

## **NASA Inspires Futures for Tomorrow's Youth (NIFTY) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **Q. What is the *NIFTY* Project, and what are its goals?**

A. *NASA Inspires Futures for Tomorrow's Youth (NIFTY)* is a new NASA Science Activation initiative led by Twin Cities PBS (TPT) that is preparing NASA professionals to be STEM role models and connect them to NASA-themed STEM outreach programs for youth and families within the TPT *SciGirls*, National Girls Collaborative and the Space Science Institutes' STAR Library Network (STAR Net).

Girls and youth of color display high interest, confidence, and ability in STEM, but face multiple barriers including the intersectionality of racial, ethnic and gender stereotypes, low or no exposure to STEM role models, and low awareness of STEM fields and career pathways. The project's goal is to broaden participation of youth (ages 9-14) in STEM, with a critical focus on girls and youth of color, by providing opportunities to interact with and learn from diverse NASA role models.

With your partnership, *NIFTY* will address the ongoing need to engage more youth in STEM and NASA career pathways. *NIFTY* will broaden participation in STEM education, with a critical focus on girls and youth of color, build unique partnerships between STEM professionals, and educate tomorrow's NASA workforce. ***If she can see it, she can be it!***

### **Q. What do you mean by "STEM"?**

A. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, but it also refers to a way of thinking and solving problems. STEM involves deepening and using one's creativity, curiosity, critical thinking skills, and communication skills. Library staff can play a critical role in giving kids access to STEM concepts and opportunities and related career paths. Regardless of their ultimate career path, STEM learning also prepares youth to face everyday challenges, no matter what field they study and work in. Youth need continual opportunities and support in order to persist in their own STEM learning journeys.

### **Q. What does "historically excluded in STEM fields" mean?**

A. The representation of certain groups in STEM education and occupations differs from their representation in the U.S. population. Women, Hispanic or Latino/a/x, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian groups have been historically excluded from opportunities that can get them into STEM fields, and while these groups have gradually increased their share of STEM college degrees, they remain underrepresented among STEM degree recipients and STEM careers. This project also has a focus on engaging other historically excluded genders in STEM, which in addition to cis girls includes trans youth, gender non-conforming, and/or non-binary youth.

**Q. What do you mean by “Role Models”?**

A. Role models are individuals who can positively shape a learner’s motivation by acting as a successful exemplar. In the *NIFTY* project, we are focusing on connecting libraries with NASA role models who are subject matter ex STEM professionals with diverse racial/ethnic and gender identities.

**Q. What is the project timeline?**

A.

June 2023	July – December 2023	November 2024	January – June 2025
Professional Development for two library staff	10 hours of NASA-themed STEM programs with at least one Role Model and families (Round 1)	Professional Development for two library staff	10 hours of NASA-themed STEM programs with Role Models and families (Round 2)

**Q. What benefits do participating libraries receive?**

A. Libraries selected for the *NIFTY* Project will receive:

- \$5,000 stipend
- Professional development in research-based gender equitable and culturally responsive instructional strategies, including the use of role models that validate and uplift youth learners
- Support in connecting with NASA professionals to serve as role models in library programs
- STEM activities and materials to support library programs

**Q. What are the participating libraries required to accomplish?**

A. Libraries selected for the *NIFTY* Project are expected to:

- Participate in virtual training workshops in June 2023 and November 2024 (two staff per library).
- Facilitate two rounds of NASA-themed STEM programs with ten youth (ages 9-14) involving at least one NASA role model. Each round should include 10 hours of programs, the first running from July – December 2023 and the second round running from January – June 2025.

Additionally, library staff are expected to participate in the following evaluation activities:

- Complete a Needs Assessment survey (winter/spring of 2023)

- Complete a Post-Professional Development survey (summer 2023 and winter 2024)
- Complete a Post-Program survey (winter/spring 2023 and summer 2025)
- Distribute a Family Survey at the end of each round of NASA-themed STEM programs
- (Optional) three sites in 2023 and three sites in 2025 will have one program observed by the evaluator.

**Q. How do I know if my library is eligible to apply?**

A. The *NIFTY* Project is open to all public libraries from Tennessee, California, Minnesota, and Arizona.

**Q. How do I apply to be part of the *NIFTY* Project?**

A. Applications will open on Friday, January 6<sup>th</sup> via an online survey. The deadline to apply is February 10, 2023. You can find the link to apply here:

<https://community.starnetlibraries.org/nasa-inspires-futures-for-tomorrows-youth-nifty-application-announcement/>

**Q. What will make a successful applicant?**

A. Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- The size and demographics of the community. *The selection committee will prioritize submissions from areas with above average populations of Hispanic or Latino/a/x communities and with detailed plans to reach historically excluded genders in STEM, which in addition to cis girls includes trans youth, gender non-conforming, and/or non-binary youth. Additional consideration will be given to libraries that demonstrate the need for resources to support learning in their community (e.g., low median household income and/or education levels).*
- Evidence that the site has support from the library leadership in planning for the program and that participation in the program aligns to library goals or desired outcomes regarding STEM education.
- Evidence that the site is committed to prioritizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility and can reach audiences historically excluded in STEM and market the program to those audiences effectively.
- Evidence that the site has the capacity to carry out programming requirements, including the interest and capacity to host two rounds of NASA-themed STEM programs (of 10 hours each).