



INSPIRE - ENGAGE - EDUCATE - EMPLOY
The Next Generation of Explorers

In-Flight Education Downlink Proposal Writing Workshop

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You Will Need



- Downlink Planning Guide (sent previously)
- Downlink Proposal Form (sent previously)
- Your organization's mission statement, vision statement and/or core values

Topics for Today



- Introduction and Overview.
- Introduction to Downlinks.
 - What is a downlink?
 - Building your downlink proposal committee.
- Downlink Proposal Form Overview.
- Impact Statement.
 - Student & reader audience.
 - What makes a strong impact statement?
 - Impact Statement Writing Exercise.

Break.

- Brief Overview of Proposal Form.
- Virtual Audience Contingency Planning.
- Selection and Scheduling Process.
- Questions, Answers and Conclusion.



Your Presenters



Lauren Parker
7th & 8th Grade Science Teacher
Fort Worth Academy
Fort Worth, TX



Allison Bott Ashford
NASA Activity Coordinator
Johnson Space Center
Houston, TX

What is a downlink?



An opportunity for students and educators to interact with astronauts aboard the International Space Station through a question and answer session.



A downlink:



- Is 20 minutes in length.
- Allows the audience to see and hear astronauts live from space.
- Support a comprehensive suite of activities proposed by the host.
- Is broadcast live on NASA TV and streamed on NASA's website.
- Is a large-scale, public event.
- Is available to educational organizations in the United States.



Building Your Downlink Proposal Committee



- A downlink is a large, public event – it will take more than one person to plan for and carry out the event.
- At a minimum, you need a main POC, a technical POC, and a media POC to put together your proposal.
- Lean on each POC's expertise to fill out the technology and outreach sections of the proposal.
- Consider diversity in your proposal committee:
 - Are you reaching all learners?
 - Do you have members from outside of the STEM departments?
 - Does your proposal committee reflect the student population?
 - How can you get students involved in the proposal?
- Have each POC review and edit the proposal before you submit it.
- Grammar and formatting issues can be a red flag for the selection committee.



Fort Worth Academy's Proposal Committee



- Technical Director
- Administrator
- Marketing and Communications Director
- Teacher (Lauren)
- A few additional people who could be counted on to get things done



Proposal Form: Availability



Date availability:

- Only **weekdays** are available.
- Check your calendar for **holidays, testing days, etc.**
- **Black out** any dates you are unable to host a downlink on the calendar on the proposal form.
- **Leave as many available dates as possible.** The more dates you are available, the better your chance of being selected and scheduled for a downlink.
- List a preferred 2 hour time window **between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. Central Time.**
- Make sure to send us an email to get a new proposal form each cycle!

October				
M	Tu	W	Th	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30



Proposal Form: Impact Statement



Tell us who you are and why a downlink will be impactful to your targeted audience, organization and community.

This is your first impression to the selection committee, who are nearly all former educators. Be specific about the impact you expect.



Impact Statement: Two Audiences



Student Audience

You **must** define your student audience for the selection committee.

- Who is your student body?
- How do you expect a downlink to impact them?

For informal educational organizations:

- Who will you be inviting to the downlink?
- How will you capture them before and after the event?

Reader Audience

The selection committee is human – find a way to connect your organization to them – pictures, short stories, etc.

Ways to impress the selection committee:

- Pay attention to detail in the proposal.
- Make the proposal look professional.
- Appropriate pictures.
- Letters of support from community partners or VIPs:
 - If you are a school: letters from community partners who can support the event or speakers who have committed to attending the event.
 - If you are an informal education organization: letters from schools or districts you are reaching out to.

Impact Statement



A strong impact statement:

- Explains specifically **why a downlink will benefit your organization and community.**

The impact statement may include:

- The organization's educational **goals**, especially related to STEM education.
- **Demographics** for the population served and the community.
- Successes (with metrics) from previous large events hosted by the organization.
- **Special considerations** (ties to crew members, community needs, etc.).

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Examples could include pictures, short stories, notes from students, etc.

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Use What You Are Already Doing



Fort Worth Academy was already doing:

- Space Week for all grades kindergarten through eighth grade, which features a inflatable space station and changing themes.
- Research on the International Space Station with Magnitude.io

Fort Worth Academy had a lot of pieces already and the downlink was the piece that tied everything together.



