STRATEGY 1

Leveraging a wraparound model to address holistic needs to support STEM learning and development

What is the strategy?

Strategy 1 for coordinating across settings is a wraparound model (i.e., cradle through career) that aims to bring cross-sector organizations together (e.g. Habitat for Humanity, WIC, career services, etc.) to address holistic needs of communities.

Why would you use this strategy?

Supporting transitions to STEM careers requires an approach that meets youth and families where they are and provides assistance from childhood through adulthood.

Who would use this strategy?

This is for networks/programs that need to support low-income populations with few easily accessible STEM opportunities (e.g., "STEM deserts"); rather than focus on isolated STEM experiences, this strategy takes into account the holistic needs of youth, families, and communities while making connections to STEM opportunities.

"What (our director) had in mind was to purchase the school and to bring in community partners and offer an office space so people could use this as a one-stop-shop and they wouldn't have to do the runaround for resources."

-Justin, Pocono Services for Families and Children

This brief is a product of research conducted in 2021-2022 within the Making Connections project, a collaboration between the Connected Learning Lab at UCI and STEM Next and their regional partners. This is one of eight strategies, which are still evolving, for coordinating and brokering connections across settings in STEM ecosystems.

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Design Considerations

Network Level ≫

Coordinate across organizations to make connections between program leaders who might be interested in working together in mutually beneficial ways.

Support organizations by applying for funding and grants that could financially support their work.

Program Level ≫

Multigenerational trust-building and establishing a positive reputation in the community is an ongoing process that program leaders must nurture.

Provide space for other organizations to maintain individual identities, while offering incentives for physical co-location (e.g., lower cost rent, better access to individuals the organizations serve). Note that co-location might not always be necessary to support a wraparound approach.

All members of the organization need to be committed to creating a "safe haven" for youth and families (e.g., coaches, teachers, front office staff).

Target Outcomes

Surfacing opportunities for summer employment and for youth to give back to their communities.

Youth find possibilities for fulfilling STEM careers that they enjoy and that align with their interests.

Youth and families are supported throughout stages of life and across various areas of need; all systems are coordinated and working together for youth and families.

Important Considerations

- Takes considerable time and effort to build and keep community trust.
- Co-location of organizations may not be an option in certain communities; if it is something that is possible and desired, finding space to sufficiently support co-location can be challenging.
- People in leadership roles may have varying depth and length of commitment to communities where they work.

- With a wraparound approach, outcomes are differentiated by specific developmental and age-appropriate goals (e.g., kindergarten readiness outcomes for pre-school population, college essay writing for high schoolers), and the entire lifespan of learning and development is taken into account when designing systems.