

## CONOCIMIENTO ACTIVITY

The process of Conocimiento was developed by cultural activists in the early 1970s. It is rooted in the influence and inspiration of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher who believed that we can teach each other about one another through dialogue. It is a basic tool for developing group connections.

For the Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley (HFSV) STEM Career Accelerator program, Conocimiento is a foundation that provides us with reference points to build our community of colleagues seeking to advance the representation of Latino leaders in STEM industries. We depend on each other and the insights that we all contribute to better navigate our professional pathways and to engage in meaningful industry transformation. It is essential that we learn who we are so that we have a context for the individuals who make up our Career Accelerator cohort.

Sharing our own stories and listening to those of others is important for developing impactful discussions during this program. Within this Conocimiento, we will reflect on our journeys and share our knowledge and aspirations as Latino STEM professionals who are building pathways toward leadership. It is through this process that we discover ways that we can connect with and support each other as we navigate and thrive in the tech ecosystem.

### Section 1. Identity and Background

- Is there a place (or more than one place) you consider “home”? If so, where is it, and why? If not, why not?
- Tell us about your family, however you choose to define it: How big was your family, including siblings and other extended family members? Were you the oldest, the youngest, in between, or an only child? How did that shape your experience?
- What do you know of your family history? Do you feel connected to that heritage?
- What languages are spoken in your family? What languages do you speak?
- Are there family traditions or cultural values that you hold dear? What are these, and why?
- Are there any social identities that are especially salient for you? If so, what are they and why?

### Section 2. Journey into Higher Education

- Where did you receive your undergraduate degree? Who or what led you to major in STEM?
- What was a challenge you faced on the road to completing your degree? How did you deal with it?

- Did your parents or caregivers have post-secondary degrees? Whether the answer is “yes” or “no,” how did that shape your educational trajectory?
- What do you wish your professors had known about you when you were in college, and why?
- How did you learn about HFSV’s Latinos in Technology initiative and scholarship? What was the impact the initiative had on you?
- In what ways might your salient social identities have shaped your student experience?

### **Section 3. Interest in the STEM Career Accelerator Program**

- Tell us about your current position and company. What do you find most meaningful and/or most challenging in your day-to-day work?
- Who are the people that currently support your professional growth? For example, who do you turn to when you need guidance on career advancement, salary negotiations, leveraging benefits, and the like?
- Think about the next three to five years of your career: What kind of impact, role, or growth would you like to see for yourself?
- When people hear your name in a professional setting, what do you hope they associate with you? What do you see as your strengths, values, or expertise?
- What does leadership in STEM mean to you, particularly as a Latino professional? Have you seen leadership modeled in ways that inspired you or spoke to your values?
- In what ways do your cultural background, lived experiences, or social identities shape your professional aspirations in STEM?

### **Section 4. Debrief and Reflection**

1. How did it feel to participate in this Conocimiento, both as someone who shared your experience and as someone who listened to the experiences of others? What did you discover about yourself or others in your group?
2. What can we do to continue this process of Conocimiento throughout our time together in the STEM Career Accelerator program?
3. In what ways could you use or adapt an activity like this to build community with colleagues in your workplace?