



# Guide for Engaging the Public with Global-Facing R&D

Helping advocates connect with the public about R&D carried out in the UK to tackle global issues

# We want to help advocates engage the public about global-facing R&D

This guide aims to support advocates who are communicating with broad public audiences about global-facing R&D – research that is conducted in the UK, but whose benefits may largely be felt outside the UK.

CaSE believes that forging stronger connections with the public can build trust, and also help the R&D and development sectors secure the political support they need.

This guide provides advice on the messages that resonates with the public, how to deal with common messaging challenges, and the role researchers should play.

It has been informed by nationally representative polling of 4,000 people and four focus groups, all carried out in June 2024. In addition, it draws on CaSE's wider public opinion research and insights from experts in this area.

For the data behind the advice, visit CaSE's [Public Attitudes to R&D pages](#). This guide was developed as part of a project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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## Introduction

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Advocates for global-facing R&D can take confidence in the public's support for the UK playing a role in solving global challenges, and investing in R&D as a tool to achieve this goal. A plurality think the UK investing money into solving global problems will have a positive impact on the UK's security, people, economy and reputation – and want to see the UK collaborating with other countries on this work.

However, R&D advocates must also recognise that the public are concerned about the UK's problems, with worries that investing more in global-facing R&D will mean less focus or funding to solve issues at home. Many people think that the UK already does – and spends - enough to help other countries, and a majority say the UK should focus on solving problems at home before helping others.

This guide offers practical advice for organisations across the R&D and development sectors, to help advocates identify and adopt effective messaging.

CaSE has used the term 'global-facing R&D' to describe research that tackles global issues, and where the UK may not be primary beneficiary. All our public opinion research defines R&D as work that aims to solve a problem or increase what we know, covering all disciplines and sectors.

## Four fundamentals for engaging the public with R&D

CaSE's extensive research into public attitudes to R&D has demonstrated the importance of foregrounding the purpose of R&D and the place it's happening.

We recommend using messaging that demonstrates R&D is...



