What we've learned about developing commmunity outreach programmes

Practical ideas on how to plan successful events for groups in the community

When you're planning the content of your outreach...

Plan the topics of the session to be **fun, memorable and varied**. Choose things that people wouldn't have thought of doing at home or school. It's good to have special props or equipment, but everyday items or chemicals can work if they're used in an unusual or revealing way.

Define just **two or three clear learning objectives** for each session.

When you're working with community audiences...

A community group is anyone who meets **outside formal school or work time**, and it includes groups like Cubs and Brownies, parents working with their own children in a library or school, special interest groups, cultural groups, people in hospital or prison, and so on.

Community outreach has a **different feel** to schools outreach. It's important to understand the background and ethos of the group first, so make time to **pre-visit the group**, chat with the leaders and agree mutually beneficial outcomes.

You should also agree the **target audience** at which you will aim the event. On the day, your role is to **provide the show or workshop** to the group, so make sure it's clear that the group leaders will be responsible for managing behaviour.

When you're scheduling outreach programmes...

Work out how many sessions you can offer in a day, and the **costs** of taking your events out, including the travel and possible overnight stays if the distance is great. Set out clear costs for different options.

Some audience groups can be reached through appointed leaders, but others (e.g. grandparents) may have no formal network and it is harder – but no less worthwhile – to make contact with them.

Keep in touch with your contacts close to the event date, so they have the correct **expectations** and feel informed and excited about the event. When you leave for a venue, make sure you have the map, contact name, timetable for the day and any other details you need.

When you're planning your props and materials

Store your props in a **safe and well-organised** way, grouped according to the session they relate to. This saves a lot of time. Ensure your props are smart, clean and professional-looking, possibly with a uniform style, so that they give a good impression.

After the show is over...

Try to get **feedback** from everyone, perhaps getting permission to video some attendees to get their reactions to the event. Prepare a feedback form (two sides of A4 maximum) for leaders to fill in, and try to get them back before you leave the venue. **Compare** what people say the workshop was about with the **learning objectives** you identified, to see if they match.

Seek ways to **showcase** the project to maximise its benefits to your organisation and in order to share learning. It may be a good case study for other museums, or result in future collaborations.

Further resources:

See the Kitchen Science activities that developed out of our Creative Canals outreach project with communities in London: www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/educators/we_visit_you/resources.aspx

Find out what we've learned about developing science shows and workshops by reading other sheets in the *What we've learned* series:

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

Read summaries of key findings from Science Museum Research reports about working in venues outside the museum:

- Science Museum Research Summary: Running effective events at external venues

See easy-to-copy science experiments by the Science Museum's science comedy troupe Punk Science in their book *Do Try This At Home* by Jon Milton.