

NASA Ames Research Center Visitor Center Funds
Administered by NASA Ames and The AERO Institute
Type of Agreement: Cooperative Agreement (NNX08B70A)
Project Manager: Laura Lewis
Center: Ames Research Center
Telephone Number: 650/604-2162

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

NASA Ames Education and Public Outreach office and the AERO Institute will work closely together on a balanced approach for the use of the Informal Education Visitor Center funding that supports visitor center enhancement, the creation of new collaborations and partnerships, and provides staff to create and adequately implement new educational content, programs and opportunities for educators, students and the general public. A small portion of the funding is also currently set aside to obtain materials and support miscellaneous purchases and services.

PROJECT GOALS

- 1) Support visitor center enhancements
- 2) Enhance existing and create new collaborations and partnerships
- 3) Create new content, programs and opportunities for educators, students and the general public.

PROJECT BENEFIT TO OUTCOME (1,2, OR 3)

The Visitor Center enhancements and creation of new content primarily benefits Outcome 3 (Inspire, Engage) by telling the story of space exploration to varied audiences in an engaging and compelling way. Outcomes 1 and 2 also indirectly benefit from these goals since school children and other students constitute a large number of NASA Ames' annual visitors. Outcomes 1 (Employ) and 2 (Educate) also benefit from the enhancement of new collaborations and partnerships by bringing in student interns from local colleges and providing opportunities for students and faculty within other higher education programs operating at NASA Ames to participate in the development of new programs and content.

PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The full scope of the project has yet to be accomplished; however, the following accomplishments have been achieved to date:

Goal 1: Visitor Center Enhancements: In the Ames visitor center, known as the Exploration Center (EC), a new sound system is being purchased that will increase the capacity of the crowd that can attend our outreach and education programs and enhance our ability to network with other science and education centers. Improvements have also been made to the Exploration Center lighting. The new lighting improves ambiance and exhibit visibility and reduces the problem of glare on the immersive theater screen during shows and presentations.

Goal 2: Enhance existing and create new collaborations and partnerships: The partnership with the AERO Institute has continued to develop, and a significant portion of the funds provided have been placed on the collaborative agreement to facilitate additional partnerships. Contacts have been made with local colleges and universities to initiate discussions about potential partnerships and internship opportunities for students. Collaboration with other education programs at NASA Ames (e.g., pre-service teacher training) are also being pursued.

Goal 3: Create new content, programs and opportunities for educators, students and the general public.

New exhibits have been created for the Exploration Center to describe NASA Ames missions and programs. Additional exhibits are under development. New programming and opportunities for after school groups (e.g., Boys and Girls Club, Girl Scouts) and the general public are also under development.

PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO PART MEASURES

Approximately 55,000 visitors came to the Ames Exploration Center for visits and special programming in FY 2009. This number is expected to increase as new programming and content are made available to students, after school groups and the general public.

IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN THE PAST YEAR

Operation of the Exploration Center has been transition from a previous support service contract to the AERO Institute. This enables the full implementation of the visitor center plan to begin, removing management barriers that had previously existed.

PROJECT PARTNERS AND ROLE OF PARTNERS IN PROJECT EXECUTION

AERO Institute (AERO) will build upon the Education and Education Outreach programs at the Ames Research Center by advancing the strategy of engagement of all education customers, integration of education programs, and incorporation of information delivery technologies in the operational processes. AERO has analyzed the operational structure and activities of the Ames Education Office and Educational outreach programs, recognizes unique opportunities for enhancement. AERO's vision statement "CESIS will integrate the operational processes of the Education Programs and the education Outreach Programs and continually leverage partnerships and facilities to maximize the human capital and financial resources necessary to sustain and enhance the activities of the Ames Office of Education in a cost effective manner" captures the proposed strategic focus. Approximately \$470,000 of the fiscal year 2009 funds have been transferred to the Aero Institute.

Webpage for the AERO Institute: <http://www.aeroi.org/>