

Blue Marble Project Impact Report

Reporting Period: January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025

Prepared by: The Blue Marble Project

Website: BlueMarbleProj.com

Contact: Sharife Gacel, LMHC, LPC, sgacel@gmail.com

Executive Summary

This impact report highlights how The Blue Marble Project advanced its mission of exploring space while inspiring mental health awareness, creativity, and human connection on Earth throughout the 2025 reporting period. Guided by the motto *Exploring Space, Inspiring Earth*, the project is rooted in the belief that awe, curiosity, and perspective foster resilience, meaning, and connection.

During this period, the Blue Marble Project engaged the public through science outreach, mental health education, artistic expression, community-based programming, and analog astronaut-informed research initiatives. Drawing on lived experience from analog astronaut missions and spaceflight simulation environments, the project explored how isolation, confinement, teamwork, and awe-inspiring environments influence psychological well-being, adaptability, and meaning-making. These insights strengthened public programming, educational content, and clinical practice by grounding outreach in real-world space psychology and human factors research.

This report summarizes key activities and outcomes, including measurable reach and engagement, qualitative impact on participants, collaborative partnerships, and progress toward long-term research and educational goals. It also reflects on challenges, lessons learned, and future priorities as The Blue Marble Project continues to expand its role at the intersection of space exploration, mental health, creativity, and human-centered science communication.



(Above: IMAP launch)

Mission and Vision

Mission

The mission of The Blue Marble Project is to bring together space science, mental health, art, and education to inspire curiosity, emotional resilience, and a broader sense of perspective. Using space as both a subject of exploration and a source of reflection, the project helps people connect discoveries beyond Earth with their inner experiences here at home.

Through outreach, research, counseling, and creative work, The Blue Marble Project makes science more human and mental health more approachable. The guiding motto, *Exploring Space, Inspiring Earth*, reflects a commitment to scientific curiosity and discovery while translating those experiences into meaningful, accessible insights that support emotional well-being and connection in everyday life.



(Above: Mission Control Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California)

Vision

The vision of The Blue Marble Project is a world where science and mental health are accessible, inclusive, and grounded in shared human experience. In this vision, people feel invited to engage with science regardless of background, while also feeling supported in exploring their inner worlds with curiosity and compassion.

By helping people look outward at the universe and inward at themselves, The Blue Marble Project envisions communities that are more resilient, thoughtful, and connected, finding meaning not only in the stars above but also in the lives they are living on Earth.

Core Focus Areas

Space and Science Communication

Space and science communication is a core pillar of The Blue Marble Project. During the reporting period, the project published **17 original long-form articles**, translating complex scientific and psychological topics into accessible, engaging narratives for a general audience.

Content covered space missions, spacecraft and technology, astronomy and observatories, space psychology, mental health, and the intersection of science and art. Articles were written to strike a balance between scientific accuracy and clarity, enabling readers without technical backgrounds to engage meaningfully with topics such as International Space Station research, deep-space missions, telescope history, and human adaptation to extreme environments.

A significant portion of this work integrated analog astronaut research and space psychology, drawing on themes of isolation, teamwork, awe, and resilience. These articles supported science literacy while encouraging readers to reflect on their own experiences with uncertainty, meaning, and perspective.



(Above: NG-23 Launch)

Article Impact Metrics

- Total article views: **1,022**
- Average time on article pages: **2 minutes, 59 seconds**
- Average engagement rate: **71%**
- Highest average reading months: June, July, and March
- Overall trend: Consistent monthly readership with sustained long-form engagement

Mental Health Counseling and Wellness

Mental health counseling services extend The Blue Marble Project's mission into direct, individualized care. Grounded in evidence-based practice and informed by space psychology and analog astronaut research, counseling supported adults navigating anxiety, stress, identity exploration, relationships, and major life transitions.



Blue Marble Project is an applied mental health initiative that uses awe-based and meaning-centered experiences to support emotional regulation, psychological flexibility, identity integration, and post-traumatic growth. It integrates acceptance-based, behavioral, strengths-based, narrative, and trauma-informed approaches, with a focus on meaning-making, psychological flexibility, and post-traumatic growth. and translates these principles into experiential, research-informed, and public-facing formats. Exploration of Awe leads to nervous system regulation, attentional broadening, and reduction in rumination, all symptoms of anxiety disorders.

(Above: Pillars of Creation as taken by a SeestarS50)

During the reporting period:

- **80+ adult clients** received counseling services
- Client ages ranged from **19 to 56**
- Strong representation from **LGBTQ+ communities**
- Services delivered across **Florida and Colorado**
- Approximately **600 hours** of direct counseling were provided

Counseling emphasized emotional awareness, psychological flexibility, and values-based decision-making, translating themes of awe and perspective into tangible mental health support. This work reflects the project's commitment to providing inclusive, human-centered care, aligned with the theme of *Exploring Space, Inspiring Earth*.

