ABSTRACT
As a non-profit cultural institution the Buffalo Museum of Science (BMS) accepts many charitable donations to help meet the museum’s mission of inspiring curiosity through exploration. One of the BMS’s generous partners is a gas distribution corporation that sells and transports natural gas in the Western New York and Northwestern Pennsylvania regions. The goal of the partnership between the BMS and this gas distribution corporation is to educate students (children of our shared customers and client families) to the benefits of using natural gas and the potential risks associated with this resource. In the past, areas of focus included practical in-home application of natural gas and the potential risks associated with this resource. In the present, the BMS is focused on improving scientific and technological advancements that exist primarily in a lecture style setting. While thousands were served, the impact of the programming generally remained surficial. Now, with a 20% increase in grant funding, the BMS and its educators have decided to rework the current curriculum and adopt a more impactful programming more closely connected to classroom outcomes.

IMPLICATIONS
In the past, grant funded education included outreach programs, in the form of fun festivals, public theme day weekends, and theme days for schools, solely focusing on the mass education of phases of matter, natural gas recognition, and alternative energies, primarily in a lecture style setting. While thousands were served, the impact of the programming generally remained surficial. Now, with a 20% increase in grant funding, the BMS and its educators have decided to rework the current curriculum and adopt a more impactful programming more closely connected to classroom outcomes.

The new creative choices of the BMS’s educators will include the services offered in years past, but will also integrate facilitated workshops focused on geology laboratory assignments and the drilling techniques and technologies associated with the natural gas industry. These facilitated workshops will lend themselves to a higher quality of informal educational experience for those participating, thus enhancing participant involvement and retention. Funds for transportation will also be included in the grant this year, making it possible to reach students who may have been inaccessible before. The new suite of programming designed by the informal educators of the BMS will lend itself to a higher quality of material and content presented, and thus be more enriching, although the total served will slightly decrease.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
The partnership between the BMS and the local gas distribution corporation is valuable, for geographical and scientific reasons. The Marcellus Shale, and what it holds for gas distribution corporations, is a good introduction to geology because of its accessibility and proximity. Thanks to the shift in focus of the fuel industry, it provides a useful opportunity to talk about the ever improving scientific and technological advancements that exist because of America’s demand for fuel resources.

CONCLUSION
While there are no quantitative results, other than the number of total served during the lifespan of this grant, there are conclusive qualitative results. Students participants are acquiring new knowledge and the funding corporation’s community engagement objectives are being achieved. The BMS is proud to serve as a catalyst with the public on such issues. The BMS believes these partnerships build the institution’s foundation as a trusted resource for the communities of Western New York. To continue generating the greatest learning impact and outcomes it will be critical for the BMS to secure additional participant feedback.

REFERENCES