Public Engagement Training and CPD

Science for All report: desk research and interview findings

To inform the development of a competency framework for public engagement

Contents

1. Introduction

Achieving the Science for All vision requires significant cultural and organisational change to move public engagement from being a fringe activity, to a core expectation of how researchers and practitioners of science (i.e. those that apply science within their profession - engineers, chemists, social scientists, environmental scientists, health professionals etc) conduct their professional lives.

One of the objectives of the Science for All group was to "achieve greater acknowledgement of the importance of public engagement activity supported by increased **training** and recognition in all sectors".

As the goal is to create a vibrant professional culture around engagement then training will of course provide an important aspect to that, but as important is a range of other interventions that contribute more widely to professional development.

With these aims in mind, this research project aimed to gather evidence to inform the development of a competency framework for public engagement. This will provide organisations with a map of public engagement skills and competencies that could become adopted into existing professional development frameworks.

Recognition and adoption of public engagement skills and competencies as a part of the personal and professional development of researchers and practitioners is essential if public engagement training provision is to become embedded and widespread.

1.1 Research

Two pieces of research were conducted:

1. Mapping of Public Engagement Competencies: Exploratory desk research was undertaken to explore existing public engagement-related competencies that are currently identified in four selected sectors: academia; engineering; health; and government, and to note the training provided to develop these competencies.

2. Interviews: In-depth interviews with 8 key players were also conducted to gather insight from different perspectives from across the four selected sectors to explore:

• informal or formal recognition of public engagement related skills and competencies;
• which roles/ professions are required to have public engagement related skills and competencies;
• the provision of public engagement-related training and CPD opportunities;
• opportunities for public engagement competencies and skills to become adopted/ embedded.

2. Desk Research on Public Engagement Competencies

Author: BIS/ Science for All training sub-group: October/ November 2009

The table below summarises an exploratory piece of desk research to gather a snapshot of the public engagement-related skills and competencies that are currently recognised in different sectors and training provision. These are mapped against each of the four purposes of public engagement, which were utilised for the larger public engagement mapping activity carried out by UWE:

Telling: the public need convincing
Sharing*:* the public are curious and expect relevant, accessible information
Involving: public involvement increases the effectiveness of policy and service delivery
Consulting: deliberation with the public improves the quality of decision making and enhances democracy
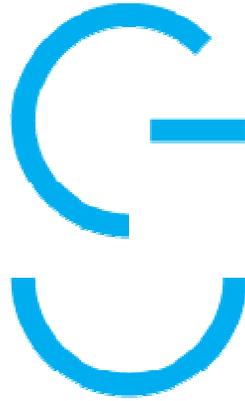
ENGINEERING		
Public Engagement Category	**Competencies required/ recognised**	**Evidence**
Telling	Problem solving Communication skills Presentation skills Interpersonal skills Marketing skills	QAA Undergraduate benchmarks Some CPD training courses offered by engineering institutes (e.g. IMeche) Recognised in Professional Standards and Codes (EngTech; IEng; CEng; ICTech).
Sharing	Debating skills Personal and social skills Examples of other competencies required: • 'Ability to work effectively with the public' • 'make a personal commitment to recognising obligations to the public'	Recognised in Professional Standards and Codes (EngTech; IEng; CEng; ICTech)
Involving	Negotiation skills Examples of other competencies required: • 'Understand customer and user needs'. • 'Appreciate the social, environmental, ethical, economic and commercial considerations' 'Ability to use market research and understand users needs to improve products, systems and services' • 'Ability to encourage stakeholder involvement' • 'Ability to consider societal impacts and outcomes'	QAA Undergraduate benchmarks Some CPD training courses offered by engineering institutes (e.g. IMeche) Recognised in Professional Standards and Codes (EngTech; IEng; CEng; ICTech)
Consulting		

GOVERNMENT		
Public Engagement Category	**Competencies required/ recognised**	**Evidence**
Telling	Communications skills Presentation skills	Recognised in the Professional Skills Framework in the following roles: ' COMMS SPECIALIST; S&E SPECIALIST' An extensive suite of CPD training courses are provided by the National Schools for Government
Sharing	Communications skills Presentation skills Marketing skills Stakeholder engagement skills Examples of other competencies required: • "Understands channels available to reach target audience" • "Is sensitive to the boundaries of non-technical audiences and tailors advice and training accordingly "	Recognised in the Professional Skills Framework in the following roles: COMMS SPECIALIST; S&E SPECIALIST; GENERIC HEO/SEO; GENERIC EO. An extensive suite of CPD training courses are provided by the National Schools for Government
Involving	Communications skills Stakeholder engagement skills Other competencies required include: • "Uses communications and marketing to put the citizen at the heart of policy development and operations" • "Understand and explain the relevance of your message to your audience" • "Provide evidence of mapping out all key stakeholders and ensuring end user perspectives and insights are built into all policy and operational processes"	Recognised in the Professional Skills Framework in the following roles: GENERIC DEPUTY DIRECTOR An extensive suite of CPD training courses are provided by the National Schools for Government
Consulting	Communications skills: Presentation skills Marketing skills Stakeholder engagement skills Working with partners and stakeholders Other competencies required include: • "how to engage your customers and stakeholders in a continuous two way dialogue" • "Creates and drives forward a culture that demands active, two-way engagement with all stakeholders, including people within the organisation" • "Provide evidence of how you have ensured that departmental values support and develop a culture of active engagement"	Recognised in the Professional Skills Framework in the following roles: GENERIC HEO/SEO; GENERIC EO; GENERIC DEPUTY DIRECTOR; GENERIC DIRECTOR An extensive suite of CPD training courses are provided by the National Schools for Government

