

## Evaluation Team Report for Year 1

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The current AISL project was implemented in Fall of 2016. In Summer 2016, initial efforts with respect to the evaluation began and were focused on coordinating and responding to compliance requests for the project internal and external evaluation efforts with the Online Project Monitoring System, administered by Westat for NSF (this continued into spring of 2017). Ultimately, project leadership received notification that this OPMS/Westat model was being discontinued. The project director and evaluation team responded to substantive requests for information, and participated in meetings, to move the project forward through the winter months and into 2017. The evaluation team and project leadership have moved forward since that point with the finalized evaluation plan that was submitted to NSF for review with the proposal.

For year 1, the evaluators engaged in several formative processes to gain a better perspective of project personnel and exhibit design processes, as well as participating in multiple planning and work meetings associated with the exhibit design. A survey of key partners was conducted in February 2017. This survey served multiple purposes. The first was to ascertain key partner information about the initial partnering organizations and institutions as a foundational database for the project. The survey obtained responses from fourteen key project team members. Select questions related to partner interrelationships and prior historical connections with the original *NSF Pathways* project (the precursor to this AISL project) were also solicited. This information will serve as input for a social network analysis in years two through five, which will portray the extent and growth of project participants and impacts of the project as described in the evaluation plan. At this point, a software program for portraying the network analysis has been examined and tentatively selected. Select literature on network analyses have been reviewed to provide guidance for approaching the analyses.

The second purpose of the survey was formative. Questions about partner perceptions and needs were designed to address any early project concerns and offer insight for project management decision-making. These questions yielded useful responses, stressing what partners perceived would be helpful for participating more effectively in this AISL project. A summary of key question results is included below. A brief report was provided to the PIs, and appropriate revisions to project communication strategies, and select other project activities, were implemented.

Survey item eight focused on desired communications methods for the project that would be perceived by partners as supportive of the overall goals and objectives.

Responses to this question fell into two categories: external and internal communications. For public dissemination, the most mentioned methods were newsletter/blog and website. Other suggestions included flyers once the kiosks (the exhibit) are deployed, a listserv and press releases. For private internal team communications, the most mentioned methods were:

- Conference calls/video calls, e.g. Zoom. A suggestion was to follow up conference calls with summary notes that solicited input.
- Email
- A project web site, private for the team
- File sharing methods such as Wiggio, Google Docs, or Dropbox

It must be noted that personal face to face meetings were listed as the preferred communications method by several of the respondents to this question. One person noted a dislike for conference calls. Another person cautioned about having too many calls and suggested that calls involve just essential personnel.

Survey item nine sought information from the initial key personnel regarding additional potential partners or participating institutions and organizations to which outreach might be beneficial. Other partners to serve as potential host sites for the exhibit and programs which were suggested included: Alaska Native Heritage Museum, partnering with the Anchorage Museum, the Stanbuck Museum at South Carolina State University (highly rural), the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and various NASA centers. Additional project partners that were suggested included: NOAA, the New Brunswick, New Jersey, Department of Parks; a private van rental company; the National Fair organization, neighboring Girl Scouts and library systems; alumni teachers from IODP Education programs; and representatives from other disciplines—musicians, artists, ESOL, and the language arts.

The third (final) purpose of the partner survey was for the PIs to gain an understanding of the partners' knowledge about the project and its goals. Through the responses to these items the PIs could ascertain project elements that needed further explanations or revisions.

A second evaluation method implemented this first year was a documentation of the communications across the project team members and design consultants. This was undertaken to describe involvement of key personnel in the project's development and exhibit design for formative purposes. The evaluator gathered and summarized email exchange about major design decisions for project content, appearance, structure and function, from a pool of twenty-three participating individuals. These communications revealed a deep connection and commitment to the project, and suggest that the design phase of the educational exhibits for this project has been well-conceptualized, with input from both science experts, education and exhibit design experts, host-site leadership, and evaluators. The communications reveal numerous changes and revisions (from content, to color of design elements, to font, to the text of the graphics).

This conversational and iterative model for educational exhibit design has been viewed positively by participants and lends credibility to the exhibit, which is now in preliminary production stages. There has been a clear expansion of the number of key personnel connected to this project from the initial group that planned and wrote the funding proposal to NSF (from the initial fourteen who completed the survey, to the twenty-three who participated in the conversations about the exhibit). This growth is in line with the initial plans and timetable for the project, and suggests the project is moving positively.

Early in year two of the project (9/2017-8/2018) a project training workshop will be implemented in Texas for teams of three, site-based personnel for the first year of the Pop-Up/Drill-Down programs (year two of the project). Select project leadership, science support personnel, and evaluation team members will attend this training, currently planned for December 2017. Efforts to develop an evaluation instrument for the training program were begun during a planning meeting in June, which included the project PI/Director (Sharon Cooper), the internal evaluator (Karen Thompson), and the two external evaluators (Tina Bishop and Howard Walters). A draft instrument will be circulated by early October 2017 among the project leadership team for input.