

Nanotechnology Frontiers at 20 years of NNI


Proceedings, December 1, 2020

<http://www.nseresearch.org/2020/>

NISE Net: 20 Year Engaging the Public in Learning about the National Nanotechnology Initiative

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Strategic Initiatives

 Museum of Science.

Abstract

At the launch of the National Nanotechnology Initiative in university research centers nationwide enlisted educators and exhibit developers at nearby science museums to figure out how to engage public audiences in the abstract and complex emerging fields of nanoscale science, engineering, and technology. In 2005, the National Science Foundation funded a partnership of the Museum of Science, the Science Museum of Minnesota, and the Exploratorium to form the Nanoscale Informal Science Education Network. The NISE Network brought hundreds of science and children's museum educators together with nanoscale researchers and students across the country to develop informal education and outreach materials and to engage publics in learning about the nanoscale. The NISE Net distributed 1,650 NanoDays kits to 468 different organizations over eight years reaching about 1.1 million visitors per year, and 93 copies of the "Nano" mini-exhibition, which has been reaching 9-10 million additional visitors each year. Those materials and 121 guides, videos, and other professional development tools have raised the capacity of informal educators and researchers doing public outreach to more successfully engage lay publics in nanoscale science, engineering, and technology. Even after its ten years of funding for nano was over, the NISE Net continued to make the public engagement and professional development resources available online at www.nisenet.org and brought its human resources to new subject matter related to nanotechnology, synthetic biology, chemistry, space and earth science, sustainability and more. The Museum of Science's partnership with Harvard University's nanoscale science and engineering center, which predated the formation of the NISE Net itself, was reborn after NISE Net in the world of quantum research.