HEALTH SECTOR		
Public Engagement Category	**Competencies required/ recognised**	**Evidence**
Telling	Communication (Written and Verbal) Interpersonal Problem Solving	QAA Undergraduate benchmarks QAA Postgraduate benchmarks Benchmarks/ evidence of skills recognition in vocational training Recognised in Professional Standards and Codes (e.g. HPC – Standards of Proficiency; GDC – Standards for Dental Professionals; Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain – Performance Standards) CPD training courses are provided by Professional Bodies
Sharing	Communication (Written and Verbal) Knowledge Sharing	QAA Undergraduate benchmarks
Involving	Communication (Written, Verbal and Listening) Interpersonal Facilitation Other competencies required include: • "All surgeons must listen to and respect the views of patients"	QAA Undergraduate benchmarks Recognised in Professional Standards and Codes (e.g. Royal College of Surgeons of England: Good Surgical Practice 2008)
Consulting	Communication (Written, Verbal and Listening) Interpersonal Cultural and Ethical Understanding Other competencies required include: • "Engage in, develop and disengage from therapeutic relationships through the use of appropriate communication and interpersonal skills"	QAA Undergraduate benchmarks Recognised in Professional Standards and Codes (NMC – Standards of Proficiency)
ACADEMIA		
Please refer to: the draft Researcher Development Framework (Vitae/ RCUK): http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/165001/Researcher-development-framework-consultation.html)		

Mapping by sector – recognised public engagement related skills and training support

The following framework was used for to gather the information each sector:

Goal	Key skills/ competencies recognised	Undergrad courses		Postgrad courses		Vocational courses		CPD		Professional standards / codes	
		Analyse QAA benchmarks for evidence of these skills being taught		*Analyse QAA benchmarks for evidence of these skills being taught*		*Analyse benchmarks for vocational training for evidence of these skills*		*Analyse courses for evidence of these skills being targeted*		*Analyse standards for evidence of these skills being identified*	
		Course	Benchmark statements	Course	Benchmark statements	Course	Benchmark statements	Role / course	Content	Code	Content
Telling											
Sharing											
Involving											
Consulting											

Science for All report: interview findings

Findings from interviews regarding public engagement CPD and skills provision across the four sectors [Academia, Engineering, Government, and Health] to inform the development of a competency framework for public engagement.

Graphic Science Ltd

[November 2009]

Ben Johnson, Graphic Science Ltd, The Sheilings, Felton Common, North Somerset, BS40 9YP.
Tel: +44 (0) 1275 474444; email: ben@graphicscience.co.uk

3.1 Background

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) tasked the 'Science for All' group to draft a competency framework for Public Engagement.

In order to inform development of this competency framework, Graphic Science Ltd were tasked to conduct research into training and skills provision pertaining to public engagement (PE) already in place across four sectors: academia, engineering, government and health.

During November 2009, Graphic Science conducted in-depth interviews with eight key players across these four sectors. The interview subjects were identified by the Science for All team and included:

1. A representative of the Sanger Institute, (representing the sector: Academia)
2. A representative of Vitae, (representing the sector: Academia)
3. A representative of Newcastle University, (representing the sector: Engineering, with a secondary view of academia)
4. A representative of the University of Brighton, (representing the sector: Engineering, with a secondary view from academia)
5. A representative of Kings College, London and an active public engager, (representing the sector: Engineering, with a secondary view from academia)
6. A representative of the Professional Skills for Government Framework, (representing the sector: Government)
7. A representative of the Central Office of Information (COI) (representing the sector: Government – but also with knowledge of the Health sector)
8. A representative of the Department of Health, (representing the sector: Health)

Areas explored in the interviews included:

1. Obvious ways in which individuals in the sector are involved with Public Engagement
2. Feedback on the four way categorisation of PE activity (telling, sharing, involving and consulting – as identified by a separate team tasked to conduct a mini-mapping exercise)
3. How professionals acquire their PE skills
4. Whether PE related skills/experience/knowledge are recognised in the sector
5. Any particular training opportunities or initiatives that would be regarded as best practice for professionals to gain PE skills
6. Any approaches that should be avoided
7. How new competencies are recognised and embedded by sector
8. How we might get public engagement skills to be recognised as valuable/ essential

