

EVALUATION IN WHAT SPIKE LEE CALLS "CHIRAQ"

Giving Up Evaluator-Centric Control & Getting Better Data on Chicago's South Side

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How might evaluators change our practice to provide greater equity & access into our field?

Could this lead to the most beautiful & meaningful data yet?

The Chicago Zoological Society (Brookfield Zoo) was awarded a 4-year National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to expand on an existing partnership with Eden Place Nature Center, located in Fuller Park – a severely under-resourced neighborhood on Chicago's south side.

Complementary elements in existing Zoo and Eden Place program portfolios have been strategically aligned and fine-tuned to increase community-wide engagement in environmental science.

For the evaluation to successfully elevate authentic community voices in a neighborhood plagued by a long history of inequity and injustice, we had to do something different. We committed to community inclusion, professional development, and capacity building.



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SCIENCES Community Ambassadors: data collectors from the community and for the community

Results from the community brought on as they got through a comprehensive training program over the back, supported by professional contractors, offered ongoing professional development, & set up for success.

How's work in Chicago? Get involved. Learn work knowledge? Find your Ambassadors!

Preliminary data shows 90% of participants feel more comfortable with science and feel they are more connected to their environment.

Next steps? Collecting data, presenting findings, & taking results back to the community.

For more information, contact Kate Livingston at: Kate@ExposeYourMuseum.com

SCIENCES—Supporting a Community's Informal Education Needs: Confidence and Empowerment in STEM is a four year Full-Scale Development Project with Research funded by the National Science Foundation Advancing Informal STEM Learning (NSF AISL) program.

The overarching project goal is to create a “STEM ecosystem” in a severely under-resourced urban community. The Chicago Zoological Society (CZS), which operates Brookfield Zoo, is expanding a community partnership with Eden Place Nature Center in Chicago's Fuller Park Neighborhood and offering a full suite of environmental science learning opportunities targeted at teachers, youth, families, and adults.

- This project identifies complementary elements in existing Brookfield Zoo and Eden Place program portfolios that can be strategically aligned to increase the engagement of this community in environmental science.
- Education programs will be woven into an “ecosystemic” learning model, providing large segments of the community with learning resources aligned across targeted sub-audiences (early childhood through adult) and settings (in-school and out-of-school).
- A research component led by the University of Illinois at Chicago will expand understandings of how a large informal science learning institution works with a community-based organization to support environmental scientific literacy and agency at all levels of the community.
- Evaluation is empowerment-based and participatory, mobilizing a team of “SCIENCES Community Ambassadors” who live and/or work in the Fuller Park community to collect data, help analyze and interpret data, and report and disseminate findings.
- Broad dissemination of lessons learned from this project includes the Visitor Studies Association, the American Evaluation Association, the SCIENCES National Amplification Network accessed via the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Diversity Committee and the Metropolitan Greenspaces Alliance, which will allow others to adapt and transfer this “ecosystemic” environmental science learning model.

Thank you, Eval2015, for checking out our poster!
This project means a lot to us and we hope you'll keep in touch.

For questions about the evaluation, questions about considering, forming, and supporting a community-based evaluation team, or for inquiries about working with or hiring the SCIENCE Community Ambassadors for your Chicago-based project, email Kate Livingston at ExposeYourMuseum LLC: kate@exposeyourmuseum.com.

For questions about collecting data in Fuller Park or what it's like to be a SCIENCES Community Ambassador, email Nita Marchant at nmarchant@ssncandoit.com or Laura Dillard at lauradillard@sbcglobal.net.

For questions about the SCIENCES project generally, the education programs being delivered, and/or the research components, email Lisa Kelly at the Chicago Zoological Society: lisa.kelly@czs.org.

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