



EXPLORE YOUR UNIVERSE

My Reflection Journal





Explore Your Universe Phase 4

The UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres (ASDC) is the vibrant national charity that brings together the leading informal science engagement organisations in the UK.

Collectively, we strive to make our centres and science more inclusive, with a vision of a society where all people are intrigued, inspired and involved with the sciences.



In partnership with the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), Explore Your Universe Phase 4 (EYU4) supports UK science centres to create lasting partnerships with community organisations, building trust and participation for families who may not currently feel that science and science centres are for them. EYU4 brings a specific focus of audience-based, evidenced methodologies that successfully build interest, value, curiosity and confidence in the physical sciences for children aged 8 – 14 and their families.

Our evaluation strategy aims to effectively capture all the impacts of EYU4, to share all the changes, learning and good practice across the network and wider informal science learning sector. This will be a key legacy of Explore Your Universe Phase 4.

We cannot do this without the input of you, the practitioner.



What we need you to do

As a science centre partner, we are asking you to use this journal to reflect after each EYU4 session on what worked well, what was challenging, and what you might change in your approach and activities next time.

It's an opportunity to make space for yourself to think on your own professional practice. Were all participants supported to feel part of it? Did some choose not to join in? Whose voice was absent from the room? And were there any presumptions made of experience, knowledge, values, ability or interests that you had to challenge to enable greater participation?

We ask you to be as honest as you can be within these pages. We have provided questions which we hope will spark your reflections, but there are also blank pages at the end which you can use to note down thoughts that don't quite fit elsewhere.

This Reflection Journal forms a part of your contract with us, and we will ask you to photograph or scan pages and send them back to ASDC to form an important part of our evaluation. However, it is yours to keep, and we hope you will find it a useful tool for your own personal professional development, as well as a starting point for wider discussions within your organisation.

Enjoy!

Shaaron Leverment, Abi Ashton and the ASDC Team





The power of reflective practice

Reflection is an essential tool in change. It is the process through which an organisation learns how to work better, what needs to change, and whether the changes it has already made are successful or not.

It is the moment of stepping back to see what worked; thinking about and questioning one's actions; being self-critical; and constantly learning from what went well, what could have gone better, and what might be done differently. It includes the skill to listen, to have an honest dialogue that is about learning not blame, and being open to challenge, alternative values and working methods.

Ideally, reflection is built into everyday working practices, and involves not only staff but external voices such as community partners and other stakeholders. Indeed, one of the first reflective questions to ask is: 'who else should be involved in this discussion so that we capture all perspectives?'

The most successful approaches integrate reflection into regular meeting agendas, providing space to reflect and evaluate together, challenge working practices and help with problem-solving. Some of these can move away from a traditional meeting structure, instead encouraging a more participatory approach by including practical mini-workshops, Open Space and group discussions.



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However, building reflection into daily practice is still a challenge for many organisations, who acknowledge its importance but struggle to find time for it. Yet the common response that it takes time out of normal working is wrong-headed: reflection should be central to normal working. Some practitioners, when they first try a reflective process, dismiss it as navel-gazing. But to be able to reflect honestly, without assigning blame, and genuinely listen to other perspectives, is a skill to be learned, like any other. It is an essential organisational learning process that feeds back into planning and action, and answers a key question about the work of the organisation: are there things we need to address? It is also an ongoing, iterative process that should not be limited to a discussion at the end of a project.

Too often, organisations claim that they do reflect, but admit they have no formal, robust mechanisms for that reflection. In those cases, what tends to happen is that any reflection and learning sits with individuals, is not shared with colleagues, and does not influence the learning of the whole organisation. For reflection to be effective, it should be formalised into identifiable mechanisms. The ideal situation is when several processes overlap and encourage continual reflection and learning.

Piotr Bienkowski





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When have you found is the best time to write this journal? Write your thoughts in the margins





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Have a look through all your journal entries to date. Highlight a couple of points that you feel would be useful to share with another practitioner starting out on a similar project



SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT REFLECTIONS

A science-capital-informed approach is about reflecting on your STEM experience through the eyes of your audiences using these key ideas.

