

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2025

CONNECT
COMMUNICATE
COLLABORATE





A MESSAGE FROM OMAHA STEM ECOSYSTEM

I am honored to present the Omaha STEM Ecosystem's 2025 Annual Report, which highlights the meaningful progress and collective impact achieved across our community this year. Within these pages, you will find our shared successes and the dedication of countless individuals and organizations who continue to help build Omaha's future STEM workforce.

2025 was a year of new beginnings for the Omaha STEM Ecosystem (OSE). After eight remarkable years, our director, Julie Sigmon, retired from her position on January 15, 2025. Julie's leadership, vision and commitment have made the OSE the successful collective impact organization that it is today. We were proud to present her with the honorary award at our inaugural STEM Impact Awards, a new event celebrating excellence in science, technology, engineering and mathematics across Nebraska.

Following Julie's retirement, we embarked on the development of a new strategic plan focused on community input and engagement. Facilitated by Valerie Calderon of Calderon Research and Consulting Services, these sessions provided valuable insights that informed our 2025-2028 strategic priorities and objectives, which will

play a key role in shaping the position and vision of the OSE's next director.

2025 also marked the third year of our STEM Connect Series. With participation from more than 40 organizations and over 300 community members, this initiative continued to strengthen career pathways, foster cross-sector dialogue and honor individuals and organizations that have been transforming Nebraska's STEM landscape through education, innovation and community impact.

None of our achievements would be possible without the generosity and support of our donors. I extend my gratitude to them, as well as to the numerous partners and collaborators who have dedicated their time, talent, and expertise.

As we approach our 10th anniversary, the OSE's vital role of facilitating Communication, Collaboration and Connection has never been more important.

