



Invitation to tender: external evaluation of Explorify

Summary

STEM Learning Ltd is seeking an evaluator to assess the impact of [Explorify](#). Explorify is a completely free digital resource which supports primary science teaching in the UK. It provides over 700 activities linked to the national curriculum to engage children with their science learning. The website aims to build teachers' confidence in delivering the subject by developing their skills in facilitating science discussions and improving their own science knowledge.

This evaluation will assess the reach and impact of Explorify upon educators and pupils across all UK nations, and identify areas for future development.

1. Background

Explorify was created in 2016 as part of the Wellcome Trust's Primary Science Campaign to improve primary science education in the UK. In September 2021, the management of Explorify was taken over by STEM Learning in partnership with the Primary Science Teaching Trust (PSTT), with the support of The Ogden Trust and the Glasgow Science Centre. STEM Learning manages the website whilst the PSTT develops the educational content and provides in-school support.

Created originally to support primary teachers to get started with teaching science, Explorify has since grown in terms of user numbers. At present, the website has over 50,000 registered user accounts, including many teaching assistants and home educators in addition to classroom teachers. The vision for Explorify is for it to be a sustainable and dynamic resource that is a core part of the primary science teacher's toolkit – enabling teachers and school leaders to develop primary science as a strength, and inspiring children to engage with science.

Explorify uses eight (soon to be nine) specific activity types that are designed to get pupils thinking about and discussing science-related topics. These activities are linked to the National curricula for the 4 UK nations, and all of them are offered in Welsh as well as English.

At present, the programme employs four Explorify Engagement Leaders, who are tasked with developing new content, presenting workshops and raising awareness of Explorify among teachers. Explorify also has a community of over 40 voluntary Explorify Champions. They are experts in the primary science sector who spread the word about Explorify to teachers and science leaders within their local network. Explorify is also introduced to teachers through CPD delivered by STEM Learning and the PSTT.

As part of its programme of continuous quality improvement, STEM Learning wishes to understand the impact of Explorify upon the educators who use it and the young people they work with. Previous evaluations of Wellcome's Primary Science Campaign, including



Explorify, were completed by CFE Research and can be found on the [STEM Learning website](#). The report entitled "[Does Explorify support better primary science teaching?](#)" is of particular relevance to this evaluation. The appointed evaluator will work with STEM Learning over a period of two years to investigate the programme's reach and impact.

2. Purposes of the evaluation

Work on an interim report will coincide with the one year anniversary of Explorify being led by STEM Learning and its partner organisations. A final report will be produced in June 2024.

Both the interim and final reports will investigate:

- The reach of Explorify;
- The benefits of Explorify for educators who use it and, as far as possible, impacts upon the pupils who are taught by educators using Explorify;
- Any successes and barriers faced;
- Areas for development or improvement;
- Successes of the Explorify Engagement Leads and Explorify Champions and any barriers they have faced;
- How their findings compare to previous reports on the impact of Explorify, taking into account the potential effects of COVID-19.

In the final report, any recommendations arising from the interim report will also be re-examined and progress made against these will be measured.

3. Methodology

The appointed evaluator will utilise a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, which they will propose and will include:

- Focus groups;
- Survey(s);
- One-on-one interviews, a subset of which will lead to the production of case studies.

In the analysis, STEM Learning will be interested to establish any evidence there is to support programme development, and is particularly keen to understand if any of the feedback has messages that need to be followed up or explored further.

4. Intellectual property rights

All intellectual property arising from any work will be vested in STEM Learning.



5. Deliverables and audience

The appointed evaluator will be expected to produce two concise reports covering the topics for investigation outlined in Section 2. The interim report will be delivered by the end of 2022, and the final report will be completed in summer 2024. Each report should include a one-page executive summary written in non-technical language that could be used in the dissemination of findings to stakeholders.

Case studies showcasing how educators use Explorify will also be produced alongside both reports.

The principal audiences for the reports and case studies will be funders, the Explorify programme team, STEM Learning, and the PSTT. The case studies will also be used to demonstrate to teachers how to most effectively use Explorify. The branding and design of all deliverables will reflect the house style of the appointed evaluator.

