

CSW Network Quarterly Report July – December 2014

During the last two quarters of 2014 (July – December), the CSW Network took several key steps to solidifying our position as an independent 501c3 organization. We continued an ambitious program of professional development opportunities for staff, maintained valuable partnerships on behalf of sites, and formed exciting new relationships with other organizations in the field of informal science education. We also provided emergency services to two CSW sites facing challenging circumstances. The following is a detailed report of services and support we provided to our Member CSW sites, according to our four major strategic goals:

Strategic Goal #1: Craft Vision and Strategy for CSWs Statewide

Necessary Infrastructure

Part of the vision of a statewide Network of Community Science Workshops is maintaining a strong, viable, and well-respected nonprofit organization. Two key pieces of back-end administrative work support that goal: audits and correct IRS filings. While these aren't glamorous, they take a lot of Network staff energy, and they're absolutely crucial to our long-term ability to serve CSW sites. We completed our first audit as an independent entity in October of 2014, and the good news is that our financial management practices passed the rigorous tests applied by our auditor. Combined with the past two years of parallel financial reviews of our practices while under fiscal sponsorship, we now have three years of records to share with funders. In November, we were able to draw upon the FY14 audit to file our (extremely complicated!) 990 forms with the IRS, and to request a change in our public charity status. We are still waiting to hear confirmation back from the IRS on our switch from Supporting Organization to regular publicly supported 501c3, and we look forward to greatly increasing our ability to attract funding once the change is confirmed.

Staff Viewpoints

Much more exciting work on the vision and strategy for CSWs came out of our staff retreat (see Professional Development section, below) in August. We asked educators from all sites in the Network to work together to define CSW values in the areas of Facilitation, Space, and Core Values. It was an exhilarating, boisterous, argumentative and passionate exercise, as our educators care deeply about their work and they wanted to get it right. Some highlights from their work (the full notes are attached as an appendix) include the following:

Facilitation: *“Students are in charge, not us, we just make it possible for them to succeed”*

Space: *“Open space to work and be creative”*



CSW Educators work together to define the core values of our work

Core Values: *“Science is the vehicle, not necessarily the product. Through teaching our model of experiential learning, we try to encourage curiosity, respect, passion and the students to connect with and be interested in the world around them. For students to realize their connection to each other, and to their community at large. We hope that by modeling our values, students will disseminate them outwards through the community.”*

Network Framework Agreement

We signed Supported Site Agreements with all our Member CSW sites at the end of 2014. This document provides the template for the relationship between a CSW and the Network, clarifying roles and responsibilities, as well as laying out a detailed description of the CSW model of educational programming. We anticipate this document will be a valuable tool for communicating basic expectations as we start up and recruit new sites into our Network.

Strategic Goal #2: Provide Staff Development to CSW Sites

Staff Retreat

In the last two quarters of 2014, we continued to provide a variety of professional development opportunities for CSW educators. For the first time ever, we were able to offer 28 staff from all CSW sites the chance to get together for a two-day overnight camping retreat. During the retreat, we guided staff through a series of exercises designed to give them a forum to name the challenges they face every day, and facilitated time to work in teams to address those challenges. The depth, clarity, and passion of the conversations that ensued were truly breathtaking –staff debated everything from the best way to engage girls whose parents enforce traditional gender roles, to the impact of how new staff is trained, to the role of weapons in our neighborhoods and in the projects we make in the workshops. The final exercise was value mapping (see graphic above), where staff showed the strength of their voices and their expertise in the work that they do. We hope to do an annual staff retreat on this scale every year, as the feedback was overwhelmingly positive from staff.

Conferences

We were able to send staff members to professional development conferences for the second year in a row, with each site having the option to send two people to either CSTA in December or the STEM Symposium in September. While not every site opted to participate, those who did reported a boost in new curriculum and facilitation ideas to take back to the workshop.

Shadow Visits (cumulative visits since September 2013as of Dec 2014)

Greenfield CSW staff visited San Francisco, and hosted Watsonville staff for repeated coaching and mentoring sessions.

MSW staff visited Greenfield to help build out their new space.

Watsonville ESW staff visited targeted programs in San Francisco, Fresno, and Sanger, giving staff the opportunity to observe programs and facilitators in their particular area of practice.

Fresno CSW staff visited San Francisco and Watsonville to observe school field trips and drop in programs.

Sanger CSW staff visited drop-in programs in San Francisco, Watsonville, and Fresno, bringing back ideas and adapting their own rapidly developing drop-in program to include best practices from other sites.

