**** #ESRCFestival**

***ESRC Festival of Social Science (FoSS) 2021 Information and Guidelines***

The 2021 national Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) Festival of Social Science (FoSS) will run from 1-30 November. This year FoSS will tie in with [COP26](https://ukcop26.org/) to include a festival strand connecting the audience and aims of the festival to an environment and climate change theme.

**Aims of Festival of Social Science 2021**

* UK-wide festival, in part focused on the themes of COP26
* Aimed at public audiences and young people
* At least 40% of FoSS events overall to be on an environment theme
* Topics selected to be of interest to public audiences/young people
* Environment theme can include non-climate-change topics (e.g. relationship between wellbeing and green spaces)
* Focus where possible on inspiring action (e.g. what can be done to improve our environment and reduce climate change)
* Include where possible individual or local changes that can make a difference with respect to climate change, or relatable stories about individuals and climate change from around the world
* Strong economics/social science element but with potential to include events led by, or run in collaboration with, researchers from other disciplines.

**Please note:** as all festival events this year should be targeted at public and/or youth audiences, we’re unable to support events aimed at other groups, such as policymakers or businesses.

**More broadly, the Festival of Social Science objectives are to:**

* encourage, support and create opportunities for social science researchers to engage with public and young people audiences
* promote and increase awareness of the social sciences and ESRC-funded research
* promote and increase awareness of the contribution social science makes to the wellbeing and the economy of society in the UK
* enable the public to engage with social science research
* engage with teachers and young people and to raise their awareness of the social sciences.

**Who can apply?**

Applications are welcome from disciplines outside the social sciences, however, to meet ESRC conditions there must be a social science component/collaborating partner for the event to be eligible. Applications are welcome from any researcher at the collaborating institution, regardless of career stage.

**Target number of attendees per event**

ESRC is not setting a target number of attendees per event. ESRC *will* be asking for data on attendee numbers as part of the festival evaluation and are keen to see strong attendance overall, but don’t wish to exclude great events with small groups. In particular:

* Participatory events are very welcome and attendance numbers should be limited to what is practical and will ensure a good experience for attendees.
* ESRC welcome events that aim to broaden the reach of the festival and attract attendees who might not normally attend a research-based or cultural event. ESRC appreciate that such events may not attract large numbers, but that engaging with a small group of harder-to-reach attendees is in itself a success.

**Event types and format (online/in person)**

* All event types are welcome – talks, exhibitions, quizzes, performances, craft activities, debates, pop-up stalls…
* Events can be online, in person or hybrid, subject to following national and local COVID-19 guidance that applies at the time.
* If using a video-conferencing platform for adult audiences, we suggest using either Zoom (as many of the public will already be familiar with it) or specifically looking into what’s most popular with your target audience (see below).
* If using a video-conferencing platform for young audiences, it is worth consulting with a partner organisation before choosing. For example, many schools use Teams or Google Classroom, in which case Teams or Google Meet offer a familiar option.

**Costs**

ESRC recommend a spend of Costs supporting capacity building, external support, transport to events where needed for those who might otherwise be unable to attend (for example bus hire for schools or transport costs for those from low-income backgrounds), and any type of engagement activities that directly support the festival objectives are acceptable.

**Costs must be non FEC**

The following costs are not supported:

* Staff costs
* Alcohol, and substantial food and beverage offerings (light refreshments such as tea, coffee, juice and biscuits can be covered)
* Goody bags or giveaways

The following costs are supported only under exceptional circumstances (we will need to liaise with ESRC before agreeing to pay these):

* Travel costs for international speakers/participants
* Accommodation

**Attracting public audiences and meeting expectations – ESRC guidelines for institutions and researchers**

All 2021 festival events should be aimed at the public and/or young people; however, this still covers a very wide range! It’s a good idea to narrow down your target audience and tailor your event accordingly, rather than trying to attract and please all of ‘the public’ or all young people of a particular age. Putting yourself in their shoes right from the planning stage can help ensure they leave with a smile and feel their time has been well spent.

