



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2024

CONNECTION
COLLABORATION
COMMUNICATION





MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am deeply honored to present our 2024 annual report, which highlights the remarkable impact achieved by the Omaha STEM Ecosystem. This report shares the story behind our accomplishments and celebrates the commitment of our generous, engaged community partners, who have transformed how we collaborate to achieve positive impact.

The second year of our STEM Connect Series has continued to expand cross-collaborations, which builds strong partnerships that align with our organization's principles of connecting educational initiatives with business development. Together, we have fostered a shared understanding of core talent needs and implemented a framework to guide our collaborative efforts to shape the future workforce. The series started with Dr. Nicole Pinkard, Alice Hamilton Professor of Learning Science at Northwestern University and Founder of Digital Youth Network, which developed the Cities Learn technology platform. At our July event, educators and industry partners gathered to discuss recruitment and retention challenges, identify critical skills for new hires and offer classroom-ready insights for teachers.

Our community partners have shown a deep commitment to expand our impact

beyond simple connections from shared events, presentations and communication tools to demonstrate a single mindset of building our future workforce in Nebraska. OSE's vision for lasting impact involves the ongoing development of the STEM Community Platform. Incorporating a comprehensive toolkit, such as the Cities Learn project, will capture critical data, generate unique insights and empower data-driven decisions.

None of this would be possible without the extraordinary generosity and unwavering support of our donors. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to them and the numerous partners who have contributed their time, talent and expertise.

Looking ahead to 2025, we will focus on building sustainability to increase our impact, enhance communication to strengthen collaboration, and measure our progress to ensure meaningful outcomes.

We look forward to continuing this journey. We invite you to join us!

Thank you,

Julie Sigmon / Director

MISSION

Building a stronger STEM community by connecting education and business development for tomorrow's workforce.

VISION

Transforming Omaha into a robust center of STEM excellence and innovation.

CONNECTIVITY THROUGH THE NUMBERS



IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

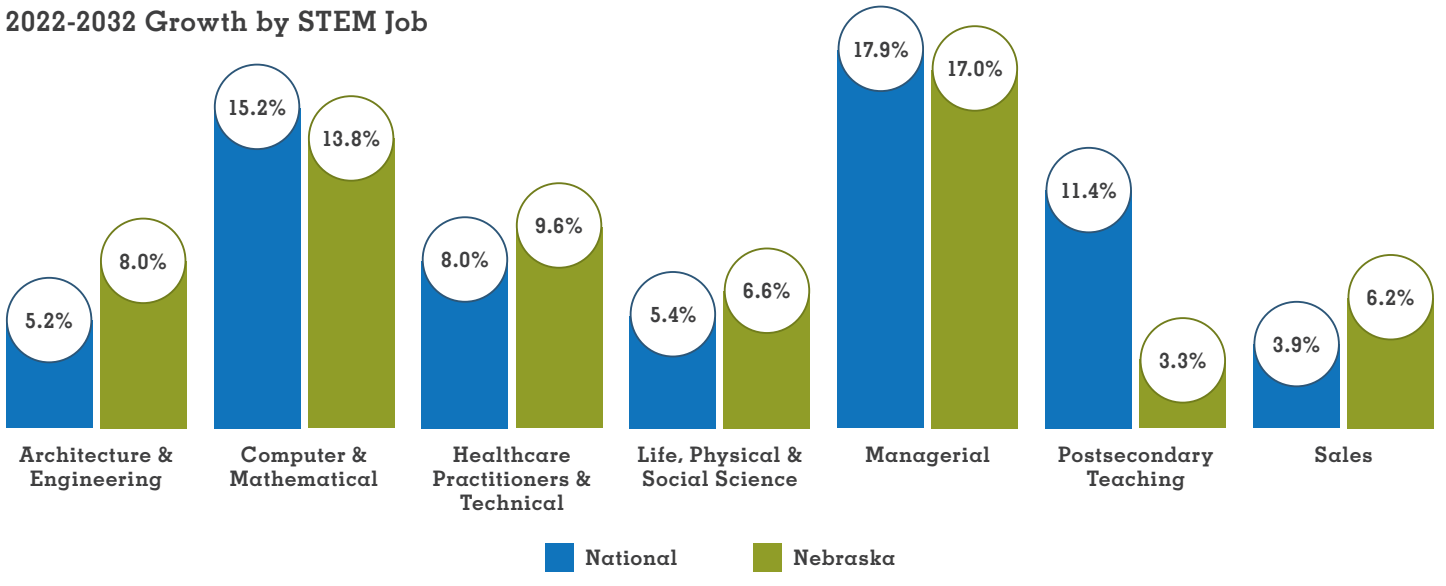
The demand for STEM talent continues to increase throughout the country, particularly in Nebraska as STEM occupations are projected to grow by 10.5% between 2022-2032 (Nebraska Department of Labor, 2024). Notably, Omaha has the fastest projected growth rate of the Nebraska regions at 12.9% (NDOL, 2024).

