



Minnesota STEM Ecosystem: Quarterly Report Summary July 2026

During the second quarter of 2026, the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem continued to strengthen its role as a statewide convener, bringing together education, workforce, industry, nonprofit, and government partners to advance shared STEM learning and workforce development goals. These efforts continued to encourage collaboration across sectors, reinforcing the Ecosystem's role as the backbone organization connecting STEM education with Minnesota's workforce priorities.

Milestones & Highlights

STEM Day at the Capitol. Successfully hosted the 2026 STEM Day at the Capitol, bringing together 27 organizations representing education, industry, workforce development, nonprofits, and government to showcase career-connected STEM learning for legislators and the public. *The event was sponsored by Xcel Energy.*

Community of Practice. Hosted the first statewide Community of Practice for Partnership Grantees, Regional STEM Coordinators, Advisory Council members, and STEM funders to share best practices, strengthen collaboration, and support continuous improvement across funded projects.

Advisory Council. Convened the quarterly Advisory Council meeting where members adopted statewide performance indicators and welcomed new representation from Ramsey County, strengthening statewide leadership and accountability.

Program Administration. Expanded active partnership grant programs expanded from 6 to 11 statewide. A comprehensive grant monitoring framework was implemented to support accountability and stewardship. Ongoing technical assistance to grantees through individualized support was provided while continuing to build a culture of continuous improvement through collaboration and shared learning.

Regional STEM Coordination

A cornerstone of the Ecosystem's statewide strategy is the Regional STEM Coordinator model, including Coordinators based within the Minnesota Service Cooperatives. This regional model ensures that STEM programming reflects local workforce needs while expanding access in Greater Minnesota. Highlights Included:

Southern Minnesota. Expanded educator engagement through STEM Forward, AI professional learning, Career-Connected Learning initiatives, and regional partnerships supporting STEM education and workforce development.

West/Northwest Minnesota. Continued the expansion of the Makerspace Lending Library while hosting successful regional events including the Young Writers & STEM Conference and strengthening educator networks across west-central Minnesota

Northeast Minnesota. Strengthened regional STEM collaboration by supporting the Informal Computer Science Learning Summit, expanding regional communications, and building partnerships among STEM, CTE, and computer science organizations.



Q2 Partnership Grant Program Highlights

Strengthening Workforce Pathways & Advancing Minnesota's Innovation Economy

During the second quarter, **eleven Partnership Grant projects were actively delivering innovative STEM learning and workforce development opportunities across Minnesota**. Programs engaged youth, educators, employers, higher education institutions, and community partners through hands-on STEM experiences, career exploration, educator professional development, and authentic work-based learning aligned with Minnesota's workforce priorities.

Educator Professional Development

Southeast Service Cooperative. Established a **Southeast MN AI Taskforce**, successfully recruiting **15 taskforce members** representing a broad and diverse cross-section of districts throughout the region tasked with creating an AI Literacy Framework to help educators confidently integrate artificial intelligence into the classroom.

Science Museum of Minnesota. Developed the statewide **AI Foundations for Educators** professional learning series, including instructional modules, educator resources, and workshop content focused on artificial intelligence, machine learning, and classroom applications scheduled to launch during the upcoming school year.

South Central Service Cooperative. In cooperation with the Mn State Centers of Excellence and Minnesota Service Cooperatives across the state, the **statewide STEM Educator Externship Program was successfully launched**. The cohort represents schools and colleges from across Minnesota, with educators teaching agriculture, manufacturing, engineering, computer science, and other career-connected fields spanning grade levels from sixth grade through college.

Hands-on STEM Learning & Career Exploration

Twin Cities PBS. Developed a fifth STEM career-connected **Skillsville** instructional module, distributed **2,000 family STEM learning kits**, expanded afterschool programming, and launched statewide summer library STEM events to extend learning beyond the classroom.

