



Cultivating Community Science Stipends

Program Goals

Community science is a deliberate way of working in which community members collaborate with one another, scientists, science engagement practitioners, and others to **advance community priorities** through scientific research, technological innovation, and more. Community science efforts can take many forms, including dialogue, data collection, and civic engagement. All of these methods can be used to address injustices, reduce disparities, and help achieve equity through processes informed by community priorities, strengths, and leadership.

The Cultivating Community Science stipends will support established teams of science center/museum- and community-based partners in using one or more [community science approaches](#) to achieve clear, shared community science objectives that make demonstrable progress on community priorities. Cultivating Community Science Stipends are intended to support 15-month collaborative projects with long-term visions. Through these stipends, ASTC aims to support and scale promising approaches to community science among its members and their partners. Applicants should have broad support for community science within their institutions, as well as an established relationship with a community-based partner.

Program & Funding Structure

The ASTC Community Science Initiative will distribute approximately \$250,000 in Cultivating Community Science Stipends across 5-10 teams to support ASTC members and their partners in implementing small- to large-scale community science projects. These funds may be used for needs including (but not limited to) museum and community partner staff time, participating community members stipends, external consultants (e.g., facilitators, translators, childcare providers, evaluators), communication/marketing needs (e.g., advertising, design, printing), and/or producing resources or reference materials. The stipend period will run from March 2024 to May 2025.



Requirements for awardees will include:

- **Kick-off webinar.** All team members will attend a kick-off webinar in early 2024 (to be offered at multiple times).
- **Quarterly updates.** Teams will submit quarterly project updates to ASTC. These streamlined reports will be collected via a brief survey and are intended to identify ways ASTC can provide additional support.
- **Progress meetings.** Teams will participate in two progress review meetings with the ASTC team 6 months and 12 months into their project implementation.
- **Evaluation.** Teams will participate in evaluation activities with ASTC’s external evaluator (e.g., responding to surveys, interviews with evaluator, etc.).
- **Building the professional community.** At least one project team member will attend ASTC’s series of virtual, bi-monthly Community Science Clinics during the project period. These virtual calls will take place on the third Tuesday of every other month at 2:00 pm Eastern starting in February 2024. These networking calls are for community science practitioners at all levels to talk with their peers and seek advice from colleagues working on community science efforts.
- **Field dissemination.** Teams will participate in at least one promotional activity to share their work (e.g., speaking on a webinar, presenting at a conference, authoring a blog, contributing to promotional materials, etc.).
- **Final report.** Teams will submit a final project report by 11:59 pm Eastern on Monday, June 30, 2025.

Application, Decision, and Program Timelines

Applications due	by 11:59 pm Eastern on Monday, December 4, 2023
Awardees notified	Mid-January 2024
Project activities take place	March 1, 2024 - May 30, 2025
Quarterly project updates due	June 2024, September 2024, December 2024
Progress review meetings with ASTC	September 2024 and March 2025
Final reports due	June 30, 2025

Eligibility Requirements

For ASTC members

This opportunity is open to ASTC science center and museum members as well as allied members in North America, South America, Hawaii, and the Caribbean and their community-based partners. All programming and materials will be conducted in English and in western hemisphere time zones. You are eligible to submit a proposal regardless of whether you have received past support from ASTC for community science work.

For the community-based partner

Community-based partners can include (but are not limited to) Tribal organizations, community development nonprofits, public libraries, regional planning commissions, neighborhood civic associations, faith-based organizations, youth-focused nonprofits, environmental advocacy organizations, or parent-teacher associations. A community-based partner is a public or private organization, entity, or group that represents the community, provides community-centered services, and centers community needs, priorities, and/or goals.

Teams will consist of individuals from both the ASTC member institution and community-based partner. This stipend program is intended to support established partnerships that have clear long-term visions for continued collaboration.

Project topics and approaches

We are interested in supporting teams advancing community priorities on a wide range of issues, including but not limited to public health, land use, climate and environmental hazards, food and nutrition, air and water quality, and other community priorities existing at the intersection of science and society. The strongest applications will use multiple [community science approaches](#).

