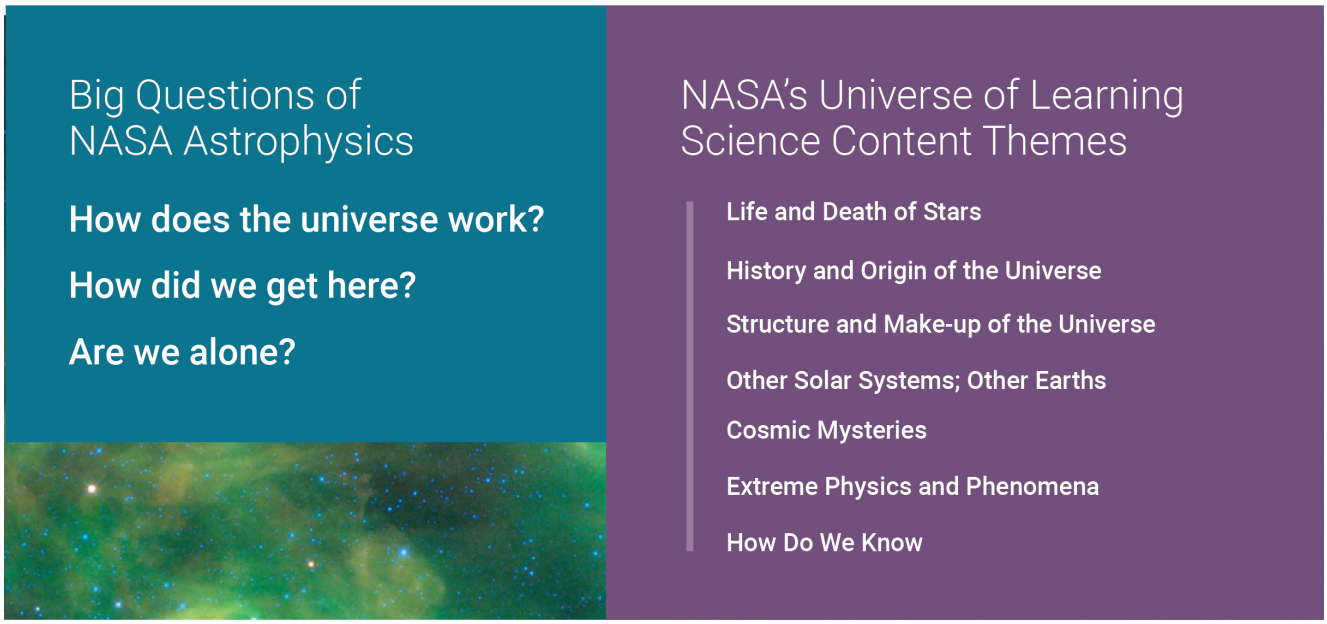
# Expanding the Network - Program Requirements and Guidelines




**The Informal Learning Network of NASA's Universe of Learning is a collaboration of museums and cultural institutions affiliated with the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) and the Smithsonian who are learning together to create and imagine learning resources and experiences for diverse learning audiences. NASA's Universe of Learning is seeking to enhance and broaden the Informal Learning Network portfolio of astrophysics learning assets through co-creation, and the inclusion of broader perspectives to reduce barriers of participation. By expanding the network it is our hope that together we will achieve impactful astrophysics programming that is innovative, inclusi{ve, accessible, and relevant to broader audiences.**

**To achieve this goal, we are offering a new round of competitive funding to informal learning institutions. This funding will support expanding opportunities to communities traditionally underserved in STEM and STEAM programming. Funding tiers are described below. All ASTC member organizations and Smithsonian Affiliates are eligible to apply for Tier 1 funding. Only existing members of the community (those that have previously received NASA's Universe of Learning funding) are eligible to apply to funding tiers 2 and 3, which enable Informal Learning Network members to take a more direct leadership role within the network and to maximize the impact of the network's prior work.**

**Important Dates!**

## Deadline to apply: December 16th, 2021

## Funding Office Hours

Join us next week on **Wednesday 12/8 anytime between 1:30PM - 4PM ET** for our funding office hours. Do you have questions on the application process? Do you want to know if your program idea qualifies for a specific tier? Want to bounce ideas off of the informal learning network team? Drop-in anytime during our set hours and let's have a conversation!

**Join Zoom Meeting:** https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88411427630?pwd=YldKcXE1YzdPTitzZ0M3UHpSKzlmUT09

Meeting ID: 884 1142 7630
Passcode: 296219

Dial by your location
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
+1 646 876 9923 US (New York)
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
Meeting ID: 884 1142 7630
Find your local number: https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kdKfOkVbQP

**REMINDER**: The call for proposals is due December 16. You are all eligible for funding up to $20,000 depending on the tier you apply for. Check it out here: https://outerspace.stsci.edu/display/ENPRG.

If you missed last month's CC about the new funding opportunity, catch-up with the recording here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcLqP0oCaPU

