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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Idaho STEM Action Center a finalist in STEM Coalition Challenge**

*Initiative made possible by Arconic Foundation to spur innovation  
in STEM mentorship and maker-centered learning*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Jan. 16, 2018) — Today, US2020 announces 15 finalists, including the Idaho STEM Action Center, for the STEM Coalition Challenge, a competition for communities across the country to develop cross-sector partnerships to bring quality hands-on STEM mentoring and maker-centered learning to underrepresented students. These finalists will now move forward to compete for \$1 million in resources to implement their bold strategies, representing some of the most innovative approaches to tackling the opportunity gap through STEM.

“We received so many great ideas and are inspired by the response of the country,” Esra Ozer, president of challenge sponsor Arconic Foundation, said. “Arconic Foundation is excited to support and galvanize the efforts of these diverse communities, and we look forward to learning about the wins, challenges, and new ideas that come from this group of finalists.”

The Challenge received 92 applications from 82 communities across 35 states, representing more than 1,800 nonprofit, companies, school districts, and local government partners.

“It is clear by the national response that there is an interest and a need to increase STEM education opportunities for America’s youth,” Em McCann, CEO of Citizen Schools, the umbrella nonprofit working to expand learning opportunities to underserved students across the country, said. “In order to ensure an economy and country of diverse thinkers and doers, we need to continue to shine a light on the STEM collaborations that are on the ground. We need to collectively lift up programs that are inspiring more students to become the next generation of change-makers.”

Idaho STEM Action Center executive director Angela Hemingway concurs. “Many kids step away from STEM in middle school because it can be challenging, but if they leave the STEM pipeline they many never come back, leaving gaps in our future workforce,” she said. “However, research shows a mentor can positively impact the chances that a child continues in a STEM pathway. One of our goals we listed in our STEM Coalition Challenge application was to create a platform that can connect the most rural and remote parts of our state with mentors from both industry and post-secondary education.”

Hemingway is delighted the Idaho STEM Action Center is being recognized for its work developing mechanisms to connect education and industry. “Through our strong industry partnerships, we will be able to regionalize mentorship opportunities, transforming virtual relationships in to face-to-face interactions including mentors site visits, job shadowing, internships, and more,” she said. “We are just starting down the path with the goal of ensuring that every child in Idaho has access to a high quality mentor.”

In addition to the Idaho STEM Action Center, the finalists are:

- **Allendale, S.C.** — Promise Zone Collaboration/SRS Community Reuse Organization Region
- **Atlanta, Ga.** — United Way of Greater Atlanta
- **Brooklyn, N.Y.** — Pratt Institute
- **Buffalo, N.Y.** — Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering Partnership (ISEP)
- **Chicago, Ill.** — Project Exploration
- **Cincinnati, Ohio** — Greater Cincinnati STEM Collaborative
- **The Dalles, Ore.** — Columbia Gorge STEM Hub
- **Colorado** — Colorado STEM Coalition
- **Detroit, Mich.** — Michigan Science Center
- **Downey, Calif.** — Columbia Memorial Space Science Learning Center Foundation
- **Pittsburgh, Pa.** — Remake Learning
- **South San Francisco, Calif.** — California Academy of Sciences/Bay Area STEM Ecosystem
- **Socorro, N.M.** — New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology
- **Washington, D.C.** — DC STEM Network

Finalists were evaluated based on their potential for impact, approach to partnership building, creative engagement strategies, and sustainability planning. Finalists will gather on Jan. 31 for the STEM Collaboratory, a two-day workshop in Pittsburgh, Penn., where STEM experts and creative community builders will join them. The event will allow finalists to share, learn, and inspire one another to build local movements and bridge the opportunity gap.

Winners will be announced in Spring 2018. The \$1 million in total prize value will be shared across eight winners and is comprised of financial, consulting, and staff support, including:

- Three \$50,000 cash prizes
- Two full-time staff placements in five winning locations
- Access to US2020’s dynamic volunteer matching platform
- National visibility and communications opportunities with US2020 and its partners
- Measurement and evaluation tools and support
- Management consulting services from US2020 and external partners
- Membership in the US2020 Learning Network and national Community of Practice

In addition to Arconic Foundation, US2020's work is supported by national investments from Amgen, Chevron, Discovery Communications, Genentech, Fidelity Investments, Tata Consultancy Services, and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

**About US2020**

US2020, a division of Citizen Schools is working to dramatically scale the number of STEM professionals mentoring and teaching students through hands-on projects with a focus on serving underrepresented communities, especially girls, underrepresented minorities, and low-income children. Through partnerships at the national level and coalitions at the local level, US2020 has built a network of more than 350 organizations in 13 cities actively working to scale the STEM mentoring field, to align the field on common metrics, and to advance a focus on quality. Learn more at [US2020.org](http://US2020.org).

**About Citizen Schools**

Citizen Schools is a national nonprofit organization that partners with middle schools to expand the learning day for children in low-income communities. Citizen Schools mobilizes a team of AmeriCorps educators and volunteer "Citizen Teachers" to teach real-world learning projects and provide academic support, in order to help all students discover and achieve their dreams. Learn more at [CitizenSchools.org](http://CitizenSchools.org).

**About the Idaho STEM Action Center**

The Idaho STEM Action Center was created in 2015 because Idaho citizens are not entering the STEM pipeline fast enough to meet current and future Idaho workforce needs. Its goals are to coordinate and facilitate implementation of STEM programs, align education and workforce needs, and increase awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality teacher professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho's continued economic prosperity. Visit [STEM.Idaho.gov](http://STEM.Idaho.gov) for more information.

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