

REPORT 2019 October Cycle

GENERAL INFORMATION

Organization Information

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Head Of Organization

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Application Contact

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REPORT INFORMATION

Report Funding Cycle: 2019 October Cycle	Report Date: 08/18/2020 12:00 am
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1: Please include in your report the dollar amount of the funds that were awarded, the date they were funded and what the funds supported.

Awarded Amount: 45,000	Date: 10/31/2019
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2: Were the objectives cited in your original proposal met? Please address each started objective and how it was met.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the objective of running 4 summer camps was not met. Throughout fall 2019 and spring 2020, the Science Mill was preparing to host 46 weeks of summer camp, including 4 Najim Charitable Fund sponsored camps. Discussions were in progress with the ISDs, supplies were purchased, camp staff were being recruited and student recruitment was being planned.

As the pandemic intensified in mid-March, the Science Mill made the decision to close the doors of the museum, cancel all outreach programs and furlough many of its staff. With great disappointment and after long conversations with our partner schools and ISDs, we collectively made the decision to also cancel all 2020 summer camps. This decision to cancel summer camps was the result of districts deciding that school campuses (the site of our camps) would be closed for face-to-face interaction, as well as significant restrictions on interactive camps that made our camps, which are designed to be hands-on with team-based challenges, impossible to offer virtually. However, much of the purchasing of equipment and supplies for the 4 camps was completed prior to the pandemic and will be available to support camps in 2021.

Our priority turned to keeping the museum open as a relevant asset to students and their families. Funds from the Najim Charitable Fund were redirected to bring back our furloughed staff, re-open the museum in mid-June and rapidly implement new virtual programs that are available to students and their families through our website.

3: Please explain any changes from the original proposal and the circumstances that lead to the modification of the objective.

The mission of the Science Mill is to give all students the confidence, tools and support to reach their full potential as a productive member of a 21st century technical workforce. By engaging underserved students in economically disadvantaged communities in collaborative, hands-on, inquiry- based approaches to STEM education, we not only engage students, but will also elevate prospects of students, including those at schools with limited resources, to experience a new level of interest and excitement about the importance and relevancy of science in their world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the loss of a valuable resource to local students and their families. The role science museums play in economically disadvantaged communities cannot be overestimated. Museum programs support school districts with classroom, afterschool and summer informal STEM programs as well as a being a place for families to experience the excitement of science through hands-on engagement with exhibits and programs. As we contemplate what the school year will look like, it is clear that now more than ever students living in these communities will need increased access to STEM enrichment programs. Najim funding has provided us much needed support to maintain museum staff and the development and launch of our virtual programs that support these students.

4: What needs were addressed?

The pandemic has decimated an already weakened fabric of STEM education in economically disadvantaged communities. The challenges of the pandemic--and the vast educational inequities it has unveiled--have only strengthened our resolve to create equitable access to STEM programs. Our team has been using the museum as a testbed to create innovative new programs designed to bring the wonder and excitement of a science museum to students, teachers and families, no matter where they live or learn.

The Science Mill quickly pivoted staff and resources to find new ways to serve students and their families virtually, resulting in three new programs.

The Explorer Zone was a weekly online series that brought museum exhibits, STEM learning, DIY projects, and ideas for future STEM careers to students while learning at home.

Labs-on-the-Go, available this fall, is a new innovative program that brings the Science Mill field trip experience to underserved students. It is a unique blending of virtual and hands-on STEM enrichment activities for upper elementary and middle school students in communities that have little access to a science museum and informal STEM education programs.

Virtual Professional Development (<https://www.sciencemill.org/smpd>) is an online professional development program for STEM educators. Teachers will explore innovative resources and proven methods that through a lens of cultural diversity ignite curiosity in the classroom, spark students' excitement in STEM learning, and illuminate pathways to future careers. Consisting of six modules, this program is currently being developed and the full series will be available in November.

5: What method of evaluation did you use to monitor and measure the project's outcome and what are the result?

