

Request for Letter of Inquiry

Project R³

Relationships, Relevance, and the Real World:
Boosting Math Confidence in the OST Field

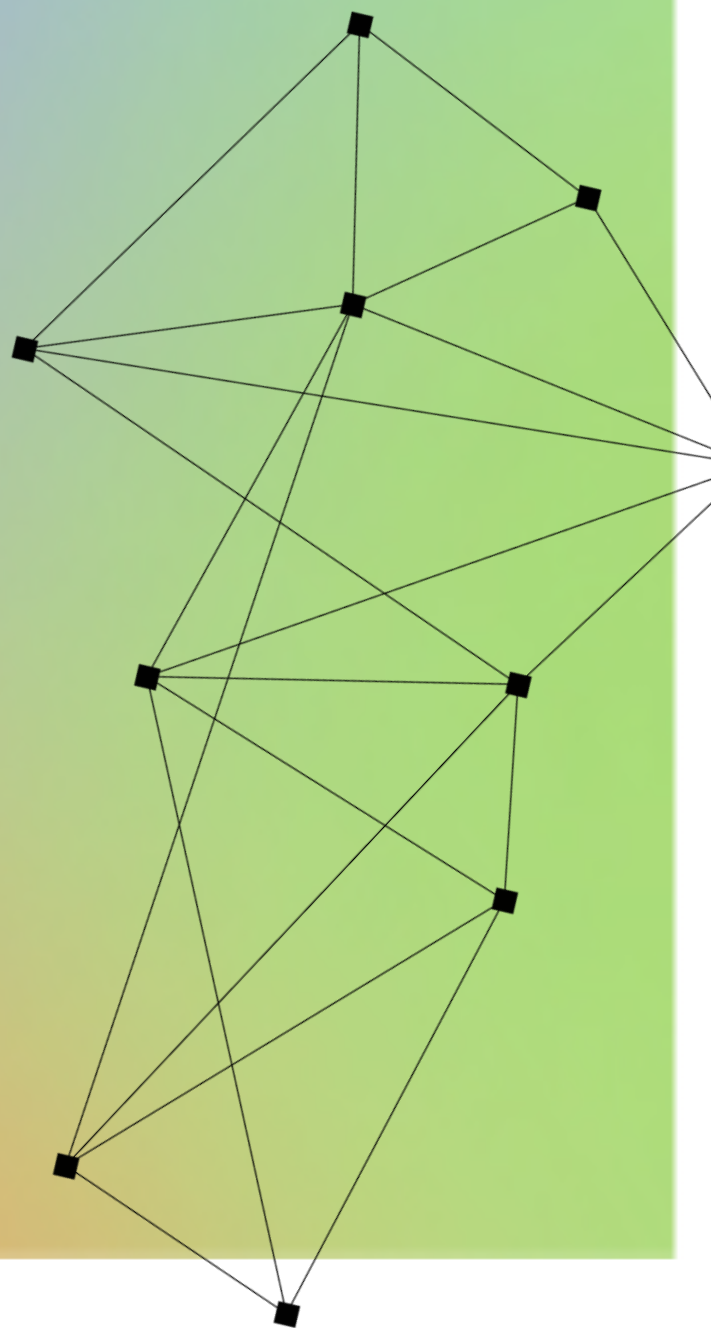


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Introduction

In a world increasingly shaped by data and advanced technology, mathematical thinking is a life skill young people need to navigate their futures. Yet today, far too many are falling behind in math and missing out on the opportunities it unlocks. Declining math achievement isn't just an academic issue; it threatens our nation's economy, security, and global competitiveness, limiting the opportunities young people have to succeed. Yet, much of the public conversation has centered on in-school interventions such as tutoring and curriculum reform that aim to raise test scores. Far less attention has been paid to other learning environments where students build confidence in math and discover its relevance to their lives.

That's where out-of-school-time (OST) programs come in. Free from the pressures of test scores or rigid curricular bounds, OST programs represent one of the most powerful yet underused tools we have to reshape how young people experience math. Afterschool and summer learning environments are uniquely positioned to reshape students' relationship with math, making it feel approachable, meaningful, and worth pursuing.

STEM Next is excited to announce a new project, R^3 (pronounced "R Cubed"), designed to support math relationships, relevance, and real-world applications, boosting math confidence among youth, educators, and families. We are seeking **OST system-level partners** who are actively prioritizing math outcomes across their entire ecosystem to further enhance math learning and shift the narrative around math for young people in their state or region. Essential organizational expertise in youth development, STEM education, and professional learning design must be demonstrated to execute this multi-phased approach.

Learn more about STEM Next's math-related perspective and goals in the recent issue brief: [Factoring in Afterschool: A Critical Variable in America's Math Strategy](#).

R³ Core Goals

The successful implementation of R³ is defined by achieving the following five core goals informed by insights and findings from [The Math Narrative Project](#) and research from [Stanford University](#):

1. **Develop Positive Relationships:** Establish and nurture positive relationships between adults (OST staff) and youth, specifically concerning mathematics and problem-solving.
2. **Increase Relevant Application:** Integrate more relevant, real-world applications of mathematics into existing OST STEM learning experiences.
3. **Disseminate Research-Based Toolkits:** Disseminate and train OST practitioners on research-based strategies designed for adults to positively facilitate productive math STEM learning experiences with youth.
4. **Activate Peer Mentoring:** Activate a peer mentoring model within OST programs to boost youth confidence in their own mathematical abilities.
5. **Build Positive Narrative:** Establish a positive, cohesive narrative around the value and accessibility of math in the OST context for all adults, families, and community members.

