Understanding Audience Needs

The Forums organize Working Groups, conduct audience surveys, and review education literature in order to identify the needs of the informal science education and outreach communities and how best to support them. Informal science educators include museum / science center / planetarium professionals, librarians, park rangers, amateur astronomers.

Building Connections and Best Practices

The Forums facilitate connections both within the SMD E/PO community and beyond to the informal science education and outreach communities. These collaborations strengthen partnerships, build best practices, and enhance coherence for NASA SMD-funded E/PO missions and programs.

Connecting at Conferences

The Forums organize exhibit hall booths at annual conferences, such as the Association of Science-Technology Centers, to place SMD resources in context for informal education professionals.

Professional Development

Forums and SMD E/PO community members share the results of E/PO programming, evaluation results, and best practices with colleagues inside and outside the SMD E/PO community. Community members regularly present at the Annual Meeting of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP). Session papers are included in the ASP Conference Proceedings.

NASA Science4Girls

NASA Science4Girls and Their Families partners NASA science education programs and scientists with public libraries to provide NASA-themed hands-on education activities for girls and their families, along with training for librarians, in conjunction with Women’s History Month.

- Encourages collaboration across NASA science divisions
- Builds local partnerships with libraries
- Leverages regional / national partnerships and National Women’s History Month
- Creates awareness about and access to NASA resources for engaging girls in STEM
- Explores new ways to make connections with underserved communities

Access to Resources

The Forums facilitate easy access to the resources developed by the SMD E/PO community. Forum-organized products place individual E/PO resources in context and support audiences in incorporating SMD E/PO resources into their programs.

Samples

The NASA SMD E/PO Forums have created samplers of resources that have been developed by NASA SMD E/PO programs. These samplers support informal educators in selecting:

- Science on a Sphere presentations
- Planetarium shows
- Programming resources
- Interpreter resources
- Digital resources
- Exhibits

Why should scientists get involved in informal science education and outreach?

Scientists are the holders of current, accurate scientific knowledge and can transfer ownership of science to the public by increasing access to scientific thought and discovery. Informal science education and outreach venues provide opportunities for scientists to get involved in education with generally enthusiastic audiences through programs that often do not require a large time commitment. These venues can provide wide reach to many different audiences, helping to increase the science literacy of the public.

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NASA Wavelength

NASA Wavelength is your pathway into a digital collection of Earth and space science resources for educators of all levels – from elementary to college, to out-of-school programs. These resources, developed through funding of the NASA SMD, have undergone a peer-review process through which educators and scientists ensure the content is accurate and useful in an educational setting.

Year of the Solar System

Thematic resources for teaching about the solar system can be found at the Year of the Solar System website. Background information, missions, the latest in planetary science news, and educational products suitable for use in informal education environments are provided for each featured topic (e.g. volcanism, ice, astrobiology, etc.).

Learn more!

Members of the Planetary Science E/PO Forum are happy to help if you have questions or would like more information!

- Planetary Science Informal Education Working Group Member
  Kelliann LaConte (laconte@lpi.usra.edu)
- Planetary Science Scientist Engagement Lead Sanlyn Buxner
  (buxner@psi.edu)
- Browse the Forum’s online community workspace at
  http://smdepo.org