We have monitored online engagement of the eight Explorer Zone episodes (one each week), which resulted in over 30,000 views on the Science Mill website and social media. The Explorer Zone also received recognition and shares from many local STEM organizations such as UTEACH Outreach, Geek Families-San Antonio, Texas Hill Country Magazine, Hill Country Sun, and more.

An advantage of virtual programming is the ability to engage with those outside of our normal geographic reach. One mother from South Dakota shared the following on Instagram about the Explorer Zone: "...One of our little guy is watching a phenomenal video on dinosaurs. One of his favorite things! @sciencemilltx THANK YOU for unlimited access to your videos!!! They are awesome and informative- even our 3 yr old now remembers facts about dinosaurs! Our kids have spent lots of time watching them right beside me..."

6: Do you plan to continue this project, and if so, how do you plan to sustain it?

Our team has been hard at work, using the museum as a testbed to create innovative new programs designed to bring the wonder and excitement of a science museum to students, teachers and families, no matter where they live or learn. We plan to continue both virtual programming, as well as in-person camp and afterschool programming.

Planning for our STEM summer camps in 2021 is underway. We plan to continue our model of bringing exciting, creative, and entrepreneurial programming to kids in economically disadvantaged communities throughout central and south Texas. The supplies and equipment that were purchased prior to the pandemic will be utilized in the 2021 summer camp program. This will result in a decrease in overall camp costs for the coming year.

Our commitment to bring equitable access for STEM learning to all students is greater than ever. We are moving forward with our school district partners to bring programs to their students beginning this fall and carrying forward into the summer. Funding for our summer camp program has come from a variety of sources that include individual donors, corporate and family foundations and federal grants. Additionally, this summer, a number of our programs were to be funded directly from school districts. We see this as an increasingly more important source of funds, as school districts are looking to sources of informal education providers to help support the needs of their students.

7: Please provide any other comments or information relevant to this grant.

Although we were incredibly disappointed to not be able to offer summer camp programs this summer, we thank the Najim Charitable Fund for your support which helped keep the Science Mill safe from permanent closure when many museums throughout the United States are facing that very reality. Our ability to be nimble, creative and innovative in bringing STEM learning to students during these times of isolation has allowed us to continue to be an important component of their education.

If we want a nation where our future leaders, neighbors, and workers have the ability to understand and solve some of the complex challenges of today and tomorrow, and to meet the demands of the dynamic and evolving workforce, building students' skills, content knowledge, and fluency in STEM fields is essential. We must also make sure that, no matter where children live, they have access to quality learning environments.

Budget Comments:

We were far enough along in the planning process before the forced cancellation of camps that supplies had been purchased. These supplies and curriculum will be used for 2021 summer camps. The remaining \$30,135 that was budgeted for staffing, evaluation and overhead were transferred to help cover salaries for education and creative teams to produce the Explorer Zone and other virtual programs, as well as keep the museum open to the public. If the Najim Charitable Fund will consider supporting the same program in 2021, the cost will be credited with the technology, supplies and curriculum development costs.

8: Please provide an updated detailed projected budget with expenses for the received grant. Also include the totals for the budgeted and actual amount. Explain any discrepancies between the budgeted and the actual expenses for the project.

Line Item Description	Total Project Funds Allocation	Najim Requested Funds	Project Funds Actual	Najim Funds Allocation
Staffing: Training & Teaching	\$298,000	\$26,510	\$0	\$0
Technology & Equipment	\$63,000	\$8,000	\$11,755	\$7,755
Supplies	\$78,000	\$6,460	\$10,300	\$6,460
Logistics Support	\$57,000	\$1,580	\$30,000	\$0
Curriculum Development	\$26,000	\$650	\$30,000	\$650

Registration & Parent Communications	\$25,000	\$1,000	\$7,500	\$0
Evaluation	\$33,000	\$500	\$7,000	\$0
Overhead/Insurance	\$20,000	\$300	\$5,000	\$0
TOTAL:	\$600,000	\$45,000	\$101,555	\$14,865
Signature Holly Barton				