

Royal Society of Chemistry – Outreach Fund

Our Outreach Fund provides financial support to members, individuals and organisations in order to enable them to run a broad range of chemistry-based public and schools engagement activities.

The public engagement and outreach work we support will **bring the chemical sciences closer to people's lives and people's lives closer to the chemical sciences**. We want our funding to connect communities with the chemical sciences, help bring different people and organisations together to share ideas, develop meaningful partnerships, inspire new ways of working, and encourage dialogue about the importance and role of chemistry for making the world a better place.

Through the fund we aim to support projects that:

- Develop chemists' public engagement and science communication skills - building capacity and opportunities for chemists and chemical scientists to engage with schools and public audiences
- Engage with school students - inspiring and raising aspirations of student audiences to nurture a future generation passionate about the chemical sciences
- Engage with public audiences - involving a wide range of people in relevant contemporary issues in the chemical sciences
- Provide under-represented audiences, communities and places with inspiring chemistry engagement opportunities, delivered or coordinated by skilled people

What outcomes are we looking for?

We are currently prioritising funding for projects that have one or more of the following outcomes:

- Audiences are engaged with issues around sustainability linked to chemical sciences.
- Under-represented audiences are better connected with or represented by chemical science.
- RSC members have opportunities to develop and/or use their engagement skills.
- The project or partnership supports positive social outcomes such as an increase in wellbeing, improved confidence, and/or an increased sense of belonging.
- Families and intergenerational audiences connect with chemistry in fun, creative and participatory ways.
- Audiences interact with chemistry in and through local contexts.
- Adults engage with chemists and chemistry to empower them to access, connect and respond to chemistry and societal issues

Available funding

- The Outreach Fund supports Small grants of up to £5,000 and Large grants of between £5,001 – £10,000. Applications to the fund should be made using our single application form, the word limit is tailored for some of our standard questions in proportion to the funding level requested by the applicant.
- We welcome standalone Small or Large projects. Alternatively, the two funding tiers enable projects to be piloted as a Small grant, building evidence of project successes for a Large grant application, which can be used to scale and diversify the project. However, the success of a Small grant application does not guarantee funding at Large grant scale in future rounds.
- The Outreach Fund is a competitive scheme and as such, our ability to repeatedly fund applications that relate to an existing project is limited beyond an initial scale-up.

Eligibility

Applicant eligibility

- The grant scheme is open to all (individuals and organisations). This includes, but is not limited to, members of the Royal Society of Chemistry, member-led groups, researchers in academia or industry, museums, community groups, not-for-profit organisations, arts groups and libraries.

- Applications are only open to people aged 18 and over who are either a UK or Republic of Ireland (ROI) resident (with a UK or ROI address and bank account), or who are applying on behalf of an organisation registered in the UK or ROI
- Previous recipients of any of RSC grants, including the Outreach Fund, are eligible to apply for funding for either a new project, or to scale and develop new strands of work within an existing project

Project eligibility

- Funding is only available for projects to be delivered within the UK or Republic of Ireland
- Applications that relate to an existing project will be considered alongside evidence of sufficient evaluation of the existing project (including evaluation forms received where the existing project has been previously funded by the RSC). If there is no or insufficient evaluation to support such applications, they will not be considered by the panel
- Applications that relate to scaling up an existing project must include plans for project sustainability and learnings from previous iterations, in addition to reflecting on the impact of the funding in the longer term
- Applicants should not resubmit an unsuccessful Outreach Fund application unless invited to do so
- Applicants wishing to submit multiple applications in one funding round might wish to submit one single application for a coherent programme to the large grant scheme
- The review panel monitor the number of applications submitted by individuals and institutions for each funding round, if multiple applications from the same individual or institution are received in one funding round, the panel may choose to consider all such applications in relation to each other
- Applications must be submitted in line with the specified deadlines for consideration in a particular funding round. If an application deadline is missed, it may still be submitted in the instance that the fund remains open to applications, but will not be reviewed by the assessment panel until after the next submission deadline
- Activity phase to be supported by the fund should not fall outside of the timescales detailed on this website for the round of funding you are applying. If your project exceeds these timescales, please get in contact with using the link at the side of this page. Applications for retrospective funding will not be considered
- Applicants must include a detailed breakdown of the financial support requested, it is advised that applicants attach a detailed budget overview to the budget section of the application form in addition to any comments they wish to add
- The project must have a significant aspect which is related to the chemical sciences

Criteria

All applications will be judged on the following criteria and should clearly demonstrate the following:

Content

- Projects must have clearly defined, and measurable aims, objectives and outcomes that are relevant and appropriate for the target audience
- Where possible, applicants should seek to engage with members of the Royal Society of Chemistry and member groups (e.g. to inform the chemistry content, to develop long-term sustainability plans, to engage volunteers to take part in the activities). The lead applicant, however, is not required to be an RSC member
- Applicants should evidence how and why the delivery method(s) chosen is effective and relevant for the target audience and demonstrate best practice for engaging with schools or the public (using evidence from literature or previous experience)
- Applicants should detail how clear, accurate and relevant chemistry content will be curated for the target audience. Full details of content are not required (but may be added to the Supplementary Document section of the application form), a summary overview will suffice

- Activities should increase chemists' visibility as diverse approachable people, increase the audiences' confidence in discussing chemistry and demonstrate the relevance of chemistry to everyday interests and concerns
- Projects should provide opportunities and activity which would not normally be accessible to the audience
- Projects which target school aged individuals/groups (including those in further education) should demonstrate career opportunities, develop employability skills and enrich chemistry education
- Projects should provide the audience with the opportunity to explore chemistry through local contexts
- CPD for teachers may be included in a schools engagement application where the CPD activity can be demonstrated to support curriculum enriching activity and be of ultimate benefit to students
- Salary and/or consultancy fees (including teacher cover costs in schools engagement applications) may be included in an application where they can be clearly shown to be essential for activity to take place