Projected growth in some of the top STEM Disciplines for Nebraska

- **Managerial:** Nebraska has a projected growth of 17.0% vs. the national average at 17.9%
- **Computer and Mathematical:** Nebraska has a projected growth of 13.8% vs. the national average at 15.2%
- **Healthcare Practitioners & Technical:** Nebraska has a projected growth of 9.6% vs. the national average of 8.0%

The rapid pace of economic expansion in the Greater Omaha area, combined with the growing demand for scientific and technical expertise, clearly demonstrates that the current model is unsustainable.

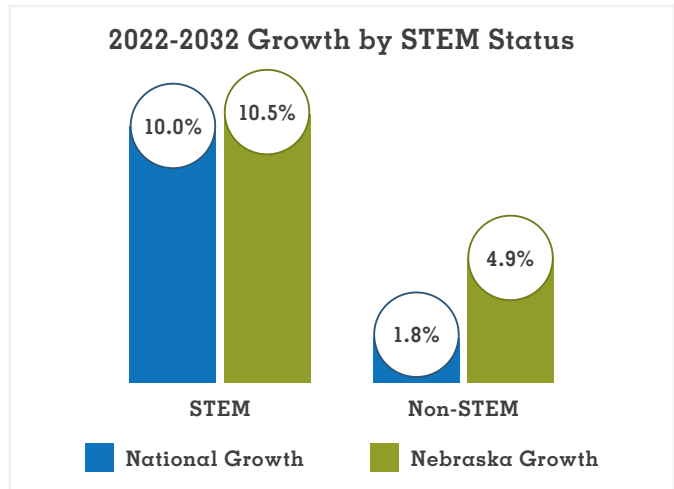
2022-2032 Growth by STEM Job



WHAT IS STEM?

STEM is science, technology, engineering and mathematics. At its fundamental core, STEM is exploration and critical thinking for solving solutions.

2022-2032 Growth by STEM Status



SOLUTION

Building on the Omaha STEM Ecosystem’s 2016 vision to break down educational silos and connect resources to create interconnected pathways, we remain committed to advance our mission. We are focused to expand our impact beyond random acts of STEM by utilizing tools, such as the Cities Learn project, that will capture critical data, generate unique insights and empower data-driven decisions. Our primary objective is to cultivate a shared understanding of the core talent requirements within STEM disciplines and create an actionable framework for optimal pathways in the Omaha area and eventually across the state.

STRATEGIC DRIVERS



Building Sustainability to Increase Impact

Evaluated, evolved, and established a sustainable nationally recognized organization



Strengthened the statewide collaboration between multiple entities



Expanding Communication to Elevate Collaboration

Evaluated and enhanced brand awareness of OSE through value propositions for local, state and national audiences and partners



Operationalized effective internal and external communications strategies



Measuring Impact to Ensure Progress

Reflected on the progress of benchmarks for assessment of organizations' impact and adjust as needed



Evaluated the utilization of research studies distributed by OSE for the advancement of STEM in education, business, nonprofits, government, policy makers, etc.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Outreach to our community partners involves unique collaborations that are all valuable in assuring our STEM community remains vibrant.



