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## **COVID funds fuel major upgrades to Idaho STEM library network**

BOISE, Idaho (Aug. 25, 2021) — As Idaho students go back to school this fall, their teachers have more lesson-planning resources at their disposal thanks to the revamped network of i-STEM Libraries throughout the state. The Idaho STEM Action Center has invested nearly \$110,000 in the libraries, helping them acquire new equipment and classroom sets, curating supporting curricula and resources, and consolidating each site's inventory into a centralized online database.

The i-STEM Libraries are a network of STEM resource hubs that loan science, technology, engineering, and math equipment and materials to Idaho educators, including formal ones like teachers and librarians at public schools and informal educators like out-of-school programs and parent-teacher organizations. The libraries are strategically located at six college campuses, including College of Eastern Idaho in Idaho Falls, College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls, College of Western Idaho in the Treasure Valley, Gizmo-CdA Makerspace on the campus of North Idaho College, Idaho State University in Pocatello, and Lewis Clark State College in Lewiston.

In addition to providing educators with more materials and resources, the upgrades make the experience more user friendly. For instance, the i-STEM Libraries' new online catalogue offers individually browsable tabs for each library location and includes images and descriptions of each available item. When browsing the database, educators can see whether or not each item is available and click a link to access an online check-out form from the hosting library. Users also can search the database for a particular item or filter their search results based on grade level or STEM content area.

The new catalogue contains a database of more than 200 expertly curated digital resources to support the implementation of library items in learning environments, including user manuals, videos, lesson plans, educator guides, extension opportunities, and more. Resources are directly linked to the library items they support so educators can access links to those resources within the item record they view.

The STEM A.C. provided each regional i-STEM library with \$12,000 to acquire new equipment and materials, with a focus on classroom sets and multi-regional availability. The agency also gave hosting sites the freedom to customize inventory and lending processes in ways that will best serve educators in each region.

Dr. Kaitlin Maguire, the STEM Action Center's executive director, said the effort has yielded a much more robust array of offerings with dramatically improved access.

"As COVID-19 disrupted our regularly scheduled programming, the STEM Action Center invested time, energy, and funds into revamping one of the state's most critical but underutilized pieces of STEM infrastructure," she said. "Although these improvements were envisioned and implemented as an emergency response to the coronavirus, they will in fact have a lasting positive impact for educators and students post pandemic, as well."

The work utilized a \$98,000 Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund grant fueled by the CARES Act and \$10,000 from the STEMx network.

Visit [stem.idaho.gov/i-stem-library](https://stem.idaho.gov/i-stem-library) to access the new online catalogue, learn more about the host sites, and get more details.

Educators and organizations interested in borrowing equipment and classroom sets from their local i-STEM Library can make a request through the catalog and pick up items on site. Educators should check with their local Library Manager for information regarding whether delivery or shipping is an option.

#### ***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 increase equitable access to STEM opportunities, align education and workforce needs, and amplify awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho's continued economic prosperity.

Visit [STEM.idaho.gov](https://STEM.idaho.gov) for more information, and visit <https://STEM.idaho.gov/support-us/foundation> to make a tax-deductible donation to the Idaho STEM Action Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to enhance the investment the state has made in Idaho's STEM community. Contributions provide greater access to STEM camps for children, student competitions, and many other life-shaping programs.

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