

# STEM Outreach Center in Las Cruces awarded \$26.5 million grant for school district programs

By news editor and partners • 19 hours ago



The STEM Outreach Center at New Mexico State University has been awarded a five-year grant totaling \$26.5 million to continue and extend support for after-school programs in school districts in Doña Ana, Grant and Hidalgo counties.

The Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, offered through the New Mexico Public Education Department, increases the number of learning centers the STEM Outreach Center serves from 26 to 47. As part of the grant, Hobbs Municipal Schools will receive funding from the STEM Outreach Center for their out-of-school-time programs, serving an additional 17 schools.

“This grant speaks to our history of providing good-quality systems and programs,” said Wanda Bulger-Tamez, director of the STEM Outreach Center. “Our team looks forward to expanding after-school programs across southern New Mexico. These programs provide a safe place for students to

participate in after-school programs that provide an array of enrichment opportunities."

"We are so delighted to be able to broaden our outreach and touch so many more students in different parts of the state," said Henrietta Pichon, interim dean of the NMSU College of Health, Education and Social Transformation, where the STEM Outreach Center is housed. "Programs such as these create life-long learners who see learning as another great adventure."

The programs offered by the STEM Outreach Center provide academic support and enrichment opportunities to support literacy and science, technology, engineering and math learning designed to reinforce topics introduced during the students' traditional learning day. Students participate in activities such as robotics, photography, coding, engineering design, dance, cooking, crafts and sports. Each school chooses the after-school programs that match the interests and needs of the school community.

The grant is offered to high-need schools through the New Mexico Public Education Department through the national 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. The STEM Outreach Center will partner with school districts and organizations such as Ngage New Mexico, Cruces Creatives, STEAMing Ahead for Success and La Semilla Food Center to provide a wide range of community resources.

The STEM Outreach Center is the largest consortium in the state receiving 21st CCLC funding, and is among the largest in the nation to receive a 21st CCLC award. The U.S. Department of Education offers the grant through its national 21st CCLC program by partnering with state education departments.

“Our consortium of schools are in a position to implement aspects of the Community Schools Framework, which includes collaborative leadership and planning,” said Sara Morales, associate director of the STEM Outreach Center.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects.

Information from NMSU