



Looking Back, Moving Forward

Summary of the Cambio Summit



Bienvenidos to the Cambio Summit!

With support from the National Science Foundation, the Exploratorium hosted a culminating summit for its [Cambio](#) project on April 22 and 23, 2025. Cambio is a professional development project for museum staff that uses a transformational approach, combining cultural competency and organizational change. From 2020 to 2025, four cohorts of museum professionals participated in a yearlong professional development curriculum; the summit offered an opportunity for those professionals to connect with each other, reflect on their Cambio experiences, celebrate their accomplishments, and plan for the future.

The summit was explicitly designed around the Cambio framework, described in the following section. This document serves as a complement to the Cambio framework, describing cross-cutting themes that emerged from the summit's *chispas* (inspirational keynote presentations), breakout sessions, and participant reflections.



For more curricular resources focused on engaging with Latinx audiences, reconceptualizing STEM, or shifting organizational practices, go to [Cambio Experience](#).

Cambio was a multi-year professional development initiative created in collaboration between the Exploratorium and the Cultural Competence Learning Institute and made possible through the generous support of the National Science Foundation.

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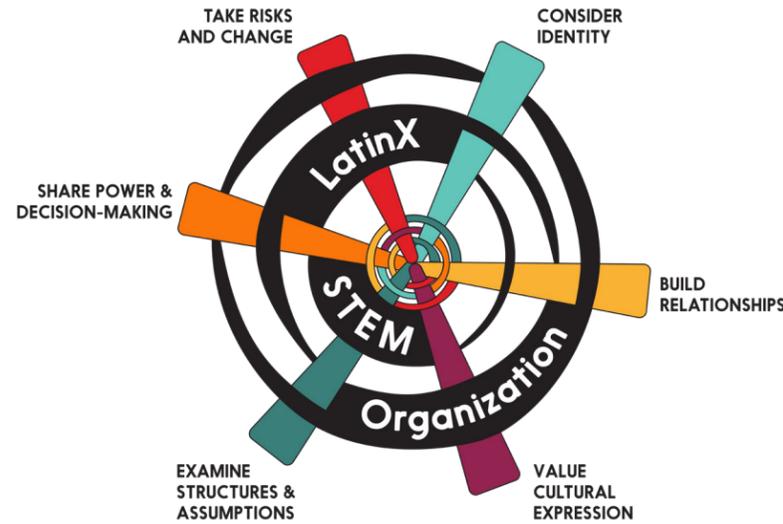
The Cambio Framework

Cambio was a five-year collaboration between the Exploratorium and [CCLI](#).¹ The project weaves together CCLI's diversity and inclusion initiative for museums with the Exploratorium's insights about STEM and Latinx² communities resulting from the [GENIAL Summit](#).

Cambio's vision centers on encouraging organizations to shift their practices at all levels by examining the cultural dimensions and intersections of Latinx communities, cultural expressions of STEM, and shifts in organizational practice. These three strands and the spokes shown in the Cambio framework provided the structure for the summit.

Cambio Framework

Cambio's vision centers on encouraging organizations to shift our practices at all levels by examining the cultural dimensions and intersections of Latinx communities, STEM, and shifts in organizational practice.



LATINX COMMUNITIES

Cambio supports practitioners as we:

develop awareness, skills, and practices to understand our local Latinx communities.

CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF STEM

shift museum practice from dominant to non-dominant approaches of STEM that value people's lived experience.

SHIFTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE

examine the role of systemic oppression as part of shifting organizational practices, systems, and structures toward equity.

CONSIDER IDENTITY

"I see you."

Each of us identifies with a number of different dimensions of diversity that create our multidimensional identities.

Awareness and understanding of our own and acceptance of others' identities is an important step toward equity.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

"Let's get to know each other."

As we learn about each other and understand who we are in relation to others, we can begin to build relationships across differences, with humility, acceptance and mutual reciprocity.

VALUE CULTURAL EXPRESSION

"Embrace different ways of being and knowing."

