

PhD placement/PIPS: Evaluating and Enhancing Nature-Based Engagement at Wakehurst

Placement supervisor:

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Placement team/department:

Learning and Participation Department, Wakehurst

Placement overview and objectives:

Wakehurst, Kew's wild botanic garden in Sussex, delivers a range of programmes that connect people with nature through wellbeing, creativity, and community participation. Its Discovery and Access activities such as Nature Natters, Sow and Grow, Dementia Friendly Walks, Trees for Bees, and Crafting for Connection (CASI Club) engage diverse audiences and promote inclusion, confidence, and environmental awareness.

This placement offers a unique opportunity for a PhD student to work at the intersection of research, evaluation, and programme delivery within a leading cultural and scientific institution. The student will collaborate with Wakehurst's Participation team to implement a new evaluation toolkit that is currently being developed and will be launched in February 2026. They will help measure and interpret the impact of nature-based engagement on wellbeing and inclusion, with the intention of contributing to the design of future initiatives and resources and proposing practical ways to sustain engagement.

Through this placement, the student will gain first-hand experience of how a large organisation such as RBG Kew designs, delivers, and evaluates public engagement programmes, from planning and facilitation through to impact reporting and strategic development.

Tasks to be undertaken/possible projects:

- Use the new evaluation toolkit to assess current Discovery and Access projects, gathering and analysing qualitative and quantitative data.
- Observe and contribute to live delivery sessions to gain practical understanding of community engagement in a large cultural institution.
- Analyse how frequency, duration, and type of engagement influence wellbeing, confidence, and social connection.
- Develop and test an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Impact Framework to inform future project design.
- Produce actionable recommendations on how landscapes, facilitation, and programme structures can promote equitable access.
- Support the creation of accessible resources or guidance materials to share good practice with community partners.

Required skills and experience:

- Experience in qualitative and/or quantitative research and data analysis.

- Strong analytical and writing skills with attention to clarity and rigour.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to engage confidently with diverse audiences.
- Interest in wellbeing, inclusion, and engagement with the natural world.
- Understanding of or interest in public engagement and evaluation within cultural institutions.

Skills and areas of knowledge to be developed through the placement:

- Applied evaluation and research design in real-world programme delivery contexts.
- First-hand experience of how cultural institutions deliver and assess community engagement.
- Stakeholder engagement and co-design with diverse audiences.
- Framework development for evaluating inclusion, participation, and access.
- Communication of evidence and impact to multiple audiences, both professional and public.

Location of work:

Wakehurst, West Sussex (primarily on-site, with flexibility for hybrid work).

Length of placement:

3 months. Shorter/longer placements possible.

Provisional start date:

From March 2026 onwards, aligned with implementation of the new evaluation toolkit.

Deadline for applications:

Applications open until filled (no fixed deadline).