6. Timeline

The proposed timeline for this work is as follows, and will be confirmed once the evaluator is appointed:

Activity	Date
Open, competitive Invitation to Tender issued	29 th April 2022
Deadline for submission of tenders	6 th June 2022
Independent evaluator appointed	17 th June 2022
Evaluation commences (incl. contracting, kick-off meetings)	w/c 4 th July 2022
Research for interim evaluation commences	September 2022
Interim report submitted	16 th December 2022
Research for final evaluation commences	September 2023 (suggested – to be defined by the appointed evaluator)
Final report submitted	June 2024



7. Costing and pricing

Proposals should include a full budget plan for the whole costs, including any anticipated travel, expenses, and VAT. All costs should be clear and transparent, clarifying the number of days of each individual working on the activity that they provide. Decisions will be based on perceived value for money, rather than the lowest cost proposal.

In the region of £45,000 (exclusive of VAT) is available for the contract period (July 2022 to end June 2024).

8. Tender content

Tenders should show, as a minimum:

- details of significant experience in conducting educational evaluation and impact case study work;
- justification of proposed methodologies;
- details of report writing experience, including multiple samples of recent previous work - where possible, links to recently published reports should be included;
- how the aims and actions of the evaluation will be addressed to ensure effective and ethical completion of the evaluation;
- the timeline for data analysis and reporting;
- the roles, responsibilities and brief CVs of personnel involved;
- a breakdown of costs by staff and non-staff categories, office costs, travel and subsistence costs;
- risk assessment and mitigating actions;
- contact details of two referees.

Evidence of working with young people under the age of 18, and an understanding of the additional safeguarding, ethical, and data protection-related factors required for this, would be highly beneficial.

9. Submission and format of proposals

The deadline for receipt of submissions is 6th June 2022. Late submissions will not be accepted. All submissions will be acknowledged with a notification of receipt.

An electronic copy of the proposal should be received in PDF format by this deadline. This is an electronic only submission process, therefore all documentation must be submitted in PDF format as a single zipped folder if the size of the submission is greater than 10Mb.

Proposals should be no longer than 8 sides of A4 (excluding CVs of people involved) and typed in Arial size 12 font. If the proposal exceeds this limit, proposal evaluators will be advised to disregard any information outside the limit.



Proposals with the subject line “External Evaluation of Explorify” should be emailed to Dr Amy Newman, Evaluation Lead for Enrichment and Enhancement (a.newman@stem.org.uk).

STEM Learning Ltd reserves the right not to award a contract.

A decision will be made as soon as possible after receiving the tenders, with a clarification meeting if needed.

10. References

Tenderers should indicate the names of two current or recent clients for whom similar evaluations have been carried out and who would be prepared to act as referees.

11. Selection criteria

Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria, which are not listed in order of importance:

- compliance with, and understanding of, requirements outlined in this tender document;
- understanding of the educational landscape and STEM education;
- effectiveness of the proposed methodology for undertaking the evaluation;
- clarity and feasibility of the programme of work, work plans, and risk assessment;
- clear outline of outputs and deliverables;
- relevant experience of the tendering team;
- ability to meet the required timetable;
- commitment to working with STEM Learning Ltd and appropriate stakeholders;
- management of any existing or potential conflict of interest identified by the bidder;
- realistic and appropriate budget;
- value for money.

12. Enquiries

These instructions are designed to ensure that all tenders are given equal and fair consideration. It is important therefore that you provide all the information asked for in the format and order specified.

Please contact Amy Newman (a.newman@stem.org.uk) or Daniel Pledger, Research Assistant (d.pledger@stem.org.uk) if you have any difficulty in providing the information requested. Pre-tender negotiations are not permitted. If you have any questions relating to the



requirements, please contact Amy Newman or Daniel Pledger as above. We will aim to respond to any queries within 5 working days.

If we feel that the query relates to an issue of which all prospective bidders should be made aware, we reserve the right to communicate our response to all those who have requested tender documentation. If you consider any point you raise to be confidential to your own proposal, please make this clear.

Please note the last date for the submission of any queries is 31st May 2022.