STEM IN LIBRARIES | **Fund Development Toolkit**

STEM LIBRARIES

INSTITUTE of **Museum**and**Library** SERVICES   **Cornerstones of Science** connecting libraries with science   **MSL** MAINE STATE LIBRARY

Introduction

The *STEM in Libraries: Fund Development Toolkit* provides resources to help you understand potential funding sources for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs, and identify these sources in your community. You'll learn how to apply best practices in your STEM fundraising.and how to successfully secure funds for STEM programs.

What's inside

- ⊙ Core elements of success
- ⊙ Finding the money
- ⊙ Funding tips
- ⊙ Additional resources

Core elements of success

New programs require resources. Although many science, technology, engineering, and math activities can be carried out at low or no cost, significant and sustainable STEM initiatives will require funding.

Regardless of the funding source, there are some common core elements of successful fundraising. You'll increase your odds of success if your partnerships are well aligned, your fundraising efforts are well coordinated, and your proposed idea is carefully considered and compellingly presented. Persistence counts, too.

Hone your idea

Hone a general STEM idea into a compelling need that is locally relevant.

- Learn about a few key issues in the community that people are concerned about. Then concisely describe the role the library can have in increasing understanding of the issues and effecting change. To learn about potential issues, speak with local officials, ask your staff which issues they are passionate about, engage your patrons through digital surveys or in-branch suggestion boxes, read the paper, and connect with current and potential community partners.

- Identify a few STEM aspects of the issue to focus your efforts. The STEM idea needs to be tangible, something people will want to come to the library to learn more about. You want to pique their curiosity.

- Begin at the end by describing the specific outcome and results you want to achieve. These should be impacts on the library, your staff, your patrons, and/or the community at large.

- Outline the steps that need to be taken to achieve the desired results, and define the resources—existing or needed—that are required. Articulate what your library will do and the impacts of those actions.

- Produce a brief narrative and share that draft with a focus group of the people you hope to impact. Ask if it is what they are interested in. Do you have it right? Will it hit the target?

Develop a stellar proposal

Follow best practices as you prepare your proposal.

- Make a clear case for support and then test it with others.

- To create a win-win situation, specifically address the funder's priorities: how will your project help them accomplish their mission? Follow the funder's guidelines, and provide exactly what they ask for in the format they want.

- Get others involved in the process of cultivation and solicitation. Helpers may include staff, Library Friends, and current supporters.

- Have a clear internal plan for recording and reporting results.

- Say thank you—all the time!

Make your case

Make the case for external support of STEM in your library with strong, consistent messages about how STEM benefits library patrons and brands the library as a STEM resource for the community. Craft clear language about why libraries are a great venue for STEM and why the public should look to libraries for this content.

Tie this STEM messaging to your messages about the overall value of libraries: They are anchors of community life; they meet the needs of many people throughout the community, including the underserved; they are open access venues, free and safe; they are local and trusted resources; they serve as sources of knowledge and learning. Draw on both the intellectual and emotional appeal of a library.

See the *STEM in Libraries: Marketing Communications Toolkit* for more ideas.

Build local partnerships

Build local partnerships that are beneficial to all involved. Your partners may include individuals, nonprofit organizations, for-profit corporations, and government agencies. See the *STEM in Libraries: Community Partnerships Toolkit* for more information.

Be persistent

Present proposals to multiple sources. If a proposal is not funded, ask the funders why, and apply useful feedback to your next proposal. Remember that a denial does not mean the ideas were not strong.

Align your fundraising efforts

Align your pursuit of STEM funding with your other library fundraising efforts to avoid internal competition for funds. As you have staff capacity, prioritize your fundraising endeavors where you are likely to get the best results. Your fundraising efforts may include annual appeals, special events, memorial gifts, major gifts to support capital projects, planned giving or bequests, and other opportunities. Think of fundraising as a long-term, integrated program.

Finding the money

Funding support for STEM programs may be found through people in your community, corporate contributions, grant proposals, or government appropriations.

