WASHINGTON STEM

Transforming Washington's Cradle-to-Career Education Systems

Addressing the root causes of educational inequity and economic injustice requires a wide lens and a comprehensive view of how children develop into STEM-literate adults ready to step into in-demand, family-sustaining jobs.

Washington STEM is committed to changing systems of practice, policy, resource distribution, and power to ensure that all learners are supported through each critical phase of their educational journey.

THE POWER OF OUR APPROACH

Washington STEM is uniquely positioned to drive the transformation of our cradle-to-career education system because of how we leverage partnerships and data to fuel advocacy.

Partnership
We foster deep, cross-sector engagement with partners at the state, regional, and local levels. Our place-based and statewide initiatives allow us to identify, scale, and spread effective solutions that serve as models for broader systemic change.

Data & Evidence
We directly support our state-wide partners through targeted community investments, open-source access to data and measurement tools, and technical assistance.

Advocacy
We champion transformative solutions by educating decision-makers, amplifying impact stories, and forging alliances across systems and sectors to drive lasting, equitable policy change.

In pursuit of educational and economic justice

MISSION

In collaboration with our statewide partners, Washington STEM confronts the inequities in our state's education systems through evidence-based strategies, advocacy, and policy changes so all students leverage STEM for economic and civic health and lifelong learning.

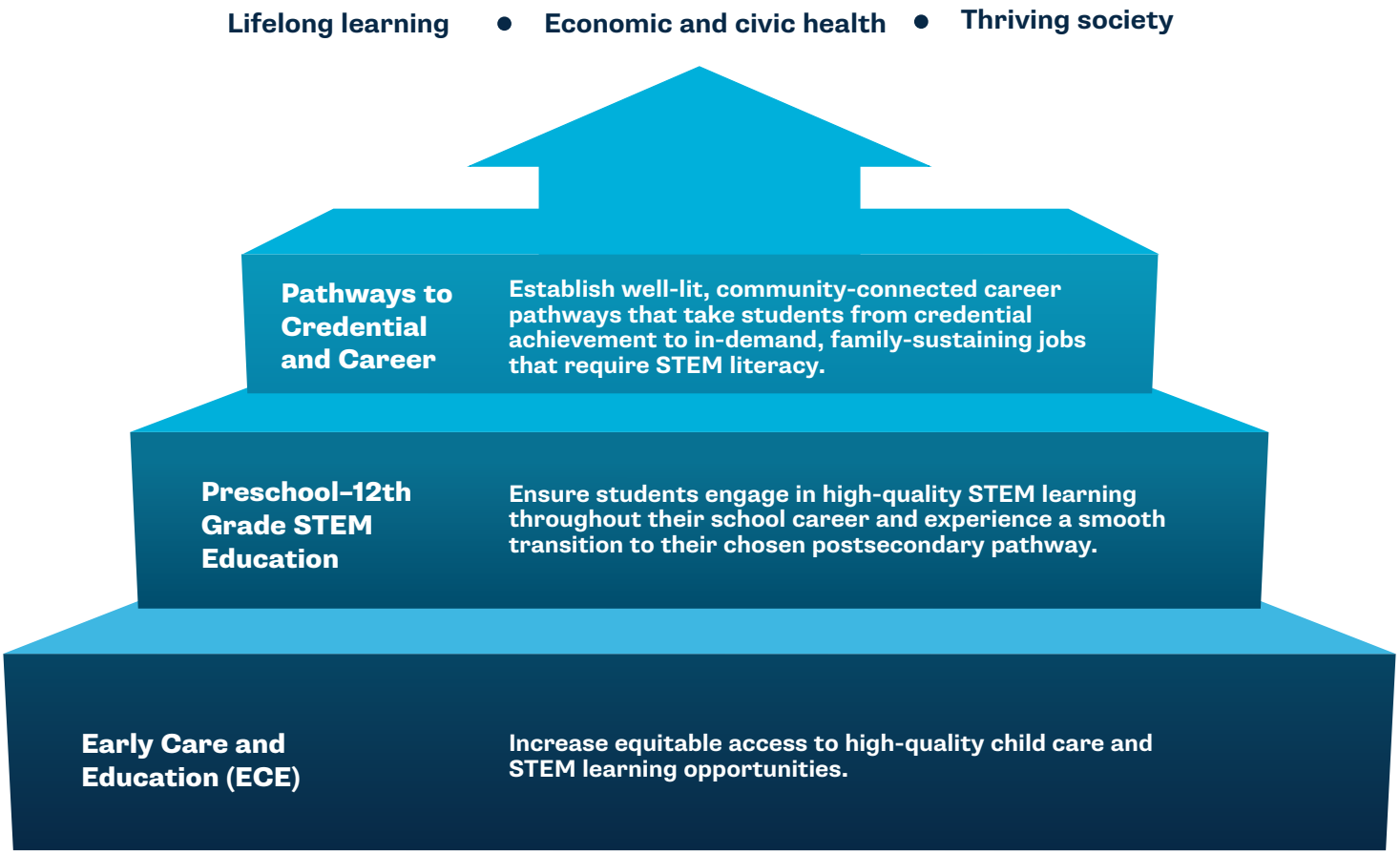
VISION

We envision equitable, accessible cradle-to-career STEM education that nurtures students' aspirations and well-being.

