



CRACKING THE CODE ON STEM

A People Strategy
for Nevada's Economy

Reconstitute the STEM Advisory Council to Better Support Nevada's STEM Education and Workforce Training Agenda

Problem

The creation of a STEM Advisory Council in the last legislative session confirmed that Nevada is beginning to take STEM education seriously. However, the council's ability to promote and expand high-quality STEM education in the state remains in question. Furthermore, as currently constituted, the council membership does not adequately represent the varied stakeholders implicated in strengthening the STEM workforce. In particular, limited private-sector representation on the council allows for only a partial understanding of the workforce needs of Nevada's STEM-oriented target industries, which will be the primary employers of STEM-proficient Nevadans in the years ahead.

Recommendation

To support Nevada's efforts to develop and implement a comprehensive STEM education and workforce development strategy, the legislature, with support from Gov. Sandoval, should revise the STEM Advisory Council's authorizing legislation to improve its ability to support the development and implementation of a statewide STEM education and workforce agenda and to ensure that its membership better represents the many stakeholders involved in the state's STEM education and workforce development ecosystems.

The newly reconstituted council—composed of economic development, workforce development, and education professionals as well as private-sector actors from all of the state's economic regions—would provide critical advice and expertise to the proposed STEM Champion as s/he develops a statewide strategy for strengthening Nevada's STEM education and workforce development systems. In addition, council meetings would serve as a mechanism for improving regular communication both within state government and between the public and private sectors.

Implementation Specifics

The state legislature should amend the authorizing legislation for the Nevada STEM Advisory Council so that the council membership better captures the full range of actors involved in expanding Nevada's STEM-proficient workforce. In addition to representatives from the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation (DETR); the Nevada Department of Education (NDE); key STEM leaders in the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE); and the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED), the council should also include representation from the state's regional development authorities (RDAs) and the proposed STEM Champion. Other council members (including classroom teachers, school administrators, and industry representatives) should be included in a manner that provides proportional regional representation in accord with the state's economic regions (including the Las Vegas and Reno metropolitan areas and rural parts of the state). In addition, a minimum of five private-sector members should be appointed to represent the state's most STEM-intensive target industries.

In addition, the legislature should narrow the remit of the council to a consultative role in support of the governor-appointed STEM Champion. At meetings to be held no less than once per quarter, the council should draw on its collective expertise to advise the STEM Champion as s/he works to establish clear guidelines and expectations for quality STEM education and workforce training programs based on national standards of excellence. The council could provide advice and insight on a variety of subjects, including:

- Existing and expected industry workforce needs in the state's regional economies
- Effective STEM education programming and activities from Nevada and elsewhere that could be replicated throughout the state
- High-performing STEM schools, both in Nevada and elsewhere, and how they can best be supported and replicated
- Challenges faced by rural districts in developing exemplary STEM programs and recommendations for increasing the capacity of rural districts to provide equitable STEM educational opportunities
- Criteria to include in the STEM marketing campaign request for proposals

The council would also be responsible for working with the STEM Champion to select and work with a non-governmental nonprofit entity that would seek additional funding for STEM activities and support STEM-related program delivery throughout the state.

Although the council would sunset at the end of June 2017 as currently mandated, the state legislature could choose to extend the council's tenure as appropriate.

Budget Implications

Annual funding for a STEM Advisory Council would likely range between \$100,000 and \$300,000. These funds would be designated for support of council functions, including regular council meetings, travel, research expenses, and administrative costs.

References

S.B. 345, 77th Sess. (Nev. 2013). Available at www.leg.state.nv.us/Session/77th2013/Bills/SB/SB345_EN.pdf.

For More Information

Mark Muro
Washington Director
Brookings Mountain West

Senior Fellow and Policy Director
Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program

202.797.6315
mmuro@brookings.edu