



Association for  
**Science and  
Discovery Centres**



STEM COMMUNICATORS NETWORK



UK  
Science  
Festivals  
Network

## **The Josh Award 2024: Call for Applications**

The Josh Award is the UK's national Award in science\* communication and engagement. It was established to recognise and encourage talented early career science communication professionals, to always cheerfully pursue innovation and creativity in the content and outreach of their practice.

(\* encompassing Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths, oftentimes rendered as STEAM, to include the Arts)

The Award provides the opportunity to further develop the winner's STEAM communication skills, networks, and awareness of the science communication industry and profession, both its theory and its practice, with support from fellow professionals across the UK, including the ASDC, UKSFN and BiG STEM Communicators Networks.

The Award Winner will develop and deliver a new project of their own, as a hands-on performance or event, showcasing best practice in the field of STEAM communication, to run at Science Festivals or Science Discovery Centres, or both. Projects on currently topical science themes will be welcomed.

### **The Purpose of The Josh Award**

To recognise and nurture emerging talent and leadership within today's STEAM communication and engagement, prioritising innovation and creative practice, to foster involvement in and a deeper engagement with science\*\* across many multigenerational community sectors, including the harder to reach ones and those presently under-served by science engagement opportunities.

(\*\* See also [Appendices 1 & 2 for more on Science Capital](#))

### **The Josh Award's Objectives**

- To strengthen and evolve the innovative and creative practice of STEAM communication
- To support the development of an innovative project or event for Science Discovery Centres or at Science Festivals, or both.
- To develop the winner's professional network, via partnership opportunities and skills training
- To enhance the winner's experience and strengthen their sci-comm leadership vision through involvement in a large-scale Science Festival or with a Science Discovery Centre.

### **Who is the Award for?**

Practitioners in the early stages of their career, to enhance how they engage people with STEAM.

We welcome applicants who will bring a valuable difference to our sector, either through the

audiences they work with or via their own leading edge creative practice, or both! So, you may be a:-

- full-time, part-time or volunteer science communicator, with a passion to grow your practice

- science communication practitioner through various aspects of your job, e.g. as an artistic, creative practitioner working with STEM, a Freelance Science Communication Professional, a Science Centre Presenter, or a researcher at a University who loves doing community focused science communication as well as academic research and teaching
- representative, leader or participant in a local community group interested in using a STEAM topic to a greater extent, to engage their local neighbourhood more with science

We welcome applications from both individuals and groups, and accept initial nominations. The Award is open to anyone involved in STEAM communication in the UK and is a UK resident.

### Selection Criteria for Josh Award 2024

<p><b>INNOVATION (20%)</b> Demonstrates exceptional potential for delivering an innovative, creative, leading edge STEAM communication experience.</p>
<p><b>REACH (20%)</b> Engages all generations and specific audiences with creative, participatory science. We are particularly interested in projects and events that attract audiences who might not typically engage with STEAM, or are less science-confident. (i.e. have lower Science Capital - See Appendices in the Call for Applications pack for more)</p>
<p><b>COLLABORATION (20%)</b> Demonstrates a compelling example of reflective practice and shared learning through mutually beneficial partnerships, which embed the idea of building Science Capital (see Appendices in the Call for Applications pack for more)</p>
<p><b>LEADING THE WAY 40%)</b> Helps deliver the vision of :- “A society which values and celebrates science, technology and engineering and their impact on all lives, now and in future.” How will your project or event create meaningful impact for the people it engages? How might its impact last beyond your project's delivery event? Legacy is important.</p>

### About Josh

The Award is inspired by and named in memory of Josh Phillips, who was the first Science Communication Officer at the Manchester Science and Industry Museum. He proposed and ran the first Manchester Science Festival.

Josh was a much loved, much respected and highly talented science communicator, whose outstanding career is commemorated with this Award. Josh was the Chair of BiG, the UK's premier science communicators network, at the time of his death. The Award is for Science and Showmanship, targeted to help stimulate and lead to a better future: fun with a purpose!

### About the Josh Award Steering Committee

The Josh Award Steering Committee is affiliated to and supported by BiG, and is also supported by ASDC (the Association for Science & Discovery Centres), UKSFN (the UK Science Festivals Network, which is managed by the British Science Association) and by Josh's family. Thus, the Josh Award is owned and supported by the UK Science Communication community.