3.2 Findings

3.2.1 Sector: Academia

- The Sanger Institute is in the end stages of developing a competency framework for public engagement, which sees academics progressing from presenters to popularisers/interactors and on to debaters. They do not include any public consultation in their PE practices.
- Similarly, Vitae are producing a researcher developer framework looking at the skills of a researcher at different stages of a research career which they intend to look at through the lens of PE. Vitae also run a website which allows researchers to share experiences, gain advice and find access to resources.
- Researchers tend to be individually motivated rather than institutionally motivated to get involved in PE. Many academics develop their skills informally or through programmes offered by outside agencies e.g. Researchers in Residence, STEM Ambassadors. These tend to be initiatives which individuals choose to involve themselves in rather than being organisation led.
- By the time you get to lecturer level and above, there is a lot of positive reinforcement from the research councils, pushing the PE agenda. But academic staff are either uninterested as they feel it is not a part of their job or they feel it is not one of the skills they possess so they concentrate on the rest of the academic workload.
- The Sanger Institute offers their own day and a half training programme for their PhD Students and any particularly enthusiastic but inexperienced researchers, where they develop their skills in PE and think about audiences.
- There are a number of skills relevant to PE which come through learning to be a researcher.
- The Sanger Institute would like to develop a masterclass which enables researchers to refresh and further develop their skills and which might also lead to more researchers remaining active in PE.
- Some people, despite training and experience in PE remain at the presenter level, unable to take on feedback and develop. This suggests that there is a limit to what training can achieve in producing well rounded PE professionals. The Sanger Institute has supported a number of individuals to gain engagement experience but has found that many of their researchers are unable to move past what they have defined as 'presenters' to 'debaters' because they are unable to take on feedback. It was noted that there needs to be a mechanism for self reflection, which is something that comes from a great deal of experience and which for some will never come, regardless of training.
- The Rugby Team, a sector-led advisory group to Vitae, ran an impact study which revealed that there was evidence of direct impact on engagement as a result of training courses.
- Some institutions get involved in engagement more formally in the local area if they are big employers in that area and therefore see it as part of their corporate social responsibility.
- There is an increasing tendency for PE to be recognised in universities, especially due to the addition of accredited PE elements on PhD courses, coupled with the tendency for doctoral programmes to produce transcripts listing each element completed during the course.
- Some universities are beginning to support PE better, particularly those involved in the Beacons for public engagement, but in many institutions PE has not been handled very well.

- The Sanger Institute receives a great deal of institutional recognition from the higher echelons of the Wellcome Trust (its principal funder) who filter recognition down to upper management within the Institute. (This institution wide support may be in part responsible for the fact that the institute has felt able to formalise a structure of training and a competency framework for PE).
- In order to keep abreast of the need for new competencies it has been essential for staff to keep active within external networks as well as reviewing journals, signing up to fora (such as Psci-com) and generally keeping in touch with the wider public engagement community.

3.2.2 Sector: Engineering

- There are a number of schools outreach schemes, such as Opening Windows and Green Power, which allow engineers to engage with young audiences. There is more limited involvement with other publics.
- Engagement is not generally seen as essential to the role of an engineer (or indeed an academic) and tends to be something that the enthusiastic and self motivated are involved in.
- There is a vast amount of PE in engineering in certain areas where there are contentious issues or impacts on numerous users, such as public health engineering and flood risk engineering. In these areas there is a lot of public consultation built in. In areas of engineering where there is more of a single user end application, PE tends to be more remote.
- The engineers themselves do the engaging since social scientists tend to do more describing than taking action. The people engaging in PE tend to be at the level of the engineers actually doing the work and who know all about it. Paul would recommend that any training should be directed at adding PE to the skills set of the engineers themselves (as opposed to a PR professional) since they are the ones that know the subject, which is a prerequisite for credibility.
- Companies such as big employers like Landrover and institutions like the Royal Academy of Engineering are starting to push the PE agenda
- There are bodies such as the Engineering Professors Council (EPC) who are involved in PE and due to increasing pressures on academic staff, there is scope in large groups such as the EPC taking on the role of PE rather than leaving it to individuals.
- The telling, sharing, involving and consulting headings identified through the mapping exercise are very reasonable but should not be seen in terms of hierarchy. We do not all want to be at the involving and consulting end. It's about changing people's view about what engineering is.
- In Undergraduate education there is basic presentation skills training available but nothing in a PE context. In postgraduate education there are training opportunities but it requires encouragement from PhD supervisors and a lot of supervisors are really against it. The engineering professional bodies are beginning to take some responsibility for developing CPD in this area.
- Engineers seldom have formal PE training beyond public speaking coaching for presentations and therefore do not get help with dealing with multi-stakeholder engagement. This has led in the past to PR disasters.
- There are people with natural talent for engagement and others who will never be able to develop those skills. These few should be supported to develop. There was some resistance to the idea that every lecturer or researcher or Engineer should receive PE training.

