



Association for
**Science and
Discovery Centres**

Invitation to Participate

Next Gen Earth
2025-2026



Next Gen Earth

A national youth-led programme run by ASDC and funded by the Natural Environment Research Council

Why you should apply!

Have you been looking for opportunities to platform young people's voices and concerns about the environment?

Do you have – or are you establishing – a youth panel to bring young people into the heart of your engagement activities and decision making?

Are you looking for funding that supports co-creation with your local communities and creates space to listen and respond to the young people in your region?

ASDC is delighted to announce an exciting and innovative new grant programme funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC, part of UKRI). Grants are available this financial year to support in-depth involvement and engagement with young people from diverse background across nine regions of the UK. Leveraging the UK network of science and discovery centres and museums, this national programme will represent and platform the views and values of young people from diverse regions and backgrounds, supporting belonging, agency and developing skills for these key stakeholders in the future of environmental science, research and innovation.

Background

Young people are tasked with solving the greatest challenges of our time and have strong beliefs that climate change will greatly impact their lives in the future, and yet they feel disconnected from science and do not feel that scientists genuinely represent their views or values¹.

ASDC is working with NERC to deliver an innovative cross-over between the strategic priorities within the [NERC Public engagement with research and innovation strategy \(2020-2025\)](#) and the [NERC diversity and inclusion living action plan](#). The cross-over areas this project will focus on are:

- Working with NERC researchers and public engagement professionals to deliver inspiring, co-created and inclusive engagements with young people from diverse backgrounds.

¹ The British Science Association [Youth Insights data platform](#) (2023)

- Reinforcing connection and interaction between NERC science and society by ensuring young people have a voice in contemporary environmental issues that directly affect their lives, their regions and their futures.
- Supporting agency to nurture the environmental science leaders of the future.

Together through this National STEM programme, we seek to ensure that participants – regardless of gender, background, ability or location – feel able to connect with, contribute to and benefit from regionally relevant NERC science and research. The aim of the programme is to enable diverse perspectives to shape a national project, while equally nurturing individual's confidence, skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm, necessary to build capacity for a future workforce that reflects the diversity of the UK.

Participating science and discovery centres and museums will work in partnership with youth, community and/or faith leaders to explore different beliefs, worldviews, nature-connection practices and cultures in environmental sciences and break down barriers to opportunities in NERC science and research by inviting young people to be the drivers of a national conversation. Therefore, the specific areas of NERC science explored in resultant engagements will ultimately be driven from young people's interests and priorities.

Project Vision

To enable the next generation of environmental advocates through creative youth-led engagement with NERC science, research and innovation, championing regional diversity by elevating youth voices across the UK.

Project Mission

To co-create inclusive, youth-led programmes that connect young people with environmental science and inspire action and ownership. Leveraging the place-based network of science and discovery centres and museums to amplify diverse regional perspectives and to understand the barriers that prevent young people from accessing and engaging with NERC science, research and innovation.

Key programme objectives

- To work with the resources and partnerships of ASDC and the ASDC network of science and discovery centres and museums for a national programme of youth-led engagement in environmental sciences.
- To reach a broad range of young people across the UK, including young people from marginalised and minoritised backgrounds, from areas of geographic isolation or experiencing socio-economic disparity with lower access to STEM engagement².
- To promote the role of regional diversity in shaping individual projects across the network, ensuring engagements are led by the issues and interests relevant to participants' daily lives: cultures, identities, economies, policies, history and environmental characteristics, that are unique across different regions of the UK.
- To resource equitable and creative activities that promote agency and youth voice to inspire, engage and involve school-age children, their families and their wider communities with NERC science, research and innovation.
- To support young people to gain deeper insight and understanding of environmental careers by providing opportunities for social connection with diverse and relevant roles and role models in environmental science, research and innovation.
- To support science and discovery centre practitioners and NERC scientists and researchers (with a particular focus on early career researchers) to engage with younger audiences in an equitable way, supporting confidence, skills development, relationships and opportunity for a depth of engagement that informs their own understanding of emerging youth perspective.
- To present programme findings in a final, professional, visual evaluation 'insights' report that headline and effectively disseminate the diverse perspectives captured within this programme.