Culture refers to behaviors, practices, and patterns of human behavior; each social group that we are a part of has cultural expressions.

Recognizing and incorporating non-dominant approaches can help us to be more equitable.

EXAMINE STRUCTURES AND ASSUMPTIONS

"Ask questions and look deeper."

Beginning to understand why systems are in place—by identifying and interrogating the assumptions and historical contexts that have led to those structures—can help us see how to make change.

SHARE POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

"Let someone else take the lead."

Understanding power, our own and others', and adopting a power-sharing mindset can help us begin to shift decision-making processes to incorporate voices and views that haven't been represented.

TAKE RISKS AND CHANGE

"Try doing things differently."

Transformational change—shifts in processes, structures, and culture—requires risk-taking and is critical in the journey toward inclusive and equitable practice.

¹CCLI (Cultural Competence Learning Institute) is a partnership among Children's Discovery Museum (CDM), Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC), Association of Children's Museums (ACM), and Garibay Group.

²There are many terms of identity for referring to the group(s) of people whose backgrounds are connected to Latin America and/or Spanish-speaking cultures. These terms, including Hispanic, Chicano, Latino, Latinx, and Latine have distinctive historical, geographical, and sociopolitical contexts. In the Cambio program, we use the gender-neutral term "Latinx" to refer to a Latino/Latina person, and encourage institutions to identify the most appropriate term for their local community.

Nurturing Community

Connecting and Celebrating the Cambio Community

A key feature of the summit was to provide opportunities for Cambio participants to reconnect with their own cohort and meet the other cohorts. To this end, the summit included several activities for participants to get to know each other personally and professionally. Informal activities such as *loteria* affirmed the value of sharing joyous, cultural experiences.



What hands-on activity would you do if you were introducing someone to your organization?



Imagine that the room is a map of the United States and group yourselves by where your museum is located. Then move to the region where you grew up and connect with someone new.



If you didn't grow up playing *loteria*, you can start now with your Cambionistas.



As cards are called out, use beans to mark your board.



Roadmap: What actions—as individuals, organizations, and a field—can we take to help focus equity and inclusion for change in the future?



Who inspires you and why? Share something that makes you feel hopeful.



Cambio cohorts braid lengths of rope and weave them together into an equity basket.



Braiding a strong rope requires everyone to work together.

Cambio Professionals Engaging with their Communities

Because engaging Latinx audiences was a central goal of Cambio, the summit included opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences with community listening and community-centered events.

Participants identified some challenges of building relationships with Latinx communities and offered solutions to those challenges.

	Challenges	Solutions
Building and Maintaining Relationships in the Community	<p>Knowing where and how to start</p> <p>Understanding community needs, motivations, and fears</p> <p>Making relationships reciprocal, not extractive</p> <p>Sustaining relationships that are developed</p>	<p>Hold regular events to remind community members that they are welcome and valued.</p> <p>Create a relationship management plan within the organization.</p> <p>Leverage partnerships to address issues beyond the museum's scope.</p> <p>Create community agreements and hold each other accountable.</p> <p>Compensate community members fairly for their engagement.</p>
Organizational Realities of Community Engagement	<p>Competing organizational priorities limit time to build trust, become part of the community, and design and carry out activities that reflect community needs</p> <p>Limited staff capacity, especially bilingual staff</p> <p>Budget constraints</p>	<p>Develop a community-serving mindset across the organization and make it a funding priority.</p> <p>Build activities into budget and planning cycles early.</p> <p>Hire to fill key gaps, such as bilingual ability or understanding of community, and compensate for those skills.</p> <p>Build community engagement into training and onboarding.</p> <p>Use development funds to support skill development.</p>

Chispa



How to Build Relationships with Purpose, Integrity, and Awareness?

[Salvador Acevedo](#) described his personal journey as a successful immigrant to the United States who has dedicated his career to strengthening Latino identity and engagement with museums. He also shared his current struggles about how to help, protect, and engage the most vulnerable members of our communities.

