

FUNDING THE STEM CLASSROOM

A comprehensive guide on applying for education grants that support your K-12 classroom goals



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Who is STEM Supplies?

STEM Supplies is your premier partner for integrating hands-on and inquiry-based science, technology, engineering, and math teachings into your classroom. At STEM Supplies, we understand the importance of selecting and using high-quality STEM, STEAM, makerspace, and CTE tools. Research supports that STEM topics are best learned through real-world learning experiences, and our products and resources are designed to support you in reaching your goals in kinesthetic learning.

Our Mission

With STEM Supplies, you'll find the highest quality products designed to immerse students in real-world STEM and STEAM principles. When you partner with STEM Supplies, we guarantee that we'll support your STEM and STEAM education journey from planning through instruction. We're proud to offer exclusive products, curriculum, and resources that encourage best practices in hands-on and inquiry-based learning while promoting 21st-century skills like creativity and collaboration. Whether your school has a well-established, fully integrated program or is just starting to discover the benefits of STEM education, we're confident that we can support you in finding the right products to meet your program's unique needs.

Our Values



IMPACT

We are passionate about bringing happiness and fun to our customers through engaging STEM experiences.



BE DEPENDABLE

We fulfill our promises to our customers every day through our Unconditional 100% Satisfaction Guarantee.



INNOVATE

We drive innovation through the development of engaging products aligned with best practices in STEM education.



PROVIDE QUALITY

We aim to positively impact students' and teachers' lives through high-quality products and resources.

Our Products

STEM Supplies is proud to carry all your favorite brands, plus hundreds of exclusive products you can't find anywhere else! We carry the latest activities, tools, manipulatives, and curriculum all in one convenient place.



And so much more!

How STEM Supplies Supports You

We have put together this comprehensive grant guide to help you achieve your STEM education goals. Within this guide, you will find best practices for applying for an education grant and information about how STEM Supplies can support you along the way.

STEM Supplies makes your grant application process easier by:

- Helping you locate grant opportunities.
- Recommending products that align with your program's unique goals.
- Providing a competitive price quote that you can include in your grant application.
- Supporting you after the grant is awarded with superior customer care, fast shipping, and an Unconditional 100% Satisfaction Guarantee.



Define Your Need

There are many reasons why you may need grant funding to support your STEM programs. Before you source and apply for a grant, it's critical to define the "why" behind what this funding can do to support your goals. Consider the following questions to help define your need.

Define the Why

Read the educational research. How does your need support best practices or achievement gaps?

Dive into the pedagogy. What teaching methodologies will you apply with this funding?

What would this funding mean to you, your students, and your school?

Define Roles and Outcomes

What should students learn?

How will students learn?

Who will teach the activities?

How will it fit into standards?

What soft skills will it develop?

Define Your Space

What are the objectives of the space?

Where will teaching take place?

How large does the space need to be?

Will students work independently, in pairs, or in groups?

Do we need seating, tabletops, and/or open floor space?

Is new infrastructure needed (e.g., electricity)?

Define Your Resources

What do I currently own?

What can be repurposed?

What needs to be replaced?

What needs to be added?

What consumables are needed?

What tools are needed?

What do the new items cost?

How will we pay for future wear and tear?

Define Training and Safety

- Who will require professional development?
- How will we train on equipment usage and maintenance?
- What departments need to be involved (e.g., IT department)?
- How will we train the students on proper use of the materials?
- What is required from my administration?

Define Your Partnerships and In-Kind Options

- Will parents or PTO be involved?
- Are there any available donors?
- Can anyone in the community help?
- Can a government program assist?
- Can older students help?
- Can paraprofessionals help?

Define Assessment Methods

- Will implementing new materials increase student engagement?
- Will implementing new materials increase student enrollment?
- Will implementing new materials improve student knowledge?
- Will implementing new materials improve student test scores?
- What data will need to be collected to demonstrate success of the materials?

Define Maintenance and Long-Term Needs

- Define a replenishment timeline.
- What services are required?
- What repairs are anticipated?
- How will I fund replenishment, services, and repairs?
- Will the grant cover materials that can be used for short-term (e.g., consumables) or long-term (e.g., computers) learning?

Finding a Grant

Once you've defined your need, you can begin looking for grant opportunities that align with your goals. Depending on the type of program you're looking to create or expand, different grant opportunities will be available to you. For example, if you're looking to start an afterschool STEM club for girls, that could afford different grant options than outfitting a makerspace with active furniture. For your greatest chance of acquiring grant funds, you'll want to apply for grants that align with what you're looking to achieve.