Research and Analog Astronaut Psychology

Analog astronaut research is a foundational pillar of The Blue Marble Project. This work investigates how humans adapt psychologically and socially in extreme, space-like environments, focusing on resilience, teamwork, isolation tolerance, decision-making, and psychological safety.

In 2025, the Blue Marble Project participated in the **World's Biggest Analog**, serving as **Operations Task Manager** within a globally distributed mission coordinated by the Austrian Space Forum. This role involved supporting operational workflows, communication, and task prioritization across international teams.

Key mission details:

- 14-day global analog mission
- 16 Moon and Mars analog habitats
- 200+ participants across 25 countries
- Mission Control Vienna operations role

This experience provided direct insight into human factors affecting mission support teams, including cognitive load, coordination across time zones, and psychological safety. As a result, the Blue Marble Project was invited to continue contributing to the Human Factors teams with the Austrian Space Forum and OSMED, strengthening its role in interdisciplinary space psychology research.



(Above: Mission Control-Vienna group photo from World's Biggest Analog)

Art and Creative Expression

The Blue Marble Project's Virtual Space Art Gallery serves as a creative bridge between space exploration, personal reflection, and mental wellness. The gallery features original works inspired by astronomy, mythology, NASA missions, and human experience.

Artworks explore themes of curiosity, resilience, connection, and belonging, including:

- *Pioneer*, a symbolic reinterpretation of someone who is among the first to develop a new area of knowledge
- *Explorer*, celebrating the human drive to discover
- Various other astronomical art pieces, sharing awareness and knowledge about NASA missions

Additional works include depictions of spacecraft, celestial bodies, and cosmic phenomena. By integrating art into outreach and education, the gallery offers audiences multiple entry points into scientific curiosity and emotional insight.



“Explorer” (9x12” Pen & Ink)



“Pioneer” (9x12” Pen & Ink)

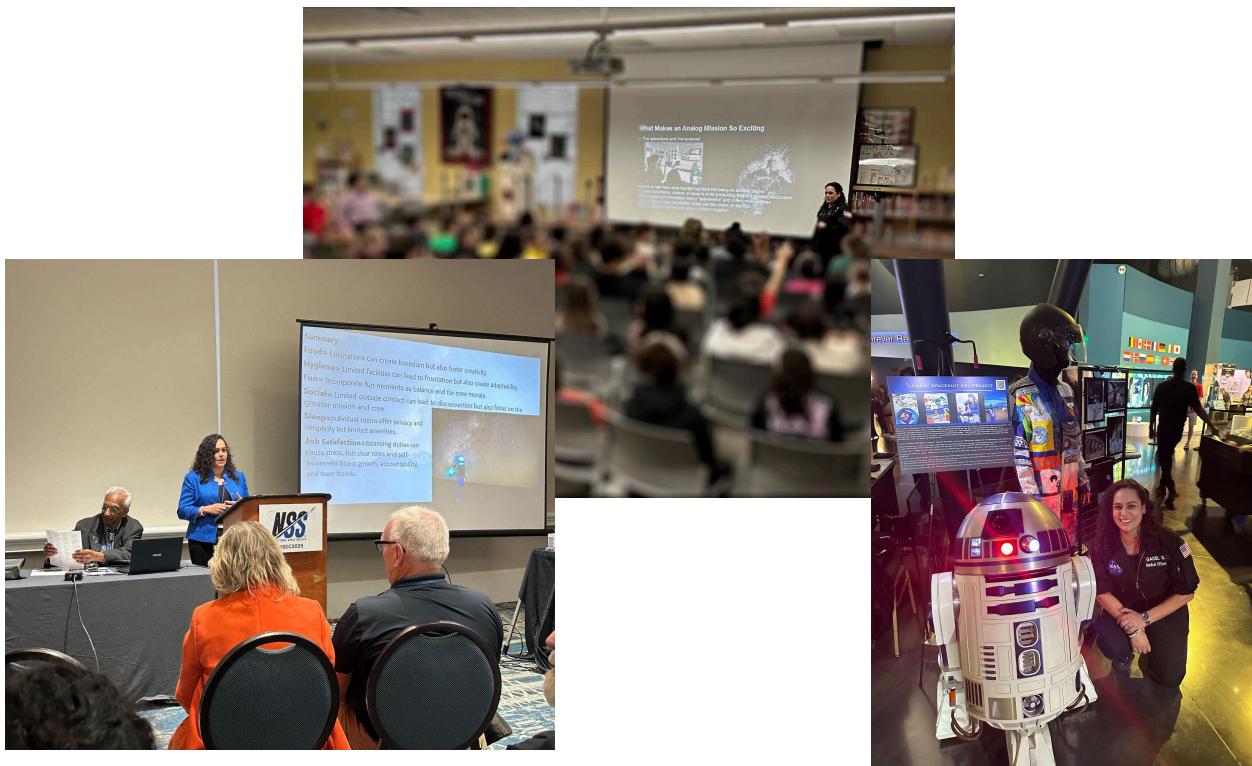
Community Engagement and Outreach

From 2020 through 2025, the Blue Marble Project led or participated in **80+ public outreach events**, with **18 NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador events delivered in 2025 alone**.