Dan Sudran offered an intensive science content training to the Fresno and Sanger CSW staff over two days in November, bringing new curriculum ideas and materials developed this year at MSW to the Central Valley. Shadow visit funds also supported broad participation in the design and build-out of Fresno's brand new building at the Highway City Community Science Workshop, with staff from Sanger, Watsonville, and Greenfield bringing their ideas and expertise to a full, fun day of building exhibits in December.



CSW Staff from around the state work together to build exhibits at the new Highway City CSW in Fresno

Strategic Goal #3: Document Learning and Evaluate Success

CSW Alumni Stories

We kicked off our CSW Stories documentation project in December, as our Network Coordinator started contacting CSW alumni to record their thoughts on what the workshop meant to them as kids. So far, he's interviewed four alumni from Watsonville, and he's in touch with two more alumni in San Francisco. Many of these folks are in college pursuing science, or have technical careers such as machining. Here are some great quotes from our CSW graduates:

"For kids growing up in Watsonville, I think science workshop is the only place where kids can see the fun part of science".

"I think [science workshop] opened my eyes more because now I can see that instead of going to someone, I try to figure it out, and if not I'll ask someone and fix it myself."

"I think it was my proudest moment when my brother came to me for car help. And that was because of this. Because he asked me. "Do you know how to do this?" and I said, "Yes, I do!" So I helped, him, I was like YES I felt so accomplished, and I think it encouraged that... It feels really nice to hear that especially because I am a girl, so it is not something you are accustomed to. You'd think he would go to my dad, but he came to me, and it is just a proud moment for me."

"When I see something that isn't really science related, because it doesn't need to be, but just anything that reminds me of this place, it just brings back memories and then I question it: How does this function

or how can I make that work... It helps you think outside the box basically, and it helps you question things and want to learn more things... "

Look out for the first drafts of published full interviews with these alumni in the next month or so, as we'll be asking for feedback on how best to present the truly inspiring and heart-warming stories we're hearing about CSW programs' impact on youth.

Research and Evaluation

The CSW Network continued to coordinate a research partnership between the Exploratorium and the Fresno and Watsonville CSW sites. Staff and Site Directors from these sites attended a three-day tinkering training at the Exploratorium in July, where they shared our collective CSW expertise in tinkering, making, and exploratory learning with people from around the country, as well as picking up new activities to try with our students. At a working meeting in September at the Exploratorium, our research group worked on developing professional development tools for training educators in tinkering. Some of these tools have already been tested at the Fresno and Watsonville sites to improve our own practice, and will eventually carry our values out into the broader field of informal science education. Both Watsonville and Fresno sites will receive \$18,000 in funding through this partnership in FY15. Network staff is working with our Exploratorium partners to find additional sources of funding to support our continued participation next fiscal year.

Our internal evaluation efforts slowed down in the last half of 2014, but will pick up again in the new year with an infusion of support in the form of a surprise \$15,000 grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation for evaluating the impact of CSW programs, which we received in December. Site Directors provided feedback to Network staff on best practices for gathering data at their meeting in December, which will be incorporated into our next steps as we continue to refine our internal evaluation strategy.

Strategic Goal #4: Facilitate Fundraising and Marketing

Network Projects

The CSW Network was awarded our first NSF grant since forming our organization – it's a tiny one (\$5,000), but still good news! We're Co-Applicants on a small planning grant headed by a coalition of education researchers in the US and the UK. The goal of the grant is to design a Youth Equity and Access Research and Practice Agenda for the field of informal science education, and the CSW Network is the Community Spaces representative for the US side of the project. We'll be meeting three times in the next nine months to set priorities for how to do better research in this area, and then our team will probably re-apply for a larger grant to fund full-scale research into the questions we've raised – research that the CSW sites can play a role in. We also completed an application for an NSF sub-award with SRI designing tools to promote inquiry in afterschool, which will bring \$300,000 to the Network and the participating sites (Sanger, MSW, Watsonville) over five years if awarded. We also have pending applications out

to SanDisk for Network support and to the California Whale Tail License Plate program for funding whale visits to schools around the state.