Program Phases for Implementation

The R³ project will be implemented in two distinct, sequential phases:

Phase 1: Focusing on Adults in the OST System (Year 1)

This initial phase focuses on raising awareness, capacity, and confidence among practitioners on how to positively facilitate productive math STEM learning experiences with youth. Activities will include:

- Disseminating **Research-Based Toolkits and Resources** focused on positive math facilitation strategies, integrating durable and growth mindset skill development, and connecting math to real-world applications.
- Attending high-quality **Professional Development** and ongoing coaching for OST site leaders and frontline staff to positively facilitate productive math learning experiences with youth and increase the integration of relevant, real-world applications of mathematics within STEM learning experiences.
- Developing an **Action Plan** to build the capacity of OST educators as they activate strategies that raise awareness and positively increase productive math learning experiences. Include ways to integrate relevant, real-world applications of mathematics within STEM learning experiences with youth.

- Participating in **Data Collection Protocols** to measure the shift in adult capacity and confidence, and changes in instructional practice.

Phase 2: Expanding to Families, Caregivers, and Community Members (Years 2-3)

Building upon the successful foundational work of Phase 1, Phase 2 will focus on extending the positive math strategies into the wider community. Activities may include:

- Piloting a **Peer Mentoring** model within youth programs.
- Disseminating **Family Engagement Materials** that offer accessible, non-intimidating ways for families and caregivers to support math connections and relevance at home.
- Hosting **Family and Community Math Events** (e.g., Math Nights, Real-World Problem Solving Challenges) to showcase how youth are applying math in engaging OST activities.
- Facilitating **Family Workshops** that build families' and caregivers' awareness and agency to support positive math connections and relevance at home.
- Building **Partnerships** with community organizations and industry partners (e.g., employers and non-employers) to provide relevant, real-world applications of mathematics within STEM learning experiences.
- Participating in **Data Collection Protocols** to measure the shift in adult capacity and confidence, and changes in instructional practice.

Letter of Inquiry (LOI) Submission Requirements

Interested organizations must concisely address the following prompts in their responses.

1. Organizational Capacity and Statement of Problem:
 - Describe the organization's mission, history, and experience executing large-scale youth development or education initiatives.
 - Demonstrate capacity to manage multi-phased projects, including professional development and curriculum design.
 - Clearly define the community problem the project will address, citing specific data or evidence.
2. Project Overview and Alignment:
 - Briefly describe your proposed approach to implementing the R³ project, explicitly addressing the strategy for achieving the five Core Goals.

- Include a concise description of the proposed project, its activities, and its intended beneficiaries.
- Show a clear link to how the activities will address the stated need.
- 3. Impact and Outcomes:
 - List 3-5 measurable outcomes (what success looks like).
 - Describe your current data collection capacity and anticipated needs to support this project.
- 4. Preliminary Budget Summary:
 - Awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000 will be considered for a one-year term. Continuation funding for years two and three will be strictly contingent upon progress toward the planned outcomes and the availability of funds.
 - Provide a budget narrative that reflects high-level allocations only over three years. If awarded, a more detailed budget will be required. Mention sources of matching or leveraged funds (if applicable).
- 5. Key Personnel and Partnerships:
 - Identify the proposed project director/lead and their relevant experience.
 - Describe any existing or planned partnerships critical to the success of this project.

Review Process and Next Steps

We are seeking partners with a strong interest in shifting math relationships and who are already working with programs or partners within the ecosystem that support productive math priorities.

- LOI Review Criteria:
 - Alignment to the R³ Core Goals, especially existing math priorities within the ecosystem
 - Organizational capacity and experience
 - Intended outcomes and feasibility
 - Leveraged partnerships, whether existing or planned
- Invitation for Concept Paper/Scope of Work:
 - Successful LOI applicants will be invited to collaborate with STEM Next and submit a detailed concept paper and scope of work for year 1.
 - Applicants may be contacted for clarifying questions before selection.
- Questions:
 - All questions related to the RFLOI process or program should be submitted via email to math@stemnext.org.
 - Requests for technical support related to the grant portal and submission form should be directed to bcoronoz@stemnext.org.

- Disclaimer:
 - This request for a letter of inquiry is an invitation only and does not guarantee funding or an invitation to submit a full proposal.

Timeline	
Request for LOI Open	November 20, 2025
LOI Submission Deadline	11:59 PM PST December 5, 2025,
Notification of Status	December 19, 2025
Term Phase 1	January 1, 2026-December 31, 2026

How to Submit a Letter of Inquiry

To submit a response to the Request for Letter of Inquiry, you must be logged into the STEM Next Grant Portal.

1. Login or register your organization: [STEM Next Grant Portal](#)
2. You will receive an email to complete the registration process.
3. Select the **Math R³** Funding Opportunity
4. Click **Apply Now** to access the submission form
5. Complete the form and press "Submit."
6. You will receive a confirmation email upon submission, along with a PDF of your submission responses.

For technical support, contact [Bri Oronoz](#).