

*The learning comes through the process:
Community collaboration projects*

MAY 28, 2026

Overview

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Session

Introduction to Co-creating with Communities project

Evaluation findings

Research findings

Q&A

Resources

Co-creating with Communities project



**CO-CREATING WITH
COMMUNITIES**



Co-creation

Collaborators co-create learning experiences that explore NASA Earth and space science and reflect family and community values and priorities.



Community of practice



A community of practice connects partners from all six sites to share and learn together.

Evaluation

Embedded evaluation methods help the sites to understand impact and track progress toward their goals.



Research

Through a reflective practice process, the community of practice is co-producing knowledge about co-creating culturally affirming STEM engagement.



Evaluation Findings

SARAH LUKOWSKI

Methods

Data were collected about the partners through:

- Monthly site reflections
- Focus groups



Today I'll be sharing primarily from these sources of evaluation data

Data were collected from the public through:

- Flash interviews
- Drawing activities

Finding: Forming partnerships

Most of the sites focused their work on having an impact on youth and families through partnerships between informal science organizations and two types of partners: local business leaders or local nonprofits that serve youth.



The founder of Reybotics facilitates an activity at Children's Museum of Brownsville



Youth participate in an activity with the San Ysidro Cougarbots at the San Ysidro STEM Fair



The Executive Director of Horizons Albuquerque welcomes attendees to the Youth Summit on the Future

Finding: More than engagement

While the professionals at the sites were already comfortable with STEM engagement, the project increased their knowledge of Earth and space science within their local context.



Finding: (re)Defining STEM/STEAM

Through the project, sites felt empowered to expand what counts as Earth and space science and add culturally relevant content and art into STEM activities.



The partners in Mesa adopted the name “Steambrando Futuros”. They engaged a co-creation group and developed several activities including interactive artwork (pictured right) that highlighted STEM careers in Mesa.

Finding: Broadening participation

All sites broadened participation by expanding who creates Earth and space science activities and/or who sees themselves as a STEM practitioner.



Finding: Fostering leadership

Many sites used the project to foster leadership beyond the core partners.



The San Francisco Bay Area team formed a subgroup of afterschool educators, called Las Estrellitas, and students to co-create STEM activities about Earth and space science.



In Albuquerque, the team formed a group called the Youth STEM Ambassadors for the Future that co-created Youth Summits alongside staff.

Finding: Sustaining the impact

Professionals at the six sites have used what they learned in this project about community engagement as a model for other work at their organizations, including sustaining the work beyond the project grant period.



The Brownsville team plans to continue to bring activities to their local flea market.



The San Diego team used the project to think about how they could share ownership of the library's intergenerational STEM nights with other local organizations like the Girl Scouts.

Research Reflections

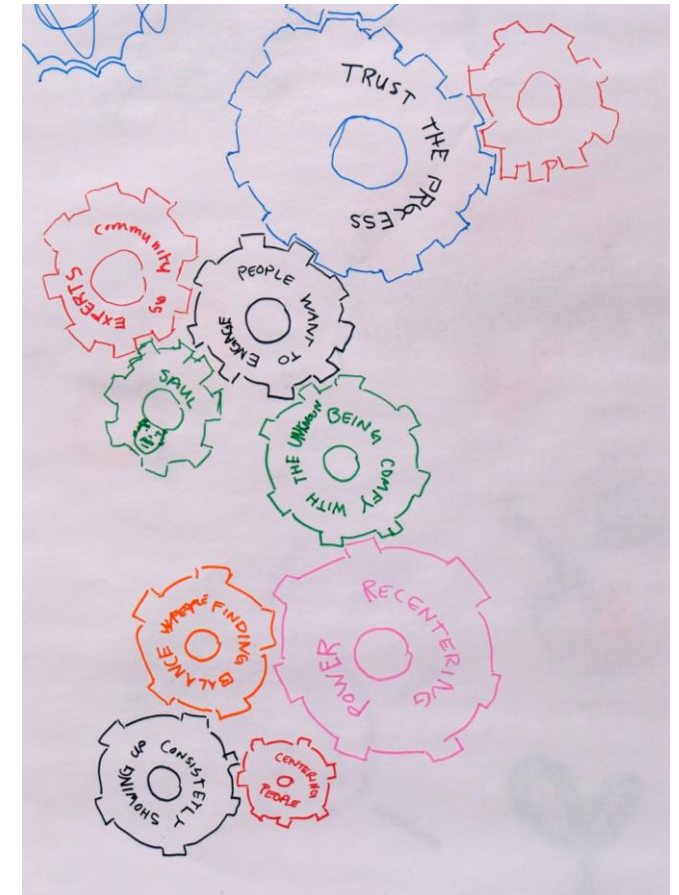
RAE OSTMAN & CECILIA GARIBAY

Reflections: Importance of process

Team members experienced the project as fundamentally different from traditional project work because it prioritized process over products:

“The learning comes through the process, and not in the development of the final product necessarily. And so that really has been our focus, is process over product.” (Education partner)

“There was a commitment to really lean into what does the community need, and being trusting of the process, even in times when we weren’t sure where the process was going. There was a level of trust and a level of support to just continue moving forward, always keeping the community in mind.” (Community partner)



Reflections: Roles and accountability

Team members emphasized the importance of agreeing on goals and being accountable to each other:

“We held each other responsible and accountable, and then we all worked on this together, with everybody having a different role, and then coming together and making the decisions that are in the best interest of that group.” (Community partner)

“Yeah, and there are the layers of trust and accountability within those layers. I had to trust [them] and they have to trust me, that I trust them.” (Education partner)

