STEM BEST Applications Are Open!

The Governor’s STEM Advisory Council at the Iowa Department of Education is accepting applications for the STEM BEST® (Business Engaging Students and Teachers) Program, which is aimed at launching or expanding models specifically focused on creating project-based learning opportunities.

The goal of the awards is to enable students to develop future-focused, high-demand skills to ensure success in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) pathways.

Iowa public and nonpublic school districts and buildings serving students in grades K-12 may apply for the competitive grant opportunity, which offers awards up to $40,000.

The STEM BEST Program encourages teachers and industry professionals to design project-based learning models that combine STEM subjects with hands-on learning. These experiences highlight the essential skills needed in the workplace and give students the opportunity to learn about different
industries and businesses and explore potential career paths in high-demand sectors.

Award may be used for many things, including facility upgrades, the purchase of industry-grade equipment, acquiring additional space, travel needs for exploration, and costs associated with planning with partners and integrating curriculum into existing courses.

In addition to acquiring high-demand skills, the projects should help students hone key 21st century skills, such as innovative thinking, problem solving, and complex communication and collaboration.

An applicant is required to provide a 2:1 match. For instance, if a school is seeking the full $40,000, it would need to have $20,000 to invest in the project, as well. The match may be either cash and/or in-kind support and the match may be contributed by the applicant or a community partner. To be eligible as a match, the cash and/or in-kind contribution must be provided during the funding period of the STEM BEST® Program award.

Timeline:

- October 2 - Application opens
- December 13 - Application deadline
- February 2024 - Awards announced
- February 2024 - May 2025 - Implementation

Read more about the STEM BEST Program and learn how to apply.

Meet Melinda McGregor
Can you describe your background?

- I have over 13 years as an experienced strategist successfully engaging students, building partnerships with businesses and connecting community partners. I am proficient in developing comprehensive recruitment strategies, facilitating internships, advancing career development, and implementing apprenticeships.

What kind of work or projects are you currently working on?

- I am currently preparing for the upcoming 2023-2024 Work-Based Learning opportunities at NIACC and continuing to build our apprenticeships.

What do you like most about your job?

- I like the connections with the variety of people each day.

What achievement or contribution are you most proud of?

- I am proud of the contribution that each connection has led to a new connection and the impact it makes on each person.

Why did you decide to become a member of the North Central Advisory Board?

- I decided to become a member of the Board because of the great opportunity to see the Regional impact on students and make a contribution to the students.

What message around STEM do you communicate with those around you?

- STEM opens doors and provides hands-on experiences allowing students to explore and discover!

What action or “first step” can individuals or communities do to
promote STEM?
- To check out local events in their community from coding, robotics, camps and more!

**STEM Checkout Library**

Storytime STEM-Packs and several former STEM Scale-Up kits are now available for checkout. These packs are a great hands on, creative way for students to learn more about various STEM concepts.

Learn more about available kits here: *Stem Pack Checkout Information*

Request a kit here: *Check-Out Form*

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**STEM Challenge Cards**
In addition to our checkout library, we have STEM Challenge Cards available by request. Each card has an easy to prepare STEM challenge for when you're looking for an activity to either supplement content or for students to do during transitional times in the classroom. In addition to the cards, some materials can be requested as well, though many are found easily at home.

To look at the challenge options and request any, click here:  
STEM Challenge Card Checkout

ICCC STEAMfest
Bring your whole family to the Iowa Central STEAMfest on Thursday, November 2 from 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM at Iowa Central Main Campus, Career Education Building, 1 Triton Circle, Fort Dodge, Iowa! Experience FUN activities at this hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) event being held at Iowa Central Community College. The festival is free and open to the public with activities being most suited for kindergarten through sixth grade students.

The goals of the festival are to promote, inspire and engage youth in STEAM activities and to introduce children and parents to STEAM careers in their local communities. Exhibits will feature interactive STEAM activities for children and their families. Attendees can drive robots, learn about birds from Blank Park Zoo, explore the Iowa Corn trailer, make beeswax lip balm, tryout some virtual reality and much more! Brought to you by Iowa Central Community College, Blanden Art Museum, City of Fort Dodge, McClure, and the Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council.

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**Upcoming Events!**

November 2nd - STEAMfest at ICCC  
November 10th - NC STEM Advisory Board Meeting  
February 7 - STEM Day at the Capitol  
April 1 - STEM Summit  
April 17 - STEM Festival in Mason City
Know of other STEM events in North Central Iowa? Email us at: ncstem@iastate.edu

Connect with us!

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