At a time when he has no answers, Acevedo has been listening to the wisdom around him. Quoting a recent email from a colleague, he said,

“We are living in a time of erasure and diminishment, but people and relationships cannot be erased. We are still here and our affection for each other and deep commitment to our shared work continues undiminished. Museums are generators of identity.”

Acevedo concluded by encouraging participants to “center our work in relationships, in the affection we have for each other beyond the work we do together.”

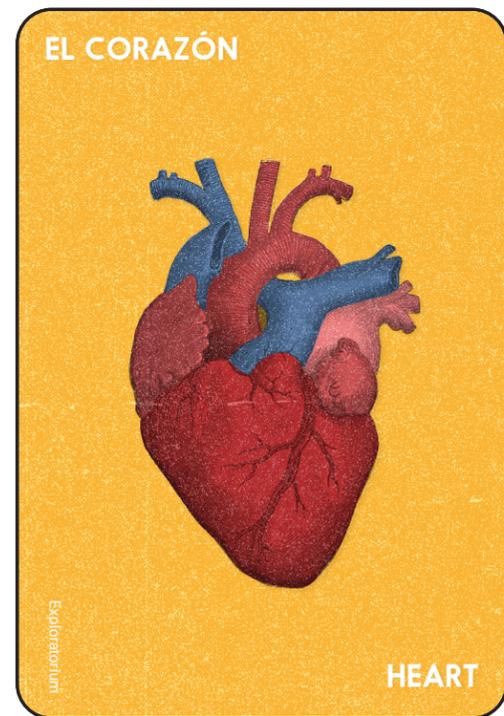


Stories of Change

Cambio means change in Spanish. The Cambio professional development curriculum was designed to promote transformation at the individual, community, and organizational levels, and the summit invited participants to share their stories.

What I Learned by Being Part of Cambio

Summit participants were asked to identify what they learned from Cambio. Two themes centered on feeling connected to a community of dedicated professionals that are doing similar work, and the intentionality and persistence required to change beliefs, practices, and operations.



A third theme related to *Comunalidad*, an Indigenous framework with four elements that define the dynamic participation in a community: relationship to place, reciprocity, self-determination, and

fiesta or feast. Many comments touched on how museums might use *Comunalidad* to engage Latinx communities with STEM in ways that connect to their ancestral heritage, cultural identities, and countries of origin.

“I HAVE LEARNED
that there are a lot of people who are putting a lot of thought, work, and energy into equity work in museums across the country, and that while change is slow, it is happening. I learned that small changes are important and worthwhile and I am not alone.”

We Are Not Alone

“I am part of a community of people nationally who are dedicated to this work and bring diverse perspectives to how to drive impact with a focus on equity and JOY!”

“Cambionistas are resilient and so are their organizations, partners, and communities! We are not alone in doing this important work and must remember to leverage resources and community knowledge!”

Organizational Transformation Takes Time and Effort

“The work of transformation is not linear, constant, quick, and without pain. It is slow, full of fits and starts, and sometimes feels like nothing is happening.”

“AUTHENTIC, SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP,
co-creation and community impact takes a lot of ongoing work that should touch all aspects of our museums and have no set endpoint.”

“Transformative change takes time, effort, patience, and love.”



“I’VE LEARNED THAT THE TIME
invested in these efforts has immediate and significant payoff—for individuals, for the community, for organizational advancement.”



The Joy of Making Cultural Expressions of STEM Come Alive!

Dr. Isabel Hawkins shared four examples of STEM knowledge that is deeply embedded in cultural and community traditions and applied to daily life.

Engineering and physics with a woven bridge.

The architect of a hand-woven bridge in Peru's Andes rallies 1,000 community members to renew the bridge every year. Using *qolla*, a local native grass, community members apply their collective understanding of the environment, materials, engineering, physics, and storytelling to sustain a bridge that is essential to their community traditions and trade.

STEM in natural pigments and textiles.

A women-led cooperative in Oaxaca, Mexico, extracts pigments from the cochineal insect to create dyes of 300 different hues in the red-orange-ochre palette. This process integrates a holistic knowledge of chemistry with traditional cultural practices to create colorful woven items that embody cultural icons in the designs.

