



Cultural Competence Learning Institute: An Expanded Reach

Executive Summary

March 2022

Overview

The Cultural Competence Learning Institute (CCLI): An Expanded Reach is an initiative with the ultimate goal of developing, tracking, promoting, and recognizing organizational change—both within individual institutions and field-wide—in order to build museums’ capacity to engage with issues of inclusion and cultural competence internally and externally.

The Cultural Competence Learning Institute (CCLI) is a collaboration between Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose (CDM), Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC), Association of Children’s Museums (ACM), and Garibay Group. With the support of a 2012 IMLS 21st Century Museum Professionals grant, Cultural Competence Learning Institute (CCLI) developed and tested a professional development model to increase participating museums’ organizational capacities around diversity, inclusion, and culture. Through this initial funding and the year following grant completion, four cohorts of museums completed the program. CCLI has continued to operate beyond its initial funding.

For the current initiative, the specific cohort program goals for *CCLI: An Expanded Reach* (IMLS proposal, 2017) included:

- Expanding the scope of CCLI to work with 15–18 museums from across the field
- Continuing to assess the effectiveness of the CCLI cohort program

In addition to the first four cohorts that completed the program during the first cycle of IMLS funding, three additional cohorts, comprising 16 total museums (referred to as cohorts 5–7), completed the program during this second cycle of funding. In total, 34 museums have participated in CCLI since its inception. (Appendix A lists participating museums for each cohort since the beginning of CCLI.)

Garibay Group led the summative evaluation for the initiative. This summary provides key findings for the museum cohort program.

Data were collected from cohorts 1–7 to assess overall program impacts. The data set included surveys, alumni group interviews, document review of strategic initiative plans and cohort museum project presentations. (See Appendix B for details on surveys and interviews conducted.)

Limitations

As with any study, this evaluation had limitations. Staff turnover at museums meant that we were unable to collect data from every participant who completed the program. At three participating museums, in fact, no staff remained who had completed CCLI. Staff turnover was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as many museums had to reduce staff. Despite a robust survey response rate (62%), some museums were not represented. A total of 20 museums are represented in the sample.

Summary of Findings

This evaluation found that CCLI largely succeeded in achieving its goals.

Expanding Reach

CCLI aimed to engage a more diverse group of museums. In prior cohorts (1–4), most participating organizations had been children’s museums or science centers. Of participating cohort 5–7 organizations, just over half (56%) were from children’s museums or science centers. The program also included participants from three regions—Mountain, West South Central, and East South Central—not previously represented in prior cohorts. Thus, this goal was moderately met.

Participating organizations, regardless of type, had positive experiences, suggesting that a wide group of institutions could likely benefit from CCLI. It may be that increased communication about the program to a broader range of museum may help further CCLI’s reach. At the same time, evaluation findings raised related questions about “organizational readiness” (discussed later in this summary) that may provide ideas for how to expand the program’s scope.

Program Outcomes

The evaluation found that CCLI helped catalyze participating museums’ diversity and inclusion work. Program participants reported strong levels of learning from their experiences; CCLI helped them examine their organization’s diversity and inclusion practices. Evaluation document a number of outcomes.

Specifically, participation in the program:

- **Pushed most participating organizations to take concrete action on DEAI.** The CCLI cohort model and structure helped museums develop a more focused approach to their DEAI efforts. This was, in large part, due to the sustained, year-long involvement and focus on a strategic initiative. Findings also suggest that CCLI is making an impact well past a participating organization’s active year in the program. It is especially noteworthy that more than 70% of surveyed cohort museums said they now had a detailed DEAI action plan—compared to only 42% of museums in the National Landscape Study—although only 20% had concrete metrics in place to assess progress.
- **Impelled participating museums to examine and focus on internal organizational practices.** One strength of the program has been to help participants see the relationship between internal and external dimensions of diversity, inclusion, and equity. In particular, the climate survey conducted at the beginning of the process often led museums to refocus their respective strategic initiatives on internal aspects. Participants found this process to be surprising and challenging as well as critical to their progress.

- **Led museums to involve more staff in their diversity and inclusion efforts.** The large majority of participating museums involved staff across the organization in their diversity and inclusion work. Most museums reported post-CCLI that participation in the program had helped shift the museum’s mindset from seeing DEAI as something driven by a few individuals or departments to something that must involve multiple stakeholders
- **Prepared some museums to engage their communities more meaningfully.** Although a less prevalent finding, CCLI seemed to better prepare some participating museums to engage more authentically and equitably with their communities.
- **Helped museums respond to the current context.** CCLI alumni interviewed shared that the program had helped prepare their organizations to respond to challenges of COVID-19, economic hardships, and racial disparities. When asked specifically how the CCLI experience had done this, the general sentiment was that the program had helped them lay the foundation to deal with unexpected change (e.g., addressing equity issues related to pandemic-related staff layoffs). A few felt that this foundation helped them engage with anti-racism and social justice.

