

## Mission X Evaluation – January 2022

By Laura Thomas, Clare Meakin and Heather MacRae

Mission X is a successful cross-curricular challenge due to its flexible delivery model and the breadth and quality of materials available. There is flexibility around how long and often the teams engage with the activities, with many being undertaken outside of the challenge period. Team Leaders (the majority of whom are teachers, but also include parents, community and uniformed groups) find it “easy” to sign up and access the resources. The cross-curricular activities are used with young people across a wide age range (year 5 is a common age group in schools) including those younger than the 8 to 12 years the resources have been developed for. The topics covered include fitness, health and nutrition along with STEM-related space activities. With regards to workload, Team Leaders have found this “manageable” and for those working in schools the packs have been developed in such a way as to make it “easy to scale up, scale it down”. The model also encouraged multi-year engagement. For example, one teacher described their journey: they talked about getting involved, having a go, seeing how it works for them and then in subsequent years adapting and adding to it. Through this process teachers themselves are building their confidence and knowledge of space and the Mission X activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mission X was able to bring school cohorts together in a shared activity when the young people weren’t able to mix in-person and it provided parents with creative and engaging materials to use at home with their own children.

Through the cross-curricular activities set in the context of training like an astronaut, young people develop their knowledge, confidence, and skills in relation to science and space. They are able to make connections with their own lives and consider the career options available to them. The young people taking part “really enjoyed” the activities and found them engaging: “*Children were very engrossed with the activities*”. Each of the aspects of Mission X combines to provide an enjoyable and engaging experience of science: “*The children are active and they’re learning, and so there’s a competition element to it as well.*”

In general, Mission X is an enrichment activity which can be used as a hook or connector to support the development of knowledge and skills across a range of areas. It can support the development of fitness, improve teamworking skills and raise awareness of potential space-related careers. There is an opportunity to build further on the success of Mission X by enhancing support for Team Leaders and developing links to careers guidance and other suitable resources. Through developing partnerships with other organisations and projects with complementary aims and objectives there is also an opportunity to expand on the activities and experiences available to participants.