

NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

Evaluate Best Practices for Science Education and Public Outreach 2013-02-03 (SC-01)

Recommendation:

The Council recommends that NASA analyze the relative effectiveness of science education and outreach efforts at NASA, measuring against Agency goals and objectives and correlating with key variables (e.g., cost, expertise, science input, and target audience). Where there are clear successes, identify a set of best practices, and use less successful efforts to indicate lessons learned; disseminate these results for the benefit of any Federal organization engaged in education and public outreach (EPO) activities.

Major Reasons for Proposing the Recommendation:

The Administration has proposed consolidating EPO programs across Federal agencies and departments. To inform this process, it would be extremely valuable for NASA to mine data collected from decades of education and public outreach efforts, looking at metrics that reflect impact on the students and the public or that reflect other Agency goals and objectives. In particular, the direct involvement of scientists in Science Mission Directorate EPO activities has been extremely effective. The NASA EPO data are a valuable archive that could be exploited to the benefit of the nation, maximizing the value from limited Federal EPO dollars.

Consequences of No Action on the Proposed Recommendation:

Government planning for a new EPO structure would proceed without the valuable information derived from past activities and archives of NASA and other Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)-active agencies, and the lessons learned from their previous EPO activities. This could potentially lead to waste and mismanagement of the nation's precious EPO resources.

NASA Response:

NASA concurs that analyzing the effectiveness of its investments in education and outreach efforts is a worthwhile effort. Consistent with the Administration and the Committee on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Education (CoSTEM) efforts to coordinate STEM efforts across the U. S. Government, the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) will support the Associate Administrator for Education in reviewing future investments by NASA in STEM education and prioritizing the education portfolio. The Science Mission Directorate, along with representatives from all other Mission Directorates and functional offices involved with NASA's education efforts, are represented on the ECC.

The Associate Administrators for Science, Education, and Communications, along with the Chief Scientist, are developing policy statements that will guide the Agency's EPO investments in FY 2014 should the Agency begin the fiscal year under a continuing resolution. The NASA Executive Council will review the policies and validate Agency direction at an upcoming meeting.