



Gateway to Science

North Dakota's Hands-on Science Center

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North Dakota STEM Ecosystem Selected to Join Global STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice; NORTH DAKOTA Wins Support to Build Connections Among Local Schools, Businesses, Other Partners

Bismarck, ND – The North Dakota STEM Ecosystem, a joint venture between the North Dakota STEM Network and Gateway to Science, has been selected to join the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice, SLE COP, an initiative to improve education in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). North Dakota STEM Ecosystem will now connect with [67](#) other Ecosystems.

Students must have quality, applicable STEM education to enable them to thrive in today's world. North Dakota STEM Ecosystem's work is grounded in an understanding that jobs in STEM careers are growing rapidly and that the national average wage for STEM-related occupations is nearly double that of non-STEM careers.

[STEM Learning Ecosystems](#) build strong collaborations in schools and beyond—in afterschool and summer programs, at home, with local business and industry partners, and in science centers, libraries and other places. Ecosystems strive to enable students to connect what they learn at home, in school and out-of-school with real-world opportunities.

North Dakota is one of twelve Ecosystems being added to the global initiative. Benefits to joining the SLE COP include:

- North Dakota STEM Ecosystem will be provided with professional support to build and strengthen lasting, impactful collaboration among local organizations. This work requires a big picture perspective that is sometimes hard for individual partners to see. The SLE COP will help guide productive cooperation among local leaders in education, business, afterschool programs and more – all focused on best possible outcomes for *students*.
- North Dakota STEM Ecosystem will be able to learn from the collective experiences of other STEM Learning Ecosystem communities that are thriving across continents through an international community of practice network.

“We're pleased to welcome North Dakota STEM Ecosystem to our community of practice. The Ecosystem was selected to join the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice because its local partners have already

demonstrated a deep commitment for STEM learning across multiple platforms,” said SLECOP co-founder Gerald Solomon, executive director of the Samueli Foundation.

Ron Ottinger, co-founder of the SLECOP and executive director of STEM Next Opportunity Fund added, “We were impressed with North Dakota STEM Ecosystem’s commitment to serving those from under-represented populations.”

Jan Morrison, president and CEO of TIES, which provides support to the SLECOP communities, said the four-year-old initiative is credited with changing how millions of students learn and dramatically altering how educators teach STEM. “Our team is eager to develop partnership and learning objectives that are relevant for the local area.”

“It makes sense to collaborate with like-minded organizations, but that doesn’t mean it’s easy,” said Beth Demke, Executive Director of Gateway to Science and co-leader of the North Dakota STEM Ecosystem. “STEM Ecosystems provides design thinking and infrastructure support so that we can tailor quality STEM learning opportunities to our specific needs in North Dakota while leveraging the experiences of similar alliances across the world.”

According to Paul Keidel, President of the North Dakota STEM Network and co-leader of the North Dakota STEM Ecosystem, early plans for North Dakota are to develop a STEM Exchange where education and industry can come together to share ideas and resources about STEM education. The STEM Exchange will be a searchable database of professionals, experiences and resources. As a member of the 4th cohort of the STEM Learning Ecosystems, the North Dakota STEM Ecosystem will benefit from the collective experiences of other communities. “We are anxious to learn how other ecosystems have identified, gathered and made hands-on STEM resources and curricula equitable for all ages, including students, families and educators in rural areas,” stated Keidel.

The following ecosystem communities were selected to become part of the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice:

- California: East Bay STEM Network
- Georgia: Atlanta STEAM Learning Ecosystem
- Hawaii: Hawai’iloa ecosySTEM Cabinet
- Illinois: South Suburban STEAM Network
- Kentucky: Southeastern Kentucky STEM Ecosystem
- Massachusetts: MetroWest STEM Education Network
- New York: Greater Southern Tier STEM Learning Network
- North Carolina: STEM SENC (Southeastern North Carolina)
- North Dakota: North Dakota STEM Ecosystem
- Texas: SA/Bexar STEM/STEAM Ecosystem
- Kenya: Kenya National STEM Learning Ecosystem
- México: Alianza Para Promover la Educación en STEM (APP STEM)

Learn more about the initiative at stemecosystems.org. Address specific questions to info@stemecosystems.org. Join online conversations on Twitter [@STEMecosystems](https://twitter.com/STEMecosystems) and #STEMecosystems and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/STEMecosystems).

The STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice is supported by the STEM Funders Network.

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