People in your community—the best place to begin

What's the best place to invest time and resources in securing financial support for library STEM programs? Start with individuals who live in your community or are somehow connected to your library, people with financial resources they may be willing to contribute to a cause they believe in. These could be library users, current supporters, or people who have a relationship with someone associated with your library. You can find these people by speaking with others in your library and with members of your library board or Library Friends group. A really simple way to find these potential donors is to look at annual reports of similar organizations in your community. Often annual reports proudly state who has provided funding that year.

Remember that 75% of all philanthropic giving in the United States comes from individuals, not institutions. (For our purposes, philanthropy is the act of giving to an organization or to a specific cause or issue of importance to a community.) The remaining 25% comprises gifts from foundations (13%), bequests (8%), and donations from corporations (4%). Consequently, to build a successful funding program you will need to develop strong relationships with individuals who live in your service area or are connected to your cause.

Sources of philanthropic giving in the United States

- ◉ 75% Individuals
- ◉ 13% Foundations
- ◉ 8% Bequests
- ◉ 4% Corporate donations]

Identify individuals who may have both the capacity and the inclination to give. Likely donors often want to join with others and feel a part of a larger, successful effort. They will also expect qualitative and quantitative examples of your success. In short, they will want to see that their support has a positive impact on the community.

Think of your donors as partners, and present donation opportunities as joint investments in the community. Make it clear what the library is contributing to the cause—perhaps staff time or other resources, matching funding, or a pledge to find additional funding sources to support the program. Potential donors will want to see that the library is committed to the program and to making it sustainable.
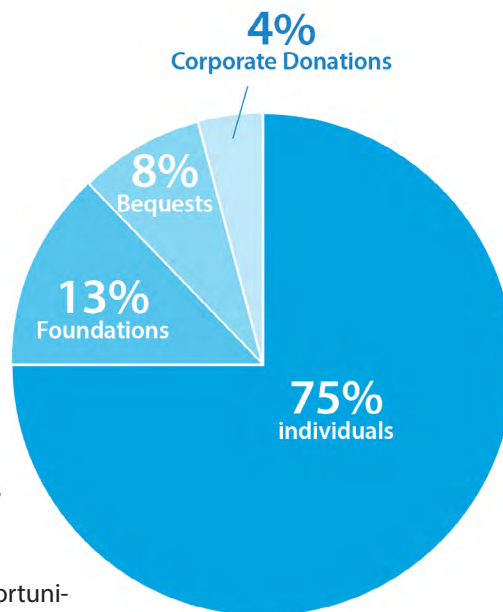
STEM example: Friends of Library Friends

A member of your Library Friends group is friendly with Mary, a wealthy individual who often donates to local health organizations and is outspoken about the urgency of the child obesity epidemic. Your director agrees this issue meshes well with the library's community wellness initiative, and your library team conducts some public domain research about Mary's key volunteer roles and previous giving to other nonprofits. Together, the library friend and your director invite Mary to see the library's relevant health resources firsthand, explain a planned library initiative to address child obesity, and arrange meetings with your local partners at a nonprofit health center and the local middle school.

By matching library priorities with what you have learned about Mary's interests, you develop an "ask" that includes support for: a two-hour training session for library staff, three science cafes for parents, book additions to your holdings that the local middle school librarian will cross-promote, a Saturday health series for your children's reading program, and take-away printed materials for children, teens, and parents or caregivers. Library staff prepare a full plan description, with desired outcomes and a budget framework, in advance of a meeting your director and library friend will have with Mary. Your director asks Mary if she would support half the cost of the program, with the library committing to securing the remaining funds through your budget and additional business sponsorships.

Community in-kind donations

There are probably other people in your community who would like to support the library but don't have the resources to make significant monetary gifts. You can give these people a way to contribute by developing and publicizing a wish list of STEM equipment needs, including everything from pipe cleaners to iPads. Individuals, local businesses, Library Friends groups, nonprofits, and others could purchase and donate these items. Think about creating a list of ongoing needs (pipe cleaners, rubber cement, and other items that need to be replaced regularly) and another list of one-time needs (six new iPads, two dozen pipettes, three new or gently used microscopes or telescopes, etc.). And don't forget to update the lists regularly!

STEM example: Supplies for a nature program

Your library team wants to start a program that encourages people to get outdoors and enjoy nature. You've partnered with your State Parks System to provide free passes to parks with hiking trails and to bring rangers to the library to talk about outdoor exploration. Now you want to stock backpacks that patrons can check out when they hit the trails.

