

GENIAL

Summary of Summit Proceedings

With generous support from the National Science Foundation, the Exploratorium held the [Generating Engagement and New Initiatives for All Latinos \(GENIAL\) Summit](#) on June 5–6, 2017, in San Francisco, California. The goals of the GENIAL Summit were to:

- Identify needs and opportunities for Latinos in informal science learning (ISL) environments.
- Facilitate and strengthen professional relationships.
- Identify recommendations, emerging research questions, and actionable insights with an outlook toward the future.
- Contribute to a more informed ISL field.

A total of [91 participants](#), a mix of practitioners, community leaders, media specialists, government officials, policy professionals, and researchers from across the United States and Puerto Rico participated in the Summit.

This document summarizes the proceedings of the GENIAL Summit. A [full report](#) of the proceedings is also available.

Working with [eight external advisors, the Exploratorium’s GENIAL team](#) organized the Summit around five major strands that are central to thinking about how to engage Latino audiences in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM¹):

- Latino Audiences
- Marketing, Communications, and Media
- Community Collaboration and Empowerment
- Organizational Change
- Relevant STEAM Experiences

Each strand was guided by its own “big idea,” which was co-developed by the strand leaders and panelists. Each strand had a different format, including a mix of panel discussions, presentations, interviews, and audience Q&A. The full [GENIAL report](#) describes the strand proceedings in detail.

STRAND	STRAND LEADERS	PANELISTS	BIG IDEA
Latino Audiences	Cecilia Garibay Verónica García-Luis	Cecilia Garibay José González Patricia Lannes	<i>Understanding the Nuanced Diversity of Latino Audiences</i>
Marketing, Communications, and Media	Lorraine Yglesias Julie Nunn	Carolina Echeverría Jesús Chávez Lorraine Yglesias	<i>The Role of Marketing Communications in Connecting Latino Audiences with STEAM</i>
Community Collaboration and Empowerment	Salvador Acevedo Paul Dusenberry	Antonia Franco Santiago Ruiz Maddie Correa Zeigler	<i>Designing Programming with, as Opposed to for, Latino Communities</i>
Organizational Change	Laura Huerta Migus	Marilee Jennings	<i>How Does a Mainstream Organization Create Inclusive Organizational Systems?</i>
Relevant STEAM Experiences	Cheryl Lani Juárez Verónica Núñez	Juliana Ospina Cano Verónica Núñez Antonio Tijerino	<i>ISL/ STEAM Experiences Are Not One Size Fits All</i>

1 The GENIAL team, advisors, and panelists agreed that it was important to broaden the STEM content focus to include the arts as an effective strategy to engage Latino audiences in informal science learning.

The GENIAL team and advisors designed the Summit to maximize participant interaction and input, and to identify a concrete set of next steps for the field. To this end, the Summit included three breakout sessions where GENIAL participants reflected on panel discussions. In each session, participants discussed the same three questions:

1. What emerged during the panel discussion that was new to you?
2. How did the panel content shift, or not shift, your thinking about your work?
3. What needs to be done next (recommendations, emerging research questions, and actionable insights)?

To build consensus around a focused set of action items, participants' responses to question 3 were compiled, each participant voted on their top three priorities, and the results were synthesized across all participants and all breakout sessions. The results of that synthesis are summarized in the section [What Needs to Be Done Next?](#) and elaborated on in the full [GENIAL report](#).

KEY THEMES FROM THE GENIAL SUMMIT

Looking across the different strands of the Summit, several major themes emerged. These themes of understanding and respecting Latino audiences, building trust and relationships, co-creating activities and initiatives with Latino communities, risk-taking, and cultivating and valuing diversity in organizations captured the tone and recurring discussions at the Summit. They also are reflected in the set of priority action items that GENIAL participants co-developed.

UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECTING LATINO AUDIENCES

From the opening strand to the final session, the fundamental need to understand and respect Latino audiences came up many times and in many different ways.

NOT ONE SIZE FITS ALL

A key takeaway from the Summit was the importance of recognizing the rich diversity that exists within the Latino community. Along these lines, a strong message from the Latino Audiences and Organizational Change strands was that Latinos are diverse individuals, not an audience. Museums and science centers should strive to understand the nuanced complexity of the Latino community. Panelists in the Relevant STEAM Experiences strand explored the idea of “not one size fits all” in depth, and concluded that diversity within the Latino community requires institutions to be intentional about their goals, keep listening all the time, recognize that people are ever-changing, and be adaptive and agile.

Diversity in the Latino community reflects the complexity of Latino culture and identity. The Latino Audiences panel emphasized the need to understand and value that complexity. As panelist Patricia Lannes said, “When we simplify, we dishonor. People feel alienated and it doesn’t work.” During the breakout discussions, GENIAL participants agreed that assumptions and generalities cause difficulties. The panels reminded participants to “look at your community to understand their culture,” and “[really get to] know the audiences you’re trying to engage.”

