

SSC Visitor Center Funds  
Administered by Stennis Space Center  
Congressionally Directed Funding

Informal Education Addressed:

- Support for Folklife Festival
- Science On a Sphere system
- Exhibits and Materials
- Education Resource Center funding for training, workshops, and materials for K-12 educators
- ERC support for training and workshops for informal education and visitor relations specialists
- Blow Up Astronaut

Planned Projects:

- Upgrades to GeoWall 3D visualization display

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Stennis Space Center Office of Education, in partnership with the SSC Visitor's Center, enhances the performance of our STEM education and outreach programs through a combination of labor, workshops, display equipment purchases, as well as small amounts of materials. The Visitor's Center at Stennis is operated by the Stennis Public Affairs Office. We are supporting the NASA Education Framework, and enhancing STEM education primarily by addressing the needs of OE Outcome 3 "Informal Education."

### **Folklife Festival**

SSC supported the Smithsonian Folklife Festival through its Astro Camp program. This program is designed for children ages 7 – 15, and has an outreach component that meshed with the intent of the Folklife Festival. SSC provided hands-on, educational activities that explored Newton's three laws of motion and the basics of propulsion. SSC provided activities and six staff members for the duration of the Folklife Festival.

### **Science on a Sphere (SOS) system**

This system fits in an existing space in our Visitors Center and it has greatly improved our regional public's access to NASA's Earth and planetary science content. In addition to displaying existing data sets developed by other NASA Centers and NOAA, we have an Applied Sciences group located on site that will support the development of remote sensing-based geospatial data sets for use on the sphere. Included in that group is a dedicated visualization team with the full set of skills, hardware, and software assets needed to support data development for the display. This is a showcase for that group to display their accomplishments.

### **Education Resource Center**

The bulk of the funding has been used to support the SSC Educator Resource Center (ERC) and will be expended through the end of FY09. Funding was provided for professional development training for members of the ERC and Visitor's Center staffs (\$35k). In addition, the ERC staff will and has hosted educator workshops that include mathematics, science, technology, and engineering. The staff will also conduct special workshops on high profile NASA missions such as the Hubble Servicing Mission, the

Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Launch and STS-119. These funds will also allow us to maintain our current activities with the Girl Scouts and other local organizations. \$320k will cover approximately four WYEs and associated computer (ODIN) costs.

### **Blow Up Astronaut**

This suit has been an excellent product to support engaging educational opportunities while providing an important visual aid and interaction method for every age group.

### **Conclusion**

Stennis' proposed activities align with the NASA's Education Framework, especially Outcomes 2 and 3. The activities and purchases provide opportunities for collaboration with academic researchers and educators. Our challenge at SSC is to ensure that the activities are not limited to a one-time infusion of funds that will subsequently be neglected. We believe that with care and proper follow-through the proposed investments represent a step toward long term improvement of STEM education in our region and for the nation.

### **Budget**

The entire budget is categorized for procurement, no Civil Service travel or salaries are covered.

Funding in \$K	
ERC support for workshops for informal and formal educators to include training for Education Specialists and VRSS	355
Astro Camp support for Folklife Festival:	40
Upgrades to GeoWall (software and fly-throughs):	0
Mobile Exhibits and Materials	10
Science On a Sphere:	125
TOTAL	530

### **Upgrades to GeoWall Exhibit**

This project has been placed on hold due to SOS work. The SOS budget was increased by \$25K due to facility modifications that had to be made to accommodate the exhibit. In addition, it was desired that only one exhibit be under construction at a time. We hope to upgrade the GeoWall display in the next FY after SOS is completed.

The NASA Education Office supported 937 Workshops and 4,833 Offsite Presentations for FY-08.

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