### Solving real problems

Put the issue that R&D is seeking to address front and centre



### Helping the next generation

Emphasise that R&D can help create a better future for others



### Relevant to real life

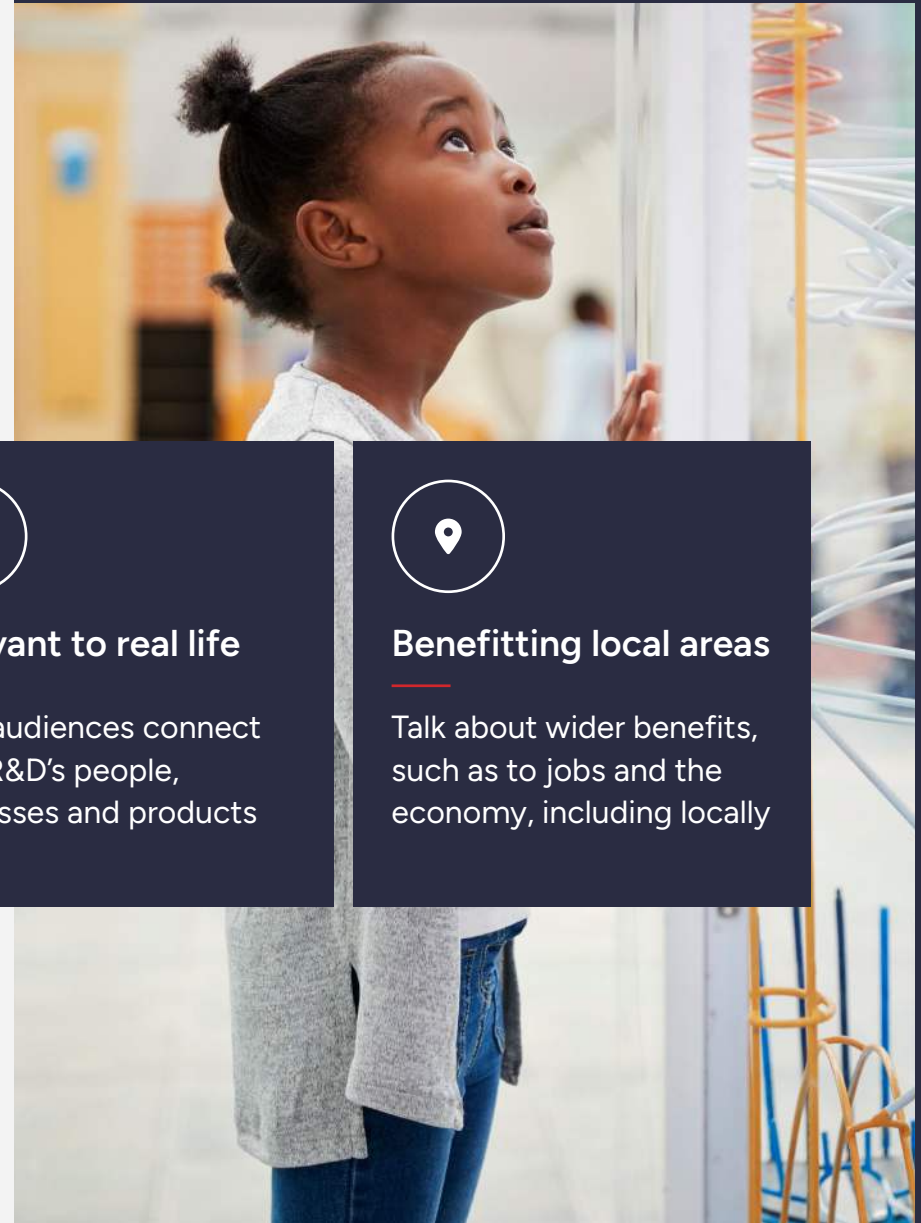
Help audiences connect with R&D's people, processes and products



### Benefitting local areas

Talk about wider benefits, such as to jobs and the economy, including locally

These fundamental principles were designed to support conversations about R&D more broadly, but also apply to messaging about global-facing R&D. Read CaSE's [Guide for Engaging the Public](#) for more advice and practical tips on language, messaging and messengers.



## R&D is seen as a tool to solve global challenges

### Advocates are starting from a strong position

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The public see R&D as an effective way to address the major challenges facing the world. Emphasising R&D's role in solving global issues will resonate with many audiences and connect with existing, instinctive public support.

**77% agree** that R&D should be used as a tool to solve global issues; this view is held consistently across different groups

Investing in R&D was seen as the most effective way of addressing global issues, including tackling extreme weather or global health, and a majority support the UK investing in R&D to tackle these issues

**Almost two-thirds (63%) agreed** that R&D benefits the UK even when it is solving issues overseas



### How can we build on this?

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This guide sets out what advocates should consider when choosing effective messaging about global R&D:

Build on the **four fundamentals** by demonstrating that global-facing R&D is solving real problems, helping the next generation, relevant to real life and benefitting local areas

Emphasise **partnerships, pride** and **pay-offs** in messaging – these resonate with the public and are reasons they support global-facing R&D

Recognise and directly engage with the **common messaging challenges** of timelags, cost and competing priorities

# What to emphasise in messaging about global-facing R&D

## 01



It should be a partnership, whether that's through funds or through the sharing of knowledge. It's not down to one person, one country, one place.

Female, 20s, Insurance, Coventry

## Partnerships

Advocates should emphasise that global-facing R&D happens in partnership and seek to demonstrate this R&D will also bring benefits at home.

The public want to see countries collaborate on global issues and think this will bring its own benefits. Messaging around how the UK should be leading the world in R&D tends to resonate less well.