HOW WE GET THERE

Our 2025–2028 strategic plan kicks off at a critical juncture in our 14-year history and a pivotal moment for our state and our country.

With a 3-year average expense budget of $6.75M and a dynamic team of 30, we approach our goals with urgency, collaboration, and courage.



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Our state ranks 2nd in the concentration of STEM jobs, with 70%+ of high-paying careers requiring STEM skills.

Yet, **70%+** of Washington's children and families lack access to high-quality early care and education. Only 40% of Washington students earn credentials within 8 years of exiting K–12 schooling—despite **90%+** of students aspiring to attain postsecondary education.

WHO WE FOCUS ON

Our strategies unapologetically center those who have been historically excluded from high-quality STEM learning and career opportunities.

Our priority populations include students of color, migrant students, students living in low-income conditions, first-generation students, and students living in rural areas. In some cases, we refine our focus based on program area, demographics, and community needs.

STEM LITERACY: EXPANDING OUR DEFINITION

STEM isn't just about science, technology, engineering, and math; it's about problem-solving and discovery—essential skills that enable lifelong learning. One who is "STEM literate" is comfortable with and equipped to engage STEM through their education, career, and daily life. A STEM-literate person considers how STEM innovations can improve the economic and civic health of their local and global communities.

BUILDING TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION (ECE)

WHAT WE'RE WORKING TOWARD

When all learners have equitable access to high-quality early care and education:

We'll see improved lifelong outcomes for young people, specifically in STEM literacy and engagement. This will accelerate economic mobility for families, generate greater profits and innovations for Washington's leading industries, and strengthen our regional economies.

BARRIERS

- We lack adequate population-specific data about ECE supply and demand.
- Government and community leaders need support in using data to identify needs and gaps and inform ECE systems change.

HOW WE GET THERE

With a focus on dual language learners, BIPOC families, students with disabilities, and families working non-traditional hours, we will acquire the data, capacity, and influence needed to establish a functional view of ECE supply and demand and effect policy change.

BY JUNE 2028, WASHINGTON STEM WILL HAVE:

Enabled state-level and local leaders to make evidence-informed changes to the ECE system across our state that close access and affordability gaps for specific populations, based on more specific and enhanced ECE supply-demand data.

PRESCHOOL–12TH GRADE STEM EDUCATION

WHAT WE'RE WORKING TOWARD

When all learners experience an inclusive, culturally relevant, high-quality STEM education that fosters STEM literacy:

We'll see more students graduating with the knowledge, skills, and sense of belonging needed to succeed in 21st-century jobs—many of which have yet to be created. They will thrive as civic-minded adults, able to engage in innovations and actions that positively impact our local and global communities.

BARRIERS

There is limited support for coordinated action across the layers of our education system—from early learning through 12th grade—which inhibits equitable STEM literacy development.

HOW WE GET THERE

By cultivating an understanding of what it means to graduate "STEM literate" and aligning actions and policies across the education system, we can leverage collective efforts and resources to strategically invest in robust learning experiences that begin early and prepare learners for their chosen pathway.

BY JUNE 2028, WASHINGTON STEM WILL HAVE:

Ignited a statewide movement for STEM literacy, showcasing powerful, scalable models where coordinated policy and practice ensure high school students graduate STEM literate.

PATHWAYS TO CREDENTIAL & CAREER

WHAT WE'RE WORKING TOWARD

When all learners have equitable access to credential and career pathways and are supported as they transition from high school into postsecondary education system:

There will be an increase in the number of students who complete these pathways, earn credentials, and step into in-demand, family-sustaining jobs that require STEM literacy.

BARRIERS

- Washington lacks a cohesive, state-wide approach to supporting students' postsecondary aspirations and transitions.
- As a result, many local organizations and institutions do not have viable pathways that take students from credentials to careers.

HOW WE GET THERE

With a focus on Washington's most disenfranchised communities, we will support regional leaders in data use, change management, and accountability to develop comprehensive navigational supports and cohesive career-connected learning pathways. By demonstrating the impact of well-lit postsecondary transitions at the local level, we will influence and improve state-level policy.

BY JUNE 2028, WASHINGTON STEM WILL HAVE:

Ensured that the majority of regions across the state have increased their resources and capacity for improving their postsecondary navigational supports and have increased the number of equitable access to career-connected learning pathways that lead to high-demand jobs.