- PE skills are like performing arts; a certain degree of coaching can help but a degree of natural talent is also required. Not everyone is suited to it and those that are should be supported and developed.
- PE skills can be recognised through general talent spotting but there may be scope for psychometric testing to identify those suited to PE. However, there should be recognition in place for the significant minority who take on the mantle so that it is a viable route.
- Newcastle University has developed a media training programme whereby journalists are brought in as speakers. This training has been useful but Paul warns that a practical approach to developing PE skills is best and a theoretical framework might overly complicate it.
- There is little recognition of PE skills in the sector but with the increased involvement of the professional bodies it is likely to increase and become more embedded. There is a slow cultural change in process.
- Engineers are bombarded with a need to constantly update to stay at the sharp edge of new technology. There needs to be a sensible structure in place which allows engineers to free up their workload to have time to engage in developing PE skills.

3.2.3 Sector: Government

- There is a competency framework in place within the civil service which dictates expected core skills. These include communication and public engagement across the various professions. These skills are expected (to varying degrees) at each level which implies that engagement is therefore part of the language of the civil service and should therefore be accepted by all – since the onus for conducting engagement is not placed on one group, it is a recognised core target of the organisation as a whole.
- Relevant skills are developed through different avenues, such as employees' previous positions. However, there is an understanding that these skills are required for the job and therefore any shortfall will be addressed with formal or informal training provided by department.
- Communications and engagement skills are recognised and rewarded (and therefore also imposed) through the performance management process, the implementation of which is devolved to departments across the sector. Employees are expected to provide evidence of engagement skills.
- The greatest challenge in rolling out a competency framework is reticence from staff about a link between new skills and performance management and the inherent nervousness that arises about whether they will be able to fulfil these requirements. This is a particular problem where staff do not recognise their current role in the description and therefore feel that it is not realistically achievable.
- Key advice on implementation of a competency framework is to be careful about the language used and to draw upon examples that staff are comfortable in order that they do not feel they have such a hill to climb. For example: in academia, many are already members of professional communities that will set competence requirements and professional benchmarks of best practice which they will already be working to. It would be useful to draw on that an analogy in order to show them that it is not something which is new to them.
- The Central Office of Information (COI) assists governmental departments with campaign work and consultations. They work particularly in the health and energy sectors for which new policies traditionally require a deal of public consultation.
- The COI sees engagement in terms of strategic, formalised consultation and two way dialogue whereby stakeholders and the public are given the opportunity to influence policy

and decisions. This means that much of their PE work is at the consulting end of the PE spectrum.

- The people directly responsible for writing the national policy statements get involved in the consultations, with the assistance of PE experienced staff at the COI. COI assists the leading policy people in designing and implementing the consultations because these people only consult periodically and do not necessarily have the skills to construct a campaign which is appropriate to the audience at hand. (Or indeed the resources in house to dedicate to acquiring them). In this way, the people writing the policy are directly involved but the skills are kept up to date because they are brought by those with a great deal of experience.
- COI have offered ad hoc, basic and informal training to departments to enable policy staff to develop skills such as workshop facilitation.
- Skills within the sector come from practical experience of consultations rather than any formalised training. Staff share skills developed through previous roles in the world of research or marketing and work closely with staff who have experience of working on numerous consultations. Inexperienced staff do not work on consultations without the aid of an experienced member or staff.
- COI are looking into working with the Consultation Institute to develop accreditation to formally recognise PE skills. However, there would always be a requirement for inexperienced engagers to work with experienced engagers and Susannah would advise against a mandatory qualification being written into a code of practice, since practical experience is far more valuable than purely theoretical training.

3.2.4 Sector: Health

- The Department of Health (DH) is involved in a broad spectrum of PE activity, from large campaigns such as Science, So What? Through to presentations at public fora such as the Cheltenham Festival of Science, through to competitions for schools. They also support the nationwide network of health scientists, many of whom deliver talks or visit schools. DH was able to place examples of their PE activity under each of the four classifications: telling, sharing, involving and consulting.
- The Central Office of Information often works with the Department of Health on public consultations. There are certain aspects of policy making within the Department of Health which must adhere to procedures and processes laid down by the Cabinet Office which dictate that a certain degree of consultation MUST be carried out.
- DH is working with STEMNET to encourage their healthcare scientists nationwide to become involved in the STEM Ambassadors scheme.
- Those involved in PE in the sector tend to be enthusiasts, though DH is looking to embed PE practice more formally through various careers across the sector.
- DH is running a major project called Modernising Careers in which they are considering the career pathways of healthcare scientists of the future. They intend to embed communication skills into the resulting structure and to develop toolkits to help people engage with the public and schools. Recognition of the skills however would default to local management chains since they do not have the authority to give directives across the whole NHS. (This might have some useful resonance in academia, where there is independent management at local levels: from the differing universities, down to differing departments and research centres).
- For members of DH, communicating with others at conferences and with key contacts in Professional Bodies is key to keeping abreast of good practice and new competencies.