“It took a shift in alignment of goals, so that we all saw the vision to where we were going.” (Education partner)



Reflections: Culturally affirming STEM

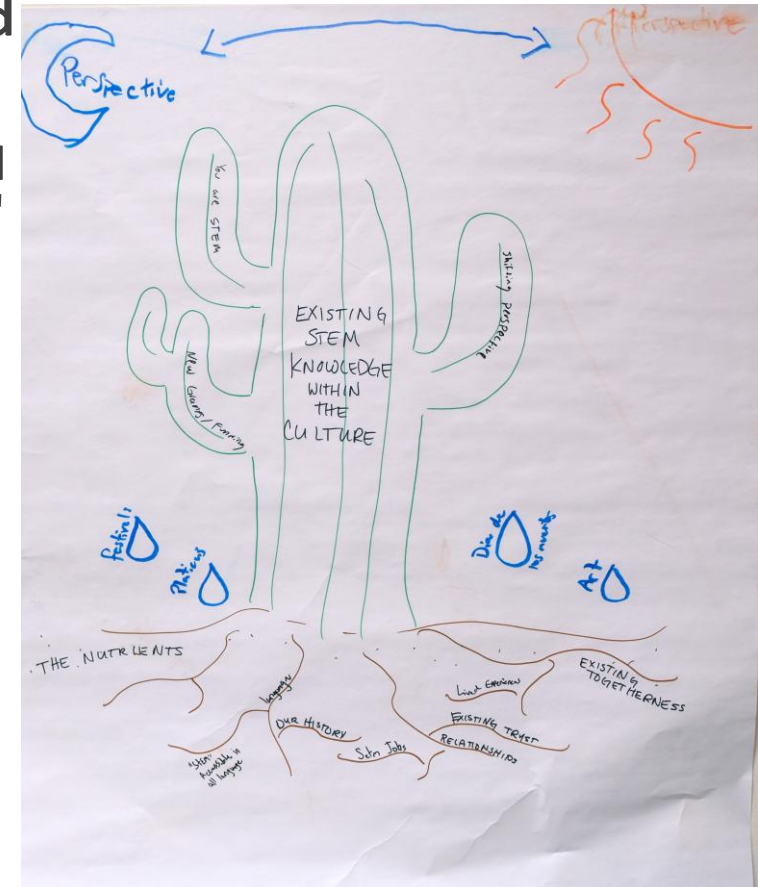
Team members sought to make activities that actively affirmed their communities' cultures:

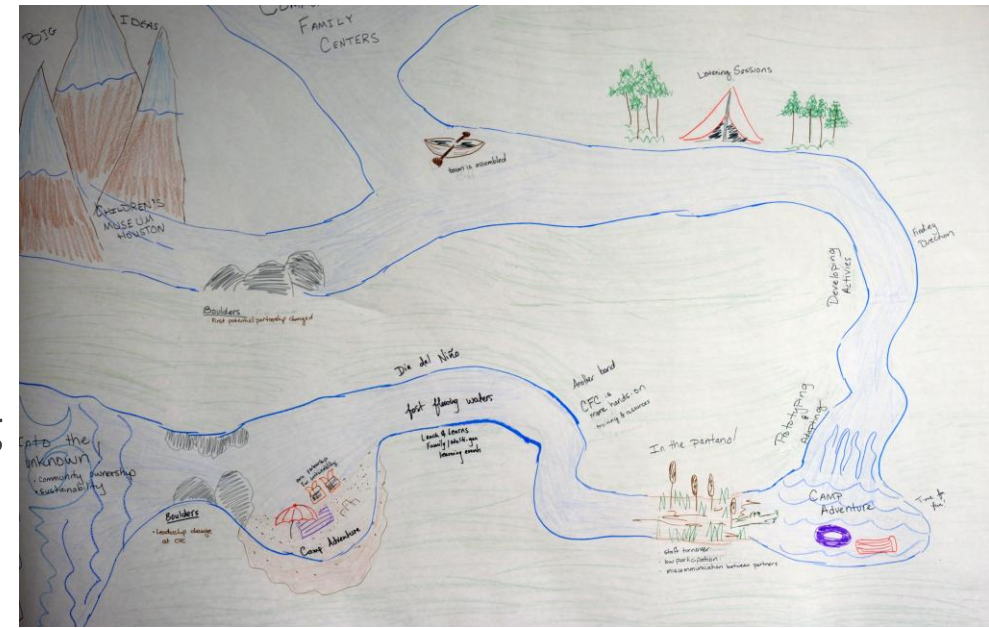
"It's important in the sense of making sure that whatever that is provided as a resource or as an interaction stems from people's lived experiences."
(Education partner)

"And it was such a powerful moment, coming to this understanding of, 'There's value in this knowledge that's been [passed] down.'"
(Community partner)

"When you say affirming, you're thinking about, what do the people value, and what are the needs, and that's what you want to be responding to on a consistent basis." (Education partner)

"We are connecting culturally to STEM, and developing ways to think about how STEM is related to our future and our past. So I just think culturally affirming is a really great way to describe it." (Education partner)





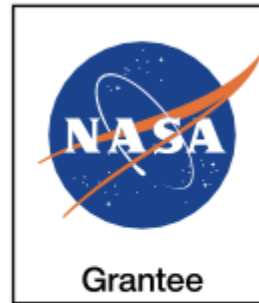
Q&A

Learn more!

An overview, videos and activities from project are on the NISE Network website
<https://nisenet.org/catalog/co-creating-communities>



Thank you



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