

EDUCATION

University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Ed.D., Learning Sciences and Policy, concentration in Out of School Learning

Research and dissertation focus on informal STEM learning funding priorities and evaluation policies

Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

M.A., Biology (focus on community-based conservation and inquiry-based learning)

Field studies in Belize, Costa Rica, and Guyana

The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

B.A., International Relations & Diplomacy and Anthropology, minor in Middle East Studies

Study abroad in London, England

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

Certificate, Biodiversity Education in Civic Ecology Lab

EXPERIENCE

Founder and Principal Evaluator

2018 – present

Improved Insights LLC, Cleveland, OH

- Provide research, program evaluation, and learning strategy services for informal STEM learning organizations, including nationally and internationally renowned nonprofits, universities, museums, government agencies, and others looking to define and measure their impact.
- Serve as a thought leader for using evaluation to advance equitable informal STEM learning and STEM outreach via practitioner and academic articles, industry newsletters, webinars, and presentations.

Evaluation Officer/Adviser

2021 – 2023

Civic Science Media Lab (formerly STEM Advocacy Institute), Boston, MA

- Advised STEM education, equity, and outreach nonprofit leaders on evaluation and strategy for their startups.
- Presented webinars on informal STEM learning and evaluation topics for Fellows and other attendees.
- Mentored Fellows as they launched new initiatives to expand pathways of access between science and society.

Associate Director for Women in Science and Engineering

2018 – 2020

Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH

- Built innovative initiatives that supported the persistence of women in STEM fields, including a hallmark program supporting undergraduate entrepreneurs; grants for students to pursue conferences, academic meetings, and undergraduate research experiences; and organizing the first cohort from CWRU to attend the national Women of Color in STEM conference.
- Researched and evaluated initiatives for women in STEM, such as student STEM self-efficacy within mentoring programs, persistence of women in STEM fields, and student entrepreneurial learning and skill development.

Senior Research and Evaluation Associate

2017 – 2018

Research and Evaluation Associate

2016 – 2017

Wildlife Conservation Society, New York, NY

- Conducted program evaluation, educational research, and audience research to investigate program success, inform programming at all five WCS parks, and explore changes in participant knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Designed and executed mixed-methods studies, including developing instruments and data collection protocols, managing data, and authoring or co-authoring dozens of reports for internal and external stakeholders.

Evaluation and Science Communication Consultant
Self-Employed, Chicago, IL

2015 – 2016

- Conducted audience research for Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art and Chicago Hands-on Educators.
- Wrote blog content for Discovery Magazine online, hosted Twitter #CitSciChat event for SciStarter to discuss topical issues in citizen science, founded and managed the Women of STEM online profile series showcasing STEM professionals with diverse STEM careers.

Student Programs Coordinator
Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago, IL

2012 – 2015

- Wrote curricula, organized logistics, and managed staff for student-based programs that served hundreds of teachers and tens of thousands of students each year. Developed and facilitated dozens of teacher/parent workshops and hundreds of student programs.
- Collaborated with Chicago Public Library and Chicago Public Schools for special events and programming. Represented the zoo in numerous conference presentations and with many industry groups like Teen Educators Exchange, Hive Chicago Fund for Connected Learning, and Chicago City of Learning.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND AWARDS

Reviewer, *Inclusive Informal STEM Education for Neurodiverse Audiences*. K. Riedinger & G. Ponti (Eds.) (forthcoming book, to be published October 2026)

Woman of Distinction Awardee, Girl Scouts of North East Ohio, 2025

Grant Application Reviewer, National Science Foundation, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, 2019-current (intermittent)

Journal Reviewer, Connected Science Learning, 2019-current

Student-Faculty Research Grant Awardee, University of Pittsburgh School of Education, 2022

Participant, Informal STEM Education Evaluation Strategic Outcome Progressions Conference (NSF AISL #2039209) – COSI Center for Research and Evaluation, National Museum of Natural History, & PEAR, 2021

Data Literacy Group Moderator, eePRO – North American Association of Environmental Education, 2020-2022

Session Reviewer, STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice, 2020-2022

Judge, Underwriters Laboratory Education Innovation Award, Underwriters Laboratory and North American Association of Environmental Educators, 2016, 2018

Future Fiction Challenge Runner-up, 2016, Center for the Future of Museums, American Alliance of Museums

Creating Young Researchers and *Observe to Learn* iPad Applications Co-Creator, Lincoln Park Zoo, 2015

SELECT PEER REVIEWED AND INDUSTRY PUBLICATIONS

Dunifon, S. & Crowley, K. (2027). Evaluation policy in the informal science funding landscape: Past, present, and future. In J. Kubarek & J. Lederman (Eds.) *Advancing Evaluation in Informal Science Learning*. Taylor & Francis Group. (In preparation).

Dunifon, S. (2026). Five tips for evaluating formal/informal learning partnership programs. *Connected Science Learning*, 8(1), 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24758779.2025.2601956>

Dunifon, S. (2025). Planning for impact with logic models and theories of change. *Connected Science Learning*, 7(2), 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24758779.2025.2469042>

Dunifon, S. M. (2024). An examination of evaluation policies and funding priorities in informal STEM education funding organizations. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh. (Unpublished) <https://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/concern/etds/c95cb285-bd5a-4fc0-b6c8-a0b365aaa078>

Dunifon, S. (2024). Program evaluation in formal and informal STEM learning environments: An introduction. *Connected Science Learning*, 6(11), 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24758779.2024.2318186>

Johnson, B., Dunifon, S., Thomas, S., Ardoin, N., & Saunders, M. (2023). Evaluating the AZA framework for zoo and aquarium social science research: A review of relevant literature 2011-2019. In J. Fraser, J. E. Heimlich, & K. Riedinger (Eds.) *Zoos and Aquariums in the Public Mind*. New York City: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84942-9_2

Dunifon, S. (2023-present). Insights & Opportunities Newsletter: A Hub for Informal STEM Learning. Improved Insights. <https://improvedinsights.substack.com/>

Aloisio J., Roberts S., Becker-Klein R., Dunifon S., Lewis J., Clark J., Munshi-South J., Tingley K. (2022). Impacts of a near-peer urban ecology research mentoring program on undergraduate mentors. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, 10, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2022.803210>

Dunifon, S. (2021). Protecting participants with confidential and anonymous data. *EvaluATE blog* (National Science Foundation evaluation resource hub for the Advanced Technological Education program). <https://evalu-ate.org/blog/dunifon-june21/>

Dunifon, S. M., Johnson, B., & Aloisio, J. (2017). Evaluating the impacts of semi-facilitated educational experiences on visitor engagement with zoo exhibits, *International Zoo Educators Association Journal*.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS	TECHNICAL SKILLS
• Association for Advancing Participatory Sciences • American Evaluation Association • National Science Teaching Association • North American Association for Environmental Education • Visitor Studies Association	• Design Software (e.g., Adobe Acrobat, PageMaker, and InDesign) • Digital Communications/Social Media (e.g., Substack, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram) • Financial Software (e.g., Intuit QuickBooks, Microsoft Excel) • Google and Microsoft Suites • Project Management Software (e.g., Asana, Trello, Slack) • Data Analysis Software (e.g., Dedoose, SPSS) • Survey Platform Software (e.g., Survey Monkey, Qualtrics, Google Forms)