64% think it is better for the UK to work with other countries to solve global problems to build stronger relationships

71% thought higher income countries should work in partnership with lower income countries to solve problems. Those who are younger and non-white are stronger supporters of partnerships

Previous CaSE research found that arguments framed around beating or falling behind other countries are the least compelling

The public faces a range of different terms to describe R&D activities; greater emphasis on common language will help to address this

## What to emphasise in messaging about global-facing R&D

# 02



We're only a small island, and to think that we're actually taking the lead on things [like extreme heat] is quite good really. It's nice to think that we're standing up and saying "something's got to be done".

Male, 70s,  
Semi-retired Builder, Coventry

## Pride

Advocates should use language that connects with the public's sense of pride in R&D.

The public often express pride about R&D, either on a national or local level, and a majority said they would feel proud if the UK invested into R&D focused on solving global problems.

66% agreed that the UK has a history of being good at R&D so we should use that to solve global issues

55% agreed with the statement "As Brits, we have something special that makes us good innovators"

A majority said that if the UK invested money into R&D to come up with new solutions to problems facing other countries, it would have a meaningful positive impact (62%) and that they would feel proud (61%)

## What to emphasise in messaging about global-facing R&D

# 03



On the financial side of it, I think for the UK, [investing in global-facing R&D] would be good for our economy.

Female, 30s, Cabin Crew, Leeds

## Pay-offs

Advocates should highlight the benefits that global-facing R&D will bring to the UK.

CaSE's work has consistently shown that the public respond to the spillover benefits that R&D can bring to their communities. This extends to global-facing R&D: the public think it can strengthen the UK's defence, create local jobs and foster stronger international relationships.

A plurality thought R&D into global issues would have a positive impact on the UK's reputation overseas (68%), security (55%), people (51%) and economy (49%)

69% agreed stabilising global issues is important for the UK's defence strategy

The most-selected benefit of the UK doing R&D to tackle global issues was that it creates jobs in the UK

The most-selected benefits of investing more were that it would improve UK jobs, solve problems facing the world, and improve relationships with allies. Under-35s are more likely than over-35s to say it improves the global economy



# Overcoming common challenges of talking about global-facing R&D



The idea of creating something new is always the lead time into what will be or may be successful in X amount of years. Whereas we've got a lot of issues now. So how do you weigh it up?

Male, 40s, IT Engineer, Coventry

## 01

### Timelags

Advocates are often hesitant to discuss R&D projects that could take a long time to have an impact. Although the public would prefer the results of R&D as soon as possible, many are willing to accept timelags – especially on complex topics. Crucially, there is public appetite for an open, honest conversation about the timeframes associated with R&D.

**Advocates should honestly address the challenge in predicting when R&D will have an impact, as transparency and accountability are crucial in earning people's trust.**

**54%** think that R&D that would take 20 years to pay off is worth investing in and takes the right amount of time

About a fifth say they 'don't know' when asked how long R&D into particular areas will take to have a meaningful positive impact

When asked whether investing UK money into R&D would solve the problems being researched, **50%** agreed that it would, while **25%** said it would not solve the problem but was worth doing anyway

## Overcoming common challenges of talking about global-facing R&D



If you pumped in so much money but actually got little return from that research, that's a risk in terms of funding, but I guess that's the nature of research. Even if it doesn't bring [results], it gives you more understanding of what might not work.

Female, 50s, Health Visitor, Leeds

# 02

## Expensive projects

Advocates could face challenges when arguing for capital investment in R&D infrastructure. However, the public is supportive of research facilities that are focused on solving global problems and often accept the risks involved in funding R&D.

**Advocates should emphasise the local benefits of large-scale R&D infrastructure and facilities, be honest about risks and be transparent about how money is spent.**

A majority supported a proposal for a research centre investigating extreme heat, whether this was focused on the UK (**63%**) or in lower income countries (**59%**). There tends to be more support for these centres among young people

**59%** would prefer large R&D infrastructure to be paid for by the UK and built in the UK so the UK can benefit from the jobs and being a key part of the research

## Overcoming common challenges of talking about global-facing R&D



I think if you can contribute without causing too much sacrifice to your own people, then you should contribute. It's a bit like giving to charity. If I can give money without it making my life harder, then I'm more than happy to do it.

