

## **Episode 5 script**

Hello. This is the SciComm Toolkit podcast. The show for scientists and science communicators to gain all the tools they need to bring their science stories to life. I'm Soph, or some of you may know me as Soph talks science and this is my passion project.

So as I sit here recording this for you today, I'm eating Christmas chocolate. That's probably not a very professional thing to be doing but hey ho. And also don't for a second believe that any chocolate in a house I live in lasts 5 months. But because I wasn't able to go home and see my family over Christmas and New Year because - you know - COVID - I still have everyone's Xmas presents stacked up on our spare bed. And earlier this week I realised that some of the things we bought were edible items, so I found myself unwrapping those to check use by dates and so on, and it just so happens that some of the chocolates are now disappearing into my belly. So sorry to any of my family who might be listening to this. I will buy some more, not Christmas themed chocolates to replace your gifts that I've now eaten - ha any way - onto today's episode

Today I want to tell you the one thing I think all science communication needs

And that is - drum roll please - a strategy! Which is just a fancy word for a plan! In today's episode, I want to talk a little bit about why your scicomm needs a plan, what things should go into your plan and then a great tool that you can add to your scicomm toolkit in the DIY section of the pod. Let's get to it!

Okay, okay I realise that me saying to have a plan or a strategy seems really obvious. I totally get that, but you will be surprised the amount of times, communicators or researchers just post to social media, or just publish a new article. There might be various reasons why things might be done a little bit more on the fly, but ultimately it is not going to help your scicomm have as much impact as possible.

Having project plans and strategies I've found are far more common for public engagement style events, because well you can't just create a science festival out of nothing. Those bigger events need planning, especially if there are multiple people involved. But your science communication, whatever form it takes can really benefit from a plan, even if it is something you are doing by yourself. Let me tell you why.

First things first - it is going to help you stay on track and guide you, especially for a longer term project rather than just a one off blog post. I know blog posts and podcasts and so on can be part of a series or a bigger goal, so we are going to look at social media strategies and blog strategies etc in their own episodes in the future.

A plan for your scicomm is going to help you work out what is working, what isn't working, and then make any changes from what you have learnt. Having a plan will make you more efficient when you are creating and developing your project. You will already know what you are trying to do, so there is less time faffing or procrastinating. Having a plan for your scicomm will help you to work out whether it has been successful or not. Having a plan will

help you to work out whether you need to find some collaborators or invest in some training before you start. A plan can help you create a schedule and a timeline that works for you and around your other commitments. It will help you to double or triple check that what you are trying to do aligns with your why and your audience. A plan can help you identify the risks. A plan could help you to get the funding you need to make this project a reality.

So, hopefully now I've convinced you that a plan for your scicomm is a good idea and you're even jotting down some initial thoughts about yours, but what needs to go in a science communication strategy?

Your plan should be a summary of everything that you need to do in your project from start to finish. This is the aims and goals of your project, the inputs, the participants, the objectives and how you are going to evaluate your project's success. I'm going to break these down for you but there is something you should do first, if your project is not completely new.

Let's say you are running a schools open day at your research organisation. This might not be the first time you have done this, so before you create your project plan. It is good to review what happened last time. Or if it is an ongoing project, review what is currently going on. That is going to give you the starting point to write your plan this time. I guess even if this is a new project for you, you can do a bit of background reading or research to see what has worked or not worked for others who have done similar things. More and more people are sharing case studies of scicomm projects now that are freely accessible.

First is your aim and your goal for the project. Now if you have listened to the very first episode of the SciComm Toolkit then you will have this one down already. If you haven't I recommend going and listening to that episode after this one and it will help you to work out why you want to do your scicomm project. This is the big overarching goal of the project. The purpose of why you are doing it.

The next key component of your strategy is the inputs. This could be a whole range of things depending on your project so let me give you a few examples. It could be your time and money. It might be the time of researchers or volunteers. It could be a strategy you have to follow. If you are hosting a bigger event, it could be all the individual activities that will be at your science event. If it is a blog, a YouTube channel or a podcast, it might be all the equipment and software you need. The inputs are basically anything that you will need to put into the project to try and get out of it what you are trying to achieve.

The next component is participants. If it is a project you are doing by yourself then this will be a quick column for you to fill in. It will be you AND your audience. That audience that you know inside out after listening to episode 2. If your project is a little bigger, then you will need to list out all your collaborators, all the different audiences you are trying to reach. It might include politicians if you are doing a science policy project. It might be the guests for your podcast or radio show. Or your film crew if you are out making a documentary. This is everyone that will contribute to this project in some way.

And now we come on to objectives. Now, you might be thinking why do we need objectives when we have a goal. As I mentioned, the goal is the big picture. If your goal is something like to inspire more girls into STEM careers, you are not going to see that impact for a few

years to come, and your project might just play a small part in that decision. Your scicomm strategy needs to have short, mid and long term goals, but crucially they need to be SMART. S-M-A-R-T. And by that I mean - specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely. I'm sure you may have heard that before, or a variation of that. I explain more about it and how to create SMART goals in a blog post which I will link in the show notes for this episode. But these represent the outputs from your project.