Networking

A great way to locate grant opportunities is through networking. First, you'll want to start within your school or district. It's likely a fellow teacher or administrator has applied for and been awarded a grant. These individuals will be able to give you insights into where to find grants based on the process they previously went through. They may also be able to help you draft your grant proposal, applying best practices from their experiences.

It is also beneficial to network within your local community. Nearby companies and non-profit organizations may provide funding for your STEM program. Many companies who hire scientists and engineers offer grants for schools supporting students in STEM as a method of workforce development (e.g., Boeing, Toshiba, 3M, etc.). Additionally, local foundations may be looking to offer support to schools that align with their overall mission.

Federal and State Grants

Both federal and state government agencies offer grants for education. Discretionary grants are awarded using a competitive application process. For example, the Perkins V Federal Grant for Career and Technical Education requires an application that proves the CTE program requesting funds aligns with teacher licensing and a set list of criteria.

Additionally, government agencies offer formula grants which require no application process and are disbursed based on formulaic criteria. The Elementary and Secondary School Relief (ESSER) fund is a formula grant disbursed based on need. However, even formula grants may require a district to draft a plan of how the funds will be used. For example, the Ambridge Area School District in Pennsylvania specified that they would use STEM to aid children with disabilities in their ESSER plan: "By maintaining mathematics, STEM, science, music, physical education, and student services staff, we will engage students, increase academic achievement, and ensure social well-being of all students with disabilities."



Use a Funding Finder Tool

STEM Supplies has developed a funding finder tool that allows you to search for STEM grants based on your location. You can locate this free resource at: stem-supplies.com/funding

How to Write a Grant Proposal

While every grant application will have variation, there are certain elements that you can expect in your proposal. The following sections outline common components to include in your grant application.

Introduce Yourself and Your School

Within your grant's narrative, you will want to dedicate time to introduce your school or district. This is where you can highlight information about your student population, your community, and your location. Keep your narrative positive, focusing on ways that the funding will improve your situation rather than spending time focused on what a lack of funding has meant in the past. For example, instead of saying, "We have not received funding to support our robotics club within the last five years", say, "With funding from this grant, we will be able to expand our robotics program for the first time in five years."

Explain Your Purpose

After completing the need checklist on pages 3 and 4, you should have a clear vision behind why you need funding for your STEM goals. Consider the funding as an investment for your students' future learning objectives. Grant awarders want to fund projects like yours that will support students and put them on a path for success. It is important to convey how your project will support those goals.

It is helpful to follow this formula when asking for funding:

I need \$X for Y items to accomplish Z goals.

Within every grant proposal, you want to be explicit on how much money you need, what you intend to purchase with that money, and what that purchase will help you achieve. Instead of asking for \$10,000 to purchase ten 3D printers, state the learning objectives and hands-on, real-world experiences your students will achieve by learning how to use a 3D printer.

Define Your Timeline

Many grants have a timeframe in which the funding must be spent. You will want to ensure that timeline is feasible for your school or district. STEM Supplies can provide you a price quote before applying for your grant so that if you are awarded funds, you can quickly move forward with acquiring the items.

You'll also want to be clear on how the grant will help your near- and long-term goals. For example, purchasing ten 3D printers can immediately support an existing makerspace, but could also be used in a future afterschool club that does not exist today. It's important to share the sustainability and longevity of the items you plan to purchase using the grant.

You should also be specific about when the funds will be used. If, for example, you are looking to use the grant to support a summer STEM camp, you may share that you will purchase the equipment in the spring, use a portion of the funds on bus transportation during the camp, and use the remaining funds after the camp is over to store the equipment in a storage unit.



Align to Research and Standards

The best grant proposals are supported by current statistics, best practices in pedagogy, and your school's standards. Providing these details elevates your proposal by showing a greater need. For example, instead of vaguely saying that you want to launch a new computer science class, you can state that the National Center for Education Statistics has found only 8% of college graduates receive a degree in computer science, and your new class will expose more students to CS to keep them in the pipeline to a CS career. This shows the grant-maker that you've done your homework and have a deep understanding of how the things you are trying to achieve align with a greater purpose.

Additionally, it's important to highlight specific standards that will be supported through the funding. For example, if you are looking to acquire periodic tables for your classroom, you can convey that having the chemical elements clearly visible in the classroom supports Next Generation Science Standard 5-PS1-4 to "conduct an investigation to determine whether the mixing of two or more substances results in new substances."

When including statistics and standards, be sure to cite your sources and make sure that the connection between the data and your learning goals is being clearly demonstrated to the person evaluating your proposal.

