Session Summary:
How can informal learning experiences activate children in ways that ignite deep engagement in future formal and informal science learning and thus produce more scientists, engineers, and science-literate citizens? We introduced a new research/practice framework and linked scalable assessment instruments that have broad implications for the field of informal science education.

Session Description:
In this session we reported the first findings from a national research and design network funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The session described our network, beginning with researchers describing our process of developing a theoretical consensus and then debuting findings from a series of instrument development and validation studies. The CEO’s of the Lawrence Hall of Science, California Academy of Science, and the Exploratorium described how their museums incorporate the framework and assessment into the design of new informal science experiences. The funder of the network explained the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation’s long-term informal science investment strategy, which targets the creation of a life-long pathway for activated science learners across informal and formal settings.