

STEM BEST® Program

Businesses Engaging Students and Teachers

Application Rubric for Enhancement Award

The STEM BEST® Enhancement Award is a funding opportunity for existing STEM BEST® Program models. This is an opportunity to enhance or improve your current model with an award of up to \$15,000 with no cost share to cover any unforeseen needs that have come up after the period of performance has ended for your STEM BEST® Award. The intent of the Enhancement Award is to improve upon your program. It is not intended to provide continuous funding or to sustain your STEM BEST® model.

Requirements for Enhancement:

- Must be a school system or district with an active STEM BEST® Program model
- STEM BEST® awardees currently implementing and managing an award are **NOT** eligible for a STEM BEST® Enhancement Award. However, STEM BEST® models not currently managing a STEM BEST® award may consider applying for the Enhancement Award and the upcoming STEM BEST® award, provided that each proposal is unique in their scope of work and does not request funding for the same activities or expenses.
- To maximize dispersal of available funds, we will prioritize schools that have **NOT** received Enhancement Awards in consecutive years.
- Different school buildings within an Iowa district may submit an independent STEM BEST® Enhancement Award proposal in the same proposal period.
- Individual school buildings may not submit more than one proposal in the same proposal period, unless one is for school-specific STEM BEST® Enhancement Award and another is part of a multi-district consortium.

Question to be evaluated:

1. Please provide a brief description (5,000 characters or less) of your current STEM BEST® model, including its goals and objectives, and explain how this funding opportunity will support and advance your model.

Score	Reason for assigning the score
10	The proposal provides a thorough and detailed description of the current STEM BEST Model including the goals and objectives. Shows a strong alignment of the proposal with the goals and objectives of the current STEM BEST® model, showing how it supports or enhances the model's mission. Response is well organized, clear and logically presented, making it easy to understand how the funding opportunity will support and advance the proposed model.
9-7	The proposal provides a detailed description of the current STEM BEST Model including the goals and objectives . Shows a strong alignment of the proposal with the goals and objectives of the current STEM BEST® model, showing how it supports or enhances the model's mission. Response is well organized, clear and logically presented, making it easy to understand how the funding opportunity will support or advance the proposed model.
6-5	Shows strong alignment of the proposal with the goals and/or objectives of the current STEM BEST® model yet lacks a comprehensive connection or clear support. Response is somewhat

	organized yet lacks clarity and cohesion in parts, affecting the overall understanding of the proposed model.
4-3	Shows some alignment of the proposal with the goals and objectives of the current STEM BEST® model yet lacks a comprehensive connection or clear support . Response is somewhat organized yet lacks clarity and cohesion in parts, affecting the overall understanding of the proposed model.
2-1	Shows little alignment of the proposal with the goals and objectives of the current STEM BEST® model. Response is disorganized or unclear, making it difficult to understand the proposed model.
0	Shows no alignment of the proposal with the goals and objectives of the current STEM BEST® model. Response is disorganized or unclear, making it difficult to understand the proposed model.

Question to be evaluated:

2. How will your proposal enrich and/or expand your current STEM BEST® model? Describe what this enrichment or expansion will look like in practice (e.g., developing new industry partnerships, reaching additional grade levels, adding new courses or content, or enhancing work-based learning opportunities). Explain how the resources supported by this funding will help address existing challenges and describe the intended outcomes or impact of the proposed expansion, including how the work may be sustained beyond the funding period. (5,000 characters maximum)

Score	Reason for assigning the score
9-10	- Provides comprehensive, compelling, and detailed evidence of quality enrichment (quality of existing practices) and/or expansion (into new areas, partnerships or audiences). - Shows strong alignment with STEM BEST® Program goals and long-term sustainability Clearly demonstrates measurable outcomes and impact across multiple stakeholders (students, educators, industry partners, and community). - Proposal stands out as a model of innovation and leadership within the statewide STEM BEST® network.
7-8	- Provides substantial and detailed evidence of enrichment and/or expansion. - Shows good alignment with STEM BEST® Program goals and includes some planning for sustainability. - Describes outcomes and impact for multiple stakeholders, though measures may be less comprehensive or specific. - Proposal demonstrates strong potential for innovation and leadership, though not yet fully realized or clearly distinguished as a statewide model.
5-6	- Provides moderate evidence of enrichment and/or expansion with some detail, but explanation may lack depth or breadth. - Shows general alignment with STEM BEST® Program goals, but sustainability plans are limited or underdeveloped. - Describes anticipated outcomes for students, educators, or partners, but evidence of measurable impact is vague or incomplete. - Proposal shows promise of innovation, but examples are standard or incremental rather than transformative.

3-4	- Provides limited evidence of enrichment and/or expansion. - Shows partial alignment with STEM BEST® Program goals, with little or no reference to sustainability. Mentions outcomes, but the impact on stakeholders is unclear, narrow, or lacking measurable indicators.
1-2	- Provides very little evidence of enrichment and/or expansion. - Shows weak or minimal alignment with STEM BEST® Program goals; sustainability not addressed. - Outcomes and impact are largely absent or highly general.
0	- Provides no evidence of enrichment or expansion. - Does not describe outcomes, impact, or sustainability. - Proposal is off-topic, incomplete, or non-responsive to the prompt.