3.3 Case study of an effective competency framework

The civil service has developed a competency framework, known as the 'Professional Skills for Government, Competency Framework'[1]. The framework, which was implemented in July 2008, identifies skills required at various levels and in the various professions across government. The competency framework lays out the core skills necessary as an entry requirement and is also used as a guide for performance management and an identifier of training needs.

The competency framework contains four elements:

- Leadership skills (which are expected of all civil servants)
- Core skills (which are expected of all civil servants)
- Professional skills (which are specific to individual roles)
- Broader experience (which is expected of Senior Civil Servants only).

The framework states that "every civil servant needs certain core skills to work effectively" and it breaks those core skills down by level. The levels identified in the framework are: Grades 6 and 7; Deputy Director (Senior Civil Servants, pay band 1) and Director (Senior Civil Servants, pay band 3). There are some generic skills identified for those below Grades 6 and 7 but the departments are expected to adapt the framework to produce relevant guidelines for these roles.

The framework will be embedded in every departmental framework across government by 2012.

3.3.1 Core skills

The table below shows that skills relating to communication with the citizen and engagement are seen as core across the civil service. These skills are required in varying degrees at all levels of the organisation.

The fact that these skills are expected at al levels and are named 'core skills' (therefore regardless of role or profession) goes some way to putting engagement at the centre of the civil service and into the language of all civil servants.

The framework explicitly decrees that Directors in the civil service are responsible for creating and driving a culture of engagement across government. Expectations of PE skills increase as the individual progresses. Most PE activity an skills requirement comes in at the senior civil servant (deputy director) level. That it is expected of senior civil servants implies that the organisation values it as important and key to achieving the organisational aims. It is also therefore recognised as a valuable skill, since it is one which senior officers must possess.

The onus for PE is not deferred to one department, role or grade, it is explicit at different levels which further highlights it as a core activity but also means that each individual feels some responsibility and has their own contribution to make to PE.

The framework rules that civil servants should work closely with marketing and communications experts which implies that it is important to the organisation that PE is not merely carried out but that it is done thoroughly and with the support of those people whose expertise, knowledge and skills are up to date. However, the responsibility for ensuring this relationship is fruitful remains that of the civil servant and therefore implies that it is important that ALL employees retain strong and refreshed PE skills.

---

[1] http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/improving/psg/psg-identifier/PSG-skills-identifier.aspx

Table 1 – PE resonant skills identified in the Core Skills requirements of the Professional Skills for Government Competency Framework.

	Director (SCS band 3)	Dep. Dir. (SCS band 1)	Grades 6 & 7
Analysis and use of evidence	Ensure the evidence base for the strategy and work of the organisation is open to critical challenge and inspires the confidence of stakeholders and the public. Provide evidence of: • Effective communication with stakeholders		Provide evidence of: • Ensuring that evidence was communicated in a planned way so that data owners and stakeholders were aware of the implications of the evidence and the se to which it was to be put.
Programme and Project Management		Ensure effective communication with stakeholders	Plan and deliver strong relationships with stakeholders, ensuring the organisation is a respected customer and provider. Provide evidence that: • Effective stakeholder communication takes place.
Comms and Marketing	Creates and drives a culture that demands active two way engagement with all stakeholders including people within the organisation	Uses communication and marketing to put the citizen at the heart of policy development and operations. Provide evidence of: • Using market research to shape and inform policy/service development • A two way dialogue between you and your team and the citizen/customer Understands and uses cross departmental customer segmentation, identifies consumer/citizen needs and understands the range of communication channels. Works in partnership with communication and marketing to achieve organisations' goals Provide evidence of: • Productive working relationships with communication and marketing colleagues so that you engage consumer/citizens in a trusted, relevant and timely way.	

3.3.2 Professional skills

Aside from the core skills expected of each member of the civil service, there are also additional frameworks which are tailored to the specific roles and professions across different departments. For the purposes of this study we looked in depth at a couple of professions within government to ascertain whether PE continued to be key at department level as well as its broader presence in the core skills of the civil service.

Table 2 - PE resonant skills identified in the Professional Skills requirements for Economists, featured in the Professional Skills for Government Competency Framework.

Director (SCS band 3)	Dep. Dir. (SCS band 1)	Grade 7
Ensure my team knows how to engage effectively with partners/stakeholders, understand their needs and aspirations and develop appropriate solutions/improvements – creative use of communication mechanisms to inform, consult and influence partners/stakeholders.	Communication and marketing: • Uses communication and marketing to put the citizen at the heart of policy development and operations • Understands and uses cross departmental customer segmentation, identifies consumer/citizen needs and understands the range of communication channels. • Aligns policy and delivery with clear communications objectives and measurement criteria • Works in partnership with communications and marketing experts to achieve organisations' goals.	Communicate complex technical ideas and arguments in ways which non-economists can readily understand.