² [Science engagement and inequity in the UK](#) (2022)

Target audiences

- School-age children (ages 7-16), their families and wider key influencers
- Practitioners within science and discovery centres and museums at a range of levels
- Community, youth and faith leaders working in partnership with the ASDC sector
- NERC and NERC-remit scientists and researchers

This programme will work with young people (target ages 7-16) from a variety of backgrounds to allow for depth and breadth of engagement across the regions served by the nine science and discovery centres or museums participating in the programme. There is not an expectation for large participant numbers for this programme, instead the particular focus is on the voices of young people historically underrepresented in environmental sciences³ who may be experiencing racism, socio-economic disparity (as defined by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) or national equivalent) or geographic (remote-from-STEM) isolation, who all have the potential to be part of the future talent pool, but may currently not have the confidence or opportunity to consider this as an option for their future.

Audiences also include participating NERC researchers and scientists, supporting them to have confidence to tackle difficult conversations and contemporary issues, to listen to those with different views, to change perspectives or approaches to future work and public engagements, and to build positive relationships with science centres and local communities.

The types of activities you might include

Activities will be accessible and should open up opportunities for young people from a broad range of backgrounds to connect with NERC's locally relevant environmental science. Engagements and activities should be on their terms, designed from the outset to put young people in the centre of decision-making. Across the ASDC network and beyond, there are numerous inspirational and effective initiatives that develop and platform young people's perspectives and build youth equity. Examples of approaches and activities of engagements that you may wish to build your engagements from include:

- [Authority sharing formats](#) (addressing youth equity by considering young people as experts in their own experience and placing equal value on the perspectives of students, scientists, and staff members)
- Youth-led [Model COP](#) events providing young people with the opportunity of taking on the role of party delegates and stakeholder organisations to foster skills and understanding of the climate negotiations

³ NERC funding investments 2014 to 2015 and 2019 to 2020: [Baseline report on community diversity and prevalence of differential outcomes for gender and ethnicity](#) (2022)

- Participatory approaches within the governance structure of organisations that enable [young advocates](#) and [steering groups](#) to influence the strategic direction and decision making of our organisations.
- [Youth advisory panel](#) for co-creating specialist events connecting young advocates with scientists, activists and creatives. Workshops, panels and talks led by young advocates for fellow peers and the public to provide a space to be heard and share ideas.
- [Activism courses](#) that aim to equip young people, particularly those from underserved communities, with tools to be advocates for climate action.

Grants

We are looking to partner with nine science and discovery centres and/or museums from our membership network. Evidence-informed approaches in proposals will be viewed favourably. For example, a strong proposal might include and involve key influencers (such as parents, carers, wider families and communities) in the plan of engagement.

Grants available:

- ‘Delivery’ grants of £9,000 will be available for organisations designing a model of equitable youth engagements with NERC science and/or scientists. To support youth agency, proposals will be encouraged to work with a multiple engagement approach with key youth voice panel members, although planned activities may interact with larger numbers and ‘one off’ interactions (e.g. meet-the-researcher showcase events, workshops and shows in science and discovery centre spaces). It will be expected that this budget includes contribution to youth/community partners involved.
- ‘Equipment’ grants of £1000 will be available for successful organisations to refresh or purchase new NERC engagement equipment. Provision of kit lists for existing programmes and other relevant resources (including those on the [ClimateHub](#)) can be accessed, but delivery partners can also develop new activities to encourage engagement with the specific environmental interests that emerge from the young people. It will not be necessary for these grants to be spent at the start of the programme, to enable decisions on kit to be made with participants.



- 'Development' grants of £250 are available for youth and community partners' time to spend a day working with your organisation at the proposal stage. This will be available for all applicants and not just those awarded a grant.

Training

This project builds on the learning from our national programmes: *Operation Earth, Our World From Space* and *Explore Your Universe: Valuing Inclusion* and will utilise a series of online training modules at the start of the programme.

All successful grant holders will attend ASDC training (July 2025, exact dates soon to be confirmed). Training will take place online, to share best practice techniques from across the sector that nurture equitable, youth-led NERC engagement. This will support all centres to provide the tools and the space for young people to question the relevance of NERC for their skillsets and their daily lives, to think critically about NERC research and its processes, and/or to gain access and opportunity to explore the diversity of careers open to them. We want to challenge misconceptions around who does environmental science, who can participate and contribute, and who benefits from environmental science, research and innovation.

The training academy itself will take place as a series of online modules, which will support accessibility of delegates and speakers (including young people) involved. Online modules will be 90 minutes long and will focus on aspects such as inspiring examples of activities and approaches to equitable youth engagements, how to best prepare and involve NERC researchers, and evaluation clinics to discuss the evaluation and reporting in the project.

