Science Museum Research Summary: Running effective events in external venues

This document includes key findings from a Science Museum Talk Science Research Report covering 18 months of work with teachers. Please contact us on learning@sciencemuseum.org.uk if you would like more details.

What should you consider when planning events outside your venue?

Take extra time to plan an event that takes place somewhere else than in your own venue. Stay in close contact with the venue's management and with the groups you're taking or meeting there – you don't want to turn up to find that part of the venue is closed, or that particular attractions are unavailable. Learn the workings of the other organisations involved in your project.

How many events should you run at the venue?

Remember that the venue can be the most significant 'event' in itself. Running too many planned events may mean the importance of the venue is overlooked. For example, a Science Museum project on a canal boat had so many timetabled events that groups sometimes missed out on the opportunity just to experience being on a boat. This was subsequently rectified when the project was repeated.

How do you develop strong relationships with the groups you're working with?

Some events are too short for relationships to grow, so running them over a number of days can help. In such cases, the number of visitors tends to increase on each successive day as word of mouth spreads, so plan accordingly – it's often best to leave the most impressive element of the event until the last day, so the maximum number of people can benefit. In the above example, a boat trip proved particularly popular, so we moved it from the first day of the event to the last.

How do you ensure that visitors associate the event with your museum, rather than just with the venue?

Our experience shows that visitors often connect events more with the venue than with the people running the event. It's worth trying to accommodating a visit to your museum as part of the event – it's easier to do this if you're running it over a few days. You may also want to visit the group in their school or community centre at the start of the event.

Further resources:

Find out about developing shows and workshops by reading sheets in our practical *What we've learned* series:

- What we've learned about writing and performing science shows
- What we've learned about developing workshops

Get practical tips on running community outreach events by reading:

- What we've learned about developing community outreach programmes