10,000 years of science in a corn tortilla.

The cultural practice of making corn tortillas involves a tacit understanding of how to release the niacin trapped in the corn to make it a complete protein. Makers have learned from oral tradition that by adding quicklime, ash, or ground

river shells into the cooking water, the food can nourish the community. Women stir the solution with a shelled corn cob to attain the desired color of yellow, which reflects alkalinity.

Living with the stars on the Day of the Dead.

In early November, in the tropics of Mesoamerica, the Sun passes through the Maya Underworld—directly beneath the Earth at midnight—symbolizing the awakening of ancestors for Día de Muertos. At the same time, the Pleiades star cluster reaches its highest point in the sky, creating a powerful celestial link to ancestral traditions. This is a time when many Latinx cultures honor and connect with their ancestors.

Together, these examples illustrate that people in many cultures understand STEM as a lived experience, or lifeway, rather than compartmentalizing their STEM knowledge into specific disciplines such as chemistry, engineering, or physics. They also illuminate different dimensions of *Comunalidad*.



Comunalidad Is the Way

“Reframing STEM as a cultural expression, decentering the dominant narrative of what STEM looks like.”

“Asking the community *its needs* before asking them to help with ours.”



“Celebrating communities helps us show we care and value them.”

“I’ve learned that my experiences, both personal and professional, are a value to advocate for my Latinx community, that it is my responsibility to celebrate and highlight the power and skills I possess and share these to create more opportunities for equality and equity in my community as a whole.”

“Comunalidad helps to build meaningful connections between culture and science.”

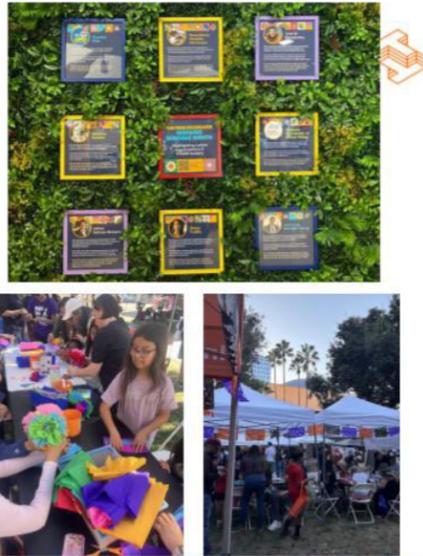
Shifts in Organizational Practices

Changes at participants' museums ranged from refining communications to rethinking hiring and training processes. Some specific changes to engage Latinx communities included:

- Hold multiple community listening sessions and community-centered events.
- Add community members to advisory groups.
- Incorporate more bilingual exhibits, announcements, presentations, and surveys.
- Hire more bilingual staff members.
- Design and co-create activities with and for community members.

Community Listening Learnings

- Do the small things as you listen - We must show up for our communities before they will show up for us
- Know where you can make an impact but keep the dialogue open
- Talk with everyone (internally and externally)



Community Listening (2024 - current) How can we improve, revised



Credit: The Tech

Early Actions

“How do our hiring practices create a larger sense of belonging within and outside of the museum?”



Contracted with local translator to rework our job descriptions to Spanish

Dedicated advertising resources to bi-lingual job boards and media

Hired bi-lingual People Service Coordinator

Next Steps

Focusing our lens on hiring and onboarding we realized with our Great Start program and Guiding Principles we were more equipped than we thought

- Conducted an audit of our hiring process, utilizing the IDI to gain cultural self awareness
- Modeled existing framework “way of being” from our educational work and applied it to hiring and onboarding
- Decisively broke from our traditional protocols
- Leaning in to our existing workforce development philosophies to sync with the feedback from our community leaders



Credit: Amazeum

For more Stories of Change, go to <https://cambioexperience.org/cambio-stories>

Toward a Hopeful Future: Final Reflections

On Day 2 of the summit, presentations by senior leaders in the field, breakout sessions, and participants' final reflections revealed a hopeful sense for the future during a time of disruption and uncertainty.