*Please note: While ASTC has recently significantly invested in supporting [Dialogue & Deliberation](#) efforts, in the interest of scaling other promising approaches, Cultivating Community Science Stipends will not be awarded to projects that **solely** use Dialogue & Deliberation as a community science approach.*

Application Instructions

For their proposal, teams must submit:

Narrative Questions

Responses to the following essay questions:

1. Four-sentence project summary (suggested 100-150 words total; one sentence per question below).
 - a. What is the issue/question your community faces?
 - b. What will you do in partnership to address the issue/answer the question?
 - c. How will your work make a difference with respect to the issue/question?
 - d. How will your work provide long-term community benefits?
2. Project narrative description - In this section, describe what you plan to do in your project. Strong proposals will reference the community science approaches you will use as described in [ASTC's Community Science Framework](#). (Suggested 250-500 words total).
 - a. What is the community priority you are focusing on?
 - b. How have you determined that this is a community priority?
 - c. Which approach(es) are best suited to your goals?
 - d. What strategies and activities will you undertake to address the community priority? How will you achieve an impact?
 - e. Is there any other information you'd like to share that would help us understand your project?
3. Project goals - In this section, describe how you plan to work with your partner(s). Strong proposals will reference the attributes and outcomes from [ASTC's Community Science Framework](#). (Suggested 250-500 words total).
 - a. Why have your organizations partnered together?
 - b. How will leadership and decision making be shared?
 - c. If successful, what impact will your project achieve?

- d. What are the goals for the partnership beyond this project?
- e. What do you expect each of your organizations to gain from this experience?

Timeline and Milestones

Applicants must upload a timeline of project milestones (PDF format preferred). Timelines should clearly outline anticipated milestones (e.g., events/engagements, decision points) over the course of your project. For each milestone, please include:

1. *Activities:* What are the major project activities? When do you expect each activity to occur, and for how long?
2. *Resources:* Who will be involved as a participant, collaborator, and/or leader of each milestone? What resources will be necessary?
3. *Considerations:* Community science is a process that is necessarily responsive to ideas and realities that emerge as a partnership evolves. Explain how you plan to adapt to new information during the process by including key considerations for each milestone.

See the example project milestone below for our required format.

Example Milestone

The following is an example milestone to help guide you in the development of your application:

Milestone: Develop working group for community-led citizen science effort (April 2024 - June 2024)

- **Activities:**
 - Establish initial objectives for working group, based on outcomes of community input gathering
 - Recruit community leaders to join working group
 - Host introductory meeting for working group
 - Working group organizes first community event

- **Resources:**
 - Staff time to coordinate with volunteers and attend meetings
 - Supplies for community event - water/snacks, protective equipment, scientific equipment
 - Honorariums for community participants
 - Consultant funds for external evaluation team
 - **Considerations:**
 - Required resources will depend on the type of activity the working group determines is most suitable (i.e., species survey, tree planting, trail maintenance)
 - We may need to recruit additional, specific-disciplinary expertise depending on the scientific question prioritized by the community
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Budget

Applicants will be required to upload a project budget. You may follow ASTC's budget template ([download here](#)) or submit your project budget in your preferred format. Project budgets must include:

1. Your full project cost
2. Funding requested from ASTC
3. Additional sources of funding (if any)
4. Museum staff time
5. Amount to be paid to community partner
6. Detailed descriptions of all other expenses such as consultants, materials, etc.

Allowable expenses include but are not limited to indirect charges/administrative overhead (not to exceed 12.5% of the overall budget), materials, consultant services, production costs, honorariums for community participants, and staff time. Stipend funds may **not** be used for capital expenditures or alcoholic beverages.

Your budget should reflect your project's estimated real/expected total costs. Clearly indicate any additional sources of funding you have secured or are seeking to support your work. (NOTE: Having additional sources of funding WILL NOT impact the assessment of your application. We are interested in understanding the total cost of your effort as part of our



ongoing effort to understand the full scope of resources required to do community science effectively.)

Strong Applications and Review Criteria

We highly recommend discussing your intended application with the ASTC team before submitting. Please reach out to Laura Bartock (Manager of Community Science and Special Projects) at lbartock@astc.org to schedule a meeting.