Metropolitan Science and Engineering Fair
ARIS Pre-Conference Presentation



Awarded Joyce Crockett Award from the University of Nebraska at Omaha
OPS Teacher Orientation Presentation



Tech on Tap
MCL Construction - Change Makers Events

UNO & MCC Speed Networking Event with internNE

Congressional App Challenge with AIM Institute

MCC & UNO H3 Panel Discussion with internNE

AIM's Heartland Developers Conference

Cities Learn Webinar with internNE

Cybersecurity Awareness Month Webinar with Nebraska Tech Collaborative

Barrientos Scholarship Foundation's Career Fair



Beyond Random Acts of STEM Conference with REVISE



Annual City Nature Challenge

Teachers' Night at the Durham Museum



Offutt Airshow

AFCEA Omaha Chapter - Dinner with a Scientist



COMMUNICATING OSE'S MISSION

The strength and success of the Omaha STEM Ecosystem requires a clear and concise message that guides stakeholders to become engaged in building a thriving STEM community.

- Monthly OSE Newsletters connected us with our members and community
- New quarterly OSE Committee Newsletters increased our cross-communication and collaboration efforts
- 2024 STEM Challenge promoted interactions between organizations, that include:
 - Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium
 - Roncalli Catholic
 - Duchesne Academy
 - NE Department of Labor
 - Clarkson College
 - Completely KIDS
 - Mallory Kountze Planetarium
 - Kids Can Community Center
 - Nebraska Tech Collaborative
 - Kiewit Luminarium
 - Brownell Talbot
 - Collective For Youth
 - Saunders County Extension & 4H



Media Reach

There were 39 earned news media placements that resulted in:

- 5 million audience reach
- \$764,835 ad equivalency value
- \$2.3 million publicity value

Media

- Omaha World-Herald
- KMTV (CSB)
- KIOS Radio
- Midlands Business Journal



2024 STEM CONNECT SERIES

Connecting Community - February 15, 2024

Dr. Nicole Pinkard, Alice Hamilton Professor of Learning Science at Northwestern University and Founder of Digital Youth Network, shared a compelling narrative about the significance of tools, such as Cities Learn, which focus on data collection to guide our efforts to ensure equitable distribution of STEM resources in the community. She understood the substantial benefits to both students and families and highlighted their role to develop our STEM talent.



Lighting the Spark - April 9, 2024

We had a blast at Lighting the Spark – The Diversity of Technology! This event was dedicated to help students and young adults find their passion, especially those who are unsure of their next steps. Attendees were able to meet with different businesses, each representing a diverse array of tech-focused careers. They also heard compelling career journeys from a panel of young tech professionals. Additionally, professionals had the opportunity to network and create new connections. We were excited to learn that an attendee had the opportunity to interview at Fastwyre Broadband after the event!

Strengthening Connections - July 16, 2024

What a great evening that strengthened the connections between business professionals and educators! Ken Moreano, President and CEO of the Scott Data Center, gave the keynote address. He spoke about AI and the power of STEM skills for the next generation. Dave Jesse of FNIC, Tyler Fritz of Olsson, Tony Fucinaro of MCL Construction, Bill Lydiatt of CHRS, Cleve Reeves of BVH Architecture and Lisa Jones of Big Iron Auctions led our breakout rooms. They shared insights into their fields and led the conversation to address workforce needs. As a result, participants were able to connect and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges businesses face with the future workforce, collaborating to develop solutions together.



Lighting the Spark - October 8, 2024

We closed our 2024 STEM Connect Series with Lighting the Spark - Study of Movement! This event was dedicated to help students and young adults find their passion, especially those who are unsure of their next steps. Dr. Kelly Gomez Johnson, Department Chair of Teacher Education at University of Nebraska at Omaha, kicked off the event with a keynote address about why students belong in STEM. Lighting the Spark showcased the fascinating world of movement and the diverse career opportunities it offers. In addition, Nik Stevenson of Collective For Youth, Cayla Iske of Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium and Hunter Bergman of XPM Agency shared their career stories as our Telling My Story speakers. Participants were able to engage with various businesses that represented a wide array of movement-focused professions.



