



September 2025

News and Events



The countdown is here. The time to register is now.

[GetConnected 2025](#), Nebraska's annual statewide conference, will be taking place on September 26 in Kearney.

This yearly gathering offers a unique opportunity to recharge, reflect, and reimagine what's possible in afterschool and summer programming. Don't miss the chance to connect with colleagues, share ideas, and explore innovations that will drive our collective work forward. Learn how you can bring level 10 leadership to your afterschool program in national speaker Adam Carroll's inspiring keynote, followed by four rounds of peer-led workshops and lunchtime awards. There will be something for everyone at GetConnected, so register now at - [GetConnected Nebraska Afterschool Conference | Eventcombo](#)

While registering, also RSVP for *Meet, Greet and GetConnected*, the pre-event that will take place at the conference center from 7-9 on Thursday, the 25th. This is your opportunity to connect and unwind with colleagues from across the state.

Join Our Meet, Greet, & GetConnected Event



Connect and unwind at our GetConnected networking event!

Event highlights include:

- Free Raffle & Giveaways
- Free Finger Foods & Desserts
- Cash Bar
- Networking Activities
- Games & Prizes

RSVP on your conference registration!



Thursday, Sep. 25



7:00 PM - 9:00 PM



Location:

Younes Conference Center North

Register Now for GetConnected 2025!

Funding Opportunities

The Contribution Project comes to Nebraska

The Contribution Project

The Contribution Project offers \$400 to young people (ages 14–25) to bring their ideas to life—whether it’s helping a friend, supporting a cause, or creating something meaningful in their community. At its core, this is more than just funding—it’s a study in purpose.



Who Can Apply

You’re eligible if:

- You’re **14–25 years old**
- You live in the **U.S. or a U.S. territory**
- You haven’t participated before



What Counts as a Contribution?

Big or small. If it matters to you, it qualifies. Your project must:

- Launch and take action **within 6 weeks**
 - Be something **you care about**
 - Be safe and follow the rules (*no harm, weapons, drugs, politics, research, or spending outside the U.S.*)

Apply Now →



How It Works

- 1 Get Started** — Create an account and complete a short research survey. You’ll receive a **\$10 Amazon gift card** just for completing this first step.
- 2 Share your idea** — Answer 4 simple questions in writing, video, or audio.
- 3 Get selected** — Applications are chosen at random.
- 4 Receive \$400** — Funds are sent by direct deposit or gift card.
- 5 Launch your project** — You’ll have 6 weeks to get started.
- 6 Wrap it up**
 - Submit all receipts
 - **All applicants** — selected or not, invited to complete the final research survey to receive a \$20 Amazon gift card



Why research?

Because **your voice matters**. The surveys help us improve the program and show how youth are making an impact.



contributionproject.org
@contributionproject
hello@contributionproject.org

Afterschool educators and youth advocates - there's a powerful, new opportunity to engage youth in meaningful community action!

Nebraska is launching its **first-ever statewide Contribution Project**, inviting young people ages **14–25** to turn their ideas into reality while making a difference in their communities.

BSB partner the **Contribution Project** will provide **\$400 in funding** for up to 50 youth or teams to bring their ideas to life - whether that's helping a neighbor, supporting a local cause, or creating something entirely new. Projects can be big or small: if it matters to the youth in your community, it qualifies. At its core, this initiative is more than just funding—it's a **study in purpose** that uplifts youth voices and shows how they contribute to their communities.

How it works:

1. Youth create an account and complete a short survey (earning a \$10 Amazon gift card for participating).
2. They share their idea in writing, video, or audio by answering four simple questions.
3. Selected applicants receive **\$400** by direct deposit or gift card to launch their project within six weeks.
4. All participants are invited to complete a final survey and receive an additional \$20 Amazon gift card.

This is an exciting way for Nebraska's afterschool programs to **support youth leadership, creativity, and community impact**—and to encourage young people in your communities to see themselves as changemakers right here in Nebraska.

Help spread the word and encourage youth across the state to apply today at: contributionproject.org.

Ignite STEM: Hubbard Classroom Grant



Share with STEM classroom teachers!

The Ignite STEM: Hubbard Classroom Grant supports excellence in STEM education by providing teachers with resources to enhance classroom instruction and recognize their efforts to inspire the next generation of STEM learners. Many afterschool program staff have

close relationships with teachers in their buildings who share their interests in facilitating hands-on STEM learning experiences. If you're an afterschool staffer who knows a great classroom teacher, please share the Ignite STEM: Hubbard Classroom Grant with them!

The grant opportunity will provide teachers with resources to enhance classroom instruction and recognize their efforts to inspire the next generation of STEM learners. Details of the award are attached or available on our website by clicking the button below.

Ignite STEM: Hubbard Classroom Grant Program

Resources

Free World Space Week Resources – and the opportunity to win big!



Nebraska afterschool educators - get ready to launch into World Space Week (October 6–10, 2025) with a brand-new toolkit from BSB’s partners at the **STEM Next Opportunity Fund**. The toolkit, with hands-on activities and resources to help young people explore Earth, space, and exciting STEM careers that support space exploration, is ready for your use.

