

# Building Lasting Connections in Business



A building technology project in East Syracuse allowed Siemens and other local leaders to reimagine STEM learning as part of an Ecosystem.



## BE SURE TO INVITE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY TO MAKE MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTIONS IN YOUR ECOSYSTEM, NOT MERELY SERVE AS YOUR BANK.

STEM   
In the Great Lakes Bay Region

Great Lakes STEM Pipeline offers an employer toolkit to support business and youth engagement.

Establishing real partnerships with business and industry partners within your ecosystem is extremely important to regional work. In this Pressing Topics series conversation, four STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice members shared ideas about how they've worked with business and industry.

"We were really lacking talent, especially STEM talent, in our area," Lori Flippin says, introducing the [Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance](#) origin story. "Our four chambers came together to work on a business attraction project to address the issue. Meanwhile, we brought together educational entities to work on the talent pipeline. We are working to support all regional industries, including automotive, agriculture, I.T. and healthcare."

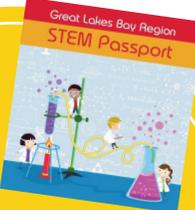
## UNDERSTAND THE VALUE-ADD OF A STRONG ECOSYSTEM.

"A well-organized network can be a huge asset that business is looking to leverage," shares Katie Grootegoed of [NeoSTEM](#). "Our collaborations give business access to the range of public and private schools in the region, while also allowing them to tap into more nimble partners in the ecosystem first to pilot ideas."

Leveraging network partners to support business partnerships was a common theme and the Great Lakes Bay Regional STEM Alliance and PA Seed both talked about their abilities to engage employees and businesses through tours and site visits.

"International capitalism alone is not a sustainable business model. There need to be opportunities for all and real public value," says Rob Boyajieff describing [Siemens'](#) approach to business and community engagement. "We want to use technology and modernization as the means to create more connected, thriving communities. If a college campus undergoes a modernization project, students should be involved in that design process. That is real-world, workforce development experience right there."

Great Lakes STEM Passport Program gets families excited about STEM, while also giving business opportunities for their employee to feel engaged in the community.



## LISTEN TO WHAT BUSINESS IS SAYING FIRST AND THEN FIGURE OUT WHERE YOU CAN INVITE THEM IN.

"We have definitely learned from our failure of not listening first," says Dr. Lindsey Rutherford Sides of [PA SEED](#). "Small tweaks to your verbiage to show the connections are sometimes all it takes, but that means you have to listen to industry needs first. I recommend doing small listening tours as a start-



ing place. Find out projections for both immediate and future needs; this is how you will know where the jobs are going to be. Once you know the need, you can easily show business where you can work together."

# TAKE-AWAYS

**DON'T BE AFRAID TO PUT YOURSELF OUT THERE. DEVELOP A STRONG BRAND FOR YOUR ECOSYSTEM AND SHARE IT WITH EVERYONE YOU MEET. PARTNERSHIPS BEGIN AT ANY TIME AND IN ANY PLACE.**

PA SEED has "flipped" the conversation for the education community in approaching business. With their FREE "EducatorExcursions" program, educators visit industry to learn from business.

"I'm always amazed with the six-degrees of separation concept. There have been so many times where I am sitting next to someone new who has heard about our work from another partner. Through random conversation, I leave the meeting with a new partner on board," Grootegoed says. "We have also learned a lot through our shortcomings. Even with failure, through conversations, we learned the more you can show others the work is real, with real people behind it, the more compelled people are to join you."

**KNOW YOUR ASSETS, LISTEN TO INDUSTRY, COMMUNICATE THE VALUE, INVITE PARTNERS IN AND EXPRESS GRATITUDE - IN THAT ORDER.**

## PANELISTS

**Robert Boyajieff**, Siemens Industry, Inc.

**Lori Flippin**, STEM Initiative Leader, Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance, Great Lakes Bay Regional STEM Initiative

**Katie Grootegoed**, Director of Technology Enhanced Learning, Breakthrough Schools, Northeast Ohio STEM Learning Ecosystem

**Lindsey Rutherford Sides, Ed.D.**, Supervisor of STEAM Education, Bucks County Intermediate Unit, PA SEED



**A FULL RECORDING OF THE WEBINAR IS AVAILABLE AT:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKNT5C1yxMg>

## STEM Learning Ecosystem Discussion Series - Pressing Topics

The Business Connections Conversation is the fourth in a series of webinar-based discussions designed to meet the needs of local and regional Ecosystem leaders have identified. Topics of high interest were identified through a survey distributed to Ecosystem leaders, as well as members that make up the STEM Learning Ecosystem Community of Practice. Panelists were selected based on self-assessed expertise in each area based on the data collected from the same survey and Ecosystems Indicator Tool (EIT).

## OTHER WEBINAR TOPICS IN THIS SERIES INCLUDE:

- Communications
- Organization and Governance Structures
- Programs
- Fundraising

**Know your Industry.** Do your research and be prepared. Know where employment gaps exist and learn about future projections. Understanding industry priorities and pain points are useful as well.

**Leverage your community assets.** Work with local organizations that convene and support business and industry. These might include Chambers of Commerce, Workforce Investment or Development Boards and other Economic Development Councils. Post-secondary institutions can add huge value too.

**Communicate your value and needs.** Don't be afraid to have honest conversations with business partners about your needs. Also, make sure that the discussion is well-rounded and you are able to simply (sans jargon) communicate your value.

**Listen to business leaders.** Listen to their needs first. Then take the time to understand how your work can offer solutions.

**Identify the right people.** Make sure you are connected with the right person(s). Different roles and responsibilities in all organization, make sure your business representatives are connected with the right people on your side and vice-versa.

**Cultivate the partnership.** Building relationships take time and effort. Invite partners to events; keep them in the loop by sending relevant and brief information. Put the time in to develop mutually beneficial, respectful unions.

**Say thank you.** Don't forget to recognize partners (this goes for all types of partners) and thank them both privately and publicly (if appropriate) for their support. This can be done from the beginning of a relationship (e.g. thanks for attending this event, speaking on this webinar, etc.).