Giving back to one's community through STEM/STEAM related activities

What is the strategy?
Strategy 3 is about coordinating between the community and afterschool programs to support community-based STEM opportunities (e.g., service learning opportunities like building a park bench or cat houses for an animal shelter lost in a recent flood).

Why would you use this strategy?
Supporting STEM opportunities in their own communities can be a way of connecting youth to civic opportunities and cultivating STEM engagement.

Who would use this strategy?
This is for local networks/programs that need to support the reimagining and rebuilding of the local economy and have strong economic and other cultural and social needs.

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Connected Learning Lab

"We're doing a community service project for the cat shelter because a few months ago they had a major flood, and they lost all their toys, all of their cat houses, cat scratch posts, food, everything. So right now we're trying to make a whole bunch of items for them. We give a lot to our community because we see how much the community does for us."

-Taryn, SHINE

Design Considerations

Network Level ⟫

Network can make connections between programs doing STEM-related service learning to create communities of practice (CoP) engaged around similar work.

Program Level ⟫

Educating teachers, adults, families, and youth on what service learning is and how it supports communities.

Youth identify a need in their community and use service-learning processes to coordinate with leaders at other organizations to figure out how to fill that need.

Bring STEAM to the projects in ways that connect to real-life skills.

Build service learning projects around issues and communities that young people care about and are invested in.

Target Outcomes

Youth feel connected to using their STEM/STEAM skills for a greater purpose of making their communities better.

Communities are strengthened/better because of youth service learning efforts.

Important Considerations

- Organizations need to coordinate to find a task for which the youth have the tools, materials and support to take on and bring to completion .

- Programs need to be nimble when youth lead projects since they can't define the exact project needs until youth decide on the project's focus. Grant funds are not always set up for this reality.

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