In order to prepare a strong application, your team should be familiar with [ASTC's Community Science Framework](#). Consider watching ASTC's brief introductory videos, "[What is Community Science?](#)" and "[Community Science Framework Overview](#)".

Applications will be reviewed by a committee of community science practitioners and ASTC staff. Awards will be selected based on the merit of the projects proposed and the amount of funding available for distribution. Reviewers will use our "Project Evaluation Rubric" (included below) to assess merit. This is a draft rubric, developed with J. Sickler consulting, that we are using for the purpose of reviewing applications. This rubric will be further developed into a publicly available tool at a later date. Review the rubric to understand how we will assess whether project plans align with the attributes described in [ASTC's Community Science Framework](#). *Funds will only be awarded to projects that meet either the "Successful" or "Exceeding Expectations" levels across all four community science attributes and at least partially meet the requirements of the related "Equity Dimensions."*



Centers Community Priorities:

Honors and centers community priorities

Defining the Project			
STRUGGLING	MAKING PROGRESS	SUCCESS	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS
<i>Focus on Science Museum</i>	<i>Leans toward Science Museum</i>	<i>Balances Perspectives</i>	<i>Leans / Focuses on Community</i>
<p>The development of the project concept (or topic idea) lacks community involvement and is exclusively driven by the goals or interests of science center/scientists.</p> <p>AND/OR the chosen project's focus primarily benefits the museum partner (scientific community) and focuses on 'educating' community or raising the museum's public profile.</p> <p>AND/OR the project is short-term or one-off in nature, rather than a sustained partnership.</p>	<p>The community is involved in the project ideation and development process, but their contribution is limited. For example, they may give input to options identified by the scientists, but do not contribute to the development of the question or identification of the topic. The selected project may still be articulated in a way that more reflects the benefits to the museum partner than to the communities. It may still be envisioned as a short-term collaboration.</p> <p>OR: The project is community-driven, but it is unclear how scientific methods or knowledge are applicable to the topic or solution.</p>	<p>The project concept (or topic idea) is the result of an iterative collaboration between partners. It is also articulated in a way that has clear benefit/meaning to both the community and museum/science. The project is articulated in a way that is clearly centered on a science-based community need that sees a path to make a long-lasting difference in the community.</p>	<p>The project includes all the Success criteria PLUS, the community is central to project ideation. For example, the entire project concept is community-driven or initiated by the community, rather than the museum partner (i.e., community sought out the museum partner).</p>



Equity Dimension

- The project concept, topic idea, or research question addresses an inequity, harm, or injustice in society.
- The project uses science to benefit society – science for the people.



Respects Community Strengths:

Emphasizes and respects community knowledge and leverages community strength

FRAMING THE PROJECT PROCESS			
STRUGGLING	MAKING PROGRESS	SUCCESS	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS
<i>Marginalizes community strength</i>	<i>Acknowledges community strength</i>	<i>Integrates community strength</i>	<i>Privileges community strength</i>
Partners make assumptions about community motivations, behaviors, or needs (rather than establish mechanisms to inquire/listen). For example, the community is viewed as the site of the 'problem', while the museum or scientists are viewed as presenting the 'solution.' The project plan limits the contribution and expertise of the community to being labor (e.g., data collectors) or a conduit to the broader public. The project plan or process distinguishes science museums or scientists as the 'experts', by giving them authority over the core (valued) work of the scientific process.	The project plan acknowledges community strengths and incorporates some mechanisms for listening into its design and process. But underlying assumptions about community capacity and capability skews the project approach toward relying on the museum/scientists as the 'experts' relied upon for the critical or seemingly more valuable parts of the project (e.g., analysis and reporting). Project responsibilities are assigned based on assumptions rather than through transparent agreement and consent. AND/OR: Project plans may acknowledge strengths of the community partner organization, but not the broader community.	The project process demonstrates mutual trust in the capabilities of partners and community, with each being transparent about their strengths, weaknesses, and capacity. The resulting project plan allows space for meaningful contributions of the community in all parts of the scientific project process. It recognizes the agency of the community to contribute to the solution and empowers them to articulate how they want to participate in the work. If the result is scientists/museum doing the "heavy lifting" of the scientific process, it was consented to or requested by the community partners.	The project plan's outcome/end goal explicitly leverages community strengths to address the topic at hand and the process is designed to create/expand community strength and respect. The plan explicitly incorporates ways to remove barriers to full community engagement and participation in the scientific process.



