# Evaluation Case Study

**BBSRC Great British Bioscience Festival**


## BACKGROUND

The Great British Bioscience Festival took place between 14th and 16th November 2014 in Bethnal Green, East London as an event to mark BBSRC’s 20th anniversary. It comprised exhibition stands from 19 different research groups representing the breadth of BBSRC-funded bioscience research.

## FESTIVAL AIMS/OBJECTIVES

**Aim 1:** To overcome barriers to access to contemporary bioscience and scientists for underserved audiences  
- Achieve visitor numbers of at least 500/day  
- Host even numbers of primary and secondary school visitors  
- Host more than half of adult and family visitors from Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs and reflect the ethnic diversity of Tower Hamlets in visitors attending.

**Aim 2:** To generate support for biosciences  
- Visitors understand the reasons for the festival taking place  
- Visitors experience positive engagement with researchers  
- Visitors experience positive engagement with the activities at the exhibition  
- Visitors demonstrate increased enthusiasm for biosciences after attending.

**Aim 3:** To develop researchers’ experience and confidence in public engagement  
- Researchers report increased engagement with the public about their research  
- Researchers report feeling more positive about the value of their research  
- Researchers report increased insight into the public’s perceptions and concerns about their research.

## ENGAGEMENT OUTPUTS

- Run a 3-day festival in Tower Hamlets involving researchers from 19 different research groups for at least 1500 visitors.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. Did the Festival reach an underserved audience from Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs?  
2. Did visitors experience positive engagement with the researchers and activities at the Festival?  
3. Did visitors demonstrate an increased enthusiasm for biosciences after attending?  
4. What impact did the Festival have on the researchers experience and confidence in public engagement?

## EVALUATION TECHNIQUES USED

- **Self-completion questionnaires** for school pupils and children visiting the festival/ general visitors to the festival
- **Postcards** asking visitors to share their hopes and concerns regarding biosciences
- **Interactive posters** to collect data on visitors’ home location, enjoyment of the festival and views on bioscience
- **Post-event online survey** of exhibitors
- **Telephone interviews/follow-up questionnaires** with teachers
- **Observations**
- **Visitor number monitoring** (conducted by BBSRC staff)

## THE EVALUATOR’S KEY FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

- Location in Bethnal Green was effective in engaging with a new audience in an area with high levels of social and economic deprivation and the event revealed a considerable appetite for this type of activity.
- Visitors left feeling engaged and enthused by bioscience, with new knowledge and a greater understanding of science and how science works. They also left with a greater awareness of BBSRC.
- Researchers exhibiting at the festival reported an uplifting experience that improved their communication skills, made them more interested in public engagement and reinvigorated them regarding the value of their own work.
- Although BBSRC had made good efforts to take into account cultural sensitivities, some things were overlooked.