Convey Your Budget

Ultimately a grant is being used to fund something, and you need to be clear in your proposal about what you will be spending the funds on. A best practice is to include an itemized list of the products you intend to purchase with the funds. Be sure to include fixed costs (e.g., tools), variable costs (e.g., program supplies), expenses for professional development or training, and any other expense you anticipate (e.g., bus transportation or food).

This is also the time to explain any in-kind donations you may be receiving that will be used alongside the grant funds. Grant-makers like to see that you are contributing to the program alongside their contribution. If your PTO is going to be donating labor hours to offset funds so that you can invest more in equipment using the grant, you'd want to explain that here.

Define an Evaluation Plan

Within this section of the grant, you will want to highlight how you plan to assess the overall impact of the funded project. Consider measurables like improved student test scores, increased student enrollment/participation, demographic breakouts, or student and teacher feedback. Demonstrated success isn't, "We started a robotics club", but rather, "30 female students joined our robotics club, representing the largest female population for any of our STEM clubs."

STEM Supplies Can Help with Your Budget!

Our knowledgeable team can create a hassle-free quote that clearly states the itemized cost of the items as well as any applicable shipping and handling charges.

You can attach this quote in your application or easily make a table that aligns with the grant guidelines using the quote as a reference.

To get started, e-mail project@stem-supplies.com

Proposal Checklist

Follow this checklist to ensure that your grant proposal is the best it can be:

I have completed any required registration for the grant.

I have set up an account to submit my grant proposal online (where applicable).

I have provided background information that describes my school, students, and teachers (e.g., mission statement, current programs, demographics, previous accomplishments, staff qualifications, etc.).

I clearly conveyed the need, learning objectives, and goals for my project.

I supported my need with education statistics, best practices in STEM pedagogy and methodology, and my state's standards.

I have clearly explained the activities that this grant will support including the methodology and staffing required to execute. These activities directly relate to my expressed goals and statements of need.

I have a clear timeline that shows when I will be purchasing and using supplies afforded by this grant. This timeline aligns with the sponsor's deadlines for the grant.

I have provided a clear budget that includes an itemized list of what will be purchased using this grant. My itemized list includes not just products, but also labor expenses and professional development.

I have a clearly stated evaluation plan that shows how I will quantitatively and qualitatively measure the success of my program and this funding.

I have answered every question and guideline that is specific to this grant opportunity.

I have attached every required document of this grant (e.g. letters of support).

I have included an abstract that summarizes the major elements of my proposal (where requested).

I have all the required signatures that I need (e.g., administrator's signature).

I have adhered to the word limit and formatting standards mandated by the proposal request.

I have proofread my proposal and have had a colleague, partner, or administrator provide feedback on it.

I have submitted the application on or before the deadline.

Receiving Funding

Funded Proposals

When you apply for a grant, it will list a period or a specific date that the grant awards will be announced. If your proposal is selected to be funded, you will likely receive an e-mail, call, mailed letter, or be able to access the list of awardees on the grant's website. Once you receive notification that you have been awarded the grant, you will receive a grant agreement that outlines the expectations between the granter and grantee. This is a legal document and once signed by both parties, you will receive your funds to begin your project.

Once you receive your funds, you will want to make sure you are purchasing your equipment within the timeframe specified by the grant. If you received a quote from STEM Supplies to prepare your grant proposal, simply contact us to turn that quote into an order using your newly awarded funds.

Unfunded Proposals

If you do not receive funding, you should still be alerted within the specified timeframe issued by the grant organization. Some grant-makers will give you information as to why your proposal was not selected to be funded. You are also welcome to ask for feedback on your proposal, but not every grant-maker has the capacity to provide individual responses.

If your proposal was not selected for funding, don't be discouraged! There are a lot of reasons why your proposal was not selected and it's usually more of an issue of volume rather than the quality of your work. Luckily, there are so many grant opportunities out there and you'll already have a head start to apply to a different grant. If you did receive notes as to why your grant was not selected, incorporate those before applying for a new grant, and make sure your new proposal aligns with its specific guidelines. Use the free Funding Finder Tool at stem-supplies.com/funding to find a new opportunity.



Grant Resources



Grant Assistance

We can help make your grant application process easier by providing product recommendations and a hassle-free price quote for your grant budget!

stem-supplies.com/grants



STEM Funding Finder

Looking for funding for your next STEM or makerspace project? You can access our free funding toolkit to find local opportunities near you!

stem-supplies.com/stem-resources/funding



Free Makerspace Consultation

Tell us about your space and we will provide you with a custom list of products to help make your makerspace dreams come true!

stem-supplies.com/make-your-space

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