

National Leadership Grants for Museums: Learning Experiences

Below are examples of recently funded projects that support activities in the National Leadership Grants for Museums Learning Experiences category.

California

Regents at the University of California (Museum of Paleontology) – Berkeley, CA

Year: 2012

Amount: \$401,833

Grant: National Leadership Grants for Museums - Demonstration

The University of California Museum of Paleontology, in partnership with the Museum of the Earth, the University of Kansas Natural History Museum, and the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, will develop a freely accessible online resource about evolutionary trees called "The Tree Room." Building on scientific expertise, learning research, and current project partner efforts, this resource will clarify what evolutionary trees are, how to read and interpret them, how they are built, how they inform research, and their applications relevant to society. The project will correct common misconceptions about evolutionary trees, identify best practices for using trees in exhibits, and provide lessons and tools for teaching about trees.

Florida

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden - Miami, FL

Year: 2012

Amount: \$161,453

Grant: 21st Century Museum Professionals Program

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden will expand the successful Fairchild Challenge (FC) to additional partner sites and provide intensive training for current partner sites. The FC is an innovative approach to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education that identifies and encourages talented young scientists through a multidisciplinary approach and competition. The FC has proven to be a replicable model for botanic gardens, science centers, zoos, and nature centers that fosters students who are solution-oriented stewards of the environment. The program will address two key needs within informal education institutions: 1) finding effective tools to increase STEM capacity of museums throughout the country with the goal of training a new generation of professionals in environmental science and 2) building a community of like-minded professionals through ongoing professional development that will increase public value in the communities they serve. The museum hopes to directly impact twelve museums through formal training and twenty more through informal recruitment sessions at professional conferences. Project activities include the recruitment of three new institutions to the program, as well as offering current and new FC partners professional development opportunities, such as a series of online workshops, site-specific training, and two summit meetings.

Illinois

Chicago Zoological Society - Brookfield, IL

Year: 2010

Amount: \$198,404

Grant: 21st Century Museum Professionals Program

Based on its award-winning nature play programs, the Chicago Zoological Society will create and test a training program and early childhood nature play curriculum for use by education professionals at museums, zoos, aquariums, and nature centers. In partnership with the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, the Natural Learning Initiative at North Carolina State University, and Chicago Wilderness, the project will develop a corps of early childhood nature play professionals across the country. IMLS funding will support pilot training programs, an online distance learning and peer support network, a comprehensive evaluation, and a strategic plan for program sustainability and growth. A minimum of 50 practitioners will complete the pilot trainings during the project period and, upon completion, these individuals will then provide training to 500 educators in their own organizations.

Maryland

London Town Foundation - Edgewater, MD

Year: 2011

Amount: \$91,239

Grant: 21st Century Museum Professionals Program

Building on a successful pilot project with the Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland Association of History Museums, the Historic London Town and Gardens will create a series of workshops for historic sites and museums to train staff, volunteers and docents in the techniques of visitor-centered museums. IMLS funding will support a series of 12 workshops that will reach 600 people over three years, enhancing the skills of front-line staff and improving the quality of the museum visitor's experience. Workshop participants will explore new ways that museum collections can be discovered by visitors, understand how educational experiences can become more visitor-centered, and learn how museums can better respond to the changing demographics of the museum visitor

Michigan

Michigan State University - East Lansing, MI

Year: 2010

Amount: \$686,422

Grant: National Leadership Grants for Museums - Research

This study seeks to understand facilitation styles and their outcomes in two distinct but representative museum environments. The first, Science Buzz at Science Museum of Minnesota, is a popular Web site identified by the field to be exemplary because of its educational value and its use of Web 2.0 functionality. The second is the more distributed use of social software at the Museum of Life and Science in Durham, North Carolina. The first uses learning platforms that are hosted internally, while the second is experimenting with building learning communities where people are already gathering on the Web, such as Flickr, Twitter, and YouTube. Researchers will closely follow activity at each museum, using discourse analysis as their primary analytical approach with the goal of identifying clear, replicable facilitation styles and indicators of learning associated with those styles.