2025 Outreach Metrics

- Total events delivered: **18**
- Total outreach hours: **39**
- Total public reach: **4,630 people**
- Average reach per event: **~257 people**

Programming included community star parties, school visits, virtual talks, conferences, podcasts, and online articles. Outreach emphasized astronomy, planetary science, analog astronaut research, and the psychological dimensions of exploration, fostering awe-based engagement and reflective discussion.



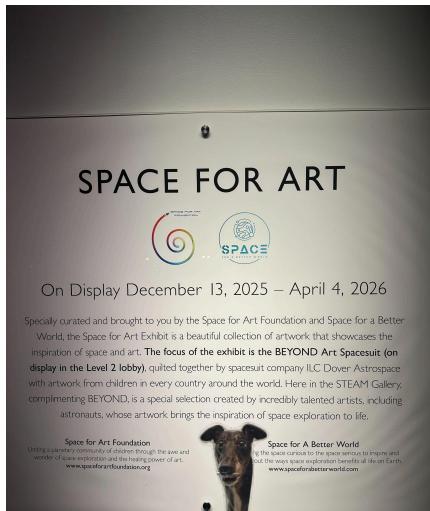
(Left: International Space Development Conference; Top: Sally Ride Elementary Teach-In Day, Right: One-Space event at Kennedy Space Center.)

Partnerships and Collaborations

Key collaborators during the reporting period included:

- NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassadors Program
- Austrian Space Forum (ÖWF)
- Central Florida Astronomical Society
- Emil Buehler Planetarium
- Orlando Science Center
- Orlando Museum of Art
- Space for Art Foundation
- Florida State Parks

These partnerships strengthened program quality, expanded reach, and supported inclusive, interdisciplinary engagement.



Left to Right; Space for Art Foundation exhibit at Orlando Science Center, Jet Propulsion Lab visit, Astrofest in partnership with Central Florida Astronomical Society.

Media and Visibility

Instagram played a key role in extending outreach beyond live events.

