

Facilitating Experiential Learning for Emerging and Novel Technologies (ExLENT) Beginnings Track: A National Convening

Keck Center, 500 Fifth Street, NW, Washington, DC and virtual
July 9-10, 2026

At the request of the National Science Foundation, the National Academy of Engineering is convening people who are involved in ExLENT “Beginnings” Track projects., designed specifically to support their work. Using a systems perspective, the convening will help project leaders advance their work by providing a forum and expertise to address shared challenges, identify new opportunities and resources, and connect individual projects to the broader education ecosystem. Sessions are designed to foster direct conversation, meaningful engagement, and collaboration.

THURSDAY, JULY 9, 2026

7:15 – 8:00am	Registration and Breakfast
8:00 – 8:15am	Welcome and Introductions, Goals, and Objectives George Ligler , Texas A&M University, <i>Convening Committee Chair</i> David A. Butler , National Academy of Engineering, <i>NAE ExLENT Project PI</i>
8:15 – 8:25am	Welcome from the NAE Tsu-Jae Liu , President of the National Academy of Engineering (via video)
8:25 – 8:45am	Welcome from the National Science Foundation Mary Crowe , National Science Foundation
8:45 – 9:15am	Highlights from the November 2025 UIDP ExLENT PI Workshop Charles Johnson-Bey , Demostrata LLC UIDP, with support from the National Science Foundation, conducted an ExLENT program PI engagement workshop in November 2025. This session will provide an overview of the resulting workshop report, which summarizes key themes and takeaways from the event.
9:15 – 10:00am	Findings and Analysis of ExLENT Project and Student Surveys Kalyn Owens , North Seattle College, <i>Convening Committee Member</i> Karl Smith , University of Minnesota and Purdue University, <i>Convening Committee Member</i> This session will review responses to the convening committee’s surveys, submitted by project leaders and current and former students involved in ExLENT Beginnings track projects.

10:00 – 10:30am	Refreshments and Networking
10:30 – 11:30am	Panel Discussion: Perspectives from Sectors Involved with Achieving Success of ExLENT Initiatives Moderator: Louis Martin-Vega, North Carolina State University, <i>Convening Committee Member</i> Panelists: George Boggs, American Association of Community Colleges, <i>Convening Committee Member</i> Nathaniel Foster [former ExLENT project participant] Portia Pratt, National Governors Association Janine Rush-Beyers, Micron Foundation Kevin Wang, Mentors in Tech Panelists will reflect on the themes raised in the previous session from the perspectives of their respective communities and offer insights on how to leverage available resources to achieve productive outcomes.
11:30am – 11:50am	
11:55am – 12:15pm	Breakout Groups: Deeper Dive on Individual Topics Participants will meet in small groups with panelists representing different sectors to discuss their perspectives and insights in greater detail. Two 20-minute sessions will allow participants to meet with multiple panelists.
12:15 – 1:15pm	Lunch and Keynote Speaker Darryll Pines, President of University of Maryland, College Park
1:15 – 1:30pm	Break
1:30 – 2:45pm	Discussion: What has worked to overcome challenges/barriers for ExLENT Beginnings projects? What unforeseen opportunities have emerged? Moderator: Latonia Harris, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine, <i>Convening Committee Member</i> This session will invite ExLENT project staff to share how they have reshaped their projects over time and their approaches to overcoming challenges and barriers to project success, starting with their reactions to the survey responses discussed earlier.

2:45 – 4:15pm	What does “Systems Thinking” mean in the context of a successful ExLENT project? George Ligler, Texas A&M University, <i>Convening Committee Chair</i> Gabriela Cruz Thompson, Intel Corporation, <i>Convening Committee Member</i> This session will discuss how “systems thinking” can be applied to strengthen individual projects by examining the broader education and workforce ecosystems in which their work takes place, including how they intersect.
4:15 – 4:45pm	Refreshments and Networking
4:45 – 5:45pm	Breakout Sessions: Developing Expanded, Systems-Based Strategies Part I Participants will meet with representatives from different work sectors and with systems experts to explore systems-based approaches for addressing challenges and opportunities within their ExLENT projects.
5:45pm	Day One Wrap-up Announcements Convening Adjourns for the Day Dinner with self-assembled groups or on your own

FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2026

7:15 – 8:00am	Breakfast
8:00 – 8:10am	Welcome, Introductions, Goals, and Objectives for the Day David A. Butler, National Academy of Engineering, <i>NAE ExLENT Project PI</i>
8:10 – 8:30am	Discussion: Day One Thoughts and Impressions How can takeaways from Day One inform today’s sessions? Moderators: Rebecca Shearman, University of Massachusetts, Lowell, <i>Convening Committee Member</i> Kalyn Owens, North Seattle College, <i>Convening Committee Member</i>
8:30 – 9:30am	Breakout Sessions: Developing Expanded, Systems-Based Strategies Part II Participants will meet with leaders and stakeholders from other projects to discuss systems-based approaches to developing and building partnerships. Breakout session topics will build on Day One discussions and focus on using systems strategies to strengthen ExLENT projects. Topics may include exploring approaches for engaging additional stakeholders, expanding learner participation, supporting long-term sustainability, and deepening project analysis.

9:30 – 10:30am	Breakout Sessions: Developing Expanded, Systems-Based Strategies Part III Participants with similar project approaches will meet in groups to identify opportunities for collaboration in their current and future work. Each group will develop a brief action plan for the next six weeks, three months, and six months, and prepare one PowerPoint slide summarizing its discussion and proposed next steps for sharing during the following session.
10:30 – 10:45am	Break
10:45 – 11:30am	Discussion: Thoughts About Next Steps for Projects Moderator: George Ligler , Texas A&M University, <i>Convening Committee Chair</i> Groups will share their one-slide summaries, followed by committee observations and a group discussion highlighting common themes across groups and identifying opportunities for continued coordination beyond the convening.
11:30am – 12:00pm	Discussion: What Should the National Academy of Engineering's September Follow-Up Virtual Convening Address? David A. Butler , National Academy of Engineering, <i>NAE ExLENT Project PI</i> As part of NSF's grant, the National Academy of Engineering will host a <u>virtual</u> meeting of ExLENT project staff on September 1–2, 2026 to gather participants' reflections on key takeaways from the current convening and identify ways to support the continuing needs of ExLENT projects, personnel, and students.
12:00pm	Closing remarks Alton D. Romig, Jr. , Executive Officer of the National Academy of Engineering (via virtual link)
12:15pm	Adjourn