Male, 30s, Head Teacher, Leeds

# 03

## Competing priorities

Advocates may be challenged on spending money on global issues before dealing with problems at home. Many people think the UK already does enough to help other countries, are worried about the issues affecting the UK, and are concerned that investing in global-facing R&D will mean less focus on these issues.

**Advocates should acknowledge these concerns but avoid positioning R&D investment as being in direct competition with funding for these issues. Instead, focus on the positives global-facing R&D can bring to the UK.**

**42%** said the UK spends too much to help other countries, with **36%** saying the UK spends about the right amount

**61%** said the UK should focus on solving problems at home before helping other countries

The biggest concerns about investing more in global-facing R&D were that investing more will mean less focus or funding on issues at home

## What role should researchers play in engaging the public with global-facing R&D?

Advocates should use R&D sector voices as messengers and emphasise the role that researchers play in advising Government on global issues.

66% trusted UK-based researchers to advise the Government on how to support R&D to help address global issues

CaSE polling has consistently found that R&D voices are generally well trusted, because they are perceived to know the topic well and be evidence-led

Previous polling shows 68% say they would mostly or completely trust scientists to honestly explain the results of R&D and 59% would trust them to be honest about how much money the Government should be investing in R&D

## How should we talk to politicians about public interest in global-facing R&D?

Advocates should apply the same messaging advice in their communications with decision makers and seek to demonstrate that the public think R&D is essential to solving global problems. Using evidence will show R&D's relevance and challenge assumptions that may be held about public attitudes. You can back this up with evidence from CaSE's research into public attitudes to global-facing R&D:

77% agree that R&D should be used as a tool to solve global issues

53% agree that cutting funding for R&D that benefits other countries would be a mistake, with 14% disagreeing

56% would support greater investment into R&D with global benefits, with just 9% who would not

65% agree that R&D benefits the UK even when solving issues overseas

CaSE has produced a [Guide for Engaging Politicians](#) with key facts to support advocacy around broader aspects of R&D.



## Putting tactics into action

To demonstrate how these messaging tactics could be put into practice, [Luna 9](#) has produced a set of illustrative campaigns, which are shown across these pages.

