

The role of engagement in impact case studies

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Session outline

- Quick overview of REF impact and how public engagement featured in REF2014
- How excellent (4*) case studies were constructed
- Hearing from some researchers as to their early REF2021 plans
- Public engagement storylines & impact

The assessment framework

Impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment

Impact made up 20% of overall assessment and consisted of impact template and case studies



Case study templates had 5 sections:

1. Summary of the impact
2. Underpinning research
3. References to the research
4. Details of the impact
5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Engagement in impact case studies

Demonstrating that the engagement activity was, at least in part, based on the submitted research and **drew materially and distinctly on it.**

Engaging the public with research can have multiple impacts – for example, on public awareness, attitudes, understanding or behaviour.

Total number of case studies = 6640 (see:
<http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/>)

Total number mentioning the term 'public engagement' = 731

Widening the search

Engaging the public
Engage with the public
Community engagement
Public participation
Social engagement
Public understanding
Public discourse
User engagement
Public awareness
Citizen science
Civic engagement
Lifelong learning
Museums and public and engagement
Cultural engagement
Media coverage
Public debate
Outreach
Customer engagement
Behaviour change
Citizen engagement

www.publicengagement.ac.uk

3108 (47%) of impact case studies featured one or more of these terms, terms that suggest some interaction with the public.

Different ‘flavours’ of public engagement feature in different discipline areas – so in Panel C, ‘public debate’ commonly occurs.

Some final observations from REF2014

- 1. Public engagement is nearly always focused on changes to understanding and awareness.** Many researchers default to a paradigm of public engagement as 'dissemination', positioning publics as 'audiences' for research rather than as experts in their own right or as active collaborators.
- 2. Public engagement is often 'mediated' through the involvement of organisations like schools, broadcasters, charities or museums – we can learn from these organisations' expertise in engagement and evaluation of impact.**
- 3. Case studies that involve engagement with the public are as likely to be rated as 4* as those that don't –** anecdotally, there was nervousness in the sector that public engagement would be valued less highly than other types of engagement. This finding challenges that assumption.

Public engagement storylines

Research generates powerful new knowledge and insight.

Public engagement brings that knowledge into the public sphere to animate conversation and understanding in wider society, inspiring learning, reflection and empathy: circulating new ways of making sense of a complex, ever-changing world, and of one's place within it.

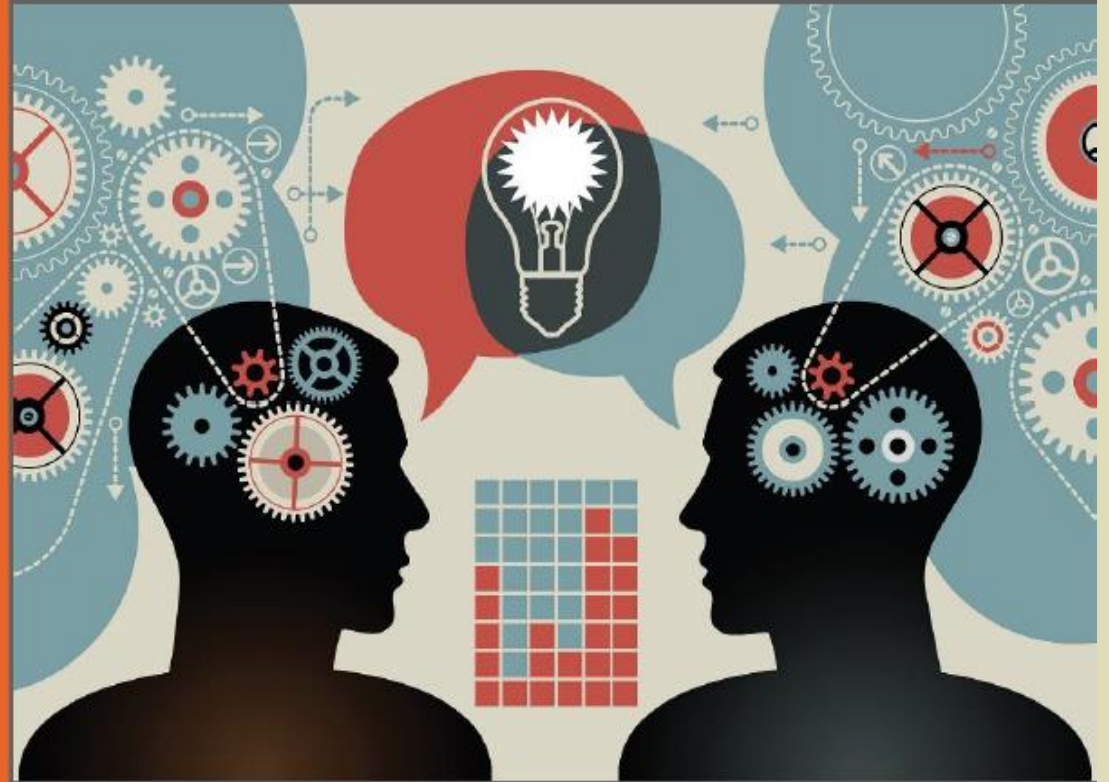
Enlightenment and empathy

Storyline 1: Enlightenment and empathy



By involving the public in the practical ways in how products and services are developed and in the infrastructure and environments they live in, public engagement brings public insight and expertise to bear on the fabric of the public sphere, generating innovation and enhanced quality of life, and improving accountability and decision making.

Social innovation



Research generates new opportunities for people to develop their skills and capabilities, and to 'live' and 'work' better. By engaging the public in action and skills development, and by involving them in critiquing and influencing the practices of the key agencies – government, business, civil society and the professions – the capacity, capability and equity of society can be significantly enhanced

Social action

Storyline 3: Social action

