

Shared Recommendations for Advancing Scientific Literacy and Science Popularisation

*Outcome of the UNESCO - WOSL Session at the
2026 World Conference on Science Literacy*

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Prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Organization for Scientific Literacy (WOSL) with contributions from the UNESCO International Expert Group on Scientific Literacy and Science Popularisation and participants in the session

Preamble

We, participants in the session “Empowering the Global Community through Scientific Literacy”, held during the 2026 World Conference on Science Literacy in Beijing, recognise that science and technology increasingly shape our societies, economies and daily lives. They are essential to address shared challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, public health, and food and water security, digital transformation and the rapid development of emerging technologies, and ultimately to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Guided by the human right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits and building on the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024–2033), led by UNESCO, we affirm the importance of enabling all people to participate in and benefit from science as a foundation for inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies.

Scientific literacy enables people to access, understand, evaluate and use scientific information in decision-making and public discussions. We recognise diverse terms and traditions are used across countries and contexts to describe the relationships between science and society, including science popularisation, science communication and public engagement with science. In these recommendations, science popularisation is understood broadly to encompass accessible communication, dialogue, participation and meaningful engagement, rather than a one-way flow of knowledge. Together, these can foster a broader scientific culture that connects people meaningfully with science and technology.

Yet significant barriers persist, including those related to language, culture, gender, education, disability, geography, infrastructure, access to technology and opportunities for participation. These are compounded by misinformation and disinformation, declining trust in science, scientific knowledge and institutions, limited science communication capacities and the growing complexity of scientific and technological developments.

Addressing these challenges calls for inclusive, locally grounded and culturally responsive approaches that recognise diverse scientific, traditional and Indigenous knowledge systems and the relationships among them. These Shared Recommendations provide a common framework for strengthening scientific literacy, science popularisation across diverse national and institutional contexts.

We therefore affirm the need for collective action to make science more accessible, inclusive, relevant and meaningful to everyone, while strengthening opportunities for dialogue, participation and public engagement with science, so that people can actively engage in shaping and benefiting from scientific and technological advancement.

Our shared vision and principles

We envision societies in which all people, regardless of background or location, can engage with, contribute to and benefit from science, critically assess evidence and use scientific knowledge to make informed choices and exercise scientific citizenship through meaningful participation in public dialogue and decision-making on science and technology.

This vision recognises people not simply as recipients of scientific information, but as participants, knowledge holders and partners in the science–society relationship. Scientific literacy is a broad and evolving capacity, while science popularisation sits within a wider landscape that includes science communication and public engagement with science. We acknowledge this plurality of terms and traditions and emphasise dialogue, reciprocity and participation rather than one-way transmission alone.

Scientific literacy and science popularisation, and the development of a vibrant scientific culture should contribute to wider efforts to strengthen education, public participation, evidence-informed policymaking, trust in science and sustainable development. This calls for cooperation across governments, scientific and educational institutions, museums and science centres, media, civil society, the private sector and communities.

We encourage approaches that are:

- **People-centred and empowering** — enabling people to access, enjoy and understand science, and to progress towards critical evaluation, engagement, participation and agency.
- **Accurate, ethical and trustworthy** — grounded in evidence, transparent about uncertainty and the evolving nature of scientific knowledge, and responsive to public questions and concerns.
- **Accessible and inclusive** — addressing physical, sensory, linguistic, technological, gender, geographic, cultural, economic and institutional barriers through appropriate diverse and engaging forms of communication and learning that stimulate curiosity and interest in science.
- **Participatory and culturally responsive** — fostering dialogue and co-creation, respecting local contexts, languages and diverse scientific, traditional and Indigenous knowledge systems.
- **Collaborative and forward-looking** — connecting formal, non-formal and informal learning and strengthening cooperation across sectors, disciplines, regions and communities to address present and emerging challenges.

Priority areas for action

We invite governments, organisations and partners to consider action in the following areas to strengthen scientific literacy and promote science popularisation:

1. Expand equitable access, inclusion and learning

Ensure that communities and people of all ages can access reliable and understandable scientific knowledge through formal, non-formal and informal learning throughout life. Strengthen connections among schools, universities, museums, science centres and community-based learning, with particular attention to groups facing linguistic, cultural, physical, geographic, socioeconomic or digital barriers.

