

What is needed for a successful STEM Camp?

Funding

Discussion: It was relatively easy to find a few private sector businesses able to donate a few hundred dollars, this time. We were able to squeak by with getting the amount needed to cover the basic expenses of meals and lodging. Agencies and organizations also provided give away items such as mugs, stickers, backpacks, etc. Workgroup members even donated personally in order to make sure it worked. But, will those same sponsors, agencies and organizations be willing to support an ongoing program once or twice a year? The first camp required approximately \$3,000 total.

Recommendation: If the STEM Camp is going to be a permanent event, we need to start looking for funding as soon as the decision is made to do it. Be sure to secure the funding before announcing to the public and accepting applications. The workgroup will need to look for alternative sources and ideally, find a permanent source so the workgroup doesn't have to go out hunting for donations for every camp.

- a. get someone on the workgroup who knows how to find and successfully apply for grants
- b. request the Governor's Office, SITSD or the Legislature to provide perpetual funding for the Camps as a community outreach and educational program
- c. find other organizations who have steady stream funding and support to co-sponsor the camps
- d. Select random agencies each time to provide give way items to share costs

Workgroup Volunteers

Discussion: The first STEM Camp we had a decent turn out of eager volunteers. After the first meeting they began dropping out as the amount of time and effort required became obvious. Within a month we were down to the 6 volunteers who planned, prepared and executed the event.

Recommendation: Find a workgroup chair and a core of committed volunteers with the time to put into the planning and preparation. We found that six volunteers the first camp was just about right. If there were more the communication and logistics would get hectic. But those six need to be fully committed and have the time to devote to the event.

The chair will need the extra time to prepare the planning documents, coordinate meetings, and, communicate with sponsors, agency representatives and camp participants.

Participant Selection

Discussion: The workgroup decided that 15 participants with chaperones was the ideal group size. We wanted to fill all 15 positions so we selected two groups that we thought together could come up with 15 kids. We wanted to maximize the participation and spread it out if possible. After selecting the participants from the applications and we started coordinating logistics, both groups requested to bring more kids than originally planned for. We had to stay with the original amount, but that left the groups in a bind by having to choose who stays home and who attends the camp.

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Recommendation: Only select one group, even if they say they can only bring less than 15, with the expectation they could end up finding more than anticipated in the application. Always set a maximum limit of what can be supported with the funding available and required logistics for the workshops, etc. The first camp we chose 15 as the maximum and required a minimum of one chaperone per every five kids, to help manage the group.

Camp Schedule

Discussion: The workgroup wanted to make the event as fun and educational as possible, so there was a lot packed into 2 days. We might have overdone it, but we think it was worth it in the end for the kids. We tried to expose them to as much diverse technology as possible in order to demonstrate the broad extent of the IT field. They made the most of their 2 days and went home full of knowledge and great memories.

Recommendation: Be sure to coordinate for food the week prior. If using any rooms in the Capitol, schedule at 90 days prior to the event. Scheduling with the Governor's Office should begin as soon as a camp date has been picked. When creating the agenda, allow for questions and plan for ample transition time between events that are in different locations.

Groups need more down time to do homework and process what they learn so limit activities to work hours (8 to 5) but provide information about the local area to the chaperones and they can choose to do additional activities on their own. This would also save money not having to provide dinners.

Exposure to various IT systems and touring agencies is good but if need to select between that and hands on, select hands on activities. It is helpful if activities can build on each other (example: build map, build app, embed in web site, make it accessible, secure it, etc.). Ideally keep group in one main training room for the entire time with space for chaperones and additional assistants to move around and then take breaks to tour.