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP



LANGUAGE

Think about the visual and verbal language you use, and how it can help everyone to feel that they are part of science – instead of feeling it is something ‘other people’ do.

Use personal pronouns, gender-neutral visual and verbal language, and explain any jargon.



CONFIDENCE AND OWNERSHIP

Consider how you can ensure that everyone feels welcome and confident to take part in your experiences.

Allow people to follow their interests. Give them choice and control in activities, and opportunities to contribute and share their knowledge and experiences with you and each other.



SKILLS

Think about how to help people recognise that they have and use a wide range of science skills.

Give examples of where and how science skills are used by different people in daily life. Highlight how these skills are useful in their hobbies and for jobs in and beyond science.



PROMOTE SCIENCE TALK

Think about how to encourage people to talk about the experiences they have had with you and about science in their life.

Invite people to share their own stories and viewpoints through questions which generate conversations among families, peers and communities – at home and at school.



EXTEND THE EXPERIENCE

Help people continue making science connections in their everyday lives.

Make your experiences last longer by giving people simple ideas and activities that they can do afterwards, such as questions to think about or research further, or challenges to do at home, at school or out and about.



PEOPLE

Think about how to broaden the perception of who does science by showing diverse examples of the people who use and benefit from science in their work.

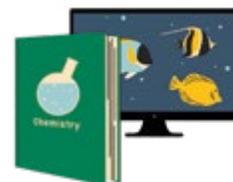
Help people to recognise that they know people who use science and how science is shaped by everyone in society.



EVERYDAY EXAMPLES

Think about how to link your STEM content to people’s rich and diverse interests and experiences.

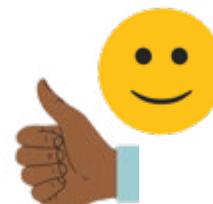
Show examples of where and how science has helped solve real-life issues. Don’t make assumptions about what people’s interests and experiences are. Everyone is different and may not be the same as you.



SCIENCE KNOWLEDGE

Consider how to value people’s existing STEM knowledge and build on it. New information should feel like a natural extension of what people already know.

Broaden people’s ideas around what science is. Communicate that science is more than just knowledge; it is a way of thinking, working and being curious.



POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Think about how to help people to feel that science is something they can do.

Highlight and reward when people are behaving scientifically, using science skills or knowledge. Leave them with the feeling that ‘I can do this’ and ‘I want to find out or do more’.



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Turn to page 13 to find out when is the best time to make space for this!





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Reflect on your experiences. What would you share with your organisation? What could professionals in your audience development, volunteering, marketing or fundraising departments learn from you?





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 Energized Curious Tired Frustrated Skeptical
 Apprehensive Fearful Tired Frustrated Skeptical
 Out-of-control Under-prepared Apathetic
 Disrespected Exhausted

Other? (would you like to write your own word or explain more?)



What was your best moment today?

What was challenging?

What surprised you?

What did your community partner think?



Do you both think people got involved in your session?

Everyone / Most people / 50:50 / Some / Hardly anyone

Were there any "Meerkat Moments"!? ('Lightbulb' moments, or moments where individuals' participation or behaviour was different from normal?)

What did you take from today?

If you could travel back in time, what piece of advice would you give yourself to do things differently and why?

For someone else running another similar session tomorrow, what piece of learning from today would you give them?





What did you do?

Date: _____
Venue postcode: _____

What did you do today?

(Brief description of session format and what you covered)

How long did it last?

Can you give an estimate of the participants in terms of:

- Number:
- Age group:
- Female ratio (e.g. 50%):

Who were your participants?

(e.g. school group, young carers group, local families, etc.)

Proportion of participants who had been before?

Who were you expecting that didn't come?

(Do you know the reasons why they weren't there?)

How did it feel?

(circle as many as you want)



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Write your own reflections here

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Write your own reflections here

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EXPLORE YOUR UNIVERSE

www.exploreyouruniverse.org

If lost please contact:
or email info@sciencecentres



UK Research
and Innovation