POWER DYNAMICS

Understanding and respecting Latino audiences requires an awareness of power dynamics within institutions, and in society more broadly. A message from the Latino Audiences panel was that people or institutions in positions of power must understand their place of privilege and power as they engage Latino audiences. Reducing power imbalances might involve respecting the way people self-identify, and/or allowing them to decide which cultural markers (such as food, clothing, or holidays) are important to them, rather than making decisions for them based on assumptions, stereotypes, or convenience. In the Community Collaboration and Empowerment strand, panelist Antonia Franco recommended addressing power dynamics head-on by having honest conversations about the value that Latino communities and organizations bring.

THE ROLE OF DATA AND MARKETING

The Marketing, Communications, and Media strand explored the power of data for understanding an audience. Specifically, the panelists agreed that audience research about affinity and interest in STEAM can help informal science learning organizations understand the nuances of a segmented audience such as the Latino community. They discussed different forms of data and explained that data collection does not have to be extensive or expensive to be useful. As one example, Marketing, Communications, and Media panelist Jesús Chávez explained that mitú, Inc., surveyed its audience using a new scale for measuring multigroup ethnic and American identity in the United States, and learned that Latinos were the only group that scored high on both the American index and the multicultural index. Based on these data, mitú, Inc., refers to its audience as 200%: 100% Latino and 100% American. They use this knowledge along with other data to write content for all audiences through a Latino lens. In a different session, Organizational Change panelist Marilee Jennings shared an example of how she used data to make the case for her museum's renowned Latino Audience Diversity Initiative.

Marketing, Communications, and Media panelists also pointed out that because Spanish-language media are so powerful, they can be an effective way to build relationships and gain an understanding of the community. The idea of using marketing and social media to open a dialogue and build a relationship with the community, rather than just to advertise, was a revelation for many GENIAL participants.

BUILDING TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS

Every strand of the GENIAL Summit strongly emphasized the need to build trust and relationships with the Latino community to meaningfully engage Latino audiences in STEAM. Creating a sense of value is necessary to attract an audience, and institutions must become a trusted member of the community to establish their value.

Relationships based on trust was a central theme of the Community Collaboration and Empowerment strand. As described in the following section, the panelists placed trust, respect, and relationships at the core of their recommendations for co-creating activities and initiatives with Latino communities.

The Marketing, Communications, and Media strand explored how the media can help build trust with audiences. One way to build trust and become part of the community is to engage people where they are rather than trying to bring them to the institution. This goal can be accomplished by embedding the message into

a medium that the audience trusts. For example, one of the museums represented at GENIAL has a weekly segment about everyday science on Univision. The segment has introduced the museum to the Univision audience as a trusted resource. As another example, embedding a message in a local radio show where the DJ understands the institution and has a strong connection with listeners can be more powerful than placing a 30-second advertising spot.

Panelists from nearly every strand emphasized the long-term nature of relationship building. Meaningfully engaging Latino audiences is a long-term commitment, especially in larger organizations, where the shifts need to happen at many levels. The breakout discussions reinforced this point.

CO-CREATING ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES WITH LATINO COMMUNITIES

Co-creating activities and initiatives with Latino communities is a natural extension of engaging Latino audiences in STEAM. A key goal of co-creation is to connect the content with the experiences, values, and interests of the community. Co-creation is important for informal science learning institutions because it can help reduce power imbalances by eliminating the idea of “us” and “them.” Moreover, institutions working together with their communities will achieve the greatest change.

The Latino Audiences strand linked co-creation to sovereignty, which the panelists defined as institutions understanding, respecting, and valuing other ways of knowing. Relevant questions about sovereignty include:

- How does a museum or other institution open up and share its resources?
- How do I become part of the community rather than just serving it?

As mentioned, co-creation was a predominant focus of the Community Collaboration and Empowerment strand. Together, the panelists identified six guiding principles for co-creating or designing programming with a community. These principles incorporate previously discussed themes of understanding, respect, trust, and relationships. They are:

1. Actively seek and include the knowledge base of the audience from planning and through to all phases of the initiative.
2. Identify connectors who are respected in their communities to serve as cultural brokers, and seek their input throughout the process.
3. Build trust with the audience, which takes time.
4. Understand the community.
5. Recognize power dynamics within and outside your institution.
6. Respect.

GENIAL participants recognized that engaging Latino audiences in co-creation requires an institution-wide commitment. This commitment can start at the grassroots level, with staff making the case to the CEO about the value of connecting with Latino audiences, or, as discussed in the Organizational Change strand, it can begin with the CEO making the case to the board of directors. Regardless of who makes the case about the value of engaging Latino audiences, panelists in the Marketing, Communications, and Media and Organizational Change strands agreed that data can be a valuable asset.

