prbb intervals
Continuing Professional Development Programme
Space for Reflective Learning

PRBB Intervals Course Proposal

Course Title
"Telling your science story"

Proposed date(s)
17 March 2027

Course Language
English

Course Leader(s) and very brief summary of relevant qualifications and experience (no more than 2 lines for each trainer)
Eric May, Media Consultant – author, Emmy ® Award winner – has helped thousands of people worldwide express complex ideas effectively for their audiences. Eric has been working with Intervals since 2008.

Rationale for course (why is this course of interest for the PRBB staff?)
To explain your research to others, knowledge and experience alone are not enough; audiences have to understand your idea before they can respond and act on it. Finding the story in your research and telling that story effectively resonates with audiences both inside and outside science. The storytelling techniques in this course will help your audiences understand better what you do and what could mean to them.

Course aim - general
Using storytelling techniques, participants will get practical methods to express and explain complex ideas and aspects of their research to different target audiences, including those inside and outside science and to the general public.

Specific learning outcomes (what new skills, knowledge &/or attitudes will participants to take away from the course?)
The course will give participants tools to identify and understand the needs of different audiences and how storytelling techniques can reach out to them effectively.

Course contents (outline of topics to be covered)

- "Understanding audiences and different perceptions about science" is a group discussion about how the public, stakeholders and potential investors and the media perceive what researchers do.
- “What is a story?” introduces fundamental principles of storytelling and how stories work for audiences. Includes a group discussion and practical exercise to find potentially strong story angles in research.
- "Identifying compelling ideas in scientific research" uses a practical exercise in which participants explain their research in a brief presentation, then the entire group is asked "what do you remember?" The idea is to identify characteristics (i.e. humanity, compassion, emotion, shared values), etc. that have resonance with audiences and can work for stories about science.
- "Explaining complex ideas effectively" uses a practical exercise in which participants explain an aspect of their research in detail, then are asked to do it again using an "approximate answer" - both versions are videotaped and compared for effectiveness.

- Building on the morning session, "Telling the story of your research" is a practical exercise in which participants design out and present story structures about their research that will resonate for audiences.
- "Storytelling for different target audiences" is a group discussion about participants' perception of different target audiences and which types of story approaches would have the most impact on them.
- "Creating a visual expression of your research" is a practical exercise in which participants can use their smartphone or laptop to express an aspect of the science story visually for a target audience of their choice. Group discussion of results.
- "Persuasion, handling criticism and the skeptics" group discussion and practical exercise to identify the most common challenges participants face when explaining their research inside and outside science, including tips on persuasion and building confidence in public speaking.

Training methods
Interactive; principles and practical exercises based on the participants' own work.

Target group in PRBB (Senior scientists, postdocs, predocs, management/admin staff, all residents)
All of the above

Number of participants (maximum)
12

Total course hours (Please specify: a) direct training with instructor present b) required self-study.
Note: only the direct training hours will be included in the post-course certificate.
7 hours and 1 hour review of material in advance

Distribution of course (hours/days)
1 day

Pre-course preparation and/or between sessions?
Bring a subject of their research they think would make a good story for audiences inside and outside science

Material participants need to bring (laptops, etc…)
Laptops and smartphones.

Relevant background reading/ audiovisual/websites or other materials
None.