Question to be evaluated:

3. How will this proposal strengthen the STEM BEST® experience and provide additional benefits for students? Please provide specific examples of skills that students will be introduced to and/or garner as a result of this award. (5,000 characters maximum)

Score	Reason for assigning the score
9-10	- Provides specific and compelling evidence of how the proposal will enhance the student experience within the STEM BEST® model. Clearly identifies specific skills students will be introduced to and/or develop and explains how students will gain those skills through the proposed experience. - Describes multiple student-centered benefits, such as new learning opportunities, stronger industry connections, or added skill-building experiences. Clearly articulates measurable or observable impacts (e.g., increased internships, new courses, career certifications, student feedback mechanisms).
7-8	- Provides detailed evidence of how the proposal will enhance the student experience within the STEM BEST® model. - Identifies specific student skills that will be introduced or developed and describes relevant learning opportunities or experiences. - Describes two or more student-centered benefits, such as new learning opportunities, stronger industry connections, or added skill-building experiences. Mentions expected outcomes for students but may be less comprehensive or specific in how they will be measured or observed.
5-6	Provides some evidence of how the proposal will enhance the student experience within the STEM BEST® model.

	- Identifies one or more skills or student benefits, but the description is vague or not clearly connected to authentic, hands-on learning or career pathways. - Description of student benefits is surface-level or limited in scope; measurable impacts are not well defined.
3-4	- Provides some evidence of how the proposal will enhance the student experience within the STEM BEST® model. - Mentions benefits and skills for students in passing, but details are vague or not clearly connected to authentic, hands-on learning or career pathways. - Outcomes are unclear, generic, or minimal in scope.
1-2	- Provides minimal evidence of how the proposal will enhance the student experience within the STEM BEST® model. - Response is overly broad, with little to no mention of authentic learning, partnerships, benefits or skill development. Does not identify measurable or observable student outcomes.
0	- Provides no evidence of how the proposal will enhance the student experience within the STEM BEST® model. - Response is vague, off-topic, incomplete, or fails to address students directly.

Question to be evaluated:

4. Describe how your planned use of these funds will increase the participation of students underserved in STEM through your STEM BEST® model activities. (3,000 characters maximum)

Score	Reason for assigning the score
5	- Outlines a comprehensive and intentional plan that removes barriers and creates meaningful opportunities for underserved populations. - Incorporates targeted outreach, inclusive program design, and strong partnerships to expand access and engagement. - Clearly articulates measurable and observable outcomes (e.g., increased enrollment of underserved students, improved retention, enhanced pathways to internships, industry certifications, or postsecondary opportunities).
4	- Provides detailed evidence of how the proposal will increase participation of underserved students. - Describes multiple strategies (e.g., partnerships with community organizations, recruitment efforts, culturally relevant learning experiences, expanded access to resources or mentors). - Expected outcomes and impacts are included, though measures may be somewhat limited.

3	- Provides some evidence of how the proposal will increase participation of underserved students. - Identifies at least one targeted strategy or activity (e.g., outreach efforts, new partnerships, or program modifications) aimed at underserved populations. - Outcomes and measures of impact are not clearly defined.
1-2	- Provides very little evidence of increasing participation of underserved students. - Mentions underserved populations but without specific strategies, activities, or measurable plans. - Student impact is unclear, minimal, or incidental.
0	- Provides no evidence of how the proposal will increase participation of underserved students. - Response is vague, incomplete, or does not address underserved populations.

Question to be evaluated:

5. Enter the budgeted amount for each proposed category. It is not a necessity to have expenses in each category. Expenses should align with what is proposed. The Budget Justification section is used to provide the details of the specific expenses and explain how you calculated the amount for each budget category that contains a request.

Score	Reason for assigning the score
5	- Budget for the award accounts for expenses that are reasonable, allowable and consistent with the proposal narrative. - Budget provided includes detailed description of how costs were determined. There is a clear plan for the utilization of dollars. - The budget clearly aligns with what is proposed in the text of the proposal and expenses occur within the period of performance.
4	- Budget for the award includes enough information to communicate that estimated costs and expenses are reasonable, allowable and consistent, but lacks detail describing how costs are determined. Some elements of the plan for the utilization of dollars are unclear. - The expenses identified in the grant request appear to be aligned with what is proposed and fall within the period of performance.
3	- Budget for the award includes enough information to communicate that estimated costs and expenses are allowable, but lacks evidence that costs are reasonable or consistent with the proposal narrative. - Elements of the plan for the utilization of grant expense dollars is unclear.

	The expenses appear to be in alignment with what is proposed and fall within the period of performance.
1-2	Budget for the award is unclear and lacking detail, but there is no evidence of expenses outside of the period of performance or not allowed.
0	There is evidence that proposed expenses are outside of the period of performance, or not-allowed (Ex: items already purchased, alcohol)