Short term objectives are ones you can measure almost immediately. It could be the number of girls who visited your activity, or the number of people who read your science news story, whether your audience gained new knowledge from your talk.

Medium term objectives are something you could measure a few months to a year out. It could be sign ups to your newsletter after coming to your event, or the increase in your website analytics from people coming back to your site, or your audience passing on the knowledge they learnt at your event.

Long term objectives I would say is anything over a year after your event. These are the hardest to measure because it means you need to stay in touch with people, you need to remember to go back and collect that data, or they are things that you can't really measure or know they are directly related to your project. But it could be things like researchers receiving funding for a project based on the interactions they had with patients, or more people are going to have smear tests for example.

We need these objectives alongside the big picture goal because our project aim might be something we can't measure. Having those objectives allows you to assess a little more easily whether your project was a success, or what you could improve for next time. Objectives also help you to focus your energy on where and how to work towards those big goals. They help you to progress whilst still keeping one eye on the big picture.

The final key component you need in your scicomm strategy is an evaluation plan. What are you going to measure, when and how - to determine the impact of your efforts. It is also worth noting here that you might need to take some baselines now like the number of followers you have, or the average monthly podcast listeners and so on. This is where your short, mid and long term objectives can also help. If you want to measure whether the audience at your talk learnt anything, you might want to devise some way when you can capture how much they know about let's say volcanoes before the talk, and then see if that moves along a scale after the talk. We are going to talk about evaluation a lot in the future so don't panic too much now. Just start thinking about ways that you can measure your objectives and ultimately the success of your project aims. Once you do your number crunching after your project is done, it will help you to review what happened and what to change for next time.

I must highlight the importance of planning how you are going to evaluate your project at the end, right at the beginning in the planning stage.

So to briefly recap - your science communication project needs a strategy or a plan. In that plan, you need to know your aim, the inputs, the people involved, the objectives and an evaluation plan.

I feel like all the episodes so far have all been talking about all the things you could and should do before you even start doing science communication, and I'm sure you are waiting to get your teeth stuck into a bit of a meatier topic like growing Instagram followers, or how to write a science story. I promise that will all come in good time, but to do science communication well, you need to invest time in planning. Not even the planning of content for your videos, the activities for your festivals, the actual putting words on paper to turn into your science book and so on. But the planning of your project. Allowing yourself that time before you even start is going to set you up so well for scicomm success.

This is the DIY part of the podcast. I designed the podcast to include this section so you had actionable things to do right away after listening to the episode. Because I don't know about you but I am super guilty of consuming all the blogs, and videos, and books and courses with all the tips and advice, but I really struggle to take action a lot of the time. So, that is why I created this self assembly arena so you had actionable exercises to take away and build up your scicomm toolkit.

So, what I have been describing to you in this episode is something called a logic model. A logic model is basically a roadmap or simplified picture that displays connections between resources, activities and outcomes within a project or plan. They are used in a range of different industries and there are loads of variations too. For example, the example that I am going to share as part of this episode includes all the components I mentioned before, but also assumptions and risks. If you do a Google search for logic model it will show you pages and pages of slightly different versions. You might want to add assumptions and risks into yours. It might not be relevant. So these plans are flexible, and as with most projects they will probably evolve as you go along too. That's fine and normal.

So, for today's DIY toolkit, head to [www.sophtalksscience.com/scicommtoolkit](http://www.sophtalksscience.com/scicommtoolkit), and under episode 5 you can click on Resource. This is going to take you to a completed example of a logic model for a public engagement project about parasitic worm infections for you to use as a template to create yours. So, go take a look and then start creating your logic model or scicomm strategy. Make a table and fill it in or just list everything as a list in a document, whatever suits you. But once you have filled that in you have your plan and another essential tool to add to your scicomm toolkit that will help you to bring science stories to life.

I hope you found today's episode useful. If you did then do let me know. You can find me on Insta @soph.talks.science. Or please rate and review the podcast. There is one solo episode from me left for this first season and then I am going to wrap this season up with four interviews with some amazing guests so they can share their wisdom with you, and also so you don't get completely bored of my voice. So if you don't want to miss out on hearing from some other amazing communicators, then remember to subscribe to the podcast on Apple podcasts, Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts. If you have any questions about what you have heard in this episode or anywhere on this podcast, please do get in touch. I do love hearing your feedback - positive or negative - as it helps me to make this better, as I am still learning myself. Or if there are any topics you would love to hear about then please let me know so I can make this the resource I aspire for it to be but more importantly the

resource you are looking for I hope. Enjoy the rest of your day whatever you are doing and I will see you in the next episode. Ciao amici.