform the development of an accessible evaluation method for scientist communicators
- Inform scientists’ communication efforts with STS concepts of public engagement
- Enable the science community to contribute to scholarship in this area

Poster shared at a meeting of polar scientists, and used to collect preliminary data prior to focus groups in a dedicated workshop.