



Local S.T.E.M. Summits

Elevating STEM at the Local Level

Elevating STEM

Over the past three years, the Missouri AfterSchool Network's (MASN) Project LIFTOFF sponsored a variety of local STEM Summits across the state. Local STEM Summits provided opportunities for communities to feature current STEM offerings while bringing together new community/business partners to support STEM education.

Early STEM Summits were hosted by local afterschool programs or community intermediaries. A small amount of seed funding was made available to the host program/organization to publicize the event, secure the location, and provide catering. Although there was strong turnout from afterschool and education partners, the participation from the business community was not as significant as originally hoped for by the project.

Ensuring Business Partner Participation

In 2013, MASN partnered with the Missouri Math & Science Coalition at the Missouri Chamber of Commerce.

Together, MASN and the Chamber developed a request for proposals, directed to the local/regional Chambers of Commerce, to host local STEM Summits. The RFP required a leadership team consisting of a Chamber/STEM business representative, K-12 administrator, and afterschool administrator to plan and host the local STEM event. Several events featured keynote speakers followed by structured discussion/planning. A few included breakout sessions highlighting existing STEM resources and programs.

Tying to other Initiatives

In addition to holding a local STEM Summit, the mini-grant requirements included attending the statewide STEM Summit, participating in STEM week (locally or at STEM Day at the Capitol), and connecting to the Missouri AfterSchool Network's STEM Committee.

Statewide STEM Summit

The statewide STEM Summit served as a kickoff event, with some grantees bringing their full planning team. The agenda included a keynote by Linda Rosen from Change the Equation and breakouts for higher education, business partnerships, K-12 formal education, and informal education/afterschool.



A look at the Local STEM Summits

Fenton Area Chamber of Commerce

The Fenton Area Chamber of Commerce business community partially overlaps four school districts and one private high school. Although the planning committee's K-12 and informal education representatives were from Rockwood School District, the event had representation from all districts within the Chamber's area. The goal of the summit was to strengthen K-12 STEM education throughout St. Louis and Jefferson County by bring together educators, business leaders, government officials and others who play a role in STEM education to share ideas and resources. This STEM Summit included an hour of exhibiting by youth from the local middle and high schools during the breakfast/networking period. Several attendees commented on the energy that lasted from the morning exhibit period into the later discussion/planning phase because of the opportunity to interact directly with the youth.

Kirkville

The Kirkville Area Chamber of Commerce partnered with the local K-12 public school, including the administrator of the 21st Century Community Learning Center funded afterschool program at the Middle School. This summit provided an opportunity for businesses and educators to meet in small groups and discuss their separate and collective needs. One middle school teacher commented that he knew the community had resources, but hadn't realized how willing businesses were to connect to the schools.

Ozark SySTEMic Coalition

The Ozark SySTEMic Coalition applied for a grant on behalf of multiple Chambers in the Ozarks region. Springfield is the third largest city in Missouri, but when combined with the dozens of surrounding communities, the Ozark region encompasses a significant geographic and employment base. The SySTEMic Coalition had existed for a few years working to connect businesses and schools, but used this mini-grant opportunity to host a local STEM Summit to formally bring together K

-12, informal education, higher education, and the business community. During a panel presentation, many of the largest employers (e.g., health care, manufacturing) talked about the need for highly skilled technology staff to support their daily operations. One accounting firm shared that they have had to relocate positions to other cities due to shortages of highly skilled network administrators. During the planning portion of the agenda, educators and business leaders worked together to identify ways of connecting students to real life STEM work experiences (e.g., job shadows, internships, etc.)

Arcadia Valley Chamber of Commerce

The Arcadia Valley Chamber of Commerce partnered with the school district and 21st CCLC afterschool program to hold a local STEM Summit. Although this community is in a rural part of Missouri, the event drew a good crowd interested in supporting and improving STEM education in their region.