Table 3 – PE resonant skills identified in the Professional Skills requirements for Policy Delivery staff, featured in the Professional Skills for Government Competency Framework.

Director (SCS band 3)	Dep. Dir. (SCS band 1)	Grade 7
Represent the organisation's view across government and external stakeholders to achieve effective outcomes for the organisation and government as a whole. Be a passionate advocate of the organisation's 'Big Picture' with stakeholders and the media. Provide evidence of: • Representing the organisation successfully to a variety of stakeholders.	Facilitate relationships with a range of people across government, the wider public sector and those who will or may be affected by issues within your area. Set clear expectations of your team to proactively engage, support and develop relationships with partners/stakeholders. Understand and explain the principles of effective consultation and the value it can add to relationships and policy development. Provide evidence of: • Well managed consultation exercises • Benefits realised through consultation.	Know who the customers are and their concerns. To meet this requirement you need to be able to provide evidence of: - Stakeholder analysis and customer focus Understand delivery mechanisms and provide evidence of: - Involving customers/their representatives and representatives of front line deliverers early in development - Effective communication with customers Creative use of communication mechanisms to inform, consult and influence partners/stakeholders.

The above tables show that the professional skills required by Economists (table 2) and Policy Delivery staff (table 3) at different levels across the civil service. Though they are already explicit in the core skills required by all civil servants, PE skills and responsibilities are again made explicit in the more role specific professional skills frameworks. This highlights the importance of such skills to individuals as well as expressing PE as a core objective of the organisation.

The PE skills, and responsibility for PE, continue to be a requirement and increase in importance and level of activity as you progress from lower to higher grades. This serves to make PE skills more desirable as civil servants can clearly see the value of developing these skills if they wish to progress through the organisation. Moreover, the learning and development framework for Government Economists specifies a guideline of 100 hours of CPD per year. 50 hours should be economics but the remaining half should include communications and people skills. This clearly links professional development of individuals with opportunities to develop communication and engagement skills, highlighting both their importance to the organisation and linking it directly to performance management, thereby becoming a motivator at an individual level.

Communication is not listed as a section in core skills for staff at grades 6 and 7, (although aspects of stakeholder engagement are present in the core skills of 'Analysis and use of evidence' and 'Programme and project management'). However, PE and communications expectations are more explicit in the professional skills at these levels. This implies that though the frameworks for these roles default to departments, the departments have judged them to be important and feel that they should be embedded. This illustrates that there is recognition of the importance of such skills across the organisation.

3.4 Conclusions and recommendations

3.4.1 Public Engagement Activity

The organisation of Public Engagement activity varies across the different sectors and it is difficult to harmonise the sectors since each organisation has a different focus, different approaches and different needs. In the case of engineering and academia, public engagement seems to be something carried out by individuals on an ad hoc basis and through enthusiasm and a desire to take it on as an additional activity. Whereas in the health and government sectors public engagement is much more formalised and is considered to be an intrinsic part of the roles of many players within organisations. The engineering sector seems to have a greater focus on engaging with schools via enrichment programmes whereas the government and health sectors have a much more formalised public engagement agenda, with a greater focus on consultation.

The four way classification of public engagement (telling, sharing, involving and consulting) as identified as part of the mini-mapping exercise, proved to be well received by each of the interviewees, each of whom were able to recognise these headings as appropriate for the activities carried out in their sector. There was some apprehension about use of the word 'telling' but others felt that this was perfectly reasonable. One interviewee made the point that the four way classification should not be seen as hierarchical, since there are cases when telling or sharing are perfectly reasonable and indeed more appropriate than involving or consulting.

The transition from involving to consulting is an interesting area. One interviewee from the academic sector felt that the spectrum of public engagement in her sector did not tend to include consultation. Interviewees from the government and health sectors also noted that consultation is the point at which they tend to involve outside communications experts to assist departments in engagement delivery.

There would appear to be a distinct step up in the level of requisite skills for consultation. While there is a clear progression in the skills needed to move along the spectrum from telling to involving, consultation might represent a ceiling beyond which it is not feasible to expect professionals to possess the pertinent skills.

We have learned that engineers already receive presentation skills training during normal under graduate education and it may be reasonable to expect further training to aide progression from presenter to debater (to use the terminology of the Sanger Institute) but we should also understand that there is a limit beyond which most cannot be expected to develop.

> ***Recommendation 1: There should be a limit on expectations of how far most people can be reasonably expected to develop.***

3.4.2 Public Engagement Skills

There were no particular training interventions which were identified as best practice. There is very little in the way of formal training and acquisition of public engagement skills. Beyond ad hoc training courses, which enthusiastic academics or engineers could choose to participate in, the only sector which formalised and set an expectation on skills acquisition was the civil service.

