



# Youth Voice

## Participating Hubs

- Central Oregon STEM Hub
- Columbia Gorge STEM Hub
- East Metro STEAM Partnership
- Frontier STEM Hub
- Greater Oregon STEM Hub
- Northwest STEM Hub
- Southern Oregon STEAM Hub
- Umpqua Valley STEAM Hub

## Grant Overview

The Youth Voice and Action in STEM initiative aimed to inspire and empower students by fostering the development of knowledge, skills, and mindsets essential for success in a rapidly evolving, technologically advanced global society. Through the initiative's first goal, youth voices were actively engaged, and leadership skills were cultivated, leading to the establishment of structures and support systems that allowed students to have meaningful input and ownership of their STEM learning experiences and career connections. With a focus on reaching underserved and underrepresented communities, the initiative sought to engage, inspire, and equip middle and high school students, promoting diversity in perspectives and enhancing cultural, racial, economic, and social inclusion in STEM education and career opportunities.

## Addressing Equity

This initiative aimed to build equity and increase opportunity and access to STEM for historically underrepresented students. Regional Leads collaborated with partner schools to identify and nominate candidates, focusing on students underrepresented in STEM. This recruitment strategy not only effectively reached the intended population but also boosted participants' confidence by recognizing their strengths. The program aligns with research emphasizing that students from diverse backgrounds, , thrive academically when they perceive themselves as valuable assets within a supportive learning community. [Comes Across the Network](#)

## Project Specific Descriptions

**Program Design:** Participating Hubs collaborated to implement Youth Voice and Action in STEM Leadership programs expanding what the traditional Chief Science Officer structure offered in years past. This leadership opportunity empowered middle and high school students to serve as STEM Ambassadors in their schools and communities.

**Connections with STEM Professionals**  
With the expansion to the Club + Leader model, many students in each participating school had regular access to STEM professionals. Advisors and regional coordinators worked together to facilitate monthly industry chats with STEM professionals. These chats included local

professionals and may have been virtual utilizing Oregon Connections or other resources.

### **Leadership Training**

Youth Voice STEAM Leaders are 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade STEM ambassadors who receive leadership training and develop a community-minded STEM project. They also advocate for and support STEM opportunities in their region and for their school STEM Club. Throughout the school year, these youth are supported by a regional coordinator and/or school site advisor. This adult will meet with their youth voice leaders at least twice per month to advise and support the students' STEM action efforts. This included community or school-focused STEM projects and programming and activities for the STEM Club. With two to three years of participation in the Youth Voice and Action in STEM initiative, districts recognized the value of youth STEM leadership opportunities and partnered with the Hubs.

### **Advocacy**

Through the Youth Voice STEM Leadership program, students and STEM professionals became aware of and engaged in STEM education efforts. In schools, Youth Voice STEM Leaders served as a voice for STEM, identifying, designing, and leading experiences that reflect student needs and interests. In the community, these youth served as ambassadors and thought leaders, working with school boards, government, business, and industry to promote STEM awareness and engagement. Youth Voice STEM Leaders attended STEM learning opportunities, provided Hubs with insights, connected with other students and STEM professionals, and learned about the array of STEM careers in their region. Volunteer industry professionals were invited to join the Youth Voice STEM Leaders, teachers, and school STEM Clubs. Industry interactions and community events were leveraged to develop program sustainability.

### **Regional and Statewide Youth Leader Connections**

Each Hub leads its own cabinet/group/club and does some work on a regional level. Required annual events include a summer leadership training institute, two cabinet meetings, and a regional spring symposium. Optional regional events could include "Dinner with a STEM Professional" and other training events. Regional and statewide virtual events were coordinated between STEM Hubs to maximize Youth Voice STEM Leader interactions with their peers across the statewide network.