Thank you,
Hannah Bergdolt
Marketing Communications Coordinator

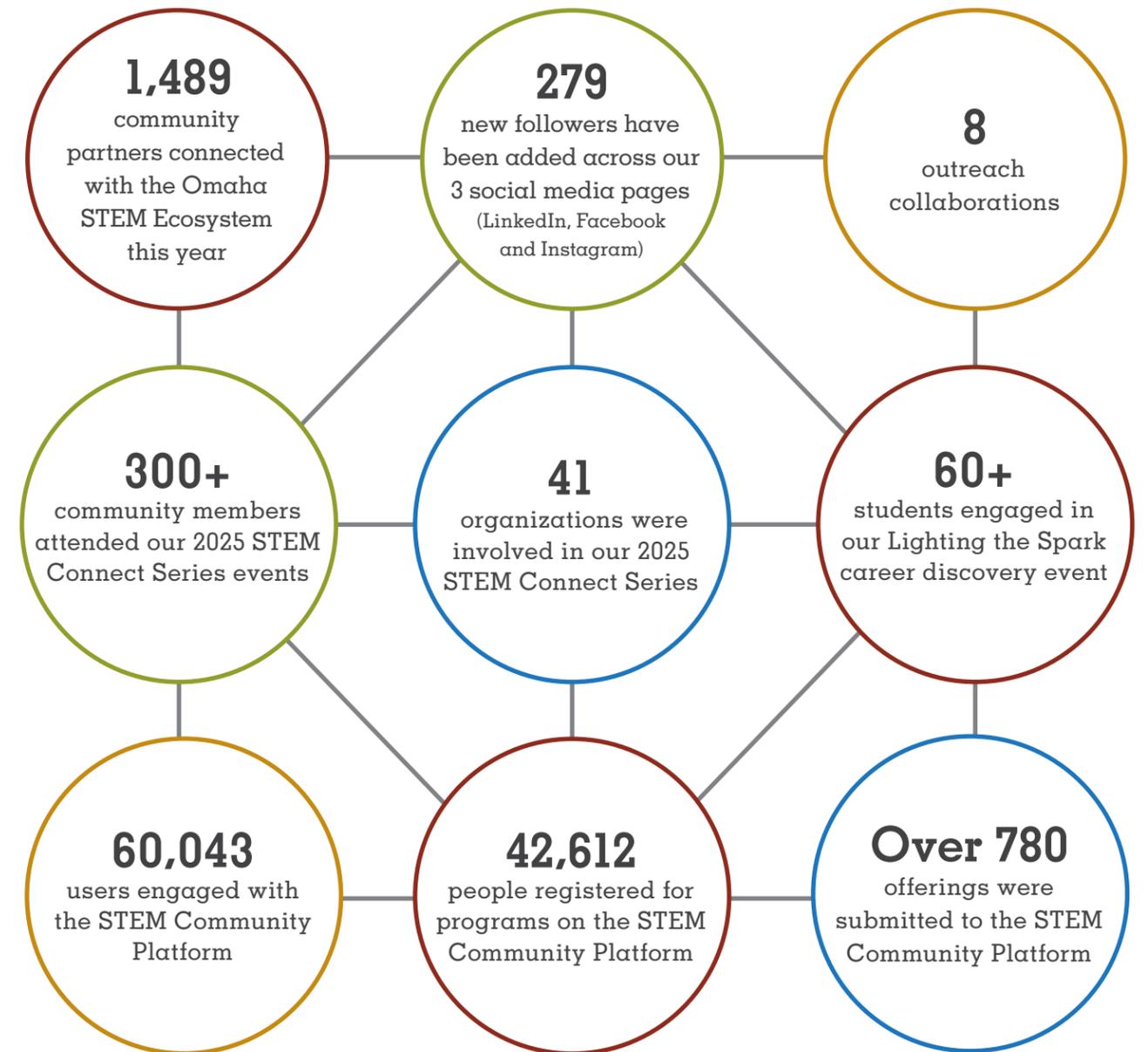
Mission

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 NUMBERS



THE PROBLEM & SOLUTION

The Problem

STEM talent continues to be in high demand across the United States, and Omaha is no exception. STEM occupations in the Omaha area are projected to grow by 12.9% between 2022 and 2032, compared to a 6.1% growth rate for non-STEM jobs (Nebraska Department of Labor [NDOL], 2024). Computer and mathematical occupations are among the fastest-growing, with top statewide projected growth at 13.79% and second-highest in Omaha at 14.86% (NDOL, 2024). Additionally, shifting career perceptions among Generation Z presents new challenges. While Gen Z expresses strong interest in STEM occupations, many do not view them as their first choice careers and believe that their K-12 education did not provide sufficient exposure to foundational STEM concepts (Gallup, 2024). The rapid pace of economic expansion in the Greater Omaha area, combined with the growing demand for scientific and technical expertise and declining early exposure to essential STEM skills, demonstrates that the current model is unsustainable.

WHAT IS STEM?

S
SCIENCE

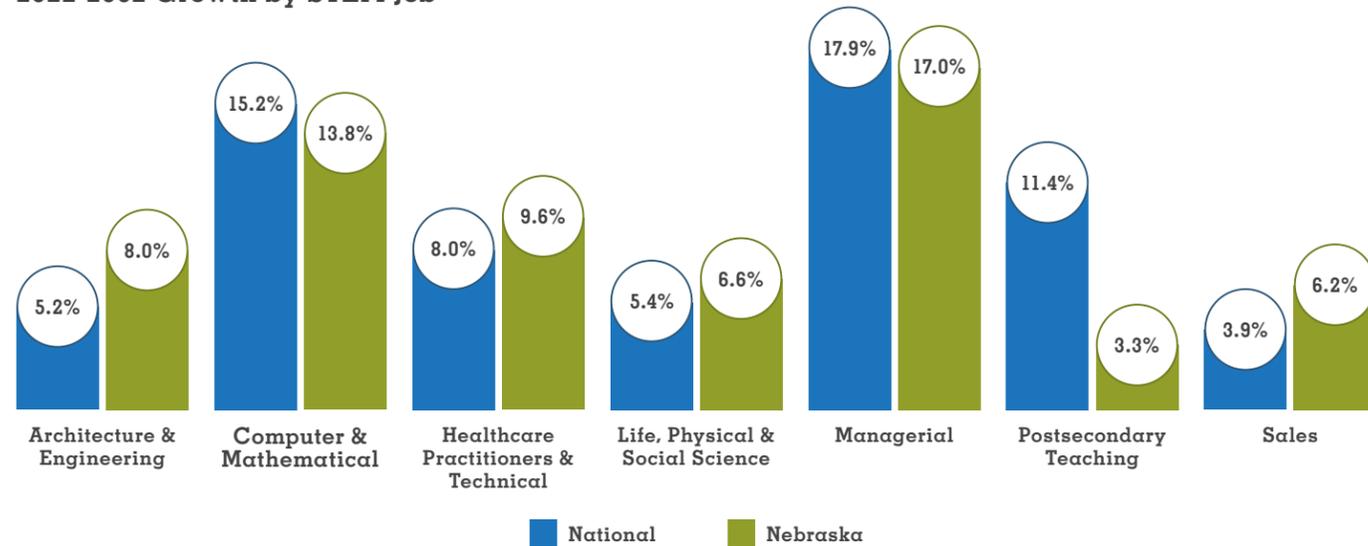
T
TECHNOLOGY

E
ENGINEERING

M
MATHEMATICS

At its fundamental core, STEM is exploration and critical thinking for solving solutions.

