



STEM ACTION CENTER

EXECUTIVE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
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ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

The STEM Action center is responsible for prioritizing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education in the state. The long run goal of the program is to develop the workforce of the future for Utah. The center will coordinate public and higher education STEM initiatives and best practices in order to ensure that the future education needs of the workforce are met.

Questions

There are two main questions the Legislature should address related to the requirements provided in the statute:

- Is the Governor's Office of Economic Development the proper location for the STEM Action Center?
- Are the current performance measure and implementation strategies proposed by GOED adequate and useful in determining the success of the program?

BACKGROUND

H.B. 139, "Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Action Center" was passed in the 2013 General Session and initially provided \$1.5 million in ongoing General Fund and \$8.5 million in one-time General Fund for the development of a comprehensive statewide STEM program. H.B. 139 authorized a pilot program with two components: 1) to provide education technology related to mathematics instruction for grades 6 through 8; and 2) to prepare high school students for college mathematics courses.

The legislation also provided the initial structure for the STEM Action Center and STEM education throughout the state. The functions of the center include: working with the State Board of Education to acquire technology for schools, supporting professional development for teachers, engaging private entities in providing staff support or financial resources for STEM activities, and acting as a research and development center for education related instructional technologies.

In the 2014 General Session H.B. 150, "Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Amendments" passed, authorizing an additional \$5.0 million in ongoing General Fund and an additional \$15.0 million in one-time General Fund. The bill expanded on the center's mission to promote best practices in STEM education and serve as repository of curriculum, programs and activities.

The legislation also allowed the STEM Action Center board to create a foundation; expand the scope of the STEM education related technology program to more students; and create the STEM education middle school applied science initiative and the high school STEM education initiative. Lastly, the bill created the STEM education endorsements and incentive program.