FameLab Academy responds to the need to attract more young people to be inspired by science and to become scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians.

Modelled on the successful International FameLab competition for early career scientists and engineers, FameLab Academy has 4 aims, to:

- Develop students’ skill and confidence in science communication
- Increase students’ understanding of the value and prevalence of science in everyday life
- Raise awareness of the breadth of STEM careers available to young people
- Build networks of and between teachers and STEM professionals

In 2016/17 academic year, 1500 students from 13 schools took part. Supported by their teachers and 13 STEM mentors, these Year 9 students prepared 3-minute presentations on a STEM subject of their choosing. They performed to an audience and three judges, who were looking for content, clarity and charisma. 123 school finalists presented to audiences totalling over 1300 across the schools. 171 Pupils successfully completed their British Science Association Bronze CREST award, which is linked directly to the project.

Winning students took part in a 2-day Masterclass in science communication and visited a local STEM company to find out about possible career pathways.

The final 13 students came together for the Grand Final at EDF Barnwood in front of high profile judges and a public audience.

Evaluation carried out before, during and after the project with students, teachers and STEM mentors this year demonstrated that all four of our aims were once again successfully achieved.
Impact on Young People
The programme allows schools to run the competition in a flexible way driven by their own setting. This year most schools took the opportunity to work with their whole year groups but the project can equally be done with small groups working in a club format.

100% of students reported that they had benefitted from taking part, specifically they:

• Grew in confidence
• Increased their communication skills
• Enjoyed the experience
• Learnt more about careers available in STEM

Impact on Teachers
Teachers take part in a 1-day workshop to find out about the competition and also to provide them with the skills to deliver the workshops in school. They also get a chance to meet their link STEM mentors. Feedback from the teachers involved this year was exceptionally positive.

100% of teachers reported that FLA was a significant programme for their students as well as being a very significant project for themselves.

FameLab Academy is fantastic, the pupils were engaged, it really improved the profile of science in school.
FameLab Academy Teacher

A fantastic opportunity to let students engage with STEM on a whole new level - just brilliant!
FameLab Academy Teacher
100% of teachers reported that it had built confidence and independence in their students and had taught them that the way we communicate can be just as important as the message.

Teachers also identified the benefits of the networks which had been facilitated by the project between themselves, industry, individual STEM mentors as well as with Cheltenham Festivals.

**Impact on STEM Mentors**

The programme provides a dedicated communications Masterclass for scientists and engineers who have a passion for promoting STEM with young people. It provides them with a platform, the skills and the confidence to mentor and support students in communicating STEM ideas and concepts. Feedback from this year’s mentors showed that the Masterclass was enjoyable, interactive engaging and fun. The Mentors also get involved in the work placement visits that give the school winners a chance to find out about a wide range of STEM careers.

*The 2-day training was extremely helpful in improving my presentation and communication skills and it has increased my confidence.*

STEM Mentor

The majority of the mentors identified three aspects of the project that were particularly successful:

- Personal communications skills development – giving the talks themselves and receiving peer feedback
- Understanding the challenges faced by schools when delivering STEM activities to pupils of all abilities
- The benefits of collaboration and sharing ideas with teachers

*Participating in FameLab has inspired me to get more involved in promoting science amongst young people in more engaging ways.*

STEM Mentor

*FameLab Academy has broadened my understanding of how young people see STEM as a career path, and the value of getting young people engaged from an early age.*

STEM Mentor
FameLab Academy is a tried and tested successful project. The number of schools and pupils taking part has grown significantly this year. The evaluation continues to show that students develop their skills and confidence in science communication and the project really does open their eyes to the importance of science in their everyday lives as well as to STEM career opportunities.

A number of things contribute to the success of the project: the quality of the resources; the initial training for teachers and STEM mentors; the flexibility which enables the teachers to take ownership of the project; and the freedom of topic-choice for the students.

With thanks to EDF Energy for their continued support with this project.