

# BSB Family Engagement 2023-2024

## Family Engagement Grants

Beyond School Bells  
Goal Alignment



Quality



Sustain



Policy



Programming

Beyond School Bells (BSB) strengthens afterschool and summer programs' connections with families in one way through STEM-focused family engagement (FE) grants. These grants are grounded in a simple, research-supported idea: when families are involved, youth do better. By offering hands-on STEM experiences that bring children and caregivers together, programs help families feel welcomed, build a sense of belonging, and show that STEM is accessible and relevant in everyday life—benefits that extend to the broader community and help support strong local economies.

### GRANT RESOURCES

[STEM Family Engagement Planning Tool](#)

[STEM Family Engagement Workbook](#)

[Family Engagement:  
Make it About Empowerment Blog](#)

To empower afterschool staff—and, in turn, support the empowerment of parents and caregivers—the core component of the grant structure is professional development (PD) focused on STEM family engagement. The grants provide funding for staff learning time and team meetings, including shared meals, to collaboratively work through the STEM Family Engagement Planning Tool developed by Drs. P.J. Allen and G.G. Noam of the Institute for the Study of Resilience in Youth (ISRY) at Harvard Medical School, with support from the STEM Next Opportunity Fund.

BSB's STEM Family Engagement Grants are designed to meet programs where they are and

support initiatives and ideas that reflect each program's unique capability and ingenuity. Applicants choose one of four grant tiers, which are tailored to suit the needs of their programs, including an option for novel ideas proposed by the grantee. STEM family engagement funds supported **5 programs** during the 2023-2024 reporting period.\*

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Grantees typically held **three or more** PD meetings to discuss the Family Engagement Toolkit and Workbook. **Four of the five programs** (80%) strongly agreed that the meetings strengthened their ability to meaningfully engage families.

### OUTCOMES

**Four programs reported increases in their family engagement events.** Grantees were asked how the grants impacted their programs, using a five-point agreement scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Mean agreement results are reported below.



\* BSB grants supported a total of 10 programs' family engagement efforts during the 2023-2024 reporting period, with five programs' support wrapped into the BSB Partners Grant. Information about family engagement through the Partners Grant is provided in the 2023-2024 Partners Grant report, accessible online at <https://beyondschoolbells.org/what-we-do/innovative-programming/family-engagement2.html>

## STEM Family Engagement Backpacks

## Beyond School Bells Goal Alignment



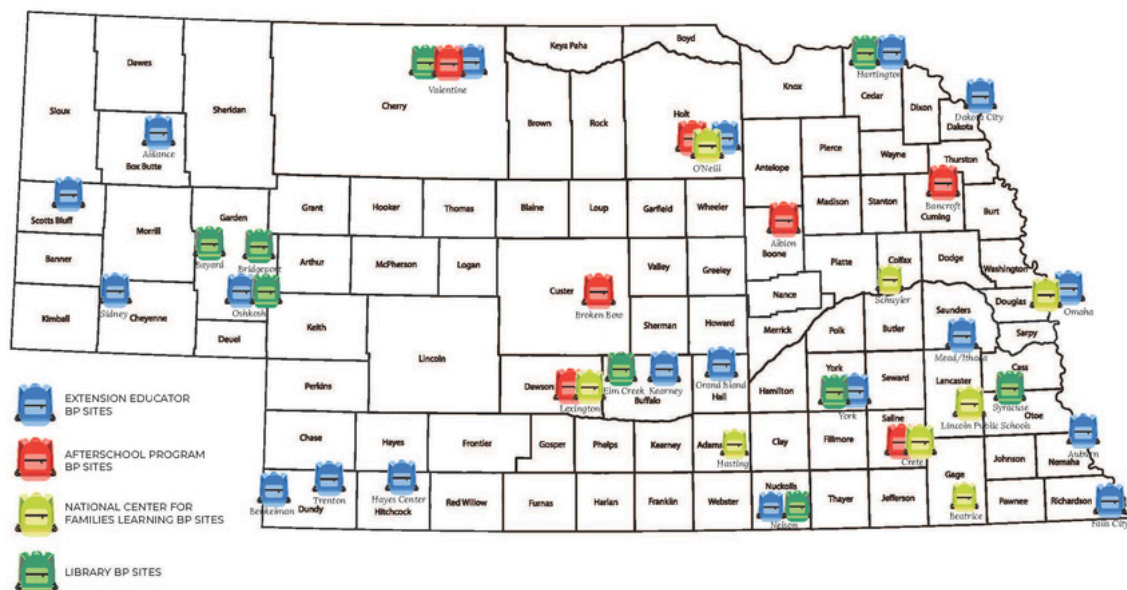
In partnership with Nebraska 4-H Extension, Beyond School Bells helps families connect through fun and engaging STEM learning through our take-home STEM backpacks. Backpacks contain books and materials needed to complete a creative, hands-on, STEM learning activity as a family. They provide a fun and engaging way for afterschool programs, libraries, and Extension educators to connect with families. Beyond School Bells offers grants for afterschool programs and some other informal educators to purchase sets of backpacks for families to check out.

Activity themes available in 2023-2024 included the magic of yeast, electricity, pollinators, and volcanoes, and educators selected the backpacks that

- **128** backpack checkouts were reported in 2023-2024.
- Families engaged with a backpack's reading materials and activity for an average of **97 minutes**.
- Parents, on average, reported that the backpack activities provided high-quality family time, rating them a **4.61** out of 5 (1= low quality, 5 = high quality).
- **18** different backpack activities are available covering a range of STEM topics.

best fit their program goals and needs. Extension provided coaching for educators and staff that included lesson instructions, check-in and check-out system guidance, and access to training materials. Books and instructions for backpacks were available in English and Spanish.

## STEM BACKPACK DISTRIBUTION ACROSS NEBRASKA



<https://beyondschoolbells.org/what-we-do/innovative-programming/take-home-stem-backpacks.html>

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