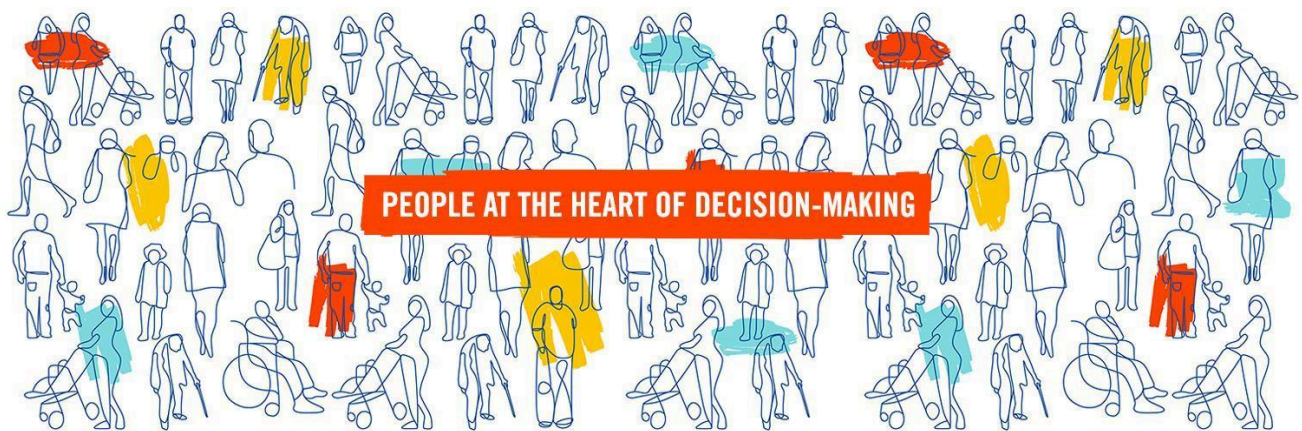




ENGAGEMENT LEAD (SCIENCE AND TECH)

Job description



Practical details

SALARY BAND: Starting salary £45,665 (pay award pending)

LOCATION: Flexible. Must be comfortable with committing to regular travel both for project work and Involve team activities. Must be able to travel across the UK.

HOURS: Full time, 35 hours a week

01. Who we are

We're the UK's leading public participation charity, and we want to build a more vibrant democracy, where everyone can have a say in a society that works for all of us.

Since 2003, we have been working with governments, parliaments, civil society, academics and members of the public to create and deliver new forms of public participation that re-vitalise democracy, improve decision-making, and enable people to shape the decisions that affect their lives.

We are realistic about the challenges faced by democracy, but optimistic about how to overcome them. We are committed to ensuring our democracies are vibrant and fit for the future by putting people at the heart of decision-making.

We work across the UK and internationally, with offices in Belfast and London. Many of our staff work from home across the UK or in a hybrid pattern, rather than being based at one of our offices, though we meet up regularly as a team.

02. What we do

Our mission is to lead the UK in making participation and deliberation an everyday part of democracy, to help meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We need to make important choices as a society, but our democracy isn't working as it should. Decision-makers are struggling to get things done. The public are frustrated the system isn't working for them. And everywhere people are feeling divided, distrustful and powerless.

Our work is focused in three areas:

- **Making the case** – demonstrating why participation and deliberation are essential features for a healthy modern democracy, and ensuring that those in positions of power and influence understand and support their use in addressing some of the UK's most intractable issues. [Check out our latest thinking.](#)
- **Embedding change** – building the capacity of public servants and practitioners, and developing the body of evidence, principles and standards that support participatory and deliberative practice. [Check out our resources.](#)
- **Pioneering practice** – encouraging widespread uptake of participatory and deliberative processes, and promoting continuous learning and innovation to improve democracy and deliver lasting solutions in key policy areas. [Check out our practical projects.](#)

All our work builds towards delivering the following six outcomes for our democracy, which we believe will lead to the vibrant, participatory society we want to see.

- **Democratic norms** – Participation and deliberation are recognised as essential features for a healthy equitable democracy by the public, society and decision-makers;
- **Political support** – People in positions of power and influence across society and the political spectrum understand and actively support the use of participatory and deliberative decision-making;

- **Frequent use** – There is frequent use of participatory and deliberative processes supported by the right resources (people and budgets) both inside and outside of political institutions;
- **Evidence and practice** – There is an accessible and well-communicated body of evidence and practice that demonstrates the impact of our vision and how to achieve it;
- **Clear standards** – There are clear principles and standards that support good practice in delivering and embedding participatory and deliberative processes, which are widely understood and followed;
- **Democratic innovations** – There is continuous learning and innovation to improve democracy and work against entrenched inequalities.

