



Remote engagement with science

Insights from practitioners engaging UK school age children with environmental science during the COVID-19 pandemic

Investing in the Future of Science

Remote engagement with science

Insights from practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Investing the Future of Science project collected data about how engagement of school-aged children with environmental sciences was changing in the UK.

Anonymous respondents provided insights into how they adapted to the loss of face-to-face engagement and move to online delivery.

Those insights are summarised here. Supporting links are provided at the end of the guide.

Get familiar with **how to conduct online meetings** before delivering sessions.

- **Online lecturing experience** can be useful to inform this

Although time might be tight, try to **avoid simply repurposing existing materials** (for example as home learning resources) for audiences they weren't created for.

- What are the **needs of your audience**?
- How will you **ensure that the needs** of the target audience **are met**?
- What **principles** can you have in place to ensure consistency?

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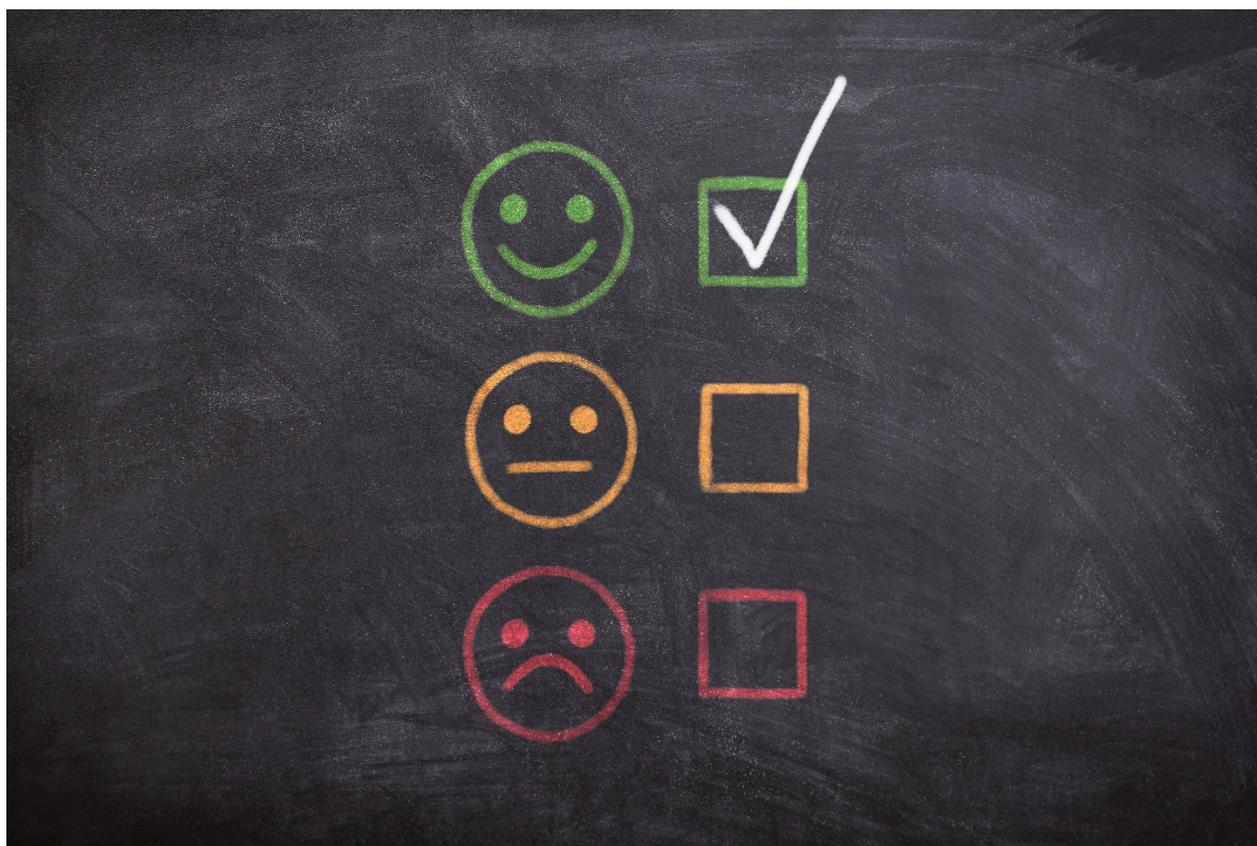


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Seek **feedback** from members of your target audience.

- But make sure this doesn't place a burden on them – find **quick and easy feedback methods** that are accessible to them

Some projects found that they were able to **expand community engagement** during lockdown.

- Can your activities be **expanded** to different audiences and settings using remote engagement?
- How will this differ from your face-to-face work?

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Who activities are delivered by may have to change.

- **Who is best placed** to deliver them?
 - A project team member, a teacher, a parent?

If delivered by someone external to the project team, **preparation and support are key.**

For written resources, **information and instructions** needed to complete the activity should be **full and clear.**

Focus on **interactive elements** and **clear instructions.**

For live remote delivery, consider **preparatory meetings** and advance information, in **alternative formats** if necessary, in case of technology failures.

Make sure activities to be delivered at home **are family-friendly.**

- If your existing resources depend on **teacher delivery**, how do they need to be **adapted** to ensure that **parents/carers** can use them successfully?

For live remote engagement, **staying online** when you're not directly delivering is useful to support those who are present with participants.

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Complementary activities can be useful, particularly for:

- access from home;
- occupying groups waiting to rotate onto the main activity.

Avoid high cost activities, in terms of both time (for parents/carers or teachers) and resources.

- Can you **provide specific resources directly**, for example by sending them to schools to use?

Consider **new skills** you might need, for example in video editing and production.

Useful links

- Hartley, J. (2021). [Science Hunters: moving school outreach to remote online delivery](#). NERC Engage blog
- I'm A Scientist, Get Me Out Of Here. [Child Safeguarding Statement](#). Safeguarding and risk assessment from a longstanding online engagement project
- Laggan, S. (2020). [Moving dialogue online](#). UWE Science Communication Unit practitioner guide
- Shimwell, J. (2020). [Supporting home learning with STEM activities](#). NUSTEM blog

Investing in the Future of Science is based at the University of the West of England and Lancaster University and delivered by Dr Laura Hobbs and Professor Carly Stevens. The project was initiated in 2019 with support from the Natural Environment Research Council. This work, conducted in 2020-2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, was supported by the Royal Society of Chemistry. The thoughts and time of survey respondents, especially at a time of great pressure, are gratefully acknowledged.

Cover image: [Gerd Altmann](#) from [Pixabay](#).