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THRIVE



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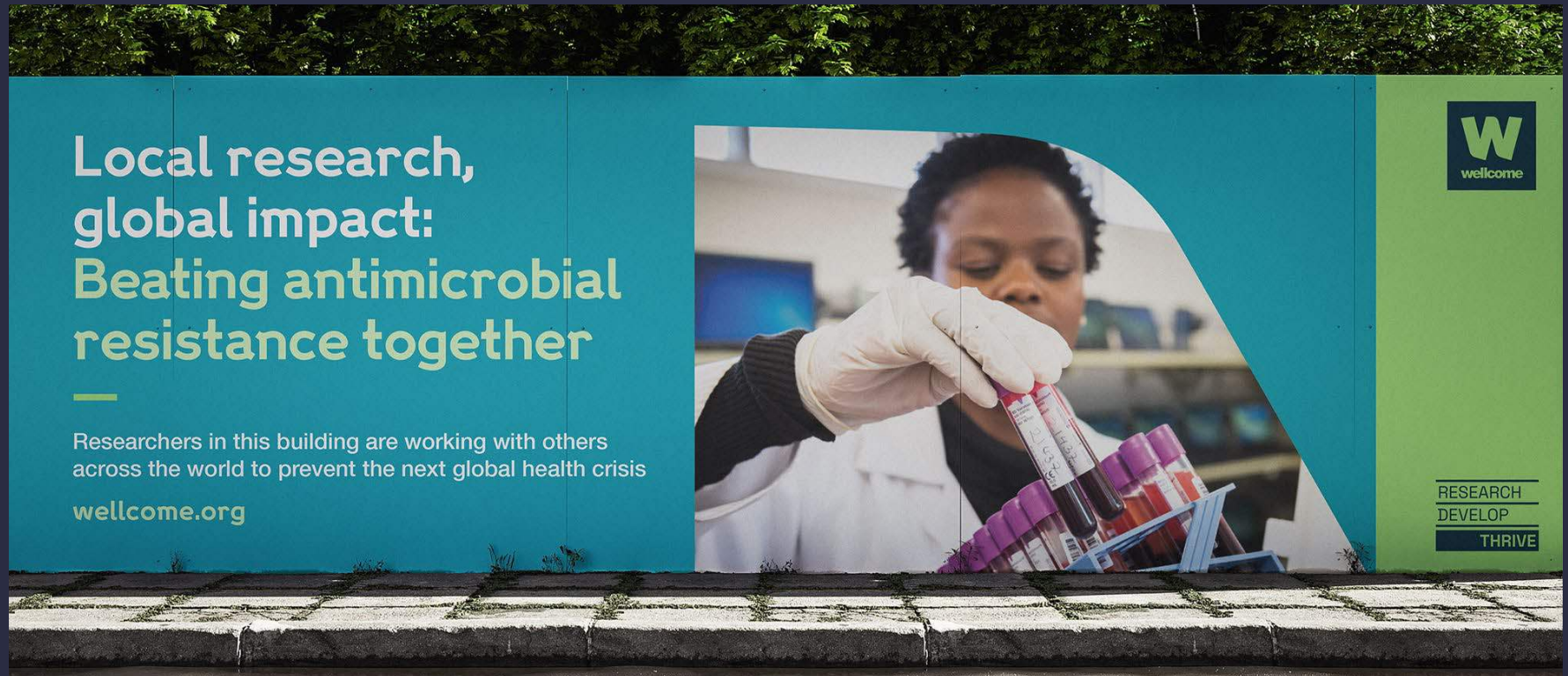
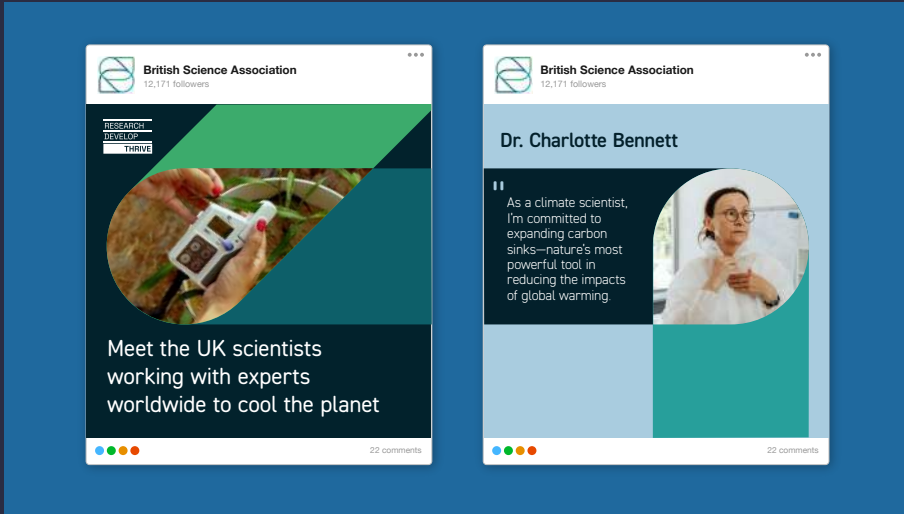
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The Campaign for Science and Engineering is a non-partisan charity with a membership that cuts across R&D sectors. We take a high-level, cross sector view of the research and innovation environment, and give impartial expert insight on the whole R&D system to decision-makers.

To discuss CaSE's work, please contact:  
**ben@sciencecampaign.org.uk**

Campaign for Science and Engineering  
1 Naoroji St  
London  
WC1X 0GB

[www.sciencecampaign.org.uk](http://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk)

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