



Afterschool Alliance

Afterschool Alliance Webinars

Your Questions Answered: Webinar Q&A STEM in Afterschool Virtual Tour

Are your curriculum resources vetted? Should I be paying for curriculum?

The [curriculum resources](#) linked to on our website are external collections of vetted curricula and lesson plans. While the Afterschool Alliance itself does not vet each curriculum individually, we are confident that these are high quality resources. For example, the curricula in the [Science After School Consumer's Guide](#) were first nominated by afterschool practitioners, then the chosen activities were reviewed by one afterschool expert and one science expert. Many of our listed resources are free and especially if you are just starting an afterschool STEM program, there is no need to be spending a lot of money.

How can we submit our program as a curriculum resource?

The Afterschool Alliance tends to feature only larger collections of curricula and does not usually disseminate information on any singular curriculum. If you would like to share interesting things your program is doing or other information, we can potentially promote this through our social media channels.

Would financial literacy be considered part of STEM?

STEM is by definition interdisciplinary and even within science there is incredible variability – from biology to physics to the space sciences. The field of Economics is very math-heavy, so depending on which aspects of financial literacy your program focuses on and how you frame it, it could be considered STEM.

What are some resources to use for assessing your program's effectiveness?

We do link to a few evaluation resources on our website. [Assessment Tools in Informal Science](#) from the [Program in Education, Afterschool and Resiliency](#) (PEAR) is a database with many tools for assessing program effectiveness. When choosing an assessment tool, it is very important that you first make the goals of your program clear, as you want a strong match between the tool and your goals. A common mistake program leaders make is choosing the incorrect assessment tool and end up gathering data that is not actually relevant to determining whether the program has achieved its goals. Be sure to look out for our Youth Outcomes study next month!

In my community, there are a number of STEM-related businesses. How can I get them involved with my afterschool program?

Many professional organizations and businesses are interested in their members or employees volunteering in their communities and are often looking for partners in these efforts. Often professional organizations and businesses look to schools for their outreach efforts, as that is what they are most familiar with. We encourage you to reach out to them because they are often unaware that afterschool is a good fit for community outreach. Some professional organizations, like the [Society of Women Engineers](#), have a very active membership and are always looking for more opportunities. Make sure to contact your [state afterschool network](#), as they may have partnerships with local businesses.

How could I use volunteers for STEM programming?

Regardless of a volunteer's academic background or professional experiences, they can be [great volunteers](#) in STEM afterschool programs. It's okay if volunteers do not have a STEM background or do not have the specific knowledge about a particular curriculum. For a STEM program, it is more important that they be adept at facilitating an inquiry-based approach to learning. Volunteer instructors and students should be exploring and learning together. For those volunteers that do have a STEM background, think of it as an added bonus! All volunteers can be successful if they are fearless and willing to dive in and tackle anything. However, your volunteer training should include youth development principles, as these are often skills that college students and professionals lack.

How can afterschool programs include volunteers, parents, and other adults given our district requires background checks for those who work directly with students?

Your [state afterschool networks](#) are a great resource to answer this question. They might have better access to models of how other local school districts address the issue.

Do you have any ideas for partnerships and funding in rural areas?

[4-H](#) is a great partner as they are highly committed to STEM. They have curricula and training which they are happy to offer to anyone interested in working with them. You can also look to universities as they often have extension programs. [Science centers](#) may have outreach programs that can come to your site. Government research labs may also have an interest in STEM education and have distance learning resources available.

Are you familiar with Engineering is Elementary? Are there any funders who specifically have funded this for afterschool?

The [Engineering is Elementary](#) project was developed by the [Museum of Science, Boston](#) and provides engineering curricula units for elementary school classrooms. [Engineering Adventures](#), curricula designed specifically for out-of-school-time programs, is currently in development. There are a few units [available now](#).

If you are looking for funders interested specifically in engineering programs, start by looking into tech companies. Take a look at [Change the Equation's membership](#) of companies. They are all interested in improving STEM education, and many are supportive of informal STEM learning. For more tips on finding funding opportunities and writing successful proposals, don't miss our [STEM Funding Guide](#).