STARBASE Duluth. Provided hands-on STEM learning experiences for **486 elementary school youth**, introducing elementary students to STEM careers through inquiry-based learning. More than **300 students reported increased interest in pursuing STEM careers** following participation.

The Works Museum. Expanded partnerships with the University of Minnesota Nano Center, Raspberry Pi Foundation, POET Biofuels, Xcel Energy, and Southeast Service Cooperative while developing Career Connections resources that will introduce elementary students to engineering and STEM careers.

Southeast Service Cooperative. Drone kits and supporting curriculum were made available for checkout at no charge, directly removing budget as a barrier for schools that could not otherwise afford the equipment. Incorporated into a class of 52 middle school students at Spring Creek Elementary in Northfield, completing the final “pilot” cohort of this program.



High Tech Kids. Continued advancing youth robotics engagement through targeted outreach, strategic partnerships- attending more than **14 community-based promotional events**. This quarter emphasized hands on robotics demonstrations, family STEM experiences, and relationship building with schools, statewide STEM partners, FIRST, and regional youth serving organizations to expand access to high quality robotics opportunities.

Work-based Learning & Workforce Engagement

Minnesota FFA. Prepared for statewide implementation of four AgriTech Field Days while **launching the Minnesota FFA Drone Grant Program**. Fifty educational drones were purchased, and **eleven schools were selected** through a competitive application process to receive classroom drone packages and educator training.

30,000 Feet. Expanded technology workforce development by providing youth with instruction in website development, Python programming, and AI prompting while strengthening partnerships with employers to connect students directly with software engineers and technology careers. Successfully transitioned several participants to employment through a partnership with Right Track.

Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center. Completed pre-internship workforce preparation and launched paid summer internships where youth gain experience in information technology, marketing, data analytics, and exhibit construction while developing professional and leadership skills.

Minnesota Diversified Industries. Expanded the Unified Work initiative by adding immersive virtual reality career exploration experiences for **110 youth with disabilities**, exposing participants to careers in advanced manufacturing, construction, engineering, healthcare, aviation, and other high-demand industries.