Good questions to consider include:

1. Is there a particular reason why you want to engage with the public? For example your motivation might be “to help people improve their wellbeing by spending time outdoors” or “to encourage more people to study my subject at university”. This may help you to decide who to target (point 2, below).
2. Who do you want to aim your event at, and what characteristics are they likely to have? For example, what will their existing knowledge of and attitude to your topic be? What is their likely educational level? Can you connect your topic to a particular leisure interest, eg targeting keen gardeners?
3. What would motivate them to take part? For example, pre-existing interest in the topic, relevance to an aspect of their life, a learning experience for their children, for a fun or moving experience to share with a friend? Understanding why they might attend can help you make sure you meet their expectations.
4. What time, day of the week and duration that will work best for them? (For example, evenings and weekends for groups that include working-age adults.)
5. Do you have a good understanding of your target group yourself, and the ability to reach and attract them, or is it worth working with a partner organisation such as a community group or charity?
6. For in-person events, is the group you are targeting likely to be comfortable and motivated to visit a university campus, or would a different venue work better (for example somewhere they visit regularly anyway)?
7. Is it practical for them to attend a virtual event (eg being a regular internet user with a good internet connection and appropriate device) and if so which platform(s) are they most familiar with?
8. When they see your event advertised, what assumptions might different groups make about it? For example, adults seeking a cultural night out with friends may assume that an exhibition or performance will provide a full evening’s entertainment; those with a pre-existing interest in your field may assume that your talk will increase their knowledge rather than introduce the basics. This can help you describe and promote your event to attract your target group, meet their expectations and manage the expectations of those who were looking for something different.

Resources that can help thinking about audiences include:

* The UWE Bristol Science Communication Unit’s *Event Public Engagement* guide (<https://www.uwe.ac.uk/research/centres-and-groups/scu/courses-and-training/practitioner-guides>), which is very useful regardless of whether you class your research area as science!
* The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)’ s short guide *Target audience: deepening your understanding* (<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/target_audience_deepening_your_understanding.pdf>).
* The Arts Council’s Generic Learning Outcomes model is helpful in appreciating the different forms that learning from an arts or cultural event can take (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/measuring-outcomes/generic-learning-outcomes#section-1>).
* You may also find inspiration in audience segmentation tools such as Culture Segments (<https://mhminsight.com/culture-segments>) and Audience Spectrum ([Audience Spectrum | The Audience Agency](https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-spectrum)), John Falk’s categorisation of museum visitors (<https://www.museumsontario.ca/newsarticle/publications/imuseum/pdf/RTAudienceResearch-FalkVisitorMotivationHandout.pdf>) and the British Science Association’s science engagement map (<https://www.britishscienceassociation.org/blog/updating-our-science-engagement-map>).

**Skills and training to run a great event**

Inspiring a public audience requires a slightly different skillset from those required in academia.

If giving a talk, speakers with limited experience outside academic contexts may benefit from additional training in presentation skills/public speaking or seeking constructive feedback from a colleague. Areas worth focusing on include:

* Good ways to structure a presentation to engage an audience in a non-academic context, such as start with an enticing hook and making key points upfront.
* Using slides to best effect for a non-academic audience, for example concentrating on visuals rather than displaying lots of text.
* Getting some feedback on delivery speed, clarity of speech, volume and modulation (to help hold of the attention of those who don’t have a pre-existing interest in the content).
* How to introduce interactive elements into talks, to make sure audience members feel included (for example a quick poll or a show of hands).
* Using any necessary technology.
* Getting some practice via a trial run.

Useful resources include:

* The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) (<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/>) provides lots of useful online resources and training opportunities (<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-engagement/engagement-training>).
* UWE Bristol Science Communication Unit runs professional and short courses (<https://www.uwe.ac.uk/research/centres-and-groups/scu/courses-and-training/professional-and-short-courses>), such as “Science Communication Building Blocks” (<https://courses.uwe.ac.uk/Z51000113/science-communication-building-blocks#about>), and free online practitioner guides (<https://www.uwe.ac.uk/research/centres-and-groups/scu/courses-and-training/practitioner-guides>). A lot of the principles are useful whatever your subject area.
* There are some useful TED-branded YouTube videos on public speaking that can help when designing talks for non-academic audiences, eg “TED’s secret to great public speaking” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FOCpMAww28>).

**Publicising events**

ESRC and the festival manager at Lancaster University will identify a small number of festival events likely to be of national-level interest that will receive additional support with publicity from the UKRI communications team.

