



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2019

**ULC Press Contact**

Curtis Rogers

202-750-8658

[crogers@urbanlibraries.org](mailto:crogers@urbanlibraries.org)

## **Public Libraries Are Teaming Up to Prepare Middle Schoolers for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Careers and Increase Access to STEM Learning Opportunities**

*Public libraries launch pilot programs and partnerships to strengthen STEM learning engagement for low-income middle school students.*

WASHINGTON — The Urban Libraries Council convened leaders from 11 public library systems in Chicago on March 13-14 to kick off pilot programs designed to test new approaches to engaging low-income middle school youth in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. These programs are extensions of ULC's Partners for Middle School STEM initiative – a two-year project focused on building multi-sector community partnerships to increase STEM learning opportunities for underserved middle school students.

"Active engagement with STEM education is vital for today's middle school students. These young learners are just starting to develop the mental capacity to process higher-order STEM concepts and they are giving serious thought to their future careers for the first time," said ULC President and CEO Susan Benton. "STEM education is critical to individual, local and national success in the 21st century. This initiative is aimed at bringing together library, school, local government and business leaders to engage students in robust STEM learning opportunities – particularly low-income youth who face the greatest hurdles to pursuing their interests and career goals in STEM fields."

The participating library systems have proposed the following projects to explore ways that libraries, local governments and schools can partner to increase STEM learning opportunities for low-income middle school youth:

- **Algona Public Library (Iowa)** will develop STEM Kits and programming to expose young patrons to a wide range of STEM topics, learning channels and career paths.
- **Chicago Public Library's (Ill.)** STEAM-ed and Chopped program looks to build deeper community engagement with STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) through challenges that will put kids into teams, train them and have them design solutions to a given problem using pre-selected materials.
- **Durham County Library's (N.C.)** STEAM OFF summer camp will feature themed weeks aimed at building the STEAM knowledge and interest of 10- to 13-year-old youth.

- **Gwinnett County Library's (Ga.)** Spanish Language STEM programing will aim to increase the number of Spanish language programs offered by the library, the awareness of STEM learning opportunities provided by the library and the involvement of caregivers in students' education.
- **Hartford Public Library's (Conn.)** STEM Lab on the Go initiative will build a mobile STEM laboratory, support youth staff in programming and offer varied science learning opportunities at all library branches.
- **Mount Vernon City Library's (Wash.)** TechVenture program will build tech literacy in a welcoming and encouraging environment in order to expose youth to basic domains of STEM careers and help offer further steps to participate in STEM.
- **Pioneer Library System (Okla.)** and **Prince George's County Memorial Library System (Md.)** will collaborate to develop a program – STEM Pals – that will expose students to experts in STEM fields, engage students in STEM design projects with ties to real-world applications and strengthen the relationship between library branches and their school districts.
- **The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County's (Ohio)** Game On! Program will engage youth in game-based math challenges developed in partnership with Cincinnati Public Schools' math teachers and coaches.
- **San José Public Library's (Calif.)** Coding Challenge 5K will seek to increase local access to coding focused programs and deepen the quality of programming through the use of vetted curricula, assessment tools and expert volunteers.
- **St. Louis County Library's (Mo.)** STEM Club partnership with Ritenour School District provides after-school STEM programming at two middle schools for 90 minutes weekly. The project aims to develop workforce skills and engage the community and students who are library non-users.

The National Center for Interactive Learning at the Space Sciences Institute is the STEM education expert for the Partners for Middle School STEM initiative and will work with these libraries to support STEM programming design and implementation. This initiative is made possible in part by an Institute of Museum and Library Services Leadership Grant (LG-95-18-0025-18).

###

#### **About the Urban Libraries Council**

The Urban Libraries Council, founded in 1971, is the voice for public libraries and the force that inspires them to evolve. ULC creates the tools, techniques and ideas to make ongoing improvements and upgrades in services and technology. ULC also speaks loudly and clearly about the value public libraries bring to communities, and secures funding for research that results in the development of new programs and services. And by serving as a forum for library leadership, ULC produces innovative ideas and best practices that ensure community impact.