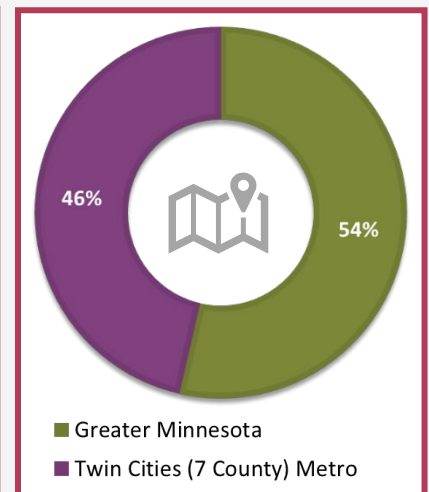
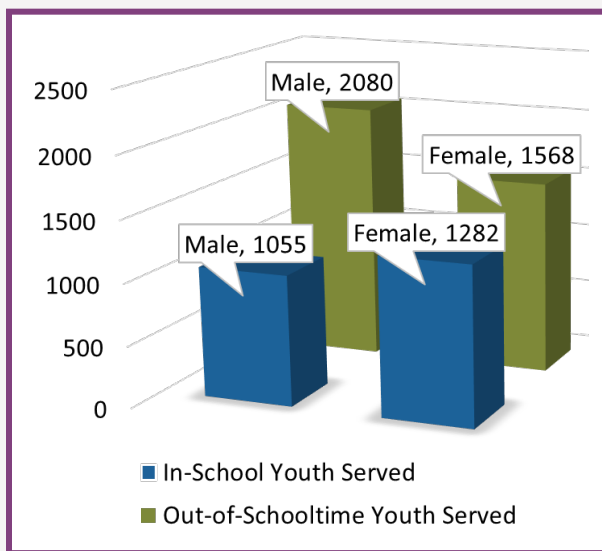
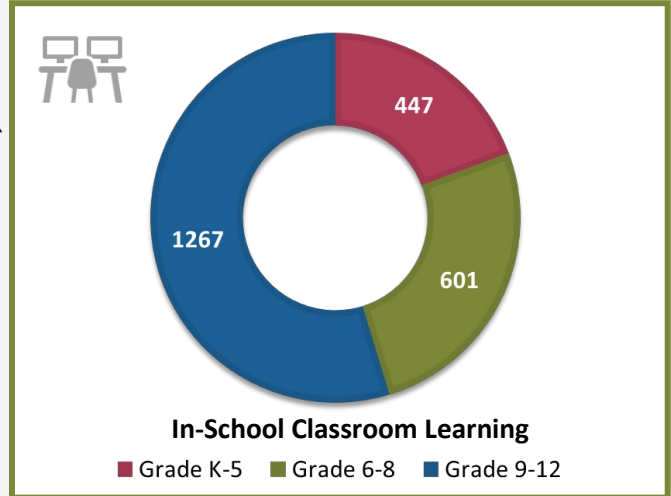
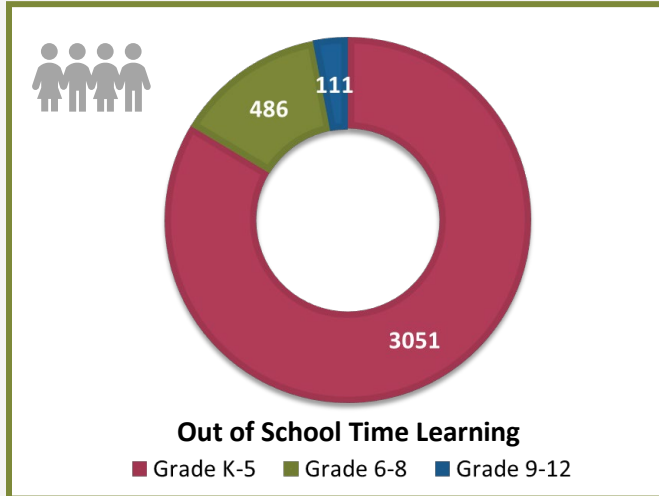
Engineering & Applied Manufacturing Center of Excellence / Marvin Manufacturing. Launched the summer paid **advanced manufacturing internship program** where students work alongside industry mentors, complete leadership development activities, **earn MSSC Certified Production Technician credentials**, and gain authentic workplace experience through Marvin Manufacturing and Northland Community & Technical College.





