

Why Business Should Support ELO Programs and STEM

Economic Transformation

The 21st Century's information economy is creating more jobs that require not only a college education but also some expertise in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math – collectively known as STEM. The last several decades have seen America's industrial- and manufacturing-based economy shift to a service economy fueled by information, knowledge and innovation. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 1996 and 2006, the United States lost three million low-tech manufacturing jobs. In that same timeframe, however, 17 million service sector jobs were created, specifically in the areas of health care, education, environment, security and energy. From 2008–2018, many of the fastest-growing jobs in the service sector are and will be STEM-related, high-end occupations that include doctors, nurses, health technicians and engineers. Industries projected to have the most employment growth are in scientific, technical and management consulting; high-tech manufacturing; computer systems design; and other STEM-related services.

Preparing the next generation to succeed in school and in life

Science and technology underpin nearly every aspect of today's society, making STEM skills necessary for all students, regardless of whether or not they eventually pursue careers in STEM. We need a STEM-literate citizenry to make informed decisions about energy sources, health care, transportation, communication, and even food development and nutrition. To become the innovators, scientists, technologists and engineers of the future, youth must be exposed to and master STEM skills. Unfortunately, there is a growing body of research suggesting Americans students are falling behind their peers internationally in their understanding of key math and science concepts.

It's All About Time...

All segments of our society have a role to play in helping to turn these dangerous trends around. Schools will continue to have a vital role. However, to prepare youth for today's challenges, we must think about STEM learning opportunities beyond the traditional school day. Combining STEM learning with out-of-school time programming can offer students of all ages fun, challenging, hands-on introductions to the skills they will need to be successful in school, college and the workplace. Research shows that when young people have meaningful, high-quality STEM experiences during non-school hours that support their classroom instruction, they are much more likely to succeed in STEM careers. Innovative school-community partnerships with strong private-sector participation can provide youth with out-of-school time learning opportunities to become the excited, engaged and inspired STEM learners that America needs.

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How Businesses Can Partner with ELO Programs

Business partners can assist afterschool programs and advocacy efforts with securing resources that would otherwise not be made available. By investing in after school programs, businesses are helping to prepare their future workforce. Many businesses also benefit from building relationships with programs that can provide afterschool services to local employees. These relationships are often beneficial to both business and afterschool providers.

Providing Technical Assistance directly to programs can be extremely valuable to improving the quality of the management and administration of afterschool programs.

Providing merchandise and equipment to afterschool programs can have a large impact on the quality of programs available to youth. Donations may include: Supplies for STEM projects/curriculum, academic materials, art supplies, games and sports equipment, furniture, technology, office supplies. There are many donations that are specific to a particular business that are needed and benefit youth (i.e. a grocery store donating food items).

Providing in-kind donations. Allowing employees to volunteer time in teaching after school classes is an invaluable partnership—this allows students to be exposed to and learn specific skills from those employed by a business. For example, an IT company could provide allow employees to teach a computer coding class for three hours a week. Providing meeting space for programming is another valuable resource.

Serving on the program’s board of directors or advisory group

Providing financial support can be hugely important to the sustainability of afterschool programs. Businesses can underwrite annual giving, fundraising events or purchases which can greatly improve a program’s outcomes for youth.