2. Enable meaningful dialogue, participation and informed decision-making

Create opportunities for people and communities to ask questions, critically engage with evidence, contribute knowledge, participate in research and public dialogue, and engage in decisions concerning science and technology. Promote civic science, citizen science and participatory research approaches that enable communities to contribute to knowledge generation and local problem-solving and evidence-informed action. Strengthen the capacity of decision-makers and other stakeholders to critically assess and use scientific evidence to inform decisions on health, the environment, technology, livelihoods and sustainable development. Connect scientific knowledge with practical needs and local realities, while recognising communities as partners and knowledge holders and respecting diverse scientific, traditional and Indigenous knowledge systems.

3. Build trust, promote ethical communication and address misinformation and disinformation

Promote transparent, accurate and responsible communication of scientific evidence and uncertainty. Encourage scientists and scientific institutions to engage openly and responsibly with society, and strengthen cooperation among researchers, communicators, educators, media and communities to improve access to reliable scientific information. Build people's capacity to understand how evidence is generated, critically evaluate information and recognise misleading scientific claims, including in digital environments.

4. Strengthen capacities, professional developments, institutions and enabling policies

Foster science communication as a recognised and valued professional field by raising awareness of its importance and creating clear career pathways for current and future practitioners. Strengthen education, specialised training, mentorship and continuing professional development for science communicators, educators, researchers, journalists, museum and science-centre professionals and community organisations. Integrate scientific literacy and science popularisation into relevant policies, programmes and planning, supported by sustainable financing and strong institutional capacity. Promote informed public dialogue on artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies and strengthen capacities for the responsible use of digital tools to expand access and engagement while addressing risks related to inequality, bias, privacy, information integrity and exclusion.

5. Strengthen evidence and context-sensitive assessment

Support research on how different stakeholders, including the public, researchers, educators, science communicators, journalists and decision-makers, access, understand, evaluate, communicate and use scientific information, including how misinformation and disinformation are understood and shared. Develop inclusive and context-sensitive approaches and indicators to assess understanding, critical evaluation, informed decision-making, participation, trust, inclusion and community benefit. Assessment should combine appropriate quantitative, qualitative and participatory methods and reflect diverse populations, stakeholders, languages, cultures and settings. Use evidence and appropriate indicators to inform policies and programmes, monitor progress and support continuous learning and improvement.

6. Strengthen regional and international cooperation

Promote cooperation across countries, regions and institutions to share evidence, methodologies, experiences and good practices. Strengthen capacities, partnerships and professional networks and facilitate mutual learning and knowledge exchange. Support collaboration among governments, scientific and educational institutions, museums and science centres, media, civil society and other relevant actors. Encourage approaches that can be adapted to different cultural, linguistic and institutional contexts, while strengthening the participation and visibility of countries and communities that remain underrepresented in international cooperation and exchange.

Our way forward: Shared commitments

Building on the priorities set out in these recommendations, we encourage participants, within their respective mandates, capacities and contexts, to translate these priorities into appropriate policies, programmes and practices, and to identify opportunities for continued action and cooperation.

We welcome continued collaboration among UNESCO, WOSL, the International Expert Group and participating organisations to advance dialogue, share evidence and good practices, strengthen capacities and regional and international networks, and explore opportunities for joint action.

We welcome the development of a global Community of Practice as a platform for peer learning, partnership-building and the exchange of knowledge, tools, methodologies and experiences, with particular attention to perspectives and practices that remain underrepresented in global discussions.

We invite UNESCO, in consultation with WOSL, the International Expert Group and other partners, to build on this Statement, the global evidence base and further consultation towards the development of a co-created Global Call to Action on Scientific Literacy and Science Popularisation.

Document status. These Shared Recommendations are a non-binding conference outcome prepared through consultation. They do not constitute UNESCO normative instruments and do not create legal, financial or institutional obligations for UNESCO, WOSL, participating organisations or individuals.