



Association of  
Science-Technology  
Centers

## STEM PUBLIC PROGRAMS: Updates and Opportunities for Science Centers

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*In an effort to make ASTC members more aware of some of the lesser-known programmatic and funding opportunities offered by a variety of sources – and available to science centers and museums – ASTC recently launched **STEM Public Programs: Updates and Opportunities for Science Centers**, a new series of electronic briefs where we'll share details from meetings and conversations with key representatives from U.S. federal agencies and elsewhere. In today's edition – which has an international focus – we'll highlight the "Museums Connect: Building Global Communities" grant program, which is made possible by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered by the American Association of Museums...*

Just last week, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and the American Association of Museums (AAM) announced 2012 grants for the Museums Connect program. Given that three of the ten funded projects include partners from ASTC member institutions – Birch Aquarium at Scripps (La Jolla, CA), Chabot Space & Science Center (Oakland, CA), and Brooklyn Children's Museum (Brooklyn, NY) – this seems like the perfect opportunity to share some information about the program with ASTC members worldwide...and for ASTC to offer our congratulations to the awardees. Congratulations!

Museums Connect – which some readers may know by its former name, Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad – was created to foster year-long museum-facilitated international exchanges in which members of the museums' communities play an active role in executing the project's activities and achieving its goals. During its first five years of existence, Museums Connect has delivered upon its goals of: (1) Helping communities in the U.S. and abroad develop a broader knowledge about and understanding of one another's cultures, and (2) Helping museums and related arts and cultural organizations create replicable models for international collaborations that reach beyond their physical walls to directly engage members of their communities.

Funding for Museums Connect comes from the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which is charged with building mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries to promote friendly and peaceful relations. The Bureau's mandate originated in 1961 with the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act, and is nonpartisan by design, having spanned numerous White House occupants. The program currently sees approximately \$1 million in annual funding, and Museums Connect grants are awarded in the \$50,000 - \$100,000 range. Note that a 50% cost-share match is required.

With regard to the timing of your possible application, grants are awarded annually (contingent upon DOS funding) in July after a flexible rolling application process. To begin, all applicants must first submit a "Museum Profile" that provides basic information about your museum and initial project ideas. At this point, you may also identify a museum partner (or partners); if you don't have definite partner(s) in mind, your profile will be posted online, where other institutions in search of partners can review the possibilities. Think of it almost like an online dating site! The deadline for museums who seek partners is October 1, 2012 and the deadline for pre-partnered museums is January 14, 2013.

Once your profile has been submitted and a partner (or partners) have been found or confirmed, the process continues with the submission of a 3-5-page "Statement of Intent to Propose" (SIP). SIPs are due

by January 31, 2013, after which AAM staff provides written feedback as well as a conference call to help you refine your project concept. The next step, not surprisingly, is the submission of a Final Proposal, which should consist of a project narrative, budget, communications plan, and outcome-based assessment model. Final Proposals are due by April 8, 2013.

After submission, an independent selection committee – with observers from AAM and DOS – reviews the Final Proposals and determines awards, which are typically announced in June or July.

AAM and DOS encourage ASTC members to apply, and AAM offered a few closing tips during our conversation about Museums Connect: (1) Don't be afraid to get creative when it comes to your proposal; (2) Consider working with multiple partners from more than two countries; and (3) Step outside your museum and look at this from a community perspective as you begin the planning process.

For more details on the Museums Connect program, including a detailed overview, eligibility requirements, a list of recently funded projects, application information, and some additional great tips, please visit <http://www.aam-us.org/museumsconnect>. For further information on the program, feel free to contact Heather Berry (Manager) or Brooke Leonard (Assistant Manager) at [museumsconnect@aam-us.org](mailto:museumsconnect@aam-us.org); both are extremely knowledgeable and willing to speak with potential applicants.

*To view previous issues of “STEM Public Programs: Updates and Opportunities for Science Centers,” please visit: <http://www.astc.org/about/government/STEMprog.htm>.*