Instagram Reach and Engagement

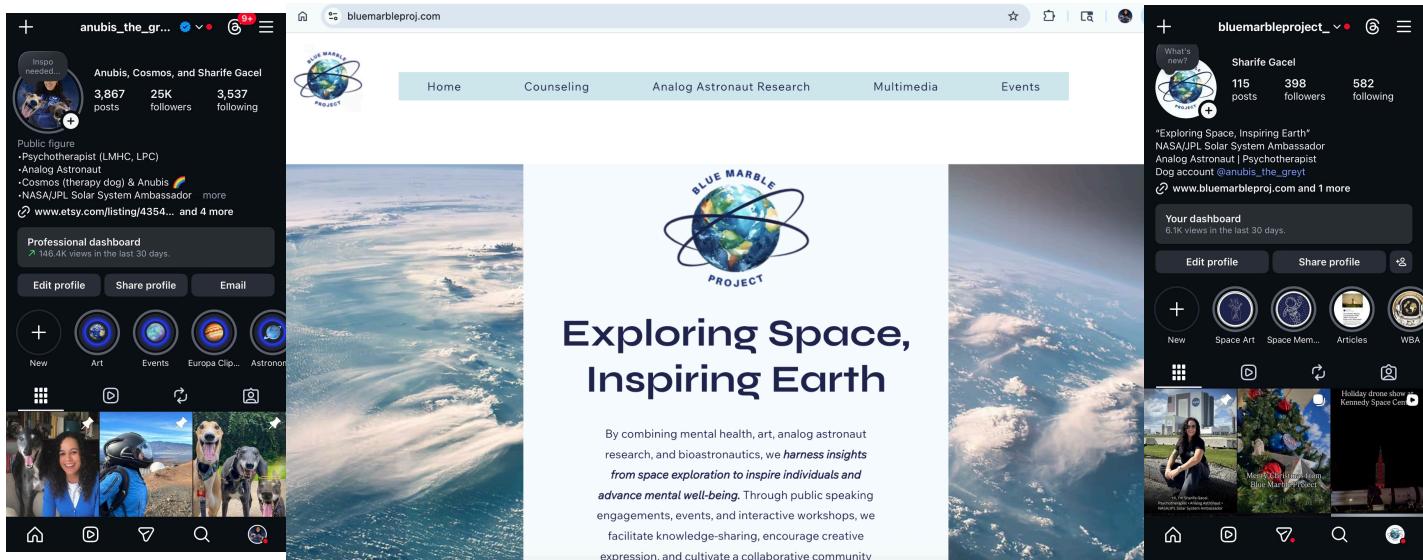
- **@anubis_the_greyt**

- Followers: 25,000
- Total views: 1,066,724
- Total interactions: 177,444

- **@bluemarbleproject_**

- Followers: 398
- Total views: 132,096
- Total interactions: 6,732

Combined reach: 1,198,820 views and 184,176 interactions



Challenges and Lessons Learned



Lessons Learned

- Strategic focus increases impact
- Partnerships amplify reach
- Diversified outreach builds resilience
- Audience-specific messaging matters
- Sustainable pacing supports longevity

Andromeda Galaxy as taken from a Seestar S50

Key Challenges

- Balancing interdisciplinary work with sustainable capacity
- Competitive and limited media access
- Managing platforms with vastly different audience sizes

Looking Ahead

The next reporting period will prioritize sustainability, depth of impact, and strategic growth.



Planned Programs and Research

- Continue development of space psychology-informed programming, including workshops and talks that explore awe, perspective, stress regulation, and human performance in extreme or novel environments.
- Advance research initiatives focused on the psychological and emotional impact of astronomical observation, including telescope-based awe experiences and analog astronaut-informed insights.
- Expand documentation and dissemination of analog astronaut-related human factors knowledge through articles, presentations, and educational materials.

(Above: Night Sky at Biolab Boat Ramp)

Outreach Goals

- Increase the number of community-based astronomy and science outreach events through partnerships with museums, planetariums, astronomy clubs, and public lands.
- Reach new audiences through a combination of in-person events, digital media, and accessible storytelling formats.
- Strengthen inclusive outreach efforts that welcome first-time telescope users and audiences traditionally underrepresented in space science engagement.

Creative Projects

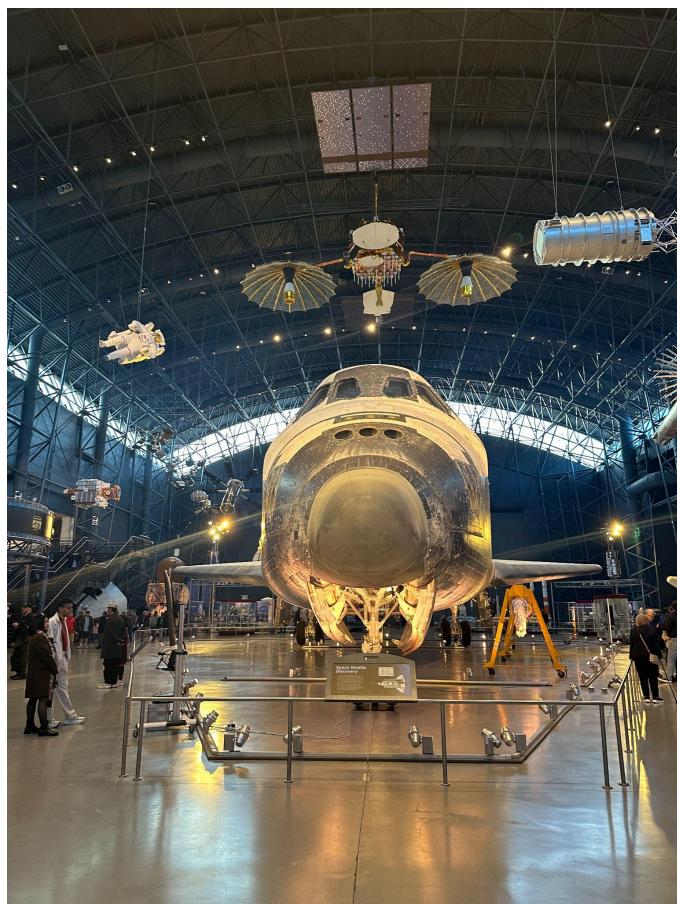
- Continue producing space-inspired artwork that bridges science, mental health, and narrative storytelling.
- Develop additional written content, including articles and long-form pieces, that connect space exploration with human experience and psychological well-being.

Gratitude and Acknowledgments

The Blue Marble Project extends sincere gratitude to collaborators, educators, participants, supporters, and the broader community. Your curiosity, trust, and shared commitment make this work possible and meaningful.

Closing Statement

At its core, The Blue Marble Project is about connection. Connection to the night sky, to curiosity, and to one another, reminding us that exploration is as much about understanding ourselves as it is about understanding the universe.



(Above: Space Shuttle Discovery at the Udvar-Hazy Museum in Washington, D.C.)
