



## **Response to Request for Information: Evolving the Network for the National Library of Medicine**

**August 30, 2024**

The Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) is pleased to submit this response to the National Library of Medicine's (NLM's) [Request for Information](#) (RFI) on Evolving the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM).

ASTC is the nonprofit membership organization for science and technology centers and museums and other allied organizations who share our vision for increasing understanding of and engagement with science and technology among all people. Our nearly 600 members in all fifty states and in several dozen countries around the world collectively engage more than 110 million people each year and are key stakeholders where science meets the public.

ASTC was pleased to work with the NNLM on *Communities for Immunity*, a 2021–2022 project supported by the U.S. Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which activated museums and libraries across the country to boost confidence in their communities around COVID-19 vaccines. We came to appreciate NNLM's ability to reach a wide array of libraries in communities across the country and feel that there is an opportunity to build on that existing network.

Consistent with NLM's strategic plan and specifically the goal of reaching more people with enhanced dissemination and engagement pathways, we encourage NLM to consider ways it could engage a wider diversity and number of partners by expanding the reach of NNLM. We are especially interested in the opportunity for science centers and museums to also connect with the network, but there is likely a wider range of community-based organizations that would also benefit from a direct connection with NLM.

This does not necessarily mean that NNLM needs to create additional resources, training, and funding opportunities for these additional groups, but instead work to explicitly open them up to a wider array of participants.

As an example of the kinds of contributions that science centers and museums might make, NNLM might encourage them to add panels to existing and new exhibitions on biomedical and health-related topics that highlight NLM resources and connect the public with NLM data and resources. NLM might also engage science centers and museums for expertise and research on how NLM could best provide information in a way that will resonate with public audiences. Indeed, our members are expert at meeting their audiences where they are and have deep expertise in engaging their communities around complex scientific topics, including those that may around public concern.

Overall, ASTC encourages NNLM to consider opportunities to expand their reach beyond libraries to also include museums and other organizations that can help engage the public on issues relevant to biomedical and health information consistent with NLM's mission.

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Founded in 1973, the [Association of Science and Technology Centers](#) (ASTC) is a network of nearly 600 science and technology centers and museums, and allied organizations, engaging more than 110 million people annually across North America and in several dozen countries. With its members and partners, ASTC works towards a vision of increasing understanding of and engagement with science and technology among all people.



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