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Going beyond the one-off: How can STEM engagement programmes with young people have real lasting impact?

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A major focus in the STEM public engagement sector concerns engaging with young people, typically through schools. The aims of these interventions are often to positively affect students' aspirations towards continuing STEM education and ultimately into STEM-related careers. Most schools engagement activities take the form of short one-off interventions that, while able to achieve positive outcomes, are limited in the extent to which they can have lasting impacts on aspirations. We review various different emerging programmes of repeated interventions with young people, assessing what impacts can realistically be expected. Short series of interventions appear also to suffer some limitations in the types of impacts achievable. However, deeper programmes that interact with both young people and those that influence them over significant periods of time (months to years) seem to be more effective in influencing aspirations. We discuss how developing a Theory of Change and considering young people's wider learning ecologies are required in enabling lasting impacts in a range of areas.