There will be opportunity at the ASDC National Conference in Bradford (9th-10th September 2025) for all grantees to come together in-person, to network and share experiences of the project development and delivery to date. Please save the dates.

Evaluation

The evaluation will be undertaken by Laura Thomas director of OnData Research who has provided evaluation for several of ASDC's programmes in the past and is therefore familiar with our network. Laura will be supported in the evaluation of the programme by Charlotte Thorley, a freelance evaluator and researcher in public engagement. Both Laura and Charlotte have significant experience supporting organisations such as learned societies, charities, universities and science centres in gaining an in-depth understanding of the impact of their programmes.

The evaluation methodology is proposed as a mixed methods study, combining qualitative and quantitative data, however the majority of the data collection will focus on qualitative approaches and the experiences and reflections from the youth advocates (young people

leading the projects). The purpose is to provide insights into the issues being explored as part of this programme with feedback coming from delivery partner staff and the youth advocates.

Delivery partners will be asked to work with Laura and Charlotte to provide feedback from staff and the young people who will be participating in the project. The proposed approaches include self-reflection for both staff and young people, along with pre- and post-participation surveys for the young people. Support will be provided around gathering feedback from the young people in terms of ethics and gaining consent from them and their parent/guardian as appropriate.

In addition to feedback on their attitudes and aspirations, we also want to understand who is engaging and this would be done through an equality and diversity monitoring form. We know that some ASDC members already have their own form which they use with audience groups, and we would be grateful if you could share this with us as part of your application submission. The evaluation team will provide a monitoring form for the purposes of this project.

A set of evaluation tools will be made available to delivery partners to help you gather feedback on any activities being run as part of the programme with other audience groups. This will be tailored to the activities being proposed. You are welcome to suggest using your own tools, but please discuss these with Laura first to ensure they align with the project objectives and we do not overload participants with multiple forms of data collection.

Lastly, the evaluation team plan to make a visit to each delivery partner. The visit may include observations of project-related activities, a focus groups with youth advocates or interviews with staff. The exact nature of this visit will be agreed with each delivery partner depending on what is most appropriate for the participants.

Reporting requirements

In recent ASDC programmes regular reporting throughout the project timeline has been positively received. Therefore, delivery partners will be required to submit updates in September and December, with final reporting in February 2026.

The two interim reports will be 'light-touch' and include:

- Metrics sheets (number of interactions, participants, demographics of audience engaged).
- Updates on types of engagement (e.g. development meetings, methods of engagement with youth panels, events taking place with wider communities).
- Summary of professional reflections (utilising journal tools provided for practitioners) to capture the development of the programme, learnings, changes and unexpected outcomes.

- Photos with relevant permissions to be used on ASDC website, social media and in the final report.

The final report, due at the end of February 2026, will include the above along with a project summary of what you did. Delivery partners will also be required to attend a final review meeting with the project manager and evaluator. Your community partner will also be invited to attend this meeting, as this often adds wonderful insights and reflections to support the understanding of impact, however it is not a requirement for them to be present.

Commitments of selected organisations

The selected organisations will need to commit to the following:

1. To work with the target audiences and their families, carer, communities and/or teachers focussing on the project Vision, Mission and key objectives.
2. To ensure that the content of your delivery links to NERC science, research and innovation.
3. To collaborate with a chosen youth partner - including at the proposal stage - to co-develop activities.
4. To ensure two members of staff attend the online training sessions taking place in July 2025
5. To allow a visit from the external evaluator for observations of activities as part of the data gathered during the delivery period.
6. To attend a final online interview with the external evaluator and project manager.
7. To submit all required evaluation and reporting of interactions required (this includes the metrics spreadsheet, participant evaluations, staff reflections, photos, case study reports and/or any video data) by the dates outlined in the timetable below.
8. To provide at least three professional quality photographs of delivery (such as during workshops, events, school visits) and confirm permissions so that ASDC is able to use these photos for reports and/or websites.
9. To market activities and materials in accordance with guidelines provided by ASDC, such as including ASDC and NERC branding where practical to do so.

