

PARTNERING TO REACH DIVERSE AUDIENCES. S. Webb¹, C. Shupla¹, A. Shaner¹, ¹Lunar and Planetary Institute (3600 Bay Area Blvd., Houston, TX 77058, swebb@lpi.usra.edu).

Introduction: Collaborating with partners is a fundamental aspect of the Lunar and Planetary Institute's (LPI) education and public engagement efforts. Efforts to create and sustain partnerships rely on input from all stakeholders, including scientists, education professionals, and members of the intended audience, to plan and execute programming. Ultimately, partnerships strengthen programs by providing diverse resources, expertise, and expanding the potential audience.

Best Practices for Partnerships: Research and experience yield a variety of best practices [1].

Partnerships take time to build. Each partner needs to learn about the other institutions' experiences, resources, and needs. Trust and respect need to be earned and demonstrated [2]. This requires a commitment of time by members of each organization to build a solid working relationship.

Partnerships require ongoing respectful communication. This is not only true for collaborations with organizations providing resources and expertise, but also when partnerships are formed to engage new communities (e.g. with an organization reaching underserved audiences). These partners have insights into their community's needs, interests, and experiences.

True partnerships require open communication that allow all parties to provide valuable input as programs are planned.



Image 1. A partnership with Best Buy's Geek Squad Academy enabled LPI to engage a diverse audience in STEM.

Partnerships require recognition of strengths, resources, and missions. A successful partnership leverages organizational strengths and resources. While missions of organizations may vary, they should be compatible for the partnerships to function. A partnership may flourish between an organization

focused on serving a community (such as underserved and underrepresented), and another primarily providing a service (such as developing tech skills) if the proposed collaboration meets both organization's missions.

Partnering to increase Earth and Space Content Interest: LPI conducts and attends a variety of events to provide earth and space science content and resources to K-12 students and undergraduates. LPI has partnered with the University of Houston-Clear Lake, Rice University and multiple Houston area public libraries, and other organizations, to deliver successful public engagement programs. Partnerships have helped connect LPI to new audiences, such as First-Generation College Students and underrepresented students throughout the Houston area. Working with local libraries and colleges has allowed participants to access subject matter experts, technology, and resources beyond what their facility can provide.



Image 2. Pasadena Public Library hosted their MARS with Scientists themed Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration.

Partnering for Engagement Events: Bringing an outside organization to participate in public events provides diverse experience for the audience. To serve the public, LPI holds several public events per year (Sky Fest) featuring activities for children, telescopes for night sky viewing, and a short scientist lecture. For nearly a decade, LPI has partnered with the NASA Johnson Space Center Astronomical Society which provides telescopes for Sky Fest events. LPI continues its long, successful partnership with JSC ARES who conducts activities and shares valuable resources such as lunar samples. LPI also engages audiences through

partnerships with local public libraries. These serve to expand our audience to communities that do not normally have access to NASA solar system content.



Image 3. LPI Scientist Kennda Lynch (right) engages participants at the Reach for the Stars STEM Festival at Rice University.

Partnering to Improve our Performance:

Partnering can provide valuable insight on how we conduct our programs, including ways to improve our ability to interact with different audiences and changing objectives.



Image 4. 2-day workshop with some of our current partners.

Conclusion: While partnerships take time and resources, they are key to successfully engaging audiences, improving programs, and leveraging the variety of resources and expertise that science education communities offer.

References: [1] Mattessich P., Murray-Close M., and Monsey B. (2001) *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*, 2nd Edition. Saint Paul, MN; Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. [2] O'Neill B. (2016) Brain O'Neill's 21 Partnership Success Factors, National Park Service, www.nps.gov/partnerships/oneill.htm.