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STFC: Spark award

Opportunity status:	Upcoming
Funders:	Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)
Funding type:	Grant
Maximum award:	£15,000
Publication date:	20 September 2020
Opening date:	9 September 2020
Closing date:	22 October 2020 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 4 September 2020

Spark awards are open to a wide range of individuals and groups including researchers, charities, museums, schools and science communicators.

Up to £15,000 is available for projects lasting up to 36 months that engage the public and demonstrate the value of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in areas supported by STFC.

Applications must include a researcher in an STFC-funded area either in an active or an advisory role.

[Open all](#)

Who can apply

Spark awards are open to almost anyone from grant-funded researchers to STFC scientists and engineers, facility users, charities, schools, museums, science communicators and amateur astronomy groups.

Applications must include a researcher in an STFC-funded area. The researcher does not have to play an active role in the public engagement activities. They could be acting as an advisor on scientific content.

What we're looking for

We are looking to support projects that do one or more of the following:

- deliver high-quality engagement activities in the areas supported by STFC
- introduce STFC science and technology to new audiences
- highlight the achievements of STFC science and technology
- demonstrate the value to the UK of science, technology, engineering and mathematics
- work with our public engagement and communication teams.

Programmes must focus on areas within the remit of STFC:

- astronomy
- solar and planetary science
- particle physics
- particle astrophysics
- cosmology
- nuclear physics
- accelerator science.

You must explain how your project aligns with our [public engagement strategy \(PDF, 1.1MB\)](#).

We are particularly seeking proposals in line with our [Wonder initiative](#) to work with 8-14-year-olds and their families in socioeconomically deprived areas.

Up to £15,000 is available to cover the full cost of projects lasting up to 36 months. Funding can be for a variety of things including:

- contributions to salary where the work would not be considered part of normal duties
- materials
- travel and subsistence.

We will typically only fund digital content that is part of a wider engagement programme. However, responses to recent coronavirus social distancing measures that are thoughtful and include two-way engagement are welcomed.

We have no capital budget for spark awards. Items of equipment costing less than £10,000 should be requested under the 'other costs' heading. You must show that any requests for equipment are essential for the project.

If you are requesting a spark award as a contribution to a larger programme, you should make this clear in your proposal. You should also make clear where additional funding for the programme is coming from.

How to apply

You must apply through the [joint electronic submission \(Je-S\) system](#). If your organisation is not already registered, you can self-register. This will allow you to make an application without going through the full registration process. If you are successful, we will contact you to help you with the full registration process. Full registration can take four weeks. Please allow enough time for this if you wish to register before applying.

We recommend you start your application early. You can save completed details in Je-S at any time and return to continue your application later.

You will need to complete the Je-S form and attach a case for support of no more than six pages in PDF format outlining:

- applicant's track record in communicating science and technology
- aims, anticipated outcomes and fit with the STFC public engagement strategy and with the Wonder initiative where relevant
- clear plan for the activities
- evaluation plan
- plan to disseminate resources and outcomes to a wider audience
- the justification for resources requested.

You should also attach letters of support (maximum two pages) from any partners making a contribution to your project.

You can find advice on completing your application in the [Je-S handbook](#).

If you need further help, you can contact the Je-S help desk on 01793 444164 or by email jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org.

Your host organisation will be able to provide advice and guidance on completing your application.

The deadline for submitting your applications is 22 October 2020. The result of your application is usually known within 10-12 weeks of the deadline for submissions.

[Read detailed guidance on spark awards.](#)

How we will assess your application

Your application will be reviewed by an independent panel with expertise in the communication of science and technology and knowledge of STFC-funded research and facilities.

It will be assessed on:

- track record in public engagement
- links to STFC science and technology
- alignment with STFC public engagement strategy
- whether it takes a new approach to engagement or new audiences

- clarity and appropriateness of the planned activities
- suitable evaluation plan
- suitable plan to publicise activities and outcomes to a wider audience
- effective use of resources.

STFC will decide on your application based on the recommendations of the panel.

Contact details

stfcpublicengagementteam@stfc.ukri.org

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