2022-2032 Growth by STEM Job



References

Gallup. (2024). Walton Family Foundation-Gallup Voices of Gen Z: Perspectives on STEM Education and Careers.

<https://www.gallup.com/analytics/544742/walton-family-foundation-pdf-report.aspx>

Nebraska Department of Labor. (2024). Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Projections.

https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/ndolmi/viz/STEMDashboard_15657317491450/STEMQuickFacts

The Solution

With this rapid expansion, the mission of the Omaha STEM Ecosystem has never been more urgent. Our central focus remains on strengthening the region's STEM community by breaking down educational silos and fostering interconnected pathways.

We advance this work by actively engaging partners across the community through Communication, Collaboration and Connection, especially through our STEM Connect events. By sharing resources and promoting initiatives, such as Lighting the Spark and Connecting Pathways, we help ensure students encounter STEM concepts earlier and teachers have the resources they need.

Research shows that middle school and high school students are more likely to pursue a STEM career when they are exposed to more STEM topics during their time in school (Gallup, 2024). Our primary objective is to build a shared understanding of the core talent requirements within STEM disciplines and create an actionable framework for optimal pathways in the Greater Omaha area, and eventually, across the state.

STRATEGIC DRIVERS



Solidify the OSE's mission, vision, and organizational structure.

- Refresh the mission and vision of the OSE.
- Promote the OSE and its refreshed mission and vision.
- Refine the organizational structure to align with the mission, vision and work.



Pursue a sustainable financial model.

- Design and implement a business plan and align resources with the organizational structure.
- Initiate multiple revenue generating opportunities.
- Clarify the OSE's partnership structure.



Align the OSE's structure and work with identified workforce needs.

- Partner with private sector businesses to identify current and future STEM workforce needs.
- Inform current and future partners about identified workforce needs.
- Identify and share existing and potential solutions for addressing workforce needs.



Leverage connections to amplify STEM career entry points.

- Aim the OSE's content and events toward identified workforce needs.
- Establish a framework for event follow-up that yields action and meaningful change.
- Elevate informal education opportunities that address workforce needs.

COMMUNICATING THE OSE'S MISSION

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

- Monthly newsletters connected the OSE with our members and greater STEM community.
- Quarterly committee newsletters increased our cross-communication and collaboration efforts.
- 2025 STEM Challenge promoted interactions between organizations that include:
 - Metropolitan Science & Engineering Fair
 - Duchesne Academy
 - Mathnasium
 - Christ the King Omaha
 - Kids Can Community Center
 - Nebraska Science Festival

Media Reach

There were **64** earned news media placements that resulted in:

- **3.3** million audience reach
- **\$272,103** ad equivalency value
- **\$818,137** publicity value

Media

- [Omaha World-Herald](#)
- [WOWT](#)
- [Nebraska Public Media](#)
- KIOS Radio
- Midlands Business Journal
- [Silicon Prairie News](#)
- [Grow Omaha](#)



COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Outreach to our community partners involves unique collaborations that are valuable to ensure our STEM community remains vibrant.



Metropolitan Science and Engineering Fair
Nebraska Science Olympiad



NSORG Grant with AIM Institute



Millard Public Schools STEM Open House
MOEC MathLink



Omaha Children's Museum Teachers' Night
Durham Museum Teachers' Night



Women in Technology of the Heartland May Mixer



Optimist Club of Omaha

COMMUNITY VOICES

The OSE's 2025 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:



“Participating in the STEM Connect Series was a meaningful reminder that HR truly lives within the STEM realm. As Chief People Officer, I discussed how people-focused strategies, data-driven decision-making and systems thinking all support innovation and the growth of STEM careers. It was meaningful to show that building great organizations and nurturing talent is as much a STEM practice as other fields.”