As the summit wrapped the formal Cambio experience, participants reflected on ways to continue their collective Cambio work forward. The energy and proliferation of ideas underscored participants' hope and determination for the future. Their commitments centered on these themes.

Pursue equity and justice with renewed intention

- Integrate diversity, equity, antiracism, and inclusion into everything the organization does.
- Rethink internal processes.
- Drive toward co-creation.
- Explore culturally relevant practices.
- Provide relevant training and leadership development.

Be open to different perspectives

- Reflect on personal assumptions and motivations.
- Seek out different points of view.
- Listen with an open mind.

Share power within organizations

- Examine organizational structures.
- Empower and support teams to do the work.

- Share authority and accountability at all levels.
- Ask for help.
- Become individual agents of change, speak up, and advocate for this work.

Understand, value, and serve the community

- Listen.
- Identify community needs and respond with transparency.
- Develop and nurture relationships with community partners.
- Make organizations safe and welcoming places to be.

Continue to learn and share knowledge

- Share the resources and knowledge gained from Cambio.
- Learn from and support colleagues who are doing similar work.
- Serve as a bridge to the Latinx community.

The summit concluded with participants from each cohort working together to weave ropes into an "equity basket" as they celebrated their Cambio experience. Invoking *fiesta* from the *Comunalidad* framework, facilitators played music and spun a disco ball while groups collaborated. Elder and honorary Cambio team member Doña Maria Ávila Vera then closed the summit with a benediction in her native language, Yucatec Mayan.



Equity: The Mechanics of Sharing Power

[Laura Huerta Migus](#) shared some of her own touchstones during times of change and crisis. She encouraged participants to disagree and make these ideas their own as they negotiate and navigate current and future challenges. Some key ideas emerged.

Equality + Equity = Integrity

Equality and equity should exist in a both/and relationship, in a place of productive tension. Equity that outstrips equality lacks integrity because without a plan for raising all ships, equity begins to look like a different kind of discrimination. Migus asked participants "Is your equity narrative one of anger, one of love, or one of radical love? We have to be able to hold all points of view at the table. Otherwise, it's still an exclusive conversation."

Centering Operations and Practice

Equity work often is driven by personal and professional agendas, and success depends on the ability to develop healthy boundaries between the two. It is not always easy for museum professionals—or anyone who is called to a service profession—to establish those boundaries, but it is important to keep the organizational mission in mind while improving practice. Successful professional actions are aligned with operations, practice, and the law. Migus framed the issue as "How can I focus on what I get paid to do and what's mine in my personal life to do?"

Circles and Cycles of Power

Power is the ability to make decisions and the ability to enable something for someone else. Power is negotiated within and across relationships, so that every constituency in an ecosystem has access to power. The ecosystem for museum professionals consists of the geographic community in which they operate, audiences, implementing staff, management, board, and funders. It is natural to feel powerless in times of instability and crisis, everyone can look within their ecosystems to share power or ask for help. Migus urged "Impact isn't just what you can do for someone. If you're always giving, your bucket will be empty. Who will help you fill up your bucket? ... It's a good moment to think about which relationships are ready for power sharing."



iGracias Cambionistas!

The Cambio Summit would not have been possible without the coalition of people and organizations that offered their insight, effort, and time to plan, produce, and attend this event. In difficult times when individual staff are often overleveraged, we were grateful to people from floor staff to CEOs who reserved dedicated time to travel and participate in the summit.

We want to offer a thank you to the Cambionistas who have contributed to this capstone event, including: our partners, the Exploratorium and CCLI, and the leadership team they formed; our advisors, including those who presented at the summit; and our participants. Thank you also to the Exploratorium and Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose



volunteers and staff who helped to navigate event preparation and logistics, including the Exploratorium Latinx Coordination Committee (LCC). We owe a deep gratitude also to our elder and honorary team member Doña Maria Ávila Vera whose wisdom opened and closed our proceedings.

