



# Alabama STEM Council Communications Plan

## Strategic Context/Overview:

The state is projected to need more than 850,000 STEM-related occupations by 2026 but may struggle to fill these positions with qualified candidates. Academically, Alabama's students have fallen behind in math and science proficiency. Significant educator shortages make it difficult to recruit, train and retain well-qualified educators equipped in the methods of a modern STEM classroom, including project-based learning, inquiry, and problem-solving. Our future workforce is largely unaware of Alabama's STEM careers and the pathways to obtain them.

The STEM Council was formed in September 2020 by Governor Kay Ivey's Executive Order No. 721. The STEM Council serves as Alabama's lead organization for STEM education and Alabama's point of contact for interfacing with other state and national STEM initiatives and consists of a cross-section of Alabama leaders representing STEM education, business, and policy interests. The council's work will build on and extend Alabama's Roadmap to STEM Success.

## Communication Challenges:

- The Council is newly established/lacks a track record
- Limited budget
- Communications plan being developed in tandem with operational plans - requires on-going updates to ensure alignment with strategic goals
- Lack of baseline data of audience awareness/understanding of STEM

## Goal:

*(desired end result – future statement)*

To provide all Alabama learners with access to excellent STEM educational programming and experiences that build a solid foundation and support the burgeoning Alabama STEM economy.

## Target Stakeholders:

*(who needs to understand, whose support do we need, who will be affected)*

- Students
- Parents/Guardians
- School, district, and community leaders - especially those from underrepresented populations

## Communications Assets:

- Website: <https://stemcouncil.alabama.gov/>
- Council members to serve as advocates/spokespersons
- AIDT Communications Team

## Objectives:

*(awareness, opinion, or action we desire)*

1. Increase STEM Awareness
2. Promote STEM Engagement
3. Illustrate the Importance of STEM skills
4. Highlight Alabama-Specific STEM Careers and Pathways

## Communication Strategies:

*(communication activities to support each business objective—Each objective from above should have individual strategies, and each strategy will have tactics to support them)*

### Objective 1: Increase STEM Awareness

**Communication Strategy:** Provide a baseline understanding of STEM awareness across the state

Tactic 1: With help from external consultants, design a statewide study to inform the STEM Council's initial STEM Communication approach. For the study, employ a mixed methods research approach using interviews, online surveys, and focus groups to gather information to inform and refine the communications strategy.

- Audience: Parents/guardians, educators, school, district, and community leaders

**Communication Strategy:** Utilize a suite of communication resources to support and promote STEM Council objectives

Tactic 1: Build out and maintain the STEM Council website with specific audiences and objectives in mind

- Audience: Parents/guardians, educators, school, district, and community leaders

Tactic 2: Establish appropriate social media channels and sub-communications plans to support them

Tactic 3: Develop standard messaging around STEM Council objectives, value, and progress

Tactic 4: Identify key members of the STEM Council to serve as spokespeople/advocates on behalf of the work being done and train them on key messages

Tactic 5: Develop a media kit

Tactic 5: Identify STEM Champions from key business sectors to serve as spokespeople/advocates

**Communication Strategy:** Using results from the baseline survey, establish communication plans to incrementally improve awareness of various stakeholder groups

Tactic 1: Develop a communication plan to engage school and community leaders

Tactic 2: Develop a communication plan to educate parents/guardians on STEM opportunities across the state

Tactic 3: Develop communications plan to engage students in STEM learning opportunities

Tactic 4: Develop communications plan to engage business and industry to provide internships, apprenticeships, mentoring, etc.

## **Objective 2: Promote STEM Engagement**

**Communication Strategy:** Provide students, parents/guardians, educators, and community leaders with resources that make it easy to identify STEM engagement opportunities

Tactic 1: Develop and maintain a user-friendly online portal that provides a gateway for students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders to access STEM programs offered across the state (i.e., summer programs, field trips, after school programs, internships, professional learning opportunities, etc.).

- Audience: Parents/guardians, educators, and students
  - Deliverable 1: Functioning web platform built into the Alabama STEM Council website
    - Timeline: Q3 2022

Tactic 2: Promote online portal to STEM organizations across the state and encourage them to upload their programs and events.

Measurement: Track effectiveness of online portal by documenting basic demographics and utilization.

**Communication Strategy:** Equip students, educators, and parents/guardians with STEM-related Alabama-specific career information geared at creating awareness and interest in STEM fields

Tactic 1: In collaboration with Alabama Public Television, produce a series of STEM episodes focused on Alabama STEM careers.

Tactic 2: Using video footage from production, produce shorter video clips and career profiles that can be easily shared on social media platforms and the STEM Council website.

## **Objective 3: Illustrate the Importance of STEM Skills**

**Communication Strategy:** Showcase existing out-of-school opportunities for K-12 students

Tactic 1: Promote field trip opportunities for K-12 students at Alabama STEM businesses and organizations

Tactic 2: Showcase STEM summer programs available to Alabama students

**Communication Strategy:** Gear messaging towards key statistics, data, information that resonate the most with targeted audiences

Tactic 1: Distribute pamphlets and other marketing material to school and community leaders

Tactic 2: Speak at Rotary Clubs, conferences, and other events about why STEM is critical to Alabama's economy

#### **Objective 4: Highlight Alabama-Specific STEM Careers and Pathways**

**Communication Strategy:** Equip students, educators, and parents/guardians with STEM-related Alabama-specific career information geared at creating awareness and interest in STEM fields

Tactic 1: In collaboration with Alabama Public Television, produce a series of STEM episodes focused on Alabama STEM careers.

Tactic 2: Using video footage from production, produce shorter video clips and career profiles that can be easily shared on social media platforms and the STEM Council website.

**Communication Strategy:** Partner with community colleges/trade schools to highlight education/training paths available to Alabama students

Tactic 1: Commercial PSAs