Find out more about our work: www.involve.org.uk/our-work/

Our values

- **Collaboration** – because change comes when broad coalitions of people work towards a common vision
- **Equity** – because everyone in society has an equal right to be listened to and participate in decisions that affect their lives. No one should be held back by societal divisions or prejudice;
- **Independence** - because we are committed to the integrity and impartiality of participatory and deliberative processes;
- **Purpose** – because participation must have an impact. We reject tokenistic or ineffectual engagement
- **Quality** - because effective participation requires time, attention and commitment

03. About the role

This role will primarily sit within our Capacity Building and Standards (CB&S) function but will work closely with our Innovation and Practice (I&P) and Advocacy and Communications (A&C) functions.

The CB&S function aims to build capacity both inside and outside of public institutions to embed the processes, skills, structures and cultures needed for effective public engagement in decision making. The I&P function is responsible for the deliberative, dialogic and participatory projects and processes that we run. The A&C function aims to build political and public understanding of and support for making participation and deliberation an everyday, integral part of our democracy.

Involve achieves its impacts by growing expertise in sector specific areas where public engagement is important. Science and tech represent policy areas where citizen engagement on both principles and practice is vital and where public engagement can also open the door to broader deliberative democratic interventions and feedback loops. Technological advancement, including AI, presents risks and opportunities and will be an ongoing priority for government with [UKRI's five critical technologies](#) and [government missions](#).

Involve has a significant pedigree and is well networked in the area of public engagement in science. Over the last 20 years we have been thought leaders in this space, in particular running the government's science and tech engagement programme, [Sciencewise](#). We have developed a reputation for good practice public dialogue, deliberation and capacity building. Given the opportunity to grow this area, our reputation, and the important democratic need, we don't want to stand still.

As Engagement Lead (science and tech) you will play a central role in leading Involve's work, and building out our strategy, on public engagement in the science, technology and data field. The job will involve leading on our Sciencewise programme of public dialogue and deliberation as well as supporting, growing and communicating our science and tech public engagement in general. You will be a proven leader of complex programmes and a strategic thinker looking to make your next move and develop your leadership and profile in this interesting and important area of public engagement work.

The primary programme that you will manage is the [Sciencewise](#) programme - a major project delivered in collaboration with UKRI. The programme enables policy makers and researchers to develop socially informed policy, with a particular emphasis on science and technology. This helps decision makers and researchers to formulate policy and research with a deeper understanding of public views, concerns and aspirations, championing good practice in public dialogue and deliberation. You will manage and identify a portfolio of dialogue and deliberation projects in the field (see examples here), as well as strategically leading the programme. This involves demonstrating the value of deliberative engagement to the R&I and policy sectors, identifying networking opportunities, promoting the programme widely, speaking to senior partners and influencers in the field, convening high level events, and sharing your expertise in dialogue and deliberation. The successful candidate will also develop the programme through our accelerators in the areas of innovation, equity and power, and creating lasting relationships.

04. Key responsibilities

1. Strategic leadership of the Sciencewise programme (55%)

- Project manage a complex, multi-year programme, including budgetary management, risk, people management and reporting
- Deliver expert support and quality assurance of Sciencewise supported projects, to around five projects per year
- Manage the journey from project identification through delivery to evaluation and long-term impact of Sciencewise projects
- Ensure that the Sciencewise Guiding Principles are applied to projects and revise them as required
- Carry out proactive horizon scanning and analysis to support project identification, including identifying networking opportunities, and convening and organising a sector-wide event programme
- Identify and meet with senior actors in government departments, the research field and elsewhere to identify Sciencewise projects
- Support the commissioning of timely and impactful public dialogues
- Demonstrate the value of deliberative engagement to the R&I and policy sectors
- Disseminate and communicate Sciencewise projects and programme learning and findings from both new projects and the 20-year archive
- Develop the programme through our accelerators in the areas of innovation, equity and power, and building lasting relationships
- Task manage a team of internal team members and Associates, plus an external impact evaluator

2. Developing and delivering other public engagement work with a focus on science, technology and data (15%)

- Plan, support and/or deliver dialogue and deliberation processes in science, technology and data, identifying funding opportunities, meeting and pitching with potential funders where relevant
- Support relevant institutions and organisations in the science, technology and data sector to embed public participation in their decision making
- Identify strategic opportunities and places in the sector for public engagement in decision making
- Oversee evaluation, monitoring, learning and impact measurement of Involve's work on science, technology and data
- Representing Involve to external audiences in the science, technology and data sector, including at a senior level
- Develop and maintain a network of senior actors in public engagement in science, technology and data, taking part in networking events and presenting at events and networks
- Author good practice guides and thought leadership pieces

3. Develop a strategy and business development (15%)

- Create a strategy for public engagement in science, technology and data that complements the Involve business plan, including identifying opportunities for development
- Undertake business development and fundraising, including responding to tenders, writing proactive fundraising bids, and cultivating positive working relationships with funders

4. Contributing to all team activities, organisational impact and learning (15%)

- Work collaboratively with other members of the Involve team, including supporting Directors to manage and develop the work of the functions
- Support other staff – including line management responsibilities, as required – and supporting and managing the work of freelancers
- Comply with Involve’s internal systems, policies and processes
- Collect evidence of project impact and helping communicate our work
- Contribute both internally and externally to Involve’s culture of learning, reflection and development of our practice, to benefit Involve and the wider sector
- Participate in team meetings, strategy sessions and away days.