The **free toolkit** includes:

- **Engaging lessons** on astronaut health, moon colony design, rockets, and more
- The all-new **“Keeping the Beat” Activity Bundle**, aligned with STEM Next’s Career-Connected Learning Framework

- Flexible, ready-to-use resources designed specifically for **afterschool educators**

This is a great opportunity to inspire Nebraska youth to see themselves as future innovators, explorers, and problem-solvers while connecting your program to a global celebration of science and discovery.

Access the toolkit here and start planning your lift off now: <https://bit.ly/4oFSN7I>

Mission 2 Mars 2.0



While planning for World Space Week, don't forget to check out one of BSB's very own favorites – ***Mission to Mars 2.0***. M2M 2.0 was designed with feedback from Nebraska's afterschool educators and contains a series of flexible modules allowing you to design an experience that meets your students' needs.

M2M 2.0 resources can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/view/missiontomars2/m2m-2-0>



Rounding out our Space Week resources, Nebraska middle and high school students have an incredible chance to take their ideas to new heights with the **NASA TechRise Student Challenge**—a **free national competition** opening this September. Info about the Challenge can be found here: [Future Engineers : NASA TechRise Challenge](#) .

We're asking for your help spreading the word so youth across our state can participate!

The challenge invites teams of students in **grades 6–12** to design and submit experiment ideas to fly on a commercial space industry suborbital flight—whether on a rocket or a high-altitude balloon.

Why participate?

- Free **educational resources** to spark classroom and afterschool learning
- A **student virtual field trip** with NASA this fall
- Opportunities for **information sessions** tailored for your program or organization
- **60 winning teams** will each receive:
 - \$1,500 to build their experiment
 - A flight test opportunity on a NASA-sponsored mission
 - Ongoing technical support from NASA TechRise advisors

This challenge is designed for all skill levels and is a great way to bring hands-on STEM learning into afterschool programs while connecting youth to real-world space exploration.

Once the challenge opens in September, updated resources—including videos, slide decks, and educator pacing guides—will be available on the NASA TechRise website.

Let's help Nebraska students reach for the stars!

Grow NE Application Due Date Extension

It's not too late, the Grow Nebraska application deadline has been extended to **September 30th!** If you and your students are expert gardeners or just curious about plants and soil, you can still apply to receive funding for food systems clubs as part of Grow Nebraska. These clubs are designed to support High School student leadership of local food systems activities like [NDE Farm to School: Harvest of the Month](#) or [Jr. Master Gardener: Learn Grow Eat and Go](#). Clubs can apply for a project that best fits their interests, with options for Innovative Agriculture, Local Foods, Sustainable Growing, and Afterschool to Table. [Apply today](#) or reach out to Alexis Hansen (AHansen@Nebraskachildren.org) or Dakota Staggs (DStaggs@Nebraskachildren.org) with questions!

National Geographic Slingshot Challenge

The [National Geographic Slingshot Challenge](#) is an opportunity for youth leadership, creativity, and real-world impact right here in Nebraska! National Geographic has called on youth 13-18 years old across the world to address an environmental issue near them, design a solution, and create a 1-minute video explaining their solution and inspiring action. Beyond School Bells believes youth leadership will solve many challenges here in our state and will support youth projects applying to the Slingshot Challenge this year. Youth can apply for club leadership or individual projects. Reach out to Alexis Hansen (AHansen@Nebraskachildren.org) or Dakota Staggs (DStaggs@Nebraskachildren.org) for support today!

Service-Learning through Conservation 2025-2026



Are your students interested in conservation? Do they want to make a difference in their communities and surrounding environment? Would they like to get funding for a service-learning project they create themselves about something they care about?

BSB has an opportunity this fall for youth-led, conservation-based, service-learning projects in partnership with National Geographic's Slingshot challenge. We will host this opportunity for HS students to join a cohort of conservation leaders and work in groups or individually to research, plan, and enact their service-learning projects. BSB is offering funding for student project supplies and career exploration experiences. We will also provide assistance and coaching to youth leadership, adult supervisors, and facilitate career connections.

[Apply here!](#)

[What is service-learning?](#)

An approach to teaching and learning where students use academic and civic knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs. It's a process, not just a project! Youth voice, youth leadership, and youth-adult partnerships are all key.

[Why service-learning?](#)

Service-learning is brain-based learning. The brain works best when there is active engagement in the learning, choice of activity or project, feedback and reflection, variety and novelty, complexity and challenge, and connection to others. SL gives students the opportunity to engage their brains in these ways while also building critical thinking, social, and other important skills.

[National Geographic Slingshot Challenge:](#)

Each student or group of students will participate in the National Geographic Slingshot Challenge throughout their project(s). This challenge aims to encourage students aged 13-18 to design and document their ideas for tackling environmental issues and creating a sustainable future.

See the BSB [website](#) for more details on service-learning, the National Geographic Slingshot Challenge, and how we can support your students in connecting these processes to their conservation goals!



Our Contact Information

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