Q2 By the Numbers

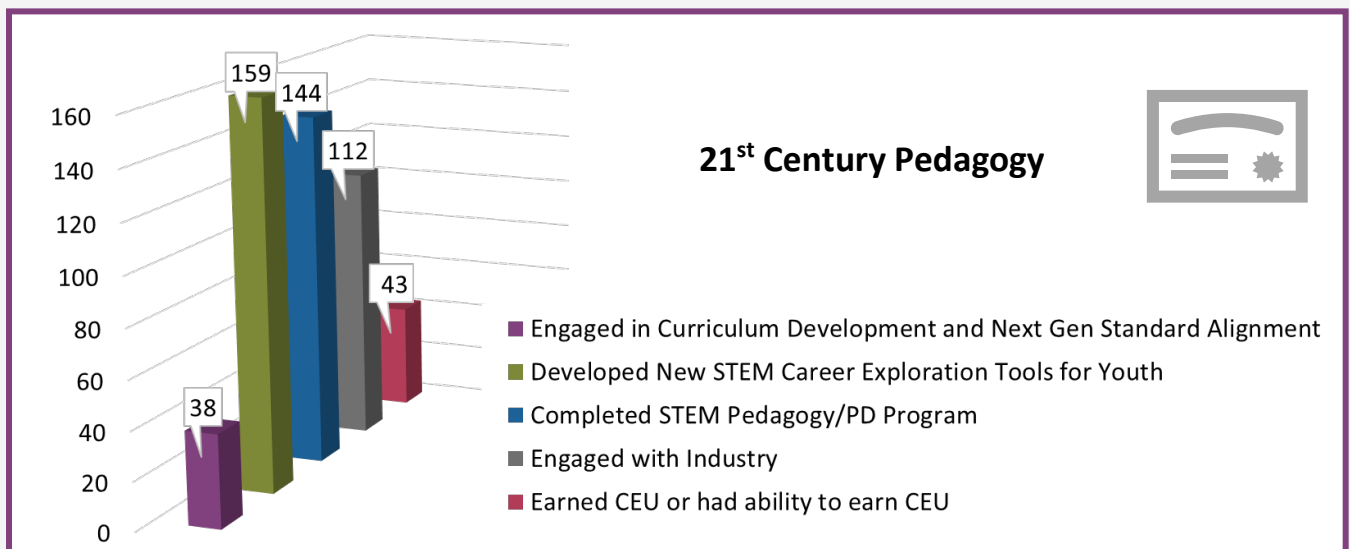
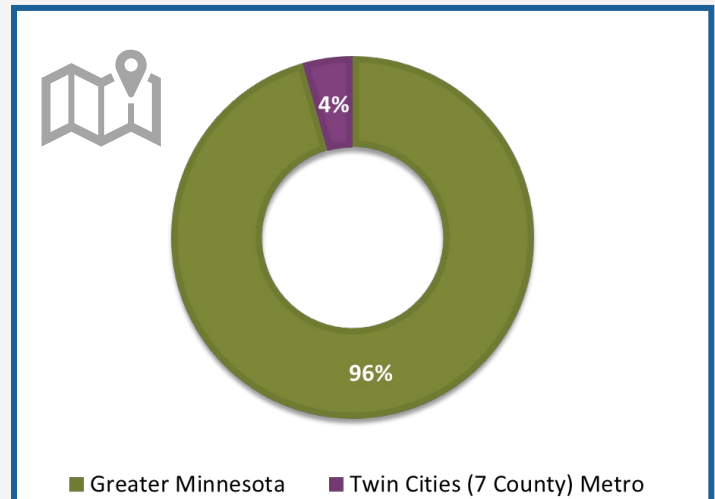
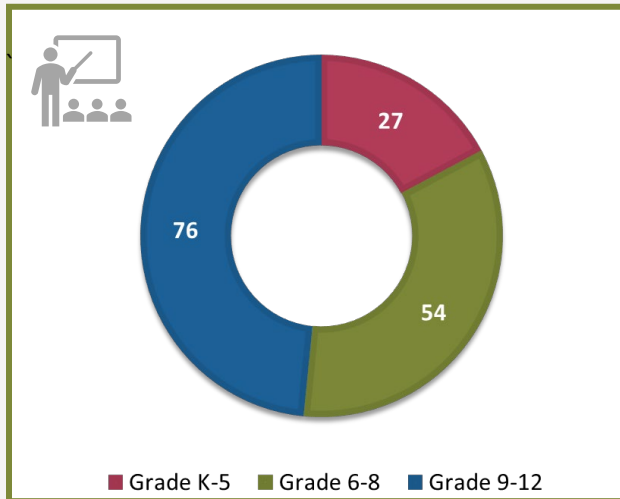
6,001 Youth Served, Statewide





Q2 By the Numbers

159 Educators Served, Statewide



Educator Externship Cohort Launches in St. Cloud with Industry and Workforce Focus



Ryan Strong, Talent Acquisition & Workforce Development Specialist with NFI Group Inc., shared, "It was great to welcome educators from across Minnesota to New Flyer and give them a behind-the-scenes look at how we manufacture sustainable transportation solutions. We trust the visit provided real examples that they can bring back to their classrooms and use to spark interest in engineering, manufacturing, and the skilled trades. We value these partnerships and are proud to play a part in building the future workforce."