**INFORMAL LEARNING NETWORK FUNDING INFORMATIONAL SESSION**

View the Recording

| Tier | Funding Level | Description | Application Preview |
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| **Tier 1: Focused astrophysics program partnership between informal learning organization and community partner** | Funding Level: $2,500-$5,000<br><br>Eligibility: All ASTC member organizations and Smithsonian Affiliates<br><br>ASTC will fund 4-12 proposals<br><br>Smithsonian Affiliations will fund 4-12 proposals | The Informal Learning network has developed over 40 astronomy program models over the past several years. These range from family astronomy events to summer camps and afterschool experiences. This funding opportunity is to support organizations in adopting, adapting, and refocusing one of these program models to *b etter address the interests of a specific underserved community. Program implementations can be similar to past Informal Learning Network program models, but should be more deeply intentional in design for and with a particular community. Focus should be primarily on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).*<br><br>EXAMPLE: Partner with a local refugee community center. Work with the center to determine the needs and interests of their community. Then tailor an existing program model and implement it to meet the needs of their audience. Make sure this program model can be adaptable and address any new needs as they arise throughout the length of the program. | ILNApplication.Tier1.pdf |
| **Tier 2: Expanding the Network – Growing community partnerships** | Funding Level: $5,000-$10,000 (Over 1 or 2 years)<br><br>Eligibility: Existing members of the Informal Learning Network (those who have previously received funding from NASA's Universe of Learning)<br><br>ASTC will fund 2-6 proposals<br><br>Smithsonian Affiliations will fund 2-6 proposals | *Build capacity in your communities by leveraging the expertise at your organization. Establish a mini network of organizations in your community working to introduce NASA' s Universe of Learning content to a broader community. This mini-network should build on your existing knowledge of Informal Learning Network program models and content areas, and support others in your community in engaging with astrophysics content.*<br><br>EXAMPLE: Invite all art museums in the city for a two-day workshop. Teach astronomy content, and highlight two STEAM program models developed years 1-5, learn how to connect with host museums and NASA's UoL subject matter experts. Following the workshop, the art museums are encouraged to put the workshop into practice - with support from workshop host and NASA's UoL. Art museums that choose to run a program receive supplies from the host museum.<br><br>EXAMPLE: Develop a program series with a local community program like Boys and Girls Club that involves multiple visits, or professional development for facilitators with Boys and Girls Club that culminates in a program that involves the museum. | ILNApplication.Tier2.pdf |
| **Tier 3: Expanding the Network at larger scale - Maximizing our impact** | Funding Level: $10,000-$20,000 over two years<br><br>Eligibility: Existing members of the Informal Learning Network (those who have previously received funding from NASA's Universe of Learning)<br><br>ASTC will fund 2-4 proposals<br><br>Smithsonian Affiliations will fund 2-4 proposals | *Broaden the community of organizations participating in the NASA's Universe of Learning Informal Learning Network. Establish a community or regional network that works together to reduce barriers to NASA's Universe of Learning content and resources. This network should include broad perspectives in its efforts to expand pathways to engage with astrophysics content, and more broadly STEM fields. This network should collaborate and co-create with its community over time.*<br><br>EXAMPLE: Convene a regional network of planetaria over the course of 2 years. Work to increase inclusivity in planetaria shows. Could bring planetaria and community organizations to work together on this (i.e., planetaria with Boys and Girls Clubs) | ILNApplication.Tier3.pdf |

## Required elements of successful proposals:

- Described projects use NASA's Universe of Learning Resources
- Proposed activities broaden the diversity of organizations using NASA's Universe of Learning resources
- Leaders will work with the NASA's Universe of Learning team to reduce audience barriers to NASA astrophysics
- Project broadens participation/ reaches communities underserved by STEM opportunities such as girls, underrepresented minorities, people with disabilities, rural audiences, etc.
- Organizations proposing to tiers 2 & 3 funding must have staff that have participated in NASA's Universe of Learning webinars/Community of Practice or contributed to past NASA's Universe of Learning Program Model development

## Preferred characteristics:

- Proposals are specific in describing how they will be increasing DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) efforts in their programs and how they will be working with their local organizations that have expertise in engaging these underserved communities
- Describes the contributions or assets brought to the project by the home institution (e.g., local partnerships, particular educational or multidisciplinary expertise, in-house resources, experience working with underserved communities)
- Proposals articulate a commitment to and strategy for sustainability beyond the period of NASA's Universe of Learning funding including potential in-kind contributions

## *In addition to the above elements, proposals will be selected based on the following criteria.*

- Evidence of intentionality of DEIA focus
- Quality of incorporation of NASA's UoL astrophysics resources
- Likelihood for having a positive community impact
- Realistic budgeting
- Balance between depth of impact (long engagement) vs. breadth of impact (size of audience)
- Other selection factors will include: geographic distribution; institutional diversity; programmatic variety

*The NASA's Universe of Learning program reserves the right to make partial selections based on budgetary and other considerations. The number of awards will be subject to the number of proposal submissions and availability of funds.

*Funding is limited to organizations in the US and its territories

Apply for Funding

Submit a Letter of Support

SAMPLE LETTER OF SUPPORT TEMPLATE

Partnership commitment lett...arning project proposal.pdf

Resources:

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| **Frequently Asked Questions** | Frequently asked questions about the Expanding the Network | Frequently Asked Questions Google Doc |
| **NASA's Universe of Learning** | Brief introduction to NASA's Universe of Learning. | NASA'sUoLPoster_2020_Final.pptx |
| **Informal Learning Network Webinars** | These webinars contain information from NASA Subject Matter Experts and Museum Professionals sharing NASA Astrophysics science and learning resources. | https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfhHnX59VA_5T6lLeNg-0tx1ejS8YT_Qj |
| **James Webb Outreach Slides** | Learn about the newest space telescope set to launch this December. | Outreach Slides |
| **Informal Learning Network Program Models** | Informal learning institutions with support from NASA's Universe of Learning have developed and tested sustainable models of innovative STEM learning for their audiences. These models utilize NASA Astrophysics assets and resources in making STEM learning more accessible and compelling.<br><br>The informal learning institutions are working to share their program models with the wider informal learning community. Their resulting program models are collected here for other informal learning sites to download and adapt for their local audiences. These resources are free to use and may be adjusted in anyway desired. | https://www.universe-of-learning.org/informal-learning |

Please contact Erika Wright (erika.wright@cfa.harvard.edu) or Yesenia Perez (yperez@stsci.edu) for any questions or more information about this new funding opportunity.