



**CONTACTS:**

Jacey Cavanagh  
MakerMinded  
[jacey.wilkins@gmail.com](mailto:jacey.wilkins@gmail.com)  
(610) 637-2796

Joe Steele  
LIFT  
[jsteele@almmii.org](mailto:jsteele@almmii.org)  
(313) 309-9132

John McFarlane  
Idaho STEM Action Center  
[maker-minded@STEM.idaho.gov](mailto:maker-minded@STEM.idaho.gov)  
(208) 231-1466

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **LIFT, STEM Action Center launch MakerMinded manufacturing learning platform year two**

*Program connects students to STEM experiences and skills to build Idaho's advanced manufacturing workforce*

BOISE, Idaho (Oct. 29, 2019) — On the heels of the Governor's Summit on the Future of Work earlier this month, Idaho Gov. Brad Little and the Idaho STEM Action Center have announced that competition for year two of MakerMinded in Idaho is now open. The STEM Action Center is again partnering with LIFT – Lightweight Innovations for Tomorrow, a Detroit-based national manufacturing innovation institute, to bring MakerMinded to public school students in fifth through 12th grades. The program utilizes a digital platform to provide students with meaningful advanced manufacturing and STEM activities in a competitive format. The goal is to give students foundational skills in advanced manufacturing to help fill Idaho's STEM career pipeline.

Originally designed by LIFT and Tennessee Tech University's iCUBE and launched in 2016, MakerMinded impassions students about advanced manufacturing and equips them with the skills and mindsets needed in the innovation economy. It directly links students to a diverse range of national and local STEM and advanced manufacturing programs, including manufacturing facility tours, gaming activities, and project-based learning. MakerMinded also drives a sense of competition, as students and schools receive points for each completed activity that are tallied on a real-time online leader board. The top schools in four different classifications based on student population will win \$4,000 each and are celebrated at year-end recognition events.

"Thousands of jobs go unfilled in Idaho because our workforce lacks the skills in science, technology, engineering, math, and computer science to meet employers' needs," Gov. Little said. "Idaho's partnership with LIFT and the work of the STEM Action Center and others are connecting our students with the education, training, and exposure they need to fill the jobs of today and tomorrow."

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Currently there are nearly 7,800 unfilled STEM jobs in Idaho, according to STEM Action Center executive director Dr. Angela Hemingway, and she said that number is expected to grow significantly in the coming years.

“One of the STEM Action Center’s legislated goals is to align science, technology, engineering, math, and computer science education with workforce needs throughout Idaho, and MakerMinded is a great program to help accomplish this goal,” Dr. Hemingway said. “The importance of a STEM-literate workforce to Idaho’s economy can’t be overstated. We are the fastest-growing state in the U.S., our tech sector is the second fastest growing in the nation, and 80 percent of all jobs will require technology skills within the next 10 years. Meanwhile, the Idaho Department of Labor predicts upwards of 100,000 STEM jobs will exist in Idaho by 2024. These jobs will represent \$6.5 billion in personal income and almost \$350 million in tax revenue if our workforce is poised to fill them.”

According to the National Association of Manufacturers, manufacturing is an important part of Idaho’s economy. The organization reports the state’s 1,714 manufacturing firms employ 9.24 percent of its workforce and that Idaho’s more than 68,130 manufacturing employees have an average annual compensation of \$70,052.70 — nearly double the average annual compensation of \$37,425.61 for employees of nonfarm businesses.

Seven states — Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia — are part of the national MakerMinded initiative. Together, more than 5,000 students and teachers from more than 400 middle and high schools are active on the platform. Originally funded in Idaho through a grant from the U.S. Department of Defense’s National Defense Education Program, year two funding shifts to the Idaho STEM Action Center, but the mission to inspire the next generation of makers and innovators remains the same.

“Programs like MakerMinded are helping to broaden the STEM talent pool and build the quality workforce our nation needs to meet its most complex defense technological and manufacturing challenges,” LIFT’s Emily DeRocco said. “We are excited to build off of last year’s success and engage more students and teachers on the MakerMinded platform.”

“Continuing to reach students of all ages to inspire them to consider advanced manufacturing as a career choice is critical to our mission and to filling the widening skills gap across the U.S.,” LIFT CEO and executive director Nigel Francis said.

A focus of this year’s competition will be to directly connect students and teachers to local manufacturers for plant tours, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities.

“We had 55 schools participate in last year’s competition and we also signed up 62 manufacturers across the state to offer schools site visits, guest speakers, mentorships, job shadows, and internships,” John McFarlane, Idaho’s MakerMinded coordinator at the STEM Action Center, said. “One of the winning schools, Basin Elementary, used their cash award to convert an unused classroom into a makerspace for the whole district to use.”

The latest competition ends at noon April 23, 2020, with recognition events scheduled for early May.

Students, schools, employers and others interested in joining the Idaho MakerMinded campaign should visit [www.id.makerminded.com](http://www.id.makerminded.com) or contact John McFarlane at [makerminded@STEM.idaho.gov](mailto:makerminded@STEM.idaho.gov).

***About LIFT – Lightweight Innovations for Tomorrow***

*LIFT is a Detroit-based, public-private partnership committed to the development and deployment of advanced lightweight materials manufacturing technologies and implementing education and training initiatives to better prepare the workforce today and in the future. LIFT is one of the founding institutes of [Manufacturing USA](#) and is funded in part by the Department of Defense with management through the Office of Naval Research.*

***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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