

CUSTOMER INTERVIEWS TO IMPROVE NASA OFFICE OF SPACE SCIENCE EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH LEVERAGING SUCCESS. Leslie Lowes¹ and Gloria Jew², ¹Jet Propulsion Laboratory, 4800 Oak Grove Drive, Mail Stop 180-109, Pasadena, CA 91109 (Leslie.Lowes@jpl.nasa.gov), ²Geebs Technical Communications, 401 N. Lincoln St. Burbank, CA 91506, gjew@geebs.com

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Leveraging with organizations that serve our customers and focussing on the needs of those organizations are two prime elements of the NASA Office of Space Science (OSS) Education and Public Outreach (E/PO) Strategy. Understanding the needs of respected organizations who serve the formal education community, as well as areas of informal education such as museums, planetariums, and youth groups, serves as a basis for a successful relationship. On behalf of NASA OSS, the Solar System Exploration (SSE) Education and Public Outreach Forum has conducted a series of customer interviews with representatives from leading organizations who serve some of the audiences we wish to reach.

We selected individuals for on-site interviews based on the breadth of their organization's understanding and relationship with their customers and their synergy with OSS E/PO. We asked the individuals to represent the needs of their general community, including but not limited to their organization. We selected organizations with which NASA OSS has newly developing or previously unexplored relationships at the thematic level.

Participants: To date, we have interviewed representatives who are leaders in five external organization types: (1) Formal Education (K-12), Alan Gould of Lawrence Hall of Science and Tyson Brown of National Science Teachers Association SciLinks; (2) Formal Education (collegiate), Jeanne Narum of Project Kaleidoscope; (3) Informal Education/Youth Groups, Linda Fallo-Mitchell of the Girl Scouts USA; (4) Informal Education/Planetariums, Martin Ratcliffe and Jon Elvert of International Planetarium Society; (5) Professional/Amateur Astronomical Organizations, Larry Lebofsky of American Astronomical Society Division of Planetary Sciences and Robert Havlin, then of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific.

Expected Outcome: We are developing a series of white papers summarizing the synergistic needs and activities for NASA OSS E/PO and the general types of organizations we interviewed, to be supplemented by further research on other organizations in that community. The information will contain:

- Highlights of interaction opportunities recommended by the representative, including:

- general information exchange and awareness raising throughout our respective communities
- potential for partnerships
- training opportunities
- participation in conferences, publications, and product development and dissemination
- Specific information on external organizations within the community, including contact information, web sites, audiences and numbers reached, and dates and lead times for conferences and publications.

Summary of Recommendations: All representatives were interested in the infusion into their communities of scientifically accurate NASA OSS content and the inspiration it provides their audiences. Desiring to work with NASA OSS through thematic-based programs, most expressed an interest in having a single point-of-contact. Where it helped forward the community's mission, the organizations expressed a common need for training and dissemination of materials and information.

Future Directions: After peer review, white papers detailing information on interacting with these types of organizations will be disseminated to the NASA OSS E/PO community. The SSE Forum will assist in brokering and developing further relationships with these communities. We also plan further interviews with representatives of the public library community, and with interpretive societies that present relevant science concepts in outdoor settings.

BIOGRAPHY

Leslie Lowes is the Co-Director for NASA's Solar System Exploration Education and Public Outreach Forum. She transitioned to the professional field of E/PO in 1996 as NASA OSS began its strategic planning and implementation. She brings understanding and cultural awareness of the scientific research field from 15 years of Earth atmospheric data processing and data management for JPL.