Impact Statement Writing Exercise



Each educator's organization will have some combination of mission statement, vision statement and/or core values.

While these are helpful, they should be used to guide an impact statement rather than copied-and-pasted into a downlink proposal.

Remember you only have one page for the impact statement. **Make sure every word is serving your purpose – to persuade the selection committee.**

Impact Statement Writing Exercise



An example:

- Sample Mission Statement: [Organization] provides enriching educational opportunities and advocates for all learners.
 - Programs:
 - Coding Club.
 - Championship LEGO Robotics team.
 - Entrepreneurship competition team.
 - ELL after school club.
 - Audience: 3-5 graders or elementary school students in underserved / high poverty area.



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What should their impact statement highlight?



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What should their impact statement highlight?

- Student need (underserved, high poverty, ELL)
- Current services (STEM activities, ELL club)
- Advocacy for all learners



Impact Statement Writing Exercise



- Something else to consider:
 - How can I use existing programs in my pre- and post-education plans?
 - Could I have my coding club recruiting for new members after the downlink or the robotics team do demonstrations?



Writing Practice and Break



Take five minutes to consider your organization's mission and vision statements, programming and audience.

- What should you **highlight** in your impact statement?
- Write a draft first line or two that **communicates who you are** to the Selection Committee.

Share any insights in the chatbox.

Then take a 5 minute break.



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The Downlink Proposal Form.



- **Pre-Education Plan.**
 - What will students do and learn before the downlink?
- **Post-Education Plan.**
 - How will you capture student excitement after the downlink?
- **Outreach Plan.**
 - Who will you reach out to about the downlink?
 - Think big – legislators, governors, corporations. This is a great time to show off what your organization is doing!
- **Logistics Plan.**
 - How will you collect questions and talent release forms?
 - Include a timeline!
- **Facilities and Technology Plan.**
 - Have your technical POC fill this out. Selection Committee wants to see that you have the technical skills to pull off a downlink.

Timeline



Week Of:

- Space Week
 - Students participated in various activities to learn more about life on the ISS.
 - Seventh and eighth graders created project boards about their research results.
 - Tech rehearsals internally and with NASA.

Day Before:

- Rehearsal with students asking questions.



Day of Timeline



Day Of:

- News crews arrived in the morning. Had students and teachers pre-selected and available for interviews with talking points.
- Everyone was in the auditorium early to review logistics.
- After the downlink:
 - K-4 students went back to class.
 - 5-8 students had a speaker from our local museum talking about the Apollo program.
 - Then 7-8 students presented their research to visitors and then watched Hidden Figures and discussed the history of the Apollo program.



Virtual Audience Event Contingency Plan.



A strong virtual audience event contingency plan includes:

- The process for **collecting and selecting video questions** from participants.
- The process for **collecting Talent Authorization Forms** from participants.
- How **community partners** will be involved virtually.
- How you will measure the impact of the downlink on the virtual audience.

Other Considerations:

- Community partner involvement.
- Timeline of surrounding virtual activities.
- Participation opportunities for students who lack devices or the internet.

Selection and Scheduling Process.



Initial review:

- A small team reviews all proposals.
- The team selects a certain number of proposals to move on to the selection committee.

Selection Committee:

- A larger team reviews the remaining proposals.
- Committee members individually rank proposals.
- Committee meets to discuss and rank proposals in priority order for scheduling.

Scheduling:

- The Public Affairs Office uses the selection committee's list to schedule organizations in available slots.
- Scheduling takes into account date availability and selection committee rankings.
- On occasion, extra slots become available at a later date and selected proposals that were not scheduled may have the opportunity to be scheduled.

Lauren's Top Takeaways



- It was really helpful to have an **email to parents of the kids asking questions** so they had realistic expectations of the day, including that we may not get to their kid's question.
- I had someone in our development office step up as **"party planner."** She managed RSVPs from VIPs, set up a reception, made sure everyone had a seat, etc.
- **Our tech director wasn't our producer.** I had someone else I trusted completely for that job so our tech director could manage the network and other things that could pop up (luckily they didn't!).
- It was a super rainy day. We had a **backup generator** just in case.
- Hooking up the **digital hybrid** took longer than we expected.
- It's very helpful to **watch videos of downlinks** to get an idea of how it flows.



Lauren's Top Takeaways



Don't give up! We applied for 3 years before I got the email we had been scheduled!



Questions?



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