Audience

- Projects must have a clearly identified audience. Applicants should demonstrate an understanding of their target audience demographic
- Applications should state the projected reach of the project (audience numbers and geographical area)
- Applications should clearly evidence audience demand, need and suitability of their project and the intended learning outcomes and benefit of activity for the specific audience
- Applications should show an understanding of how activity will be communicated to the target audience

Budget

- Applications should clearly show how money will be spent and justification for spending.
- Budgets must be considered with respect to projected project reach (geographical and audience numbers) and impact. High costs must be justified in terms of audience reach, audience needs and/or impact. Activities that have a high cost for a comparatively low reach and/or impact will not be awarded a grant. Activity that has a high cost (regardless of reach) will be considered if the impact is demonstrably high and costs justified in terms of the needs of the specific audience.

Other considerations

Eligible audiences

The RSC's [The Future Chemistry Workforce and Educational Pathways](#) report (2024) has highlighted that there is a shortage of STEM skills and subject expertise in the UK, and the [Public attitudes to chemistry](#) study (2015) found that while overall the public is positive about chemistry's contribution to society, they lack confidence and have an absence of an emotional connection with chemistry.

The Outreach Fund aims to address this by funding grants for schools and public groups without restriction on the type of audience, to connect communities from all backgrounds with the chemical sciences.

Further research done to inform the [RSC's Inclusion & Diversity strategy](#) has highlighted that many groups face barriers to entering and staying in chemistry, and are under-represented compared with the general population.

This includes women at senior levels ([Breaking the Barriers](#), 2018); members of the LGBT+ community ([Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists](#), 2019), disabled people ([Disability in the chemical sciences](#), 2023), people from Black and minoritised ethnicities ([Missing Elements](#), 2022) and people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds ([Is chemistry accessible for all?](#), 2020).

The [Chemists' Community Fund](#) (CCF) provides us ring-fenced additional funding to support initiatives that closely align to the CCF's guiding principles – projects that engage directly with under-represented groups and audiences and enable them to participate in chemistry-based engagement activities. We are particularly interested in funding work with audiences including people with disabilities and people facing social, economic and educational disadvantage.

Members

In order to deliver the activities within a project, all projects involving member and volunteer engagement activities should also look to:

- provide members with new opportunities to directly interact with the public
- allow members to communicate chemistry, and their roles within chemistry, with passion.

Legacy

Applications should consider the longer-term impact of a project. This may include but is not limited to:

- Forming or strengthening partnerships as a result of the funding
- Project organisers developing professional skills and building confidence
- Piloting a proof-of-concept activity with the aim of developing an approach or securing outside funding post-project
- RSC funds enabling a pilot project to be scaled up, influencing outreach and public engagement activities across the sector
- Projects providing evidence to impact organisation strategies

Restrictions

Outreach Fund grants will not be awarded to:

- Projects where there is no significant component relating to the chemical sciences
- Projects which do not involve engaging schools or the public with the chemical sciences, with the purpose of disseminating knowledge in line with the fund criteria and aims
- Cover the cost of hardware, apparatus or equipment (e.g. microscopes, digital cameras, printers, computers), unless it is shown to be integral to the project, that there are no more cost-effective alternatives available and that it will have significant use beyond the project lifetime to communicate chemistry,
- Projects intending solely to develop or deliver staff or teacher CPD (continuing professional development)
- Projects which aim to generate a financial surplus for commercial organisations
- Projects which are part of an organisation's or education institution's usual programme of activities, including Open Days and Taster Days
- Cover the cost of Crest Award fees (or similar) or venue entry fees
- Fund salary costs which are already paid by an organisation
- Projects where the funding does not significantly enhance the activity, for example, where the costs applied for are for promotional materials for a larger project
- To fund projects for an event which is the same or similar to one that has been previously run, or is currently being run, where there is no or insufficient evidence of project evaluation and/or plans for long-term sustainability of a project
- Projects where there is an expectation or assumption of input or support from the RSC further than the provision of funds, including support for content development. If you have identified an area in your project that may require additional support from the RSC, you should get in touch with the RSC prior to submitting your application to discuss
- To fund the delivery of a commercial science show or activity. An application to fund a commercial science show, however, will be considered if the applicant can explicitly justify how and why the show is relevant and the best method of delivery for the specific audience,

in addition to measurable learning outcomes and long-term impact of the show for the audience

- Cover the cost of resources (including textbooks, staff costs or equipment) to deliver the core curriculum or for normal curriculum delivery in schools. Applications to support activity that enhances normal teaching, notably extracurricular activity (including before/after school or lunchtime clubs) will be considered

Resources to aid your application

There are a variety of good practice tools and guidance available to support you in the development of your project. Where available we would encourage you to use research informed frameworks to strengthen your application. Below is a selection of resources in this area which you may find helpful; this list not exhaustive.

Frameworks

- [The Science Capital Teaching Approach](#), 2017

Good practice tools & evidence

- [The Partnership Cycle](#), 2023
- [The Equity Compass](#), 2020

Reports & case studies

- [Public Attitudes to Chemistry](#), 2015
- [Factors Affecting Public Engagement by Researchers](#), 2015
- [Chemistry for All](#), 2020
- [ASPIRES series](#), 2013 – 2023
- [An equitable future for research and innovation](#), 2022

For any queries or to discuss a project please do get in touch with us via outreach@rsc.org or 01223432200.