

Funding STEM Programs in K-12 Schools: A Quick Guide

How to align federal, state, and grant funding to support STEM and PLTW programming

Sources of Funding for STEM Programming

Securing funding for STEM programs can be challenging, but there are multiple sources available to support your initiatives. This guide provides an overview of federal funding sources and independent grants that can help you bring high-quality STEM education to your students. Understanding these sources can help you strategically plan and implement effective and sustainable STEM programs in your school or district.

THE BEST LONG-TERM STEM FUNDING SOLUTION

STEM as a Strategic Priority

The best long-term solution for funding STEM programming is to incorporate STEM education into the overall district or school strategic plan. By doing so, STEM initiatives can be financed through the school or district's general fund or general operating budget, offering greater flexibility and stability. This approach ensures sustainability, as strategic plans are funded over extended periods and are a consistent and reliable source of support for STEM education.



Federal Funding Sources

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Enacted in 2015, ESSA emphasizes the importance of providing a well-rounded education, which includes STEM programming. Funds from ESSA can be used for a variety of purposes, such as professional development for teachers, purchasing curricular materials, and integrating technology into the classroom. This flexibility allows schools to tailor their STEM programs to meet their specific needs and goals.

ESSA provides considerable flexibility for states and stresses the importance of equitable access to a high-quality STEM education. There are nine titles in the ESSA, with four of those titles containing significant support for PLTW programs. Local and state rules may influence how your school or district can utilize ESSA funding, so school leaders should work with their district leadership to apply for and secure funding under the titles below.

	Curriculum	Professional Development	Equipment & Supplies
--	------------	--------------------------	----------------------

ESSA Title I Part A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Title I funds are designed to support schools with a high number of students from low-income families, aiming to close the achievement gap. In schools where more than 40 percent of students come from low-income families, schools may use the funding on school-wide programs that improve achievement for all students. These funds can be used to enhance STEM programs by providing additional resources such as STEM kits, software, and after-school tutoring. Schools can also use Title I funds to hire STEM specialists who can provide targeted instruction and support to students who need it most.

ESSA Title II Part A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------------

Title II funds focus on improving teacher and principal quality. These funds can be allocated for professional development in STEM education, including workshops, conferences, and courses that help educators stay current with STEM teaching practices. Investing in professional development ensures that teachers have the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively teach STEM subjects and inspire students.

ESSA Title III	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
----------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Title III funds are aimed at supporting English learners and immigrant students. These funds can be used to integrate STEM into language instruction, helping students develop both language and STEM skills simultaneously. Schools can use Title III funds to create bilingual STEM programs, purchase STEM materials that are accessible to English learners, and provide professional development for teachers on how to effectively teach STEM to English learners.

ESSA Title IV Part A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
----------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Title IV funds support a well-rounded education, including STEM. Schools can apply for grants to fund STEM activities such as after-school programs, STEM clubs, and the purchase of STEM equipment. Title IV funds can also be used to support innovative teaching methods and partnerships with local businesses and community organizations. These grants are competitive, so schools need to demonstrate how their proposed programs will enhance STEM education and benefit students.

ESSA Title IV Part B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
----------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Title IV is known as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, and it provides federal funding to support the creation of community learning centers. These centers offer academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly those who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. Funding can support before- and after-school programs, summer learning opportunities, STEM education, career readiness programs, among others.

ESSA Title V Part B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Known as the Rural Education Initiative, Title V Part B aims to address the unique challenges faced by rural school districts. This program provides additional support to help these districts compete for federal grants and effectively use formula funds. While not exclusively focused on STEM education, Title V Part B funding can be used to enhance STEM education by improving access to technology, supporting STEM coursework, and providing professional development for educators in rural areas.

Perkins V	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
-----------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act provides funding for career and technical education (CTE) programs, which often include STEM components. Perkins V funds can be used to develop and implement programs that prepare students for STEM careers, including purchasing equipment and materials for hands-on learning, creating partnerships with local businesses and industries, and providing students with opportunities for internships and work-based learning experiences.

State and Local Funding

Local partnerships are valuable resources to support your plan. They can help with initial funding, but also with program sustainability, local buy-in, implementation, and student opportunities, as you ensure support for your program.



Independent Grants

In addition to federal funding, numerous private organizations and corporations offer grants to support STEM education.

- The National Science Foundation (NSF) provides grants for research and education projects that advance STEM learning.
- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation focuses on innovative education initiatives, including STEM.
- Corporate grants from companies like Google, Microsoft, and Intel can provide significant resources for developing and expanding STEM programs.

These grants often require detailed proposals and a clear plan for how the funds will be used to achieve specific educational outcomes.

PLTW Grants – Consolidate Your Grant Search!

Project Lead The Way offers grants to schools seeking to start or expand their STEM programming. We work with companies and foundations interested in helping schools specifically looking to start their PLTW programs, and we offer our own PLTW Grants.

Grants are awarded throughout the year. Many are awarded at the end of the fall semester and early in the spring semester, while others are awarded on a rolling basis. We recommend submitting a grant application during the fall semester to be considered for as many grants as possible. We keep your application on file until June 30 of each year so we may consider your school for more than one grant opportunity throughout the cycle.

Explore PLTW
Grants today



PLTW[↑]