To encourage in-kind donations of supplies you'll need, you create two lists: a list of resources that will need to be replaced regularly, like trail maps and pocket guides to local birds, trees, flowers, and wildlife, and a list of items that should last a while, like backpacks and binoculars. Then you **create wish lists on Amazon** or other retail websites, and publicize the lists on your library website, through your newsletters, and at programs and presentations. This approach gives community members a chance to make a selection and contribute to the library, even if their personal resources are limited.

Corporate gifts and in-kind donations

Corporations and local businesses may make tax-qualified charitable gifts, offer matching gift programs for employees, use portions of their marketing budgets for nonprofit sponsorships, make in-kind gifts of products and materials, and look for volunteer opportunities for their employees. Businesses do this to give back to their community as well as to reinforce their brand by associating with a nonprofit's mission, to raise the visibility of their company, and possibly even to increase sales. Companies want to know that they are receiving these kinds of benefits through their support of the library.

Businesses rarely give to a nonprofit indefinitely, so try framing your request as a one-time gift to a particular initiative or as a multiyear sponsorship.

STEM example: A local science-based company

Acme H2O is a local company that manufactures water-testing equipment, has a workforce of thirteen scientists, and operates an in-house laboratory where staffmembers analyze water samples for municipal water districts. Your community is grappling with two related issues affecting local homeowners: a three-year regional drought, and declining water quality in two ponds. Your staff knows the library can be the venue for an educational campaign that engages local residents.

You partner with the regional land trust and jointly approach Acme H20's vice president of sales to support a three-month program that involves the company's donating water testing kits to the land trust and staffing volunteer-training sessions. Acme's staff also offers to hold information sessions at the library to discuss how homeowners can address land uses that are impacting the ponds. In addition, Acme's vice president joins a library panel discussion to explain how the drought is contributing to the decline in water quality. The company's visibility grows, the library and land trust reinforce their roles in the community, and residents are involved in addressing two important community issues.

Competitive grant proposals

Government entities, private foundations, and corporate foundations have competitive grant programs with an application process that requires work plans, schedules, budgets, and supporting documentation. These organizations typically have specific funding priorities or missions; look for ones that align with your library's priorities. Often these funders will only give funds to federally designated 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations (or their financial agents), government entities, and those designated as 170(c)(1) entities. If your library does not qualify, your Library Friends group or a nonprofit partner might.

When public libraries seek funds for a program or service, it is common for librarians to choose to write a competitive grant proposal—despite the fact that less than 15% of all philanthropic funds come from grants. Competition for foundation grants is keen, and so the success rate is low. Similarly, the number of proposals to government agencies far exceeds the number that can be funded. So be sure your funding need closely fits the funder's priorities before you take the time and effort to research and write a grant proposal.

If a grant might make sense for your program, you can look for opportunities through The **Foundation Center** (especially the center's **Visualizing Funding for Libraries** tools and training), **Grants.gov**, and foundation directories in your region. Representatives of regional foundations may be available to consult with you on funding opportunities that could be a good match for your program idea. You'll need to research grantmaking organizations carefully, be sure you qualify for the specific grant program, and provide exactly what the funders require in the format they need. Also, be sure you're aware of any reports or other follow-up activities funders may require. The grant process doesn't end when you get the funds!

STEM example: A regional foundation

Librarians recruit several local residents with proven grant-writing experience to help prepare a grant application for a library initiative to address hunger in the community. The library partners with the local economic development agency, the garden club, and a food pantry. The partners agree to create a community garden behind the library, offer free monthly nutrition talks in the library, and facilitate a book club on growing one's own food.

Together the partners research grant opportunities and identify a regional foundation that focuses on creative solutions to hunger. The proposal is successfully funded, and in addition to meeting the program goals, new audiences connect with the library, the library forms new nonprofit partnerships, and the library is seen as a convener on a critical local issue.

Government appropriations

Public libraries are funded through a wide combination of sources; the most common are municipal and county budgets. While competition for government funding is keen, it remains a viable source of increased support. A library can work with local officials and residents on a multiyear effort to address a STEM issue that is widely acknowledged as an important local concern.