RISK-TAKING

Risk-taking at the individual and institutional levels was a strong focus of the Latino Audiences and Relevant STEAM Experiences strands. The prevailing view among these panelists was that innovation cannot happen without risk-taking, because operating from established practices or places of comfort does not leave room for learning and change. In this regard, some panelists viewed co-creation as a form of risk-taking because it requires willingness to experiment and move outside of established practices to authentically collaborate and innovate with others.

Panelists on the Organizational Change and Relevant STEAM Experiences strands bravely shared risks they have taken to:

- host a religious celebration in a children’s museum, and weather the subsequent criticism (Marilee Jennings, Organizational Change)
- find her voice as a Latina with a unique working style in a science museum (Verónica Núñez, Relevant STEAM Experiences)
- exercise her voice as a Latina in power to devote time to understanding why a new program was not initially successful, and develop a plan for improving the program (Juliana Ospina Cano, Relevant STEAM Experiences)
- have the confidence to fail when attempting to make a bold impact with limited resources (Antonio Tijerino, Relevant STEAM Experiences)

These panelists and the Latino Audiences panelists acknowledged the difficulty of taking risks. A key message from the Latino Audiences strand was that risk-taking requires trust to share ideas and move forward as a team into potentially unknown territory. It also requires accepting the possibility of failure. The reward, however, lies in the discovery and magic of diving into something that can go in unexpected and innovative directions.

GENIAL participants appreciated the value and challenges of risk-taking, and many reported feeling empowered to begin taking more risks as professionals. They were also inspired to reframe “failure” as a positive part of the learning process.

CULTIVATING AND VALUING DIVERSITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

Discussions in the Community Collaboration and Empowerment, Organizational Change, and Relevant STEAM Experiences strands served as a reminder that when organizations are not diverse, much responsibility and burden is placed on the few staff members who reflect the community. These panelists agreed that the responsibility for engaging Latino audiences in STEAM should rest with everyone in an institution, not just Latino staff.

Increasing the diversity of the informal science learning workforce was universally identified as a pressing need. Although hiring diverse staff is undoubtedly important, the different strands also added some nuances to that discussion. For example, the Organizational Change strand highlighted the importance of supporting a diverse workforce to meaningfully engage with diverse communities. That support requires an ongoing commitment of resources and training. In addition, the Relevant STEAM Experiences and Community

Collaboration and Empowerment strands discussed the need to develop more Latino/a leaders, which requires a commitment to developing leadership pathways and providing training and support along those pathways.

As an example, Organizational Change panelist Marilee Jennings described her efforts to increase diversity at the San Jose Children’s Discovery Museum by promoting from within and providing necessary professional development. Finally, Relevant STEAM Experiences strand leader Verónica Núñez shared her experiences of finding her voice within her institution, which pointed to a broader need for institutions to value the cultural contributions and ways of knowing of diverse staff members.

As Community Collaboration and Empowerment panelist Antonia Franco said, “Culture is an asset. It’s okay to show your culture. You are a great scientist when you bring your whole self to your work. You don’t leave your culture at the lab door.”

As reflected in their recommendations under What Needs to Be Done Next?, GENIAL participants agreed that a more diverse workforce and leadership structure are needed at all levels of informal science institutions, and that training and other supports are key to meaningful engagement and co-creation with Latino audiences.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

An important goal of the GENIAL Summit was to “[i]dentify recommendations, emerging research questions, and actionable insights with an outlook toward the future.” The GENIAL team and advisors designed a process to accomplish this goal that is described in the [full GENIAL Summit report](#). The consensus-building process revolved around the following question, which participants discussed in each of their three breakout sessions over the course of the Summit:

What needs to be done next (actionable insights, recommendations, emerging research questions)?

Based on the discussions and syntheses of this question, the following 10 action items emerged as the most important to GENIAL participants. These items do not appear in a ranked order. They are elaborated on in the [full report](#).

1. Identify, acknowledge, and address issues associated with the existing power structure.
2. Make the internal argument for the value of engaging Latinx communities.
3. Engage in sustainability planning for organizational leadership and programming.
4. Increase board and staff diversity.
5. Support and empower staff to engage Latino audiences.
6. Embrace risk-taking.
7. Recognize and incorporate the values of the community in ways that authentically involve them in the development of activities and initiatives.
8. Develop a deep listening process among all institutional partners to create a flexible, collaborative strategy.

9. Ensure that activities and initiatives emphasize parents, family engagement, and role models for young people.
10. Keep GENIAL participants connected in ways that advance the field.

The Exploratorium GENIAL team and participants expressed a strong desire to build on the momentum of the GENIAL Summit and move the conversation forward. As a first step toward this goal, the Exploratorium's [GENIAL website](#) includes information about the Summit and its participants, along with related materials, such as a list of resources related to each strand of the Summit, [articles](#) written by the strand leaders, and the [full GENIAL Summit report](#).