STEM Education Works®

# FUNDING THE FUTURE

## A DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING GUIDE FOR STEM PROGRAMMING IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS

STEM is one of the most exciting additions you can bring into your program to keep kids engaged and learning, but budget limitations can prevent your program from expanding into STEM education. Technology and curriculum can become expensive quickly, and many organizations rely on limited grants or annual fundraising events to support their programming.

Without reliable funding, STEM programs often remain small or struggle to continue year after year. At the same time, demand for STEM programming continues to grow. According to a national survey, 72% of parents prioritized STEM and computer science learning opportunities when choosing a program. Parents want to provide these opportunities for their children, and communities rely on out-of-school organizations to provide educational opportunities that schools may not be able to offer on their own.

Fortunately, organizations don't have to fund STEM programming alone. Corporate sponsors, community foundations, and government grants are increasingly supporting STEM education because they recognize its impact on workforce development, educational equity, and community growth. By pursuing multiple funding sources, out-of-school organizations can create sustainable STEM programs that continue serving students for years to come.

## THREE WAYS TO FUND YOUR STEM PROGRAM

STEM programming inspires students and builds valuable skills. Parents and the community understand the importance of expanding access to these enriching experiences, but without a long-term funding strategy, even successful STEM programs can be difficult to sustain or expand. Launching your program means you'll need to purchase enough technology and engaging curriculum and invest in thorough training for program leaders and volunteers.

Grant funding is often the foundation of a successful STEM program. Fortunately, as governments and corporations have realized the importance of STEM education, there have been more grant opportunities nationwide. Federal and state grants, community foundations, and corporate giving programs can all help launch new initiatives or expand your existing program. Research organizations that can help you find a grant as well as provide resources for creating the best proposal. The strongest proposals clearly demonstrate how STEM programming will benefit students while addressing local needs.

Grants are a great way to build momentum to start your program or to add small improvements year after year, but they often cannot cover every expense. STEM is a growing industry, with companies across the U.S. looking for opportunities to prepare the next generation for the workforce and make a positive impact on the community. Partnering with a local manufacturing or technology company can help you secure the funding you need while helping the company meet their

long-term community impact and workforce goals. This partnership also benefits the students involved in your program because they get to learn how STEM works in their local community, adding relevance and authenticity to what students are learning.

When it comes to funding your program, it's crucial to remember that the most successful programs are built over time. Starting small with one or two technologies and serving a limited number of students can be beneficial to your program in the long term. A pilot program allows staff and volunteers to build confidence and generate community support. Measuring student outcomes and gathering participant feedback helps demonstrate the value of your program to current and future funders. As your program receives additional funding, you can add new technologies, curriculum, and learning experiences while continuing to grow to meet the needs of the community.

> "Everybody that we've worked with at STEM Education Works has been really kind and patient. They understand our budget issues. With grant funding, things can be really tricky. So they have helped us in so many ways, and we trust them… When you have a partnership where they're looking out for your best interests rather than just looking at what they're going to make in commissions for selling you equipment, that says a lot."
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> —Amy-Jane McWilliam, Executive Director, Southwest Florida Library Network

Whether you're launching your first STEM program or expanding an existing one, a thoughtful funding strategy provides the foundation for long-term success. By combining grants, community partnerships, and scaling with time, your organization can create engaging STEM experiences that make a lasting impact on the students and families you serve.

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At STEM Education Works, we can help you through every step of implementing STEM into your program. We have resources to help you find grant opportunities, develop funding proposals, and determine the technology and budget needed to achieve your goals. Once you have your funding, we help you set up your technology, train your staff, and provide ongoing technical support to ensure your program runs smoothly. As your program grows, we continue to support you with curriculum updates, implementation guidance, and scalable technology to help your STEM program reach more students over time.