Minnesota

Minnesota Historical Society - St. Paul, MN

Year: 2011

Amount: \$449,036

Grant: National Leadership Grants for Museums - Demonstration

The Minnesota Historical Society, in partnership with four Minnesota schools, will create a new model for school field trips using mobile and Web technologies to capitalize on the natural behaviors and learning styles of twenty-first century learners and promoting the development of twenty-first century skills. "History in Our Hands: the Field Trip for the 21st Century Learner," targeted at students in grades four through eight, will demonstrate how museums can use technology with large numbers of "digitally native" students to create self-directed, personalized, responsive field trip experiences that deepen student engagement with museum content and contribute directly to the development of twenty-first century skills.

Missouri

Saint Louis Science Center – Saint Louis, MO

Year: 2012

Amount: \$249,815

Grant: National Leadership Grants for Libraries - Library-Museum Collaboration

Science Beyond the Boundaries Early Learning collaborative is a partnership of twenty science centers to share programs, research, and lessons learned. Building on the early learning expertise of five of the partners, all museums will enhance their science and school readiness programs for children aged 0-4. The collaborative will provide individual assistance to museums by linking them to knowledgeable colleagues and helping to customize materials. It will also provide free science resources and curriculum guides on its website and in a quarterly newsletter. Science Beyond the Boundaries intends to expand to serve 160 museums seeking innovative, research-based interactive strategies for early childhood science.

New York

Whitney Museum of American Art - New York, NY

Year: 2011

Amount: \$200,000

Grant: National Leadership Grants for Museums - Research

The Whitney Museum of American Art, in partnership with the Walker Art Center, the Contemporary Art Museum Houston, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, will conduct a multiyear research project to investigate the long-term impact of their teen programs on participants. Although program staff have witnessed the short-term benefits that teens experience during their tenure in each program, these institutions, and other art museums across the country, have yet to investigate the long-term impact on the teens' personal, professional, and academic lives. This study will help practitioners understand the long-term effects of arts programming for teens, to employ proven successful formats for high-impact programming, and to effectively engage diverse young audiences.

Pennsylvania

Children's Museum of Pittsburgh – Pittsburgh, PA

Year: 2012

Amount: \$444,296

Grant: National Leadership Grants for Museums - Research

Children's Museum of Pittsburgh (CMP), in partnership with the New York Hall of Science, will conduct a research study of family participation in museum-based "makerspaces," places where

people can create in a shared physical environment. The museums will work with academic researchers to design tools that recognize and measure productive patterns of family participation and their associated learning outcomes in these spaces. Museum-affiliated "maker faires" will serve as additional sites for investigating the range of museum-based making experiences for families. Results will benefit other family-oriented museums looking to provide space in which families can create together.

Texas

Children's Museum of Houston - Houston, TX

Year: 2010

Amount: \$436,088

Grant: 21st Century Museum Professionals Program

The Children's Museum of Houston will partner with the New York Hall of Science, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, and Sciencenter to develop and share methods for increasing the ability of museum exhibit facilitators to use personal mobile technologies (PMT) to engage visitors in learning. The 21st Century Exhibit Facilitators and Personal Mobile Technologies Project (21-Tech) will target staff and volunteers from museums that provide interactive opportunities to explore science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The expertise to use PMT developed through this project will be focused on providing parents and caregivers support for enhancing the meaning of museum visits for children. Supported by a robust evaluation plan, over 100 museum professionals at the four participating museums will participate in workshops, webinars, and a blog. An electronic toolkit will be developed for dissemination to an additional 80 museums.

Washington

Pacific Science Center - Seattle, WA

Year: 2010

Amount: \$576,445

Grant: National Leadership Grants for Museums - Demonstration

Pacific Science Center will develop the Research Focus Gallery, a permanent, updatable space for visitors to learn about current science and interact with researchers in their community. Designed to be cost-efficient and scalable, it will serve as a model for any museum looking to present research from its region. Its flexibility is accomplished through the use of open-ended electronic media, hands-on exhibit templates, and a presentation area where researchers can present their work to public audiences. The space is ideally suited to integrating current science into permanent exhibits, thereby providing context for both current research and established science. In showcasing current regional research, it builds a greater sense of connection in visitors between their local community and the scientific enterprise. The project will result in a tested model for such research-focused spaces, which can be replicated by other museums.