**Thank you to our 2024 STEM Connect Series sponsors for your support!
We appreciate the time, talent, and treasure you provide.**



COMMUNITY VOICES

The OSE's 2024 STEM Connect Series helped bridge the gap between education and business as it facilitated conversations, connected organizations, and helped students find their next steps. Here's what our partners and young professionals had to say:

"The Lighting the Spark event was an incredible way to connect with students potentially interested in STEM. It was awesome to see the passion some students already have for a certain career path and be able to share some insights on how they might be able to get there. It was also a great way for organizations to connect with each other to collaborate on furthering STEM initiatives."

Cayla Iske

Director of Nutrition at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium



"As passionate advocates for STEM, MCL Construction is proud to provide an influential bridge between education and business, fostering collaboration and discussion to provide our young people the experiences that will inspire them to be curious explorers. By bringing diverse and mutually interdependent perspectives together, we're not just preparing tomorrow's workforce; we're inspiring innovation and building a resilient foundation for the future of our community."

Tony Fucinaro

Managing Principal of MCL Construction

"The Aksarben Foundation is proud to support the STEM Connect Series. Supporting the Omaha STEM Ecosystem is an exciting way to invest in innovation and empower future generations to lead, create, and solve the challenges of tomorrow."

Sandra Reading

President of the Aksarben Foundation





"As President of the Barrientos Scholarship Foundation and Community Relations Specialist at JE Dunn Construction, I'm honored to support Omaha STEM's mission to create a workforce-ready education system in Nebraska. Through events like Lighting the Spark, Omaha STEM connects education with business to prepare the next generation and ensures quality opportunities reach underserved neighborhoods across the city.

For youth-serving organizations, Omaha STEM provides targeted resources for impactful programs and mentorship, aligning with our mission at the Barrientos Scholarship Foundation and JE Dunn's commitment to building stronger communities through opportunity and access. Together, we're fostering a brighter future for Nebraska's youth and our community."

Tony Aguilera
President of the Barrientos Scholarship Foundation

STUDENT VOICE

Working with students is a foundational value of the OSE to help connect career exploration opportunities. This is what a student said:

"This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to work with OSE as a marketing and communications intern. The experience opened my eyes to a wealth of knowledge I hadn't known existed and made me aware of the many STEM opportunities available in the Greater Omaha area. Through my role, I was able to share OSE's mission and values with our community and highlight the importance of STEM opportunities in shaping tomorrow's workforce. This internship not only enhanced my skills, but also deepened my appreciation for the vital role STEM plays in our future."

Olivia Petrash



CHAMPIONS

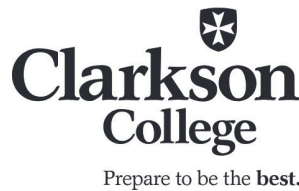
We appreciate all the volunteer efforts that these organizations provide. They dedicate their time, talent and treasure to move our mission and goals forward and assure Omaha remains a robust STEM community. The OSE's crucial role of facilitating Communication, Collaboration and Connection depends directly on the support of a passionate community.





FOUNDERS

The Omaha STEM Ecosystem believes in the power of connections, collaborations and communication to address the critical shortfall of STEM professionals in the Greater Omaha area. We could not do what we do without you. Our work depends on your support!



BUILDING AMERICA®



**ANNE HUBBARD FOUNDATION
NEBEL FAMILY**

CONNECTIVITY TO STEM OPPORTUNITIES

The OSE leverages the social capital of each partner to address the STEM workforce gap by connecting education to workforce development.



We invite you to get involved in the Omaha STEM Ecosystem by contributing your time, talent and treasure.



To learn more about ways to get involved or support the Omaha STEM Ecosystem, please contact Julie Sigmon.

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The Omaha STEM Ecosystem is committed to Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion. We respect the lived experiences of all individuals and encourage multiple perspectives in fostering a community dedicated to providing comprehensive resources, unwavering support, and abundant opportunities. To foster a vibrant STEM community, our goal is to ensure that every individual can be inspired and thrive in both academic endeavors and professional pathways.