Last year, events across a number of institutions were advertised on a central public website, see link [here](https://festivalofsocialscience.com/). If your event is selected to form part of the festival it will be featured on an updated version of this website (except for those few that are not open to attendance by the general public, for example events being run in partnership with a specific school or community group that are only open to its pupils/members).

For all events a link to a live booking system or process must be provided e.g. Eventbrite or local institutional booking process which is the responsibility of the event organiser. ESRC encourage you to consider gathering attendee details such as demographics for evaluation at the booking stage where appropriate, to reduce the number of questions you need to ask them post-event. **Details of attendee details required for evaluation purposes will be provided separately by LSSI Engagement Officer, Camilla McCartney.**

ESRC encourage you to actively promote your events through other channels, with consideration as to where to publicise events so that the relevant target groups will find them. Options to consider include:

* local events listings
* local media
* community blogs
* arts centres, community centres and libraries
* community groups (particularly those with a link to the event topic)
* science café networks (depending on the research area)
* university external contacts such as alumni databases and newsletters
* sixth forms and FE colleges (students considering university entry may be interested in events not specifically aimed at schools)
* u3a networks and retirement groups
* individual staff members with strong social media networks beyond academia

LSSI and the Public Engagement Team can help you to develop your communications and promotion plans if you are unsure, please contact Camilla in the first instance using the email address at the end of this document. Where appropriate LSSI and Public Engagement Team can use their own communications channels to support the promotion of your activities. LSSI will have a dedicated webpage to promote FoSS activities/events further, however as aforementioned, the event organiser, not LSSI, will be responsible for organising the booking process for your event.

If your event is selected to form part of the Festival, LSSI will liaise with you as speakers/event leaders to ensure that the content of each event is described as accurately as possible, so that potential attendees know what is on offer.

* For events that include multiple elements (for example a talk, a film and a Q&A), ensure it is clear which is the main event. For example, if a performance or craft activity is on offer but constitutes only 10 minutes of a 2-hour event, make this clear.
* Ensure it is clear who each event is aimed at, especially those that are open to all but targeted predominantly at a particular group.

With regard to branding and promotion of the festival as a whole:

* There will be a new website banner to replace ‘Society from your sofa’, which ESRC encourage you to use on your own website (and elsewhere, if appropriate).
* ESRC encourage the use of the ESRC festival Twitter hashtag, #ESRCFestival, by all organisers (and, where appropriate, attendees) and tag in @ESRC on Twitter and LinkedIn posts.
* ESRC ask that you use the festival logo and ESRC logo on all of your content, promotions and materials relating to the festival.
* ESRC ask that you please promote the festival website (<https://festivalofsocialscience.com/>) anywhere where your own events are promoted.

**Evaluation overview**

ESRC and LSSI are keen to support you with your events and showcasing the best of social science in 2021 and beyond. Increasingly we need evidence to demonstrate the impact that investments such as the Festival of Social Science have, and endeavour to do so via event evaluation.

All participating institutions will need to submit the required details to the festival manager at Lancaster University. By submitting an EOI form you are agreeing to submit this information to LSSI when it is time for reporting.

Full details of reporting requirements, including questionnaires, will be provided closer to the festival. As an overview, they will include the following.

**Mandatory reporting requirements**

Mandatory data to be supplied by all participating institutions will include:

* Facts and figures relating to:
	+ Numbers of events by different categories (eg by topic, audience, in person v online or hybrid)
	+ Geographical location of events
	+ Attendee numbers (pre-registered and actual) and attendee demographics
	+ Speaker/event leader details
	+ Any third-party event partner organisations (eg community groups, charities)
* Views and opinions, including:
	+ Attendee views and experiences, including impact data (eg on attitudes, anticipated behaviour changes) and whether the event met their expectations based on how it was promoted
	+ Teacher views of schools’ events
	+ Views of any event partner organisations
	+ Speaker/event leader views (if/how festival participation has benefitted them)
	+ IAA/non-IAA partner views (benefit to their institution of participating in festival)

If you have any questions in relation to the information provided here, and/or want to know more, please do not hesitate to contact Camilla McCartney, LSSI Engagement Officer, c.j.mccartney@leeds.ac.uk.

As a reminder, applicants should also consult with, and seek approval from, their individual Faculty Research and Innovation Office (FRIO), Faculty Research Manager and Head of School prior to submitting the Expression of Interest form.

We look forward to receiving your application.