Megan Rachal,

Chief People Officer at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium®

“Meeting students and passionate individuals across the Omaha Metro and sharing my story at the Lighting the Spark event was an inspiration! It was a great way to share my career path and hear what interested and motivated the community to be involved in STEM opportunities. I am thankful I was able to be a part of such a special event and share in the experience.”

Miranda Dineen,

Assistant Integrated Design Manager - Water at McCarthy®



“The Lighting the Spark event was such a great opportunity to connect with middle and high school aged youth and share about the many routes one can take to pursue a career in STEM. At Beyond School Bells, we believe that finding a spark for STEM can happen anywhere – in the classroom, in an afterschool program, or out in the community. It was inspiring to see so many students already thinking about their futures and considering a career in STEM in Nebraska!”

Lauren Clark,

Assistant Vice President BSB, Operations and Communications at Beyond School Bells

STEM CONNECT SERIES



Lighting the Spark | February 11, 2025

We kicked off our 2025 STEM Connect Series with Lighting the Spark – Women in STEM. Lighting the Spark is an event dedicated to helping students and young adults discover their passion, especially those unsure of their next steps. This edition of Lighting the Spark focused on Women in STEM.

Research shows that women who are actively engaged with supportive communities are more likely to thrive in their STEM professions. We wanted to give participants the opportunity to not only explore career pathways but to find their community.

Attendees connected with local businesses and heard from our incredible Women in STEM panel that featured Addie Schrader of Olsson, Lauren Clark of Beyond School Bells and Trish Webber of Clarkson College, led by moderator Leah Litz of Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium. What better day to celebrate Women in STEM than February 11, International Day of Women and Girls in Science!



Connecting Pathways | July 15, 2025

Another great evening bridging the gap between education and business at Connecting Pathways. Dr. Martha Garcia-Murillo, Dean of the College of Information Science & Technology at UNO, opened the event with the keynote address, highlighting the ever-changing AI landscape across various sectors.

Afterwards, participants were divided into groups for breakout sessions. Industry leaders Kim Cowman of Leo A Daly, Andy Dickmeyer of FNIC, Andreia Nebel of Clarkson College, and Todd Shackelford of HDR discussed AI's current applications and development within their fields on a panel. At the same time, Tyler McCoid, a graduate student at the College of Information Science & Technology at UNO, demonstrated AI in robotics through an interactive session.



Lighting the Spark | September 16, 2025

Our third STEM Connect event was Lighting the Spark – H3 Careers. Lighting the Spark is an event dedicated to helping students and young adults discover their passion, especially those unsure of their next steps. Our theme focused on H3 Careers, careers that are High Wage, High Skill, and High Demand. H3 Careers are the current in-demand jobs and must meet the qualifications of paying wages that match or exceed the regional average, require a diploma or the equivalent plus additional education or training, and have a high projected number of annual openings.

Attendees connected with local businesses and heard from our H3 panel featuring Cameron Troia of Embris Group, Megan Rachal of Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium, Miranda Dineen of McCarthy, and Dr. Jessica Fitzgerald of Clarkson College, led by moderator Leah Litz of Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium.



STEM Impact Awards | November 5, 2025

Our final STEM Connect event of 2025 was our inaugural STEM Impact Awards. This new event celebrated excellence in science, technology, engineering and mathematics across Nebraska.

This event was created to recognize and elevate those who are leading the way, ensuring Nebraska remains a center of innovation, equity and excellence. We honored a variety of individuals and organizations that have been transforming Nebraska's STEM landscape through education, innovation and community impact.

Highlights included a keynote presentation from Jaime Casap, a global education evangelist and former Chief Education Evangelist at Google, who launched Chromebooks as a tool for K-12 and higher education and an Animal Ambassador Encounter from Clover the Porcupine.

STEM Impact Awards Winners

Inspiring Minds



Nik Stevenson
STEM Partnerships
Manager at Collective
for Youth

Driving Innovation



MCL Construction

Transforming Communities



Deepak Khazanchi
Executive Director of the
University of Nebraska
Center for Management of IT

Honorary



Julie Sigmon
Former Director of the
Omaha STEM Ecosystem

Thank you to our 2025 STEM Connect Series sponsors for your support!

We appreciate the time, talent and treasure you provide.



FOUNDERS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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!

Founders:



Community Partners:

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.

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 with a contribution of your time, talent or treasure.



**To learn more about ways to get involved or support the Omaha
STEM Ecosystem, please contact Hannah Bergdolt**

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Omaha STEM Ecosystem

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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.

@omahastemecosystem

