



CRACKING THE CODE ON STEM

A People Strategy
for Nevada's Economy

Deploy the Governor's Bully Pulpit to Advance a STEM-Strong Vision of Nevada's Economic Future

Problem

Strong state STEM outcomes depend on clear strategies articulated by determined, enthusiastic governors. In Nevada, such a strategy appears to be under development by the STEM Advisory Council. However, STEM opportunities have not yet become a focus of high-level prioritization or communication in state government. Instead, the state's top leaders have had difficulty conveying a compelling vision of Nevada's emerging STEM-powered economy, due in part to limited discussion of STEM to date. By extension, Nevada leaders have struggled to identify the actions needed to advance STEM in the state. As a result, Nevada has lacked a sense of common purpose on STEM education and training. Absent a clear strategy communicated by top state officials, the myriad state, local, and private actors and organizations that comprise the state's education and workforce training systems have yet to be galvanized to action.

Recommendation

To underscore the importance of strong STEM industries and high-quality STEM education and training, the governor and top state officials should actively and consistently advance and promote the state's emerging STEM agenda and highlight the role that STEM skills play in Nevada's industry sectors, its regional economies, and its residents' careers. By regularly communicating an exciting, forward-looking vision for STEM in the state, the governor can work to educate the public about the importance of STEM enterprises and skills while also using this new vision to foster alignment among the state's many agencies, organizations, and actors.

Implementation Specifics

The chief executive and his team will have numerous opportunities to drive home this new focus. To start, the governor and his staff should use both official occasions such as the state of the state address, release of the executive budget, and internal cabinet meetings as well as

more incidental opportunities such as editorial board interviews and high-profile speaking engagements to underscore the critical role that STEM industries play in Nevada's efforts to strengthen and diversify its economy. Using consistent, energetic messaging, the governor can make clear Nevada's ambitious new vision for healthier STEM-intensive regional economies that provide well-paying jobs for greater numbers of Nevadans. The proposed STEM Champion and other state officials should augment these efforts by adopting similar messaging as appropriate in their own speaking engagements, public outreach, and interactions with the media.

Meanwhile, the governor and his staff should work with the STEM Champion and the STEM Advisory Council to identify and highlight innovative STEM companies in the state as well as individual Nevadans pursuing careers in STEM-strong industries, with particular attention to those occupations that might appeal to different demographics of Nevada's student population. Company tours and inclusion of engaging anecdotes in speeches and media interviews can help Nevadans begin to see a more STEM-oriented future for themselves and for the economy more broadly. Care should be taken to show that STEM jobs are not just for white and Asian men, a stereotype that discourages many Nevadans from pursuing STEM coursework and careers. To help disrupt these stereotypes, stories and examples that offer role models for young women of color, black and Latino young men, and young white women should be featured prominently in all STEM-related communications efforts.

Likewise, the governor and his staff, in conjunction with the STEM Champion and the STEM Advisory Council, should seek out success stories and positive examples of STEM education in Nevada's schools that could be used to raise awareness of STEM. Through on-site visits and mentions in official speeches, the governor can highlight the good work taking place in the state and show that Nevada's efforts to build a STEM-strong educational system and economy have already begun. Highlighting these promising examples not only will celebrate the efforts of teachers and students alike but also will encourage the replication of these strong programs by other schools and districts in the state.

The governor should also provide a keynote address each year on the importance of STEM to Nevada's economic vision at the Nevada STEM Coalition's STEM Summit, which brings together key STEM stakeholders from throughout the state. The governor's participation in the summit will highlight the connections between Nevada's economic future and STEM education while sending a clear signal of the state's support for expanding and strengthening STEM education in Nevada.

Finally, the governor should use his convening power to encourage disparate systems and actors to align with the state's emerging STEM priorities. For example, the governor should provide active, ongoing support for the STEM Champion as s/he works to foster the alignment of the education and training systems with the state's STEM industries.

Budget Implications

This recommendation could be implemented at no cost.

References

National Governor's Association. 2010. "Tools and Techniques of Effective Governors."
Available at www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1009OMCTTOOLSTECHNIQUES.PDF.

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