Project Year-End Summary Report

Title of Project: Plant Identification Signs at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park

Begin answering in the shaded box right beside or below each question and it will expand to accommodate as you type. Use up to a total of two and a half pages for questions 1-8. More detailed presentations, a final report, articles or posters are welcome separately (See final instructions at the end of this form.)*

1. Organization name or Individual who received the grant:
Asombro Institute for Science Education

2. Amount of Grant: $ 700.00

4. Was additional outside funding obtained? (check box that applies) Yes ☑ No ☐
Other funding source(s) if you checked "yes." Unrestricted donations to Asombro from individuals.

5. Briefly, how was the grant money from the Carter Conservation Fund used?
Thanks to the grant from the Carter Conservation Fund, Asombro staff designed and installed **50 new plant identification signs along five trails** at our outdoor classroom, the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, north of Las Cruces. These signs use metal 4" x 6" sign holders that are a new design for Asombro. They allow us to print and laminate signs in our office, which saves time and money. Asombro can also replace signs quickly as needed, and the signs have additional space for a QR code that will take interested visitors to the iNaturalist page for the plant so they can learn more.

6. Write an abstract or summary of the activities performed and the progress that was made this year on your project. (Save any conclusions, lessons learned, and benefits achieved for the final sections, 7&8.)
The project was completed in four phases:
February 2026 – We ordered 50 sign holders from Plant Signs (4" x 6" with 20-inch stakes).

March 2026 – Asombro's Nature Park Manager, William Lukefahr, worked with other Asombro staff members to finalize the layout of the new plant identification signs.

April – June 2026 –William Lukefahr created the 50 new signs that identify 22 different species. Some signs are duplicates (e.g., because the creosote bush is so important and ubiquitous, we have at least one creosote bush labeled on each of the five trails at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park).

July – August 2026 – Wiliam Lukefahr and Nature Park volunteers selected locations for the new signs and installed them along five trails at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.

7. How does your project further a Native Plant Society mission area, namely: *plant or ecological education; conservation/restoration of native plants and/or their habitats; adds to botanical research; promotes appropriate use of native plants to conserve water, land and/or wildlife.*

The new plant identification signs help educate the public about native plants by promoting native plant identification and ecology information. We anticipate that these new signs will be seen by approximately 3,000 people each year (including approximately 2,000 students who attend Asombro field trips and 1,000 adults who visit the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park for public events or self-guided hiking).

8. Any other conclusions, lessons learned, benefits to you, the community or the environment hopefully result from your work as assisted by this grant.

At the start of the project, we anticipated the benefits of being able to print and laminate the plant identification signs in our office rather than having to order signs each time a sign was damaged or needed to be updated. We knew this would save Asombro time and money and allow us to make sure signs were consistent with the latest scientific information.

An additional benefit of the new signs, the larger size, has become apparent during this project. The extra space on each sign allows us to add additional information on the plant's adaptations and a QR code linking to the iNaturalist page for each species. Many visitors have already told us how much they appreciate a quick link to learn more about some species. One visitor also mentioned that he had never heard of iNaturalist, but he was now interested in using it to help identify plants when he is hiking at locations outside the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. While field trips for the new school year are just starting, we anticipate that students will also be very interested in these QR codes and the iNaturalist app to support their self-guided explorations.

We love that the signs offer visitors of all ages an invitation to slow down, look closely, and discover the diversity of plant life growing all around them. This supports Asombro's mission to increase scientific literacy and inspire wonder about science and the fascinating Chihuahuan Desert. We are incredibly grateful for the grant from the Carter Conservation Fund to help us promote education about native plants in New Mexico.

Final Instructions

Please send your completed form as a PDF email attachment to cartergrantapps@gmail.com by November 1, 2026.

** To remain in good standing for any future funding from the Native Plant Society of New Mexico, we ask that you educate our membership more fully in some way. This could be an article (250 words minimum, at least 1 high resolution illustration or photo) for our newsletter, **or** a paper or electronic copy or link to a published article connected with the past year's work, **or** by making an educational and visual presentation to one of our chapters. Contact information for our 7 area chapters is found on our website at www.npsnm.org under the Chapters tab.*

What are your intentions in this regard?

We took two actions:

1) Asombro's Executive Director, Stephanie Bestelmeyer, gave a presentation at the monthly meeting of the Las Cruces Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico on May 13, 2026. The talk included

(a) information about Asombro's native plant related lessons for K-12 students and (b) an overview of progress on the new plant sign project supported by this grant.

2) In August, we submitted an article on this project for publication in the NPSNM newsletter.

This year end report is submitted by (Type your name) Stephanie Bestelmeyer

My typed name is equal to my handwritten signature in testifying to the accuracy and truth of this report to the best of my knowledge today.

eMail address stephanie@asombro.org

Date September 21, 2026

Please contact us again at cartergrantapps@gmail.com if you have any questions or alternate suggestions.