Equity Dimension

- The project plan acknowledges the multi-dimensionality of what makes for a community and recognizes other ways of knowing or doing.
- The project specifically draws on the strengths of marginalized / historically underrepresented community members.



Shares Leadership:

Shared leadership and ownership of the process and products

HOW THE PARTNERSHIP FUNCTIONS			
STRUGGLING	MAKING PROGRESS	SUCCESS	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS
<i>One-sided (towards one partner)</i>	<i>Leaning towards one partner</i>	<i>Balanced and reasonable</i>	<i>Sustained partnership</i>
<p>The project plan is unbalanced: one partner is burdened with the majority of responsibilities; granted unequal decision-making power and authority; and/or is given uneven access to critical resources.</p> <p>OR the plan has poorly documented partner roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Partners indicate commitment to sharing leadership, but their responsibilities and/or systems for accountability and operations are poorly defined or missing critical elements (see Success). Plans and processes rely on one partner to be the driving force and/or direction-setter (even if this is a default due to lack of clarity). The plan may lack clear identification of decision-making authorities for each partner and a process for those to be factored into project momentum.</p>	<p>Project plans include written operating agreements that establish partnership norms, responsibilities, and processes for communicating, managing conflict, and public representation. It clearly articulates an ongoing process of collaboration (multiple modes, touchpoints). Partners reasonably share responsibilities and accountability and feel empowered to make decisions and take actions that move the project forward.</p>	<p>Project plans provide a roadmap for sustained engagement/collaboration between partners beyond the initial project effort (not one-and-done). It anticipates changes/adaptations to future work, describes the ongoing process for this work, and articulates the responsibilities (e.g. funding, awareness, etc.) of each partner into the future.</p>



Equity Dimension

- Project partners were intentionally chosen based on who can best represent the issue and “activate” the solution(s) in their communities.
- The project recognizes the limitations of the partners and involves additional leaders/stakeholders into the process to address systemic inequities.



Aims for Action:

Aims for action and leverages scientific and technological progress to support community priorities and problem solving

ANTICIPATED PROJECT OUTCOMES			
Outcomes are the change or impact that happens as a result of effort. They are often intangible and people-centered. They are not project-centered or deliverables.			
STRUGGLING	MAKING PROGRESS	SUCCESS	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS
<i>NO outcomes identified, at all</i>	<i>Some outcomes, but weak/limited</i>	<i>Audience-centered outcomes identified</i>	<i>Beyond intended outcomes</i>
The project plan is focused on describing activities and project completion goals and deliverables, rather than attending to its intended impact. It lacks or has ill-defined people-centered outcomes (i.e. what is the change or difference they hope to make in the community).	The project plan identifies some outcomes, but they primarily focus on awareness-building, educating people, or museum-oriented goals. Outcomes are more short-term in nature and lack sustainable, community-level or long-term stakeholder impacts (e.g. hosting a one-time event with no clear follow-up or follow-through). OR: The plan names meaningful community outcomes, but it is not clear how such outcomes are reasonably aligned with the activities or how outcomes are prioritized.	The project plan identifies outcomes that would contribute toward meaningful, local change for the community, and strengthens the understanding and application of science among partners. The stated outcomes are reasonably aligned such that they can be achieved by the project activities.	The project plan reflects all the Success criteria, AND it includes activities or outcomes that would engage or impact members of the broader community who were not part of the central partnership (e.g., community members from a contrasting point-of-view; legislative or business stakeholders; etc.). Project plans articulate who (within and beyond the partnership) are accountable for specific follow-through actions/next steps. Planned actions are grounded in an intentional theory of change.



Equity Dimension

- The project outcomes advances equity or social justice in the community / society – beyond the project partnership.
- The project articulates opportunities for broad participation (beyond partners) in achieving / enacting outcomes.



[Click here](#) to submit your application to the Cultivating Community Science Stipends!

If you have any questions or issues accessing the application portal, please contact our team at communityscience@astc.org.