Grant Title: INFORMAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

Funding Opportunity Number: 10-565. CFDA Number(s): 47.076.


Area of Research: Develop and implement informal learning experiences designed to increase interest, engagement, and understanding of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).


Amount: Research: Up to $1,500,000. Pathways: Up to $250,000. Full-Scale Development: Normally be funded in the $1 million to $3 million dollar range. Broad Implementation proposals: Normally be funded in the $1 million to $3 million dollar range. Communicating Research to Public Audiences: Up to $150,000. Expected Number of Awards: 46. It is anticipated that approximately 8 Research, 8 Pathways, 17 Full-Scale Development, 3 Broad Implementation, and 10 Communicating Research to Public Audiences awards will be made.

Length of Support: Research: From one to five years. Pathways: Up to two years. Full-Scale Development and Broad Implementation: From one to five years. Communicating Research to Public Audiences: Up to two years.

Eligible Applicants: Universities and Colleges. See the full announcement for a complete list of applicants.

Summary: The ISE program supports innovation in anywhere, anytime, lifelong learning, through investments in research, development, infrastructure, and capacity-building for STEM learning outside formal school settings. The ISE program encourages proposals that move the field forward through research and evaluation, design and development, infrastructure, and capacity-building. Research and evaluation: The ISE program seeks to build the theoretical and empirical foundations for effective informal STEM learning; to advance the assessment of such learning; and to support the application of innovative methods to address questions of importance to those who live or work in informal science education settings. Investigators proposing to conduct research about informal STEM learning should clearly articulate the importance of such research to the informal science education field, the specific approaches that will be used, and how the research process and findings would be evaluated and disseminated. Researchers are encouraged to involve informal learning practitioners as partners in their projects. Design and development: Investment in models, resources, and programs for STEM learning throughout the life span is a core element of the ISE program. Proposals can utilize a broad range of communication formats and experiences, such as mobile and broadcast media, virtual learning environments, exhibitions, films, citizen science, and after-school and/or out-of-school programs. Particularly encouraged are cross-format proposals that help learners identify and navigate among multiple resources, both new and existing, to develop their own STEM-related identities over time. Infrastructure: The ISE program also encourages individual proposals to take a systemic perspective in reaching public or professional audiences. This could involve building innovative platforms with multiple uses, creating virtual organizations, utilizing scientific networks, building cross-sector partnerships, or developing connections among the wealth of existing informal science education resources in the physical and online worlds. Capacity-building: The ISE program seeks proposals to build the STEM and education expertise of informal science education's broad community of professionals, volunteers, parents and caregivers, and all those with potential to facilitate the learning of others. Partnerships among creators of informal science education experiences, STEM experts, and learning researchers are highly desirable.