### **About BiG**

BIG is the skills sharing network for individuals involved in the communication of STEM subjects. BIG runs regular events and training courses on issues relevant to science communication and informal science and maths education. Our annual conference - The BiG Event - is regarded as one of the best science communication conferences in the UK: it is the premier source of best practice skills-sharing and networking.

Members of the BiG community have access to news, discussion forums, training and events offering networking and sharing of information and views, as well as many other benefits, such as free entry to UK science centres and museums.

### **About ASDC**

The Association for Science and Discovery Centres (ASDC) is the vibrant charity which brings together the UK's regional STEM and STEAM learning organisations to play a strategic role in the nation's engagement with science. Within our network are over 50 of the largest publicly accessible science and discovery centres and science museums.

Every year our members encourage more diverse participation in science, engaging with over 25 million people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities. Together, our vision is for a society where science is accessible, inclusive and valued by all, as a fundamental part of everyday life.

### **About UKSFN**

The UK Science Festivals Network serves to unite, celebrate and develop Science Festivals in the UK. We aim to build relationships with other sectors to drive up attendance and innovation at Science Festivals. The UK Science Festivals Network is managed by the British Science Association, a charity which aims to affirm science as a core part of British culture.

## **The Prize**

### **As Josh Award 2024 Winner, You will receive:**

- The possible invitation to present your activity or event at the British Science Festival 2024 in September in East London, and then, next, the possibility of presenting at the Cheltenham Science Festival in June 2025, or at other Science Communication venues
- £500 to £2,500, depending on the availability of funds and on need, to develop your project or event to be part of a Science Discovery Centre's programme, or to run at a UK Science Festival. The British Science Festival, if accepted, could fund up to £1,000, as needed. The Cheltenham Science Festival provides presenters with one travel cost and a £100 event fee
- The Budget will include all project costs and expenses (i.e. resources, accommodation, travel). It will be controlled by the sponsoring location and the Josh Award Committee
- Non-financial support from the sponsoring venue to further develop your winning proposal, as necessary, to fit the logistics and practicalities of working in their setting
- Attend the annual 3 day BIG Event 2024 (conference fee and annual membership provided by BIG, worth around £300) to network with and present to a diverse range of science communicators across the sector, and also attend 1 day at the 2025 Event to present their work
- The 2024 BIG Event will take place on 24-26 July in Cardiff

- Opportunities for personal and professional development via the BiG network
- Attending professional training sessions with the Science Museum Group's Academy
- A personal prize cheque of £2,000 from the Josh Award Fund
- The Josh Award trophy, to hold and to hand on to the next winner, at the 2026 BiG Event

Thus, the total prize fund can be up to £4,800 + invaluable support from sci-comm professionals

#### **The winner will be expected to:**

- Suggest the Science Festival(s) or Science Discovery Centre(s) to host their project
- Develop and deliver their project or event for the sponsoring venue(s), and ensure that it meets the Award's selection criteria
- Meet expected deadlines and make themselves available for major dates agreed in advance
- Attend BiG Event 2024, present an audience-engaging case study of their project, and write it up for inclusion in the BiG newsletter after the project has been delivered
- Receive the Josh Award Trophy at the BiG Event from the previous Winner
- Proactively participate in relevant personal and professional development opportunities
- Receive the personal prize cheque from the Josh Award Fund and meet Josh Award Chairman
- Be part of the Selection Panel for Josh Award 2026
- Hand on the Award to the next winner at the 2026 BiG Event

#### **The Josh Award Selection Panel 2024**

- James Piercy, Chair BIG and Judging Panel Chair
- Kirsty Hayward, Chair BIG
- Shaaron Leverment, CEO ADSC
- James Brown, Chair, UKSFN
- Timothy Phillips, Family Representative and Steering Committee Chairman
- Eva Ernstzen, 2022 Josh Award Winner

#### **The Selection Process & Timetable**

- Applications open 24 February 2024
- Applications must be made using the Josh Award 2024 Application Form and submitted to BIG by 11:59pm on 8 April 2024
- Applications are considered by the Selection Panel, whose decision is final
- The winner and all applicants will be notified week commencing 6 May 2024
- The winner agrees their project development process and timetable with the chosen venue

#### **The Award Winner's Timetable**

- **June – August 2024:** Attend at least two planning meetings with the team from the hosting Science Centre or Festival, to develop their event/project, and to attend relevant personal and professional development opportunities
- **July 2024:** Attend BIG Event. Present their winning project/event and their work generally
- **July - September 2024:** Finalise project or event with the sponsoring venue's team and attend any relevant personal and professional development opportunities
- **2025:** Event review and de-brief with Josh Award Committee, plus shared learning to be disseminated via BiG
- **July 2025-6:** Attend BIG Event to pass on the Josh Award Trophy & present own Event.