Summary of Findings, cont'd.

While these findings show strong opportunities and positive impacts, this evaluation also identified some challenges:

Challenges

- **Organizational Readiness:** Not all museums achieved the same level of success or positive outcomes. Some museums struggled during their participation and, in some cases, were stalled. These findings raise questions about “organizational readiness” and program “fit.”
- **Accountability:** The self-directed nature of the program may not create enough accountability to act on DEAI for some. One strength of CCLI is recognizing that organizations need to set goals based on their unique contexts. There is, however, some tension between not “dictating” what progress should look like and a lack of accountability.
- **Museum Size:** In larger organizations, change appeared to be harder and took more time. (This finding is certainly not unique to CCLI.) Large organizations have many more layers and are often less nimble than mid- and smaller-sized ones. This issue is not unexpected, but in some organizations it was much harder to engage a critical mass of staff in DEAI efforts and in some instances engage top leadership.

Opportunities for Growth

Focus more strongly on equity: Our analysis found that most strategic initiatives fell into the “inclusion” category and fewer into “equity.” We also broadly categorized the extent to which strategic initiatives fell into the “diversity,” “inclusion,” or “equity” phases of work. These are not hard and fast distinctions, and work was done across the board.

The majority of cohort 5-7 museums’ strategic initiatives (13 of 16), for example, could be categorized as focusing primarily on inclusion, while three organizations worked on inclusion and also featured significant components moving toward the equity “space.” (Past cohorts also included some strategic initiatives in the equity area.) It is worth noting that 4 of the 16 organizations did include some staff training or work that included content on areas such as anti-racism work, systems of oppression, or social justice.

A few alumni who reported they are actively engaging now in racial equity and social justice work credited their experiences in CCLI as having been part of the preparation for their current efforts. These are fruitful case studies from which CCLI can learn, particularly in determining the factors that led some organizations to move into this space while others did not. We encourage the project team to further explore these issues as it moves into its next phase of work.

CCLI has a significant opportunity to lean more deeply into the equity space and support participating museums in critically examining their practices from an equity lens. For example, evaluation found that there remain clear opportunities for CCLI to consider how cohort teams can more explicitly engage with concepts of privilege, power, systemic oppression, and equity (among other critical ideas) throughout their program year.

Determine Museum Types to Engage: In reviewing the types of museums that have participated in CCLI, we noted that more “traditional” museums, such as history museums and larger art museums, have not taken part. It is unclear whether this is because more outreach is needed or due to other reasons (perhaps related to program fit). The program team may want to further examine which museums could most benefit from CCLI.

Additional Needs: Interviews with alumni working in museums also identified a number of their current challenges. Perhaps the most pertinent for CCLI are: a) getting museum boards to prioritize equity and inclusion as central to their organizations’ work and b) learning to support new staff in engaging with DEAI work that goes beyond “101” trainings. Some alumni wondered in particular about how newer staff could engage with CCLI’s frameworks and tools.

Appendices



Appendix A: CCLI Cohort Participants

Cohort 1:

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose
Long Island Children's Museum
SciPort Louisiana Science Center

Cohort 2:

Discovery Place
Kidspace Children's Museum
ScienceWorks Hands-On Museum

Cohort 3:

Boston Children's Museum
Chicago Children's Museum
Detroit Zoo
Explora
Madison Children's Museum

Cohort 4:

Children's Museum of South Dakota
Cincinnati Museum Center
Denver Museum of Nature and Science
Exploratorium
Imagine Children's Museum
The Wild Center

Cohort 5:

Adventure Science Center
Children's Museum of Denver at Marsico Campus
Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
Discovery Center at Murfree Spring
High Desert Museum

Cohort 6:

Ann Arbor Hands-on Museum and Leslie Science and Nature Center
Center for Aquatic Sciences at Adventure Aquarium
Children's Museum of Evansville
Creative Discovery Museum
Mid-Hudson Children's Museum
Natural History Museum of Utah

Cohort 7:

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art
Grand Rapids Children's Museum
International Museum of Art and Science
Living History Farms
Science Museum of Virginia
The Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum

Appendix B: Cohort Surveys and Interviews Detail

Table 1. Cohort Surveys: Summative Evaluation

	Response Rate
Post-program participation survey (cohorts 5–7), administered to all cohort participants once (at the end of their cohort year)	97%
Impacts Survey (cohorts 1–7), administered Winter 2021 to all museums regardless of what year they completed their cohort participation	52%

Table 2. Museums Represented in Impacts Survey Data

N	% of total CCLI Cohorts
20	62%

* Rate is calculated based on museums that still had staff who had gone through the CCLI program.

Table 3. Cohort Interviews: Summative Evaluation

	N
Post-participations group (cohorts 5–7), conducted at the end of each cohort (at the end of their cohort year)	16
Alumni cohort group interviews, conducted Winter 2021 to all to all museums regardless of what year they completed their cohort participation	20