

Fellowship in Informal STEM Learning

JOB DESCRIPTION:

Governor Phil Scott has identified Vermont's shrinking workforce as one of the biggest obstacles to achieving a stronger economy, creating economic opportunity for all Vermonters, and generating the revenue Vermont needs to invest in services. However, if Vermont's young people are properly prepared, jobs related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) can help drive economic growth in our state. Today's students need learning experiences that help them gain knowledge and skills in the STEM fields, reason through tough problems, and discover creative solutions.

Nationwide, states and schools are engaging diverse partners like afterschool programs, libraries, museums, universities, and businesses to ensure that students have access to high-quality STEM education. These informal STEM learning opportunities build students' essential abilities that enable lifelong success, such as creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and self-expression. Increasing students' excitement about and proficiency in excelling in the STEM subjects is essential to our state's economic future. By fully utilizing the hours outside of school, and by taking an all hands on deck approach to maximize collective impact, we can ensure that our young people are prepared for the future.

To assist in this critical work, the Fellowship in Informal STEM Learning will be a one-year position with placement at the VT Agency of _____. Candidates for the fellowship should have deep expertise and relationships in the field of informal STEM learning, familiarity with federal and Vermont state education policy, and the ability to build strong partnerships inside and outside government. The home organization of the Fellow would receive funding from an outside foundation to support the fellowship position.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS:

The Fellow reports to _____ in the _____. The Fellow will also work closely with the Director of Workforce Policy and Performance within the Vermont Department of Labor; the Special Assistant to the Governor and Executive Director of Workforce Expansion; the STEM Coordinator at Vermont Afterschool; and members of the Vermont Agency of Education's Career Tech Ed Team and Flexible Pathways/ Personalization Team.

RESPONSIBILITIES MAY INCLUDE:

* Strengthen collaboration across state agencies in the area of informal STEM learning. This will involve creating an inventory of existing state programs and initiatives that already support informal STEM learning or that could be modified to incorporate STEM learning in their objectives. The Fellow will also identify potential programming gaps based on promising careers pathways in Vermont, areas of the state lacking access to informal STEM learning opportunities, and underserved segments of the student population.

* Identify opportunities to improve informal STEM learning opportunities for Vermont's students. The Fellow will work with programs and organizations that are engaged in informal STEM learning to

improve overall quality, school-community partnerships, and connection to the K–12 system as well as to the broader informal STEM education community.

* Build on the Governor’s Cradle to Career campaign by getting more young people excited about STEM fields. This entails building collaborations with the corporate, non-profit, and philanthropic communities, including before school, afterschool and summer programs, institutions of higher education, career tech programs, museums, and libraries. Examples of potential projects that are relevant to informal STEM education include STEM programming, digital badges, tinkering, MedTrek and MedQuest, the Governor’s Institutes, Vermont Afterschool’s STEM Systems Building Project, 4H, coding camps, afterschool programs working with regional tech centers, among others.

* Use convenings, events, and other communications mechanisms to shine a spotlight on models, interventions, and policies in informal STEM learning at the state and local level that others in Vermont can learn from and replicate, as appropriate. This may include working with the growing set of state, regional-level, and urban STEM networks and the growing set of states adopting the Next Generation Science Standards.

* Increase the number and types of programs and organizations offering informal STEM learning experiences across Vermont by overseeing the disbursement of grants from Vermont’s Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund. The Fellow will work with the ELO Committee to design the grant process to increase access to afterschool and summer learning programs, including a priority for programs incorporating informal STEM learning experiences, for low-income students and in underserved areas of the state.

QUALIFICATIONS INCLUDE:

* Undergraduate degree required; graduate degree strongly preferred.

* Substantial experience in the field of informal and out-of-school time STEM learning. This can include academic work, as well as expertise gained through direct work with afterschool programs, K-12 schools, museums, libraries, foundations, companies and others that are involved in STEM education. A strong network within informal STEM learning is essential.

* Significant experience in education policy at the local, state or federal level.

* Strong interpersonal skills and willingness to work with a wide range of individuals and state offices, including the skill to be effective in state government.

* Ability to operate and execute with limited guidance and in ambiguous or novel circumstances, and ability to appropriately and effectively use informal authority when leading teams or projects.

* Ability to develop and manage complex project workplans and adhere to deadlines.

* Outstanding writing skills and demonstrated ability to craft policy papers, decision memos, talking points and program proposals on complex education issues for diverse audiences.

* Excellent strategic thinking and problem-solving abilities and a creative thinker who has demonstrated the ability to tackle new and dynamic challenges by developing original solutions while working collaboratively with others.