



# ASTC, ULC Selected for \$4M in IMLS and MacArthur Funding

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) and the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) announce today a partnership to manage a new *Learning Labs* project supported through \$4 million in funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Together, ASTC and ULC will carry out activities to support knowledge sharing among museums and libraries nationwide, with the ultimate goal of creating up to 30 new Learning Labs across the country that engage young people in learning through the use of digital media.

The Learning Labs project, first announced in September, was created in response to President Obama's *Educate to Innovate* campaign to improve the participation and performance of America's students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) through public and private sector partnerships. Dually inspired by YOUmedia, a cutting-edge space for teens at the Chicago Public Library, and innovations in science and technology centers, Learning Labs will be based upon new research about how young people learn today and will help America's youth become makers and creators of content, not just its consumers.

"Science centers and museums are ideal places to engage and educate young people through new forms of media, and ASTC is honored to be chosen as a cooperating partner for such an exciting and important project," said ASTC's CEO Anthony (Bud) Rock. "This new undertaking nicely complements our presidentially-endorsed *Youth Inspired Challenge* initiative, as both will help expand the impact of science centers and museums to assist our young people to become the innovative and creative thinkers we need for the 21st century."

ASTC and ULC will be responsible for supporting a network of Learning Labs that will use best practice principles, based on research and evidence in the field of youth digital learning, to engage youth in 21st century skills and effective STEM education. The Labs will be spaces for experimentation where young people explore traditional and digital media and use hands-on, interest-based learning to strengthen their creativity and critical thinking skills. Specifically, ASTC and ULC will administer a grant competition to support up to 30 Learning Labs in libraries and museums; provide technical assistance to applicants and awardees; facilitate communication among the network of lab sites; convene grantees; create and maintain an online toolkit of resources; and develop an evaluation framework identifying program outcomes and disseminate the results.

**A Request for Proposals for the Learning Labs project will be issued to eligible library and museum applicants in late May, and a late July deadline is anticipated.** Grants of up to \$100,000 will be awarded for each Learning Lab, and awards will be announced by IMLS in October/November. This will be the first of two grant rounds; a second deadline will occur in April/May 2012. (Note that dates are subject to change.)

## For More Information

Answers to "Frequently Asked Questions" about the Learning Labs project are available at: [www.imls.gov/pdf/MacArthurLabsFAQ.pdf](http://www.imls.gov/pdf/MacArthurLabsFAQ.pdf).



**About ASTC.** The Association of Science-Technology Centers is an organization of science centers and museums dedicated to furthering public engagement with science among increasingly diverse audiences. ASTC encourages excellence and innovation in informal science learning by serving and linking its members worldwide and advancing their common goals. Founded in 1972, ASTC now has nearly 600 members in 45 countries. In addition to science centers and museums, members include nature centers, aquariums, planetariums, zoos, children's museums and other organizations that share an interest in informal science education. To learn more about ASTC, please visit: [www.astc.org](http://www.astc.org).

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**About ULC.** The Urban Libraries Council is a membership organization made up of America's premier public library systems and the corporations that support them. While ULC's members primarily represent urban and suburban libraries, its work is widely used by all libraries. ULC strategically addresses issues important to all communities including education, workforce and economic development, public safety, environmental sustainability, health and wellness. ULC's members are thought leaders dedicated to the continuous evolution and strengthening of libraries to meet changing community needs. As ULC celebrates its 40-year anniversary, its work focuses on helping library leaders develop and use skills and strategies that match the challenges of the 21st century. To learn more about ULC, please visit: [www.urbanlibraries.org](http://www.urbanlibraries.org).

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**About the Institute of Museum and Library Services.** The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit: [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov).

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**About the MacArthur Foundation's Digital Media and Learning Initiative.** The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's digital media and learning initiative aims to determine how digital media are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize and participate in civic life. The goal is to build a base of evidence about how young people learn today, in an effort to re-imagine learning in the 21st century. More information is available at: [www.macfound.org/education](http://www.macfound.org/education).

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**About the Learning Labs Project.** The Learning Labs project was first announced in September 2010 in response to President Obama's *Educate to Innovate* campaign which called on public and private sector partners to work together to improve America's students' participation and performance in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The MacArthur Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) pledged to work together to create 30 new Learning Labs in libraries and museums for teens using the inspiration of the YOUmedia Model at the Harold Washington Library Center of the Chicago Public Library as well as innovations in other libraries and museum across the country.

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