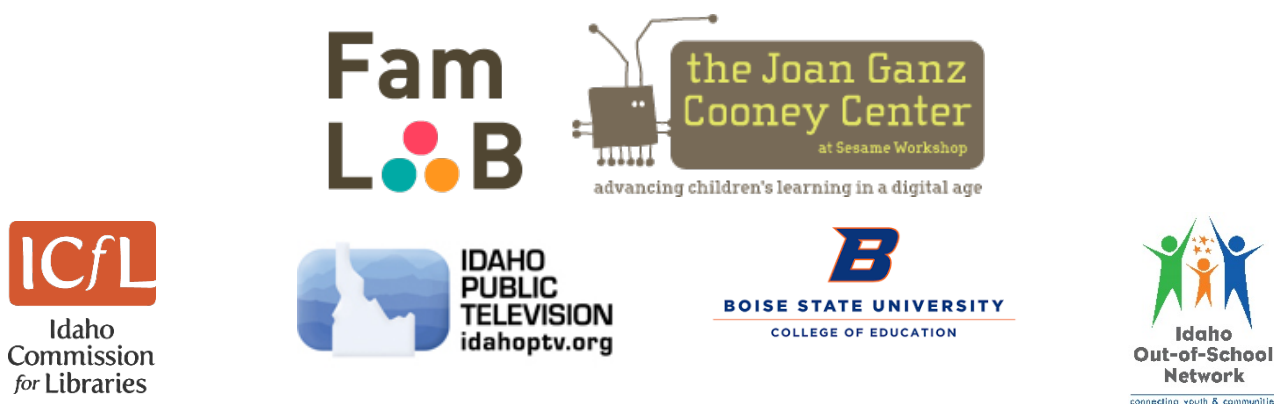




“Let Our Powers Combine” Idaho’s Early STEM Network Initiative



GRANT OVERVIEW: The Idaho STEM Action Center received a grant from the Joan Ganz Cooney Center for \$25,000. The following is a synopsis of the awarded proposal.

Idaho’s early education community is honored to receive a Spark Grant and join the larger national community supporting early childhood education across settings. Young children in Idaho are an underserved population; our youngest citizens face limited preschool opportunities and a lack of high-quality educational resources in a state that is comprised of 70% rural regions and significant underrepresented populations. Especially critical for our young children are meaningful provisions of early STEM materials and enrichment to equip them for a digital tomorrow. Our project focuses on developing a network of early STEM advocates in the state, to articulate the current deficiencies in early STEM education, identify best practices, and implement pilot programs to reach the many underserved populations in Idaho. Led by the Idaho STEM Action Center (STEM AC), this network will be a convergence of government agencies, libraries, research institutions, and community-based organizations that provide learning across boundaries. A common goal of these organizations is to provide early education professionals the tools and language needed to be facilitators of inquiry-based STEM education. This network will convene at a one-day summit in October to bring together librarians, preschool educators, out-of-school educators, museum directors, public television educators, researchers and government agency staff. During the summit, participants will define a common meaning of early STEM, select common language surrounding early STEM education, share research focused on STEM in the early years, create relationships between partners to identified priority needs, and deploy a coordinated, intentional implementation of early STEM education throughout Idaho. From the network and summit, pilot programs will be



identified to reach and engage underserved and underrepresented populations. These pilot programs will serve children ages 0 to 8, supported by research from Boise State University (BSU) as well as resources from Idaho Public TV (such as new PBS activities), library programs, Idaho Out-of-School Network programs, and STEM AC support. Because BSU researchers work with practitioners and parents, pilot programs will focus on cross-setting learning. A key goal of pilot programs will be implementation in all major regions of the state.

In the summer of 2019, the early STEM network will reconvene to evaluate the pilot programs, reflect on lessons learned and set new goals and an action plan moving forward. By combining our resources, strengths, and knowledge, our network can set the next steps for Idaho early STEM education, elevate the discussion and fully support regional needs to better reach underserved communities.

Early STEM Learning and Family Engagement Grant

Goals and objectives: Provide training and materials for early education practitioners and caregivers in rural communities to engage young children in inquiry-based STEM education through play. Priority will be given to organizations serving underserved families including rural and Spanish-speaking populations.

Brief description: This grant provides education organizations serving children ages 3-5 (includes kindergartens, preschools, libraries, Head Start, & childcare facilities) with both professional development and funding to support early STEM learning. The purpose of the grant is to educate parents and caregivers on the importance of providing discovery and inquiry-based activities for young children. After receiving one day of professional development and a starter kit of STEM tools, grant awardees will return to their educational organization and host a series of four family/caregiver workshops. Attendees will complete a pre-survey to obtain baseline data on current behaviors and attitudes towards STEM and discovery learning. Workshop attendees will be encouraged to attend all four workshops and complete a post-survey to determine if any changes in behavior and attitude occurred due to the workshop experience. These surveys will be provided by the STEM AC. *Families/caregivers attending the workshop are eligible to receive gift cards or stipends for each workshop attended, with a bonus for attending all four sessions. Funding provided by the STEM AC can be used to support these stipends, food, facilitator time, STEM materials and tools, and more.*



10 SITES WERE AWARDED:

Basin Elementary School*	BLACKFOOT
Cassia Preschool Center*	BURLEY
Children's Museum of the Magic Valley*	TWIN FALLS
Gooding Public Library*	GOODING
Marsing School District*	MARSING
Meridian Library District*	MERIDIAN
GIZMO, CDA	SANDPOINT
Payette School District*	PAYETTE
WICAP-Wilder Head Start*	WILDER

*Spanish-speaking staff to co-facilitate

Sites awarded the grant will be provided with the following:

- One-day professional development workshop with ~\$500 STEM toolkit
- Online webinar supporting family engagement workshops
- \$3,500 to host a series of family engagement workshops (to be completed by June 30, 2019)
- Mentor support for initial family engagement workshop
- Pre- and Post-Surveys from STEMAC

Funding can be used for STEM materials and tools, workshop food, facilitator stipends, and incentives for family participation. See the application for all grant details and requirements.

NEXT STEPS

The STEM Action Center will host a webinar for all participants with the following goals:

- Introduction of pilot sites
- Outline project details and more specific information on family workshops
- Share ideas on engaging families and retaining them for all 4 workshop sessions
- Answer specific questions from sites and get everyone ready to go!.

After the webinar you will be contacted by a mentor from one of the partner organizations listed above. This mentor will be available to you throughout the pilot project to answer questions, provide guidance on meeting criteria, brainstorming ideas for family engagement and more.

This program is made possible in part through a grant by the Joan Ganz Cooney Foundation FamLAB Spark Grants Program