

Center for Advancement of Informal Science Education (2016-2021)

Overview:

The Center for Advancement of Informal Science Education (CAISE) is a resource center funded through a cooperative agreement with the NSF Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) Program. The current period of funding builds on the work of CAISE since it began in 2007 to provide support to professional audiences in informal STEM learning (ISL) including professionals working in science centers and museums, zoos and aquariums, parks and botanical gardens, nature centers, events and festivals, libraries, making and tinkering spaces, media, digital learning environments, youth and out-of-school time programs, and community programs. Specifically, CAISE characterizes, highlights, and helps connect audiences to evidence-based informal STEM learning work through curated resources (e.g., project descriptions, research literature, access to evaluation reports, blogs) on the InformalScience.org website. CAISE also serves a role in convening inquiry groups, workshops, and meeting, including the bi-annual AISL principal investigator meetings.

In this current award, CAISE's goals include advancing and better integrating the fields of informal STEM Learning and Science Communication by specifically:

- 1) Broadening participation in both fields;
- 2) Deepening links between research and practices; and
- 3) Building capacity in evaluation and measurement

Scope of Work:

Co-PI Dr. Martin Storksdieck will work in collaboration with partners from CAISE, the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Washington to implement the five-year project. Dr. Storksdieck's work on this project is supported at the Center for Research on Lifelong STEM Learning by Drs. Julie Risien and Kelly Riedinger.

CAISE's main activities for this funding cycle include the development of cross-sector task forces to address each of the three main goals. The task forces are populated by field leaders and emerging leaders in both the Informal STEM Learning and Science Communication fields who are responsible for conducting field-level analyses, engaging stakeholders, and creating resources and roadmaps for future efforts. The project will take advantage of existing communication channels, conferences, convenings, and the InformalScience.org website for disseminating the work of each task force.

The Center also received a supplemental award to investigate the connections between people and ideas between the informal science education and science communication communities. Thus study has resulted in a [report summarizing and interpreting survey results, which can be found on the CAISE website](#) and broad access to interactive visualizations that show the connections between the two distinct, but overlapping professional communities.

<https://khoke.kumu.io/visualizing-connections-and-influences-across-the-ise-and-scicomm-communities>

Broader Impacts:

The CAISE resource center was developed to build and advance the field of Informal STEM Learning. CAISE provides infrastructure for the ISE field, offers resources, and helps to create connectivity among professionals working in ISL. In this funding cycle, CAISE will expand to continue advancing and better connecting the ISL and Science Communication fields.