



2018-2022 Public Engagement Strategic Action Plan

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine is committed to improving health and health equity in the UK and worldwide; working in partnership to achieve excellence in public and global health research, education, and translation of knowledge into policy and practice.

This action plan is relevant for all LSHTM staff, both academic and professional services, and doctoral students. It will be implemented and evaluated by the Public Engagement Team.

What is public engagement?

We define public engagement as activities and projects that enable open communication and two-way dialogue between researchers and members of the public, with the goal of generating mutual benefit¹. Engagement can occur at any point throughout the research cycle.

We recognise that there is a spectrum of public engagement that can bring value to the diverse public audiences that we engage with, as well as impacting our research, skills development, and LSHTM as a whole. This spectrum includes public engagement that seeks to:

Inform or Excite: Sharing what we do, and how we do it, in an understandable and relevant way (e.g. participating in science festivals, classroom workshops, etc.)

Consult: Seeking to better understand and respond to the views, attitudes, understanding, needs and behaviour of others; generating two-way dialogue and learning (e.g. focus groups, discussion forums, etc.)

Collaborate: Working together to create or apply new knowledge and achieve a common goal (e.g. citizen science, co-production, etc.)

Good public engagement can...

- Give our research new perspectives and ideas, contributing to greater impact and relevance
- Increase awareness, support and transparency of our research in the UK and abroad
- Enhance public knowledge, understanding, involvement and empowerment
- Lead to changes in attitudes, behaviour and policy
- Strengthen ties with our local and global communities

Our public engagement principles:

Aligned with the five pillars of LSHTM's strategy, five key principles will guide LSHTM's public engagement:

1. Public engagement contributes to high-quality, impactful research: By engaging with relevant public audiences throughout the research cycle we can strengthen our research and ensure that it effectively reaches and impacts individuals, communities and systems.
2. Public engagement enriches the learning experience: By providing a platform that encourages and supports doctoral students to develop skills in public engagement our students will be equipped, early on in their career, to plan and deliver public engagement effectively.

¹ <https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/about-engagement/what-public-engagement>

3. Public engagement enhances staff expertise and recognition: By supporting professional development, and recognising high-quality engagement projects and activities, we can raise the profile of all staff, both internally and externally.
4. Public engagement strengthens partnerships and builds new ones: By collaborating with diverse individuals or groups, our engagement will be strengthened and we can develop new, and sometimes unexpected, ideas and opportunities.
5. Public engagement maximises the reach and influence of our research: By engaging with individuals and communities in the UK and worldwide, we can enhance public understanding, change attitudes, behaviour and policies and gain new perspectives and ideas, sharing this learning with each other and with policy and practice communities.

Public engagement successes:

This strategic action plan seeks to build on the successful outputs from our 2012-2017 public engagement strategy, including:

- A yearly average of over 6,000 members of the public engaged with in the UK and worldwide
- Over 150 Members of staff and doctoral students trained in public engagement since 2015
- An internal seed funding scheme that has funded 36 projects since 2015²
- Recognition of public engagement as an ‘external contribution’ within academic promotions
- Over £700,000 of external funding secured since 2014 for researcher-led public engagement and to enable LSHTM to embed a culture of public engagement

Our strategic aims for 2018-2022 are to:

1. Excel at developing and delivering high quality public engagement in the UK and worldwide
2. Empower staff and doctoral students with the skills and confidence to engage effectively
3. Recognise and celebrate the diverse impacts that public engagement can have on our audiences, partners, research, skills development, and in achieving LSHTM’s mission

How will we achieve these aims?

We consider this strategy to be a living document, responsive to the evolving higher education and research landscape and the needs of our diverse staff and doctoral student community. We recognise that it exists within the wider structures and strategic initiatives across LSHTM. In response to our strategic aims, the Public Engagement Team will:

1. Excel at developing and delivering high quality public engagement in the UK and worldwide
 - Support researchers to construct well-written public engagement proposals within research grants and for stand-alone public engagement funding
 - Nurture a practice of evaluation, building upon previous successes and learning
 - Encourage collaboration and partnership with diverse individuals and groups to achieve public engagement project aims and drive innovative practice
 - Embed LSHTM-wide awareness of the support and value of the Public Engagement Team
 - Fund and support good ideas through a seed fund that increases opportunities for staff and doctoral students to engage and stimulates new approaches
 - Facilitate shared learning between staff with responsibility for public engagement in London and across the LSHTM/MRC Units in Uganda and the Gambia

² <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/public-engagement/small-grants-scheme-public-engagement>

2. Empower staff and doctoral students with the skills and confidence to engage effectively
 - Deliver high-quality training programmes that provide practical and applicable skills
 - Provide resource guides and case studies that support activity and project development
 - Promote external opportunities for public engagement to staff and doctoral students, leading on LSHTM participation in 1-2 opportunities each year
 - Stimulate an environment of peer learning and support
 - Listen and respond to staff and doctoral student development and recognition needs, both in the UK and globally
3. Recognise and celebrate the diverse impacts that public engagement can have on our audiences, partners, research, skills development, and achieving LSHTM's mission
 - Capture impacts from public engagement for external reporting, including the REF
 - Advocate for the inclusion of public engagement within appropriate institution-level strategic funding bids
 - Share examples of our high-quality public engagement internally and externally
 - Advise on how staff and doctoral students can articulate the value and impacts of their public engagement
 - Reward outstanding public engagement internally and through nominations for external awards

How will we know that we have achieved our aims?

Evaluation of our public engagement, and of the support we provide to embed and enable it, can help us to determine the effectiveness and impact of our activities or projects and allow us to refine and improve our actions. We strive for our evaluation to be:

1. Embedded within a project or activity from the outset
2. Realistic and proportional to the scale of the project or activity
3. Focused on learning to enrich our understanding and evolve our practice
4. A tool through which we can evidence our successes and communicate these with others
5. Reflective of all voices involved in the engagement including staff and doctoral students, partners and collaborators, public audiences and more

We encourage staff and doctoral students to consider these when approaching evaluation of their own public engagement projects and activities.

We have an overarching evaluation framework which sets out output and outcome indicators that will help us understand how we are achieving our engagement principles. At an operational level, we have systems and structures that ensure evaluation is integrated throughout all aspects of the programme of support provided by the Public Engagement Team.

The Public Engagement Team will work with the Public Engagement Advisory Group, which meets once a term with membership from across LSHTM and external partners, to monitor the implementation of this action plan through the use of the evaluation framework.

For more information on this strategic action plan and public engagement at LSHTM, please contact the Public Engagement Team on publicengagement@lshtm.ac.uk.