Project timeline

2025	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project announced and Invitation to Participate sent out to ASDC members Bidders' Q&A 21st May 2025 Development of proposal ideas with science centres and youth/community partner taking place Optional 1-2-1 meetings or phone calls with the project manager to support development of your proposal
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deadline for proposal submissions 19th June 2025 Review panel and successful proposals selected
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All successful and unsuccessful projects notified of panel decisions w/c 8th July Successful proposals contracted Stage 1 grants distributed Successful delivery partners announced w/c 28th July Training online modules take place (dates TBC) Delivery partners start project development meetings
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-2-1 meetings with the external evaluator taking place to discuss evaluation approach Opportunity to apply for Equipment grants for new or refreshed kit Early delivery of Next Gen Earth programme starts Evaluator visits to delivery partners scheduled across the 9 delivery partners
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of Next Gen Earth in process Check-in meetings with project partners and ASDC project manager taking place ASDC National Conference in Bradford 9th-10th September 2025 where there will be opportunity for in-person connection First interim report submitted 30th September 2025 by delivery partners to the ASDC project manager. Report to include metrics, staff reflections and any delivery photos
October / November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of Next Gen Earth in process On-site visits from evaluator and project manager taking place with observations across the network COP30 10th-21st November 2025
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second Interim report submitted 15th December by delivery partners to the ASDC project manager. Report to include metrics, staff reflections and any delivery photos.
2026	

February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of community engagement closes • All evaluation data collected and delivered to external evaluator February 2026 • Final review meetings with practitioners and ASDC project manager • Case studies, photos and video assets written and submitted to ASDC project manager by 27th February 2026
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 2 grants distributed to the delivery partners • Evaluation 'insights' report by ASDC and evaluator complete and disseminated by ASDC in April

Application process

Is your organisation eligible to apply?

All ASDC members can apply for the grant programme. Those who apply must demonstrate:

- Experience and/or partnerships in place to surface the opinions of young people (aged 7-16) through school, family and/or community engagements, and to ensure equity and agency is foregrounded within these interactions.
- Ability and/or previous experience utilising NERC science, content, people and/or places as the catalyst for inclusive engagements with young people.
- Understanding of the unique characteristics of their regions that may influence the relevant and meaningful engagement of participants with NERC science.
- Capacity to fully engage with the language and evaluation process within this programme.

Bidder's Q&A session:

ASDC will hold a bidder's Q&A session via Zoom on **21st May 2pm-3.30pm**, where all ASDC members interested in applying will have the opportunity to hear about the programme from the ASDC team, have their specific questions answered and hear the responses given to others who would be bidding.

This open and informal opportunity has been used in all previous ASDC programmes, to answer questions and give clarity over what centres need to deliver, schedules, audiences, grants, budgets and reporting before each centre applies.

Please book your place on our event page [here](#)



How to apply

To apply, please fill in the Programme Application Form which is available on the ASDC website from 19th May 2025. We will also be directly emailing this link to you.

- Please send this to us as a word document.
- Please save your application form in the following format: 'Next Gen Earth Application [name of your centre].
- **Please email your application to admin@sciencecentres.org.uk** and ensure you get an email response saying your application has been received within 48 hours (re-send or call us if you do not).
- **Any questions, please contact the project manager Cait Campbell**
cait.campbell@sciencecentres.org.uk
- For the avoidance of doubt, in the case of any issues, please inform us well in advance of the deadline if you need a day or two extension into the following week.
- If you are unsure whether to apply please contact Cait with any questions.

We are looking forward to receiving your application and working with you

Deadline for Applications: 4pm Thursday 19th June 2025.

Please contact us 24 hours in advance if you think you need an extension due to unforeseen circumstances.

Our commitment to you

At ASDC we promise to practise the following principals in the ongoing communication, monitoring and administration of these grants and aim to be transparent at every stage:

- **Equity:** We are open to challenges of the structures we have in place that may contribute to these opportunities being less equitable across our sector. We commit to addressing all those within our power and remain transparent on decision-making processes, including who received funding and under what conditions these decisions were made.
- **Humility:** We do not presume to know the best methods or approaches to address these grant criteria within your context and will openly challenge explicit and implicit power-dynamics emerging from these presumptions within our funding partnership.
- **Evidence:** Where it is within our power, ASDC commits to using evidence to inform and justify all decisions on funding criteria and will value evidence-informed, professional proposals.
- **Service:** Through listening to the sector, we aim to ensure that grant seekers are being provided for with this fund and, wherever possible, the grant proposal processes we have in place support the needs of the grant seekers above the needs of the funders.
- **Diligence:** We encourage open and honest feedback on our process, are willing to listen, consider timelines, provide 1-2-1 support and will work to the best of our ability to allow for grant seekers to make the best of this grant opportunity.