NB This timetable is Science Discovery Centre and Science Festival dependant.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Science Communication – A General Overview**

Science Festivals' and Science Discovery Centres' activities are aimed at families as well as at individuals and at groups of friends.

They aspire to be open for all, but often the majority of audiences have a strong connection to the Festival or Discovery Centre, and also have an above average interest in science. They actively participate in arts and cultural activities and like to share their experiences with others. They typically visit as group and like to see fun, immersive, and hands-on activities that all members of their family or group can get involved with and enjoy (early years up to grandparents). When looking for things to do, they value both learning and leisure equally.

So, to widen our appeal, we are particularly interested in projects and events which attract families who might not typically engage with STEM or have a below average interest in STEM. Evaluation shows that when looking for things to do, these families and groups value entertaining and popular experiences. It's possible that the adults in the family party lack confidence in their knowledge of science and knowledge of the Event or Venue, so their visit will be driven by exploring and enjoying the experience together. They want excitement and spectacle and at best are interested in how STEM affects them and their lives.

## Appendix 2

### Science Capital – What it means

Science Communication is committed to building a STEAM literate society and inspiring the future, by celebrating the impact of STEAM on people's lives, both now and in the future. The concept of science capital helps describe how people from all backgrounds engage with science, and how their engagement can be increased through different science-related experiences.

Science capital is a measure of engagement in or relationship with science, how much the individual values it, and whether they feel it is for them and connected with their life. It recognises the significance of what the individual already knows, how they think, what they do and who they know in shaping their relationship with science. It also helps to shape and frame experiences which are designed to support STEAM engagement.

Everyone has a different amount of science capital; it is not fixed and can change across a lifetime. The more science capital an individual has, the more likely they are to feel that it is useful and important in their life.

A nationally representative survey, sponsored by the Science Museums Group, found that 27% of 11-15 year olds have low science capital. Also, that those with low science capital are more likely to be female and or from less socially advantaged backgrounds. 68% of 11-15 year olds have medium science capital and only 5% have high science capital. Those with high science capital are more likely to be socially advantaged and male.

The research discerned eight main dimensions, or sources, of science capital. These are the most significant STEAM-related experiences, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes people can have which will influence their own science capital.

1. Science Literacy
2. Science Related Attitudes and Values
3. Knowledge about the transferability of Science
4. Taking in science related media
5. Participation in science related activities in and out of school
6. Family science skills, knowledge, and qualifications
7. Knowing people in a science related role
8. Talking to others about science

These dimensions show that it takes more than simply enjoying or learning about science to make a person feel more connected to it. The dimensions can be used to help design environments and deliver programmes, which are welcoming, inspiring and memorable for as wide a range of audiences as possible.

## Appendix 3

### Science Engagement: a Practitioner's Guide

The science capital approach reflects on STEAM experiences *through the audience's eyes*.

It uses these Main ideas:-

**Language:** Think about the visual and verbal language you use, and how it can help your audience feel part of science – instead of feeling science is something ‘other people’ do. Use personal pronouns, gender-neutral, visual and verbal language, and explain any jargon.

**Confidence and Ownership:** Consider how as a practitioner you can ensure that everyone feels welcome and confident to take part in the participatory experiences which you offer. 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 do in fact use a wide range of science skills already. Give examples of where and how science skills are used by different people in daily life. Highlight how these skills are useful in hobbies and in jobs within and beyond science.

**Promote Science Talk:** Think about how to encourage people to talk about the experiences they had with you, and about science in their life. Invite them to share their stories and viewpoints and via questions to generate conversations among families, peers and communities – at home and at school.

**Extend the Experience:** Help people to continue making science connections in their everyday lives. Make your experiences last longer by giving people simple ideas and activities which 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 own STEM content to people’s rich and diverse life 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 their goals may not be the same as yours.

**Science Knowledge:** Consider how to value people’s existing STEM knowledge and build on it. It really does help when new information feels 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’.

**And Always:** Remember that science is the human study of:-

**What** there is;

**How** it works;

plus **Where** and **When** it is;

Always Remember: **Why it is**, is more to do with theology, philosophy, and religion, than science.