In the civil service, training is devolved to department level but there are expectations laid out in the Professional Skills for Government Framework and linked to employee appraisal and development. Across all sectors, where these skills are in place, they tend to be acquired practically as opposed to through a theory based training programme. In fact, interviewees from each sector were supportive of skills development through practical experience. A couple of

interviewees actually stated that they would be suspicious of a theoretical framework and one interviewee from the Central Office of Information stated that she would never allow someone without practical experience of consultation to work on a consultation without a more experienced mentor.

Public Engagement skills did not tend to receive recognition across any of the sectors explored, apart from the civil service's competency framework which linked appraisal and professional development to skills acquisition. There is learning to take from this framework, in terms of recognising and embedding PE skills. The ubiquity of PE skills expected across all levels and all professions of the organisation, serves to embed PE into the language of the organisation, thereby allowing employees to see the value of developing such skills in order to progress and also in gaining high level support for such skills. However, the civil service is in a position to enforce a framework across the organisation. In the case of academia and other sectors, such as health, there is autonomy of institutions and locally devolved management making such enforcement almost impossible.

A number of interviewees warned that any competency framework should avoid making PE skills mandatory, and indeed that any training should not be offered to everyone. It was felt that to some degree, people involved in public engagement required a certain level of natural ability. Drawing on the example of performing arts, it was suggested that people with some natural ability could be trained to develop public engagement skills up to a point but that there would be a number of colleagues who would not progress very far.

> ***Recommendation 2: Science for All should avoid making PE skills and training mandatory in any framework it develops.***

There was a suggestion that those with public engagement potential should be championed and supported within departments to lead on public engagement activity. However, this would not assist in the broader recognition of PE skills and would still be seen as the responsibility of the few enthusiasts rather than the sector as a whole. There is also the issue that any professional with PE talent would need to feel that they would receive recognition in order to see it as a valuable and worthwhile career direction, especially if the rest of their workload were the same as non-PE active colleagues.

Key advice came from the civil service, where a competency framework is already in place. It was suggested that we should be careful about the language used and should draw upon examples that employees are comfortable with, so that they do not feel as though they have such a hill to climb. For example: in academia, many are already members of professional communities that will set competence requirements and professional benchmarks of best practice which they will already be working to. It would be useful to draw on that analogy in order to demonstrate competency frameworks are nothing new.

> ***Recommendation 3: Any framework for public engagement should make careful use of language and draw upon familiar examples so as to avoid reticence from the academic communities.***

There needs to be a balance between highlighting PE skills as something worth investing time in (considering the conflicting pressures on academics, engineers and health professionals) without scientists feeling that they will be penalised if they do not have and do not gain these skills. The idea of star players within an organisation is also in conflict with a point raised by a representative of both the engineering and the academic community: the fact that in order to ensure credibility, the

experts who are working on a piece of research or a project should be the very ones engaging with the public.

We would therefore recommend that, while support should be given to those who have the potential to develop PE skills, it should not default to a few within each organisation but that champions of public engagement should be a requirement of every research group, in every department. In this way PE becomes embedded into the portfolio of a department and the actual practice of scientists, while remaining close to the daily work of the organisation. This means that those who do not possess the necessary skills do not feel that they are required to develop them but those who do possess some natural ability can be nurtured and at the same time receive recognition of the value of these skills *within* their role, as opposed to in addition to their role.

> ***Recommendation 4: That responsibility for PE is devolved as far down as possible within organisations where individual performance can be recognised by the reallocation of workload.***

There was a lot of talk about the use of outside experts. Within the Central Office of Information, there is a 'learning through experience' and 'sharing and imparting of knowledge and skills' mentality. People from marketing backgrounds are teamed with those who are more experienced in public engagement when working on consultation exercises. Across each of the sectors, but especially in health and government, there was a tendency to work with departments or external organisations who specialised in public engagement and who could therefore assist people within the department to actively engage with the public, without having to have the skills or experience necessary to run their own public engagement campaigns. This means that those people responsible for writing policy are directly in touch with public consultations without demanding too much of their time or necessitating too much of an up-skilling for those individuals.

This expert involvement usually happens at the consultation level of engagement. These consultations however are not deferred to these 'experts'; they are developed in direct and close partnership with key delivery staff. The Professional Skills for Government Framework also lays the onus on the department for ensuring that PE takes place and that there is consultation with communication experts. Therefore the PE skills identified are about recognising when consultation needs to happen and where it fits within the organisation, as opposed to simply outsourcing it. The responsibility remains that of the department.

It was felt that in order to recognise the need for new competencies, it was important to keep abreast of developments and to stay in constant communication with networks of contacts within the wider community. This underscores the views of a number of interviewees, across different sectors, who insisted that practical experience was more valuable than theoretical training. The reliance on personal contacts and experience pushes against the ideas of qualifications and accreditation.