Other relevant duties may be undertaken as agreed with your line manager.

05. Key competencies

Essential competencies

1. **Dialogue and deliberation:** an excellent, practical understanding of how to develop and deliver a range of dialogue and deliberation approaches or methods, and ability to support and mentor others to do them with quality
2. **Theoretical and practical understanding:** a good understanding of the institutional factors that contribute to or block the effectiveness of commissioning and delivering public engagement in policy and research, with a focus on the R&I and policy sectors
3. **Programme management:** experience of managing complex, multi-year projects, including project management, people management, risk management, reporting and managing competing priorities
4. **Strategic guidance:** experience of strategically supporting and guiding institutions and organisations to do high quality public engagement in policy making, decision making and/or research
5. **Relationship building and networks:** experience of building and maintaining relationship and networks of high level actors in, ideally at national government level
6. **Strategic thinking and application:** able to understand wider contexts and strategic objectives and apply these to developing and delivering our thinking and work
7. **Equity, power and privilege:** a good understanding of the ways that power, privilege and equity play out in public engagement in decision making, especially in relation to the R&I and policy sectors
8. **Monitoring, evaluation and learning:** experience overseeing evaluation, monitoring, learning and impact measurement in projects, and the ability to reflect on and learn from experiences
9. **Subject matter interest:** an active interest in science, technology and/or data issues, and an understanding of the UK landscape in relation to these topics

Desirable competencies

1. **Field level experience:** experience working in the science, technology and/or data field, including ideally an existing network of contacts and relationships at senior level
2. **Communication skills:** able to write clear and persuasive copy for a range of audiences and purposes, and strong public speaking skills. An ability to communicate complex concepts to non-experts in science, tech and data, which may include authoring good practice guides and thought leadership pieces
3. **Fundraising:** experience of fundraising and working with funders, for example identifying and securing funding for programmes, and bid and tender writing, and funder reporting
4. **People management and/or line management skills:** able to support staff to be their best, and lead effective teams, and support others to embody our values of collaboration, equality, independence, purpose and quality, and further our vision
5. **Procurement:** experience developing, assessing or supporting others to procure projects, ideally through government portals
6. **Event management:** experience organising high level cross-sectoral events, including event design, curating guest lists, managing event teams, event delivery and event communications.

We are interested in applications from people with a wide range of different backgrounds. Please don't be put off applying if you don't meet all the desirable criteria.

06. Pay, location and benefits

Job Title:	Engagement Lead (science and tech)
Pay band:	Starting salary £45,665
Hours:	Full time, 35 hours per week
Start date:	As soon as possible
Location:	Flexible. Must be comfortable with regular travel both for project work and Involve team activities. Must be able to travel across the UK.
Reporting to:	Director of Capacity Building and Standards
Leave:	All staff get 25 days annual leave in addition to bank holidays and the period between Christmas Day and New Years Day.

Interviews will take place on 14-16 April 2025. Interviews will take place on Zoom and will consist of an interview task plus interview questions. If successful in the first round, you may be invited to a second interview.

We can make reasonable adjustments to our interview process, and to working arrangements, according to your needs. If you are shortlisted for interview we will explain what the interview process will involve in advance and check with you if we need to make any adjustments so that you can interview fairly and comfortably.

We're actively building a diverse team and welcome applications from everyone. But simply having a diverse workforce is not enough. We aim to build an inclusive environment, where everyone can contribute their best work and develop to their full potential. We offer a flexible working environment so you can adjust your hours to suit your personal circumstances. We celebrate our differences, and recognise the importance of teams reflecting the communities they work with.

We have physical offices in London and Belfast which are always available to work in. We are flexible in terms of either working from home, or working hybrid from home and a physical office. However the successful candidate must be able to travel for both project work and to attend Involve internal meetings and away days. This will involve travel across the UK. We anticipate that this travel would not be every day but would be fairly regular. We cannot say definitively how regularly this would be, but it is likely to be at least 2-3 times per month and sometimes to include overnight stays. As such, applicants will need to be comfortable with regular travel.

The following benefits are available to staff:

- Workplace pension with employer contribution of 5%
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Childcare vouchers
- Enhanced parental leave package for qualifying employees
- Participation in both external and internal training