

SUPPORT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION'S DIRECTORATE FOR STEM EDUCATION

Fully fund the National Science Foundation (NSF) and its Directorate for STEM Education

To fulfill the promise of the CHIPS and Science Act and develop the associated workforce, reject calls to cut the National Science Foundation and its Directorate for STEM Education.

In FY 2024, the National Science Foundation was funded at \$9.06 billion—an 8% cut from the FY 2023 level of \$9.87 billion. The Directorate for STEM Education bore \$199 million of that cut—a 15% cut compared to the previous year. The cut undermines the promise of the CHIPS and Science Act, which states that investments in STEM education and workforce development are more important than ever. It's crucial that Congress reverse this trend and provide adequate funding for both the National Science Foundation and the Directorate for STEM Education.

CHIPS and Science Act at the NSF:

- The CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 authorized historic investments in research to ensure people from all backgrounds, regions, and communities around the country benefit from and participate in STEM education and workforce development opportunities.
- The Act's authorized investments in the NSF will help the United States remain a global leader in innovation by:
 - Establishing new programs to scale up innovations in pre-K-12 STEM education, including afterschool programs. *Research shows that high-quality, expanded STEM learning opportunities can improve academic outcomes, increase college and career readiness, and foster positive youth development.*
 - Creating the Regional Innovation Engines program that, among other goals, invests in workforce development and training, including for youth through partnerships with afterschool providers.
 - Building upon NSF's Broadening Participation Portfolio of programs focused on improving accessibility and enhancing demographic, geographic, and institutional diversity in STEM.
 - Codifying the NSF INCLUDES initiative, which strives to cultivate a STEM workforce that reflects the diversity of the Nation's population.

NSF Directorate for STEM Education (EDU):

- The NSF Directorate for STEM Education (EDU) works to develop a well-informed citizenry and a diverse and capable workforce of scientists, technicians, engineers, mathematicians, and educators.
- EDU's programs support STEM education at all educational levels and in a variety of settings, including in afterschool. The Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) program:
 - Supports research on the design, development, and impact of STEM learning opportunities and experiences in informal educational environments. *A significant body of research and evaluation studies show high-quality afterschool STEM programs not only successfully engage youth in STEM, but also help them develop a sense of identity and belonging in STEM. We must continue to adequately fund the research that demonstrates what quality means and how it can be implemented in different contexts to reach more youth.*
 - Projects funded by AISL contribute to research and practice that uncovers informal STEM learning's role in equity and belonging in STEM; personal and educational success in STEM; fostering interest in STEM careers; creating and enhancing the theoretical and empirical foundations for effective informal STEM learning; and, enhancing science communication and the public's engagement in and understanding of STEM and STEM processes.

Afterschool programs can help connect students—whether in urban, suburban, or rural communities—to powerful STEM learning opportunities. By fully investing in the NSF and its Directorate for STEM Education, we can continue to build a robust STEM learning environment in every community that will expand access for all young people.

YOUTH WORKFORCE READINESS ACT

The Need for Youth Workforce Readiness Investments

- Communities across America face significant challenges in ensuring that youth are adequately prepared to enter the workforce.
- As we look for solutions to address the skills gap, we must look at how we prepare youth for the jobs of the future. 41% of youth express concerns about whether they have the skills necessary to secure a job. At the same time, employers increasingly cite challenges finding well-prepared talent as their greatest obstacle to growth.
- Traditionally, workforce development programs have targeted adults and high school students. New research has identified middle school, a critical window of cognitive development, as an ideal time to develop the essential skills youth need for success in school, work and life.
- National out-of-school time organizations have the reach, scale, and experience to prepare today's youth for success in tomorrow's workforce by teaching essential skills like judgment and decision-making, communication, and collaboration, all of which employers named as in-demand competencies in the labor market.

Bill Summary

- The bill creates federal investments and partnerships that will build knowledge, skills development, and learning experiences that prepare young people for the 21st century workforce and boosts their economic potential over a lifetime.
- The legislation establishes a competitive grant through the Department of Labor's Employment & Training Administration, for eligible national, youth-serving, out-of-school time organizations providing programs for youth between the ages of 6 to 18. Programs will focus on four overarching pillars that support youth workforce readiness:
 - Essential Skill Development: supporting social-emotional development through every developmental stage in both formal and informal learning experiences.
 - Career Exposure: targeted programming, through community business partnerships, providing discovery opportunities, career assessments, planning, and insights into both traditional and non- traditional career fields.
 - Employability & Certification: opportunities including interviewing, resume writing, financial literacy, and certifications in specific areas that will help youth land their first job.
 - Work-Based Learning: opportunities to apply skills in real-life, hands-on work experiences through local community business partnerships.
- Also, the legislation re-establishes Youth Councils to work with local workforce boards providing expertise in youth policy.

These investments will help increase opportunities for youth to build knowledge and skills, and connect to critical real-life work experiences and learning opportunities.

Youth Workforce Readiness Act [S. 454/](#) [H.R. 3416](#)