There was some discussion about the value of self-reflection. One interviewee from the academic sector noted that, in her experience, self-reflection and taking on board feedback could only be developed after a great deal of experience and in many cases, there were some who could not move forward. There was a link between those who could undertake reflection and those who could progress from what she defined as 'presenter' to 'debater'. It might be worth framing PE skills in terms of self-reflection and use this as a tool to assess whether people have the necessary ability to really develop their PE skills. It may be that some are expected to take on the mantle of presenters, whereby they participate in 'telling' and 'sharing', while others, with more skills of reflection, go on to lead on 'involving' and 'consulting'.

Recommendation 5: The ability to undertake self-reflection should be used as a key indicator of PE skills and the level of PE activity which can be reasonably expected of practitioners.

An interviewee from the engineering sector pointed out that there was support from the professional bodies which could be useful in embedding the public engagement agenda. Another interviewee from the government sector also pointed out that academics are usually members of professional communities and, as such, conform to the frameworks and expectations of their professional bodies. This seems to suggest that early adoption and support from the professional bodies could be key to embedding PE skills into the wider community.

If the framework and the training itself came from the professional bodies, as opposed to the employees' institutions and line managers, then this might help to make PE skills a broader prerequisite for the sector as a whole. In this way, a national, coherent infrastructure could be established without imposing on the autonomy of individual organisations (such as Universities and PCTs).

Furthermore, if the training offered by the professional bodies were to be accredited this would assist with recognition of the PE skills developed. The individual professionals would not themselves be accredited (thereby avoiding the conflicts and hesitation arising from mandatory expectations) but the training in which they participate would be accredited, making it a far more worthy addition to their curriculum vitae. This is further supported by the new tendency (which one interviewee pointed out) for PhD transcripts to list elements taken as part of the course. Accredited training would add value to those elements listed.

Recommendation 6: The Framework for Public Engagement and training provision should be disseminated through the Professional Bodies in order to embed PE skills acquisition in the wider professional community.

Recommendation 7: Training provided by the Professional Bodies should be accredited in order to emphasise the value of participating in such training.

In the course of the eight interviews conducted, we discovered four competency frameworks in various stages of development:

- The Civil Service's 'Professional Skills for Government Framework'
- The Sanger Institute's 'Professional Development Framework for Scientists Involved in Public Engagement Work'
- Vitae's 'Researcher Development Framework'
- The Department of Health's 'Modernising Careers'

It seems very likely that there are a number of other similar frameworks under development in different sectors concerned with PE. It would be prudent to bring as many of these together under the aegis of the science for all group as early as possible.

Recommendation 8: That the consultation process for the science for all draft report issue a call to bring together any organisations developing such frameworks in order to explore collating them, and to look for ways to harmonise them and address any conflicts.

Appendix 1 – Classifications from the mapping exercise

As part of the research we referred the interviewees to a four way classification system of public engagement, which was categorised by researchers conducting a mapping exercise into public engagement provision on behalf of Science for All. We asked researchers whether they recognised these approaches to public engagement within their sectors.

The four way classification ranged from telling, to sharing, to involving, to consulting. The definitions are as follows:

1. **Telling**

   o *The public need convincing*

2. **Sharing**

   o *The public are curious and expect relevant, accessible information*

3. **Involving**

   o *Public involvement increases the effectiveness of policy and service delivery*

4. **Consulting**

   o *Deliberation with the public improves the quality of decision making and enhances democracy*

Appendix 2- Interview schedule

1. **Can you think of any obvious ways in which your sector is involved with Public Engagement**
   - Probe for purpose beyond definition
   - In what areas is it seen to be essential?
   - Which professionals in your sector are active in PE i.e. what roles do they perform?
   - What kinds of activities are they involved in? Are these essential to their role or an enhancement activity?

2. **Feedback on the four way categorisation of PE activity**
   - Introduce the categories: We've developed a simple categorisation of PE activities, ranging between 'telling' and 'consulting'
   - Do you recognise these different approaches to PE in your sector?
   - Typically which professionals are active in these different areas?
   - What do you think are the key skills needed to accomplish these different types of PE?

3. **How do these professionals acquire their PE skills?**
   - Probe for formal/informal routes
   - Part of recognised qualification/professional training- if so at what level?

4. **Are PE related skills/experience/knowledge recognised in your sector?**
   - Probe for how
   - Probe for which skills
   - Probe for formal mechanisms
   - If informal ask for examples
   - If informal who recognises it and at what level?

5. **Are these skills seen as essential/desirable/optional?**

6. **Are you aware of any particular training opportunities or initiatives that you would regard as best practice for professionals to gain PE skills?**
   - Probe for details and justification

7. **Are there any approaches you are aware of that should be avoided?**

8. **How are new competencies recognised in your sector?**
   - How are they embedded?
   - Probe for attitudes

9. *How can we get public engagement skills to be recognises as valuable/essential*