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New Jersey STEM Strategic Advisory Board Announces 2024 Innovation Fund Grants

Chatham, NJ - The New Jersey STEM Strategic Advisory Board ("NJSSAB") is proud to announce the recipients of the 2024 Innovation Fund grants, following a rigorous evaluation process amid a surge in applications.

This year, NJSSAB experienced a substantial increase in Innovation Fund grant applications, nearly 50 in total, reflecting the growing interest and commitment to advancing STEM ("Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics") education across the state. With a record number of proposals received after last year's inaugural year of the grant, NJSSAB developed a strategic approach to allocate resources effectively, aiming to fully fund as many deserving projects as possible.

"We are thrilled to witness such overwhelming enthusiasm for STEM education initiatives in New Jersey," said Maria Spina, NJSSAB Chair and PSEG Foundation Manager. "The quality and diversity of proposals we received are a testament to the dedication and innovation of educators and organizations across our state."

After careful consideration, NJSSAB selected four grantees to receive a total of $80,000 in funding. Each grant underwent a thorough evaluation process, including an initial assessment to ensure alignment with the key criterias including innovation, organization stability, connection to additional funding/programming, number of learners impacted, underserved areas/Title 1 schools, and geographic focus.

The Innovation Fund grants serve as a catalyst for transformative STEM experiences, connecting students and educators with real-world applications of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

This year's winners are:

- **SJ Robotics - Drone and Aerial Robotics** (*Gloucester County*)
- **Lower Cape May Regional High School - Greenhouse-Based STEM Learning** *(Cape May County)*
- **Great Meadows Regional School District - STEM Enrichment Program** (*Warren County)*
- **Hopeworks - Recode Your Future** *(Camden County)*

South Jersey Robotics will provide classes for 270 individuals, exhibits and workshops for 1,225 individuals, and family-oriented exhibits and activities for 250 families. Over 700 **Lower Cape May Regional High School** students will benefit from greenhouse updates, with special education students tending to it, the culinary department using its fresh produce, and the cafeteria serving it. The greenhouse also supports staff and community purchases, with proceeds sustaining the program. **Great Meadows Regional School District** will introduce immersive STEM lessons in summer programs, enrich school-day STEM activities, and implement monthly STEM activities, impacting over 600 students from kindergarten to eighth grade. **Hopeworks** will train and place 100 young adults in living wage entry level tech jobs, focusing on web development, GIS, and data analytics.

NJSSAB plans to continue investing in the Innovation Fund and accept grant applications in the late 2025 winter. NJSSAB is accepting new members. Members can be from business or philanthropic organizations, must commit to an annual $20,000 investment, and are voting Board members who attend triannual board meetings. For those not interested in membership but interested in investing in high-quality and innovative STEM initiatives, NJSSAB is also accepting donations to its Innovation Fund. Please contact Kim Case at kcase@rdnj.org for more information.

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The New Jersey STEM Strategic Advisory Board ("NJSSAB") is part of the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network ("NJSPN"). NJSSAB was launched in 2019 to improve STEM investment ROI by uniting business and philanthropic leaders to streamline charitable investments through the Innovation Fund. Current members include Comcast, Novartis, PSEG Foundation and Overdeck Family Foundation. NJSSAB sits at the helm of the statewide STEM convenor, NJSPN, which is managed by the Research & Development Council for New Jersey. You can learn more about the New Jersey STEM Pathways Network, New Jersey's STEM Ecosystems, and NJ STEM Month by visiting www.njstempathways.org.

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