On a national level, funding opportunities may be available through the **Institute of Museum and Library Services** (IMLS) and the **Library Services and Technology Act** (LSTA), a federal program administered by IMLS through state library agencies.

STEM example: City or county funding

Your library identifies a need for high-technology jobs in the community and partners with a local job-training agency. Together you decide to furnish an area in the library to accommodate a maker space with a sound studio, robotics lab, and multimedia tools, including 3D printers. The library and the training center promote the initiative and enlist key citizen opinion leaders to publicly support the proposal at municipal budget meetings.

Funding tips

Talk with others

Identifying potential funding sources—whether individuals, foundations, or businesses—is an ongoing process.

- Engage your trustees.

- Speak with your colleagues in other libraries.

- Meet with staff at your state or regional community foundation.

- Work with staff at your state library agency.

- Tap your Library Friends group or community members supportive of the library.

- Contact your local community foundation to discuss your funding needs.

The Council on Foundations provides a **Community Foundation Locator** that can help you find an accredited community foundation in your area; there are nearly 1,000 community foundations in the United States. You are strongly encouraged to reach out to representatives of your local community foundation to discuss your program ideas and potential funding sources. Community foundation staff are experts in helping people connect with funders, and they have extensive online resources about organizations that may fund issues important to libraries. And access to community foundation resources and assistance is typically free!

Get organized

Regularly check on ongoing grant activity at priority foundations and government programs. Prepare a calendar that includes annual grant schedules such as IMLS funding deadlines or foundation submission dates. Add proposal preparation time to your calendar so you don't get caught scrambling.

Be prepared

Be proactive and have STEM proposal ideas "in the can." Be ready for unforeseen opportunities such as grant announcements. It's like being prepared for a massive snowstorm, tornado, or earthquake. Think ahead, and have a plan!

Create a team

Expand on your library's strengths by drawing on local resources to prepare a proposal. You might form a proposal-writing group of library staff and external people, pursue pro bono support from community members, or engage community partners in a proposal.

Learn about your funding prospects

Research the giving history of your potential funding sources. What types of organizations and projects do they support? What is their average gift or award amount? Each year corporations and foundations that make charitable gifts file IRS Form 990, which is publicly available. These documents provide considerable detail about the donor's giving patterns. (If organizations don't provide these on their own websites, you can often find them through research sites like **GuideStar**.) Review the annual reports of foundations and government grant programs to see which organizations they supported and the amounts they awarded.

Be patient

Funding results from building trust between the donor and the organization. Develop relationships first and secure funding second. Take the time to learn what a funder is interested in and show how the library's mission and programs connect with the donor's values, whether the potential supporter is an individual or a business.

Additional resources

Funding sources

- The Council on Foundations provides a **Community Foundation Locator** that can help you find an accredited community foundation in your area.

- **State library agency websites** often have content devoted to development and fundraising for public libraries. These web pages may contain how-to guides and identify organizations with a history of funding public libraries. State library agency staff can be a great resource as well. Staff can describe competitive funds the agency may have available, such as federal funds distributed through the **Library Services and Technology Act** (LSTA).

- The **Institute of Museum and Library Services** (IMLS) is the primary source of federal support for U.S. libraries. A **variety of grants** is available. (Note that IMLS works through state libraries to support statewide initiatives and distribute LSTA funds within states.)

- **Visualizing Funding for Libraries** from The Foundation Center helps libraries and their supporters find funding opportunities, increase understanding of funding sources, and track funding trends.

- **The Foundation Center** offers access to extensive resources that help organizations find the sources of funding they need.

- **Grants.gov** is the place to find and apply for a wide variety of U.S. federal grants.

Fundraising guides

- *Beyond Books Sales: The Complete Guide to Raising Real Money for Your Library*, by Susan Dowd, describes purposeful library fundraising to keep existing programs and services strong and to provide opportunities for innovation.

- *Make Do Share—Sustainable STEM Programming for and with Youth in Public Libraries*, from the Kitsap Regional Library, includes a STEM library roadmap that addresses effective and sustainable practices to engage the community.

- *Writing a Successful Grant Proposal*, from the Minnesota Council on Foundations, provides an excellent overview of the key components of a grant proposal with tips on how to present your case effectively.