



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) New Jersey STEM Pathways Network: STEM Learning Ecosystems RFQ

Ecosystem Development

How do you know whether a student has learned something and integrate it into the formal school day?

Strong STEM Learning Ecosystems feature dynamic collaborations among schools, out-of-school time programs, STEM expert institutions (such as museums, science centers, institutions of higher education and STEM professional associations), the private sector, community-based organizations, youth and families. In most places, a lead organization brings together stakeholders to create and connect learning opportunities for young people and sustains momentum over time.

These collaborations work to understand STEM education challenges, pinpoint gaps, define goals and launch, expand and connect initiatives. They also share wisdom, effective practices and data. They nurture partnerships across sectors, contributing to stakeholders' mutual goals.

In STEM ecosystems, educators from all sectors have access to high-quality professional development and support, often in ways that enable them to learn and teach alongside educators from different settings.

Strong STEM ecosystems create multiple pathways to STEM mastery and careers for all young people—particularly for those who have not had equal opportunity to succeed in STEM fields: young people of color, economically disadvantaged young people, girls and young people with disabilities.

We encourage you to visit the website www.stemecosystems.org to learn more.

Evaluation

Are there ways you can help us coordinate across our communities?

Yes. The NJ STEM learning ecosystems selected will receive customized technical assistance to help with evaluation at the local level. In addition, the NJ STEM learning ecosystems will have the opportunity to participate in a National

Community of Practice that will allow for peer-to-peer learning opportunities. The STEM Funders will also outline the evaluation expectations through the technical assistance and Community of Practice.

Application Process

Is there a specific order in which the application should be completed? If we have already asked partners to complete self-assessments but we haven't completed the online application yet, is that a problem?

Self-assessments can be completed at any time regardless of the status of your overall application. Conversely, all the attachments must be uploaded last when you're ready to submit and cannot be saved for later unlike the text fields.

Is there a limit to the number of letters of support we can include? How about self-assessments? I don't want to ask and then not be able to upload.

We require a minimum of three letters of support (you can provide up to 8 if you wish) and a minimum of four self-assessments (you can have as many different ecosystem members submit a self-assessment as you would like, provide you have at least four).

How many letters of recommendation are required? Any recommendations for whom should submit self-assessments? Number of responses?

Collaboration across sectors and among different groups within your communities will be a key component of this project. We encourage you to invite a diverse representation of your ecosystem to complete the self-assessment. Potential partners may include:

- Formal PreK-12 Learning: schools and school systems;
- Out-of-School Learning: out-of-school time and/or summer learning provided by schools or community-based organizations where available, out-of-school focused intermediary organizations;
- STEM-Expert Organizations: such as science centers, museums, corporations, non-profit organizations or professional associations;
- Business and industry;
- Post-secondary STEM and higher education and professional training institutions;
- Local or regional public or private funders;
- Parent organizations or organizations serving families.

In terms of the number of responses, the RFQ states:

*Select at least **four** ecosystem members to complete the online self-assessments. Once you are in the application, you will be able to copy the link to the online self-assessment form and paste it into your personal email to send to your*

ecosystem members. Submissions of self-assessments from additional ecosystem members are encouraged and will be viewed favorably.

There is no limit to the number of self-assessments that can be submitted by communities.

Can we send in DVDs as demonstrations of the STEM learning system in our community?

The online application is not equipped to have videos uploaded to it. If you would like to include any links, please include them in the narrative of your application.

Can I save my answers if I must leave the application window for any reason?

Text answers will save automatically when you exit out of SurveyMonkey. To recover your answers, you must reopen the link in the same browser and on the same computer. Please note that file answers will not save.

The Award

Will my ecosystem receive start-up funds as well as the technical assistance listed in the RFQ?

No, start-up funds or any other cash award is not included in the technical assistance package. The technical assistance services are valued at a total of \$60,000.