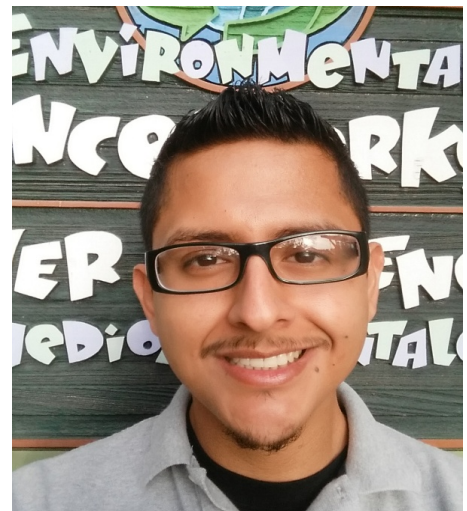
The Network continued to spread the word about Science Workshops through our website, twitter, and facebook online presences, as well as in presentations at the annual CA STEM Symposium and the Association of Science and Technology Centers conference.

Site Support

Our Packard Organizational Effectiveness proposal was awarded in August, and the Greenfield CSW is already working with a local consultant to boost their fundraising capacity and reach to local businesses and foundations. The Mission Science Workshop weathered a difficult financial period, and has spent the last two quarters of 2014 steadily fundraising. By working with Network staff to analyze their total budget needs, MSW was able to put together a cost-based price sheet for their school programs, which has helped them to bring in more money from school contracts *and* to attract funders to support programs at schools that can't pay, by providing a clear budget rationale for their requests.

Emergency Site Support

Two big challenges hit the CSW sites during the last two quarters: Our Watsonville CSW Director left to go to graduate school, and the City of Fresno threatened to fire all the most experienced educators on the CSW staff. The Watsonville CSW was left without a Site Director for four months, during which time day-to-day supervision of personnel, scheduling, staff meetings, and communication with partners and funders was taken on by CSW Network staff. In addition, our Executive Director participated closely in the process of recruiting, interviewing, and hiring the new Site Director. The Network was able to negotiate a contract with the City paying our nonprofit for these services – another landmark precedent for how the Network can sustainably step in to provide intensive support at critical moments to keep CSW programs going. We are happy to announce that our new Site Director, Jose Sandoval, began work in the last week of December. He comes to his new role after four years as an educator in the Fresno CSW, and promises to be an inspiring and inspired leader for the Watsonville program.



Welcome to Jose Sandoval, New Watsonville CSW Site Director and former Fresno CSW educator

The Network was able to help the City of Fresno, the Sanger CSW, and the Fresno CSW negotiate a deal to divert a portion of the City's science education contracts to the independent Sanger CSW, so that senior personnel could continue to work at their schools without violating the City's hours limits. This is a landmark precedent for all our City-affiliated science

workshops, as it provides a template for how revenue can be moved from the public sector to a private nonprofit to everyone's mutual benefit, but most especially for the kids by keeping quality programs going.

The CSW Network faced a cash flow problem during this period, as all four of the major prospective funding sources we were hoping for fell through. We dropped below the six month balance of unrestricted funds we need available in order to send grants out to sites, and two of our CSWs had not completed their Grant Agreement paperwork in time to receive payments before this point was reached. One of the four funders did let us know that they would be funding us again in May of 2015. We took steps to solve the problem by: adding duties to existing Network staff where we had planned to hire new staff (Alumni Stories Documentation and Evaluation); reducing some grants slightly; and working out a payment schedule to delay payment of the full balance on the grants until the end of this fiscal year. With these actions, Network staff was able to re-work the budgets to ensure that the Greenfield CSW will still receive \$30,000 in support from the Network in FY15, and the Fresno CSW will receive \$33,000 in support in FY15.

Upcoming CSW Network Activities:

In the next half of the fiscal year, we'll be taking on a few new projects, and continuing other existing projects. We have \$15,000 to spend on computers for our sites, and we'll be compiling feedback from the needs assessment we conducted this past fall to make a plan for distributing this equipment. One use of these computers will be to set up digital sign-in stations at each CSW, greatly simplifying the collection of one of our most important metrics of impact: attendance. We'll be picking up steam on our internal evaluation, working to collect coherent data sets across all sites, so that we can make statements about our impact as a whole to funders and supporters. Our Professional Development program will continue with a CSW staff Next Generation Leaders training (January 24th), and an all-staff training on overcoming gender stereotypes in science education led by the National Girls' Collaborative Project (February 14th). We'll also continue our Alumni Stories project – please send us contact info for any alumni you can think of from your programs. We are especially interested in CSW graduates from Greenfield, Fresno, and Sanger. These can be teen or college student staff members who have now moved on to further their studies, or adults who came as children, or current teen staff who participated as children... anyone with a great CSW story to tell. Finally, we're all looking forward to the grand opening of the new Highway City Community Science Workshop in Fresno on February 13th, where the Network will be well represented by visiting staff and Site Directors.