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Newark STEM Ecosystem - Six Month Check-in

Attendees post conference interactions

Conducted June 2025, six monthly following 2nd Annual Convening January 16, 2025

The Survey Introduction

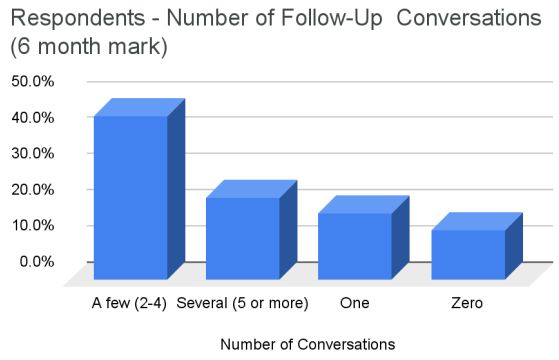
Newark STEM is working on upcoming opportunities for collaboration and learning. If you have an idea, please let us know!

Five Minutes of Your Time

We'd like to revisit your attendance at the 2nd Annual Newark STEM Ecosystem Convening that took place in January. We want to collect information to understand the event's impact and inform the team that will be planning the 3rd Annual Convening set for January 15th, 2026. This will also help in our pursuit of funding opportunities for the ecosystem.

Key Survey Takeaways:

1. **Engagement and Follow-Up:** A significant portion of respondents **(86.4%**) engaged in follow-up conversations after the 2nd Annual Convening, *indicating a positive impact on networking and relationship building.*
2. **Partnership Development:** While a majority (52.4%) reported that new partnerships, projects, or business opportunities developed, a substantial number (47.6%)had conversations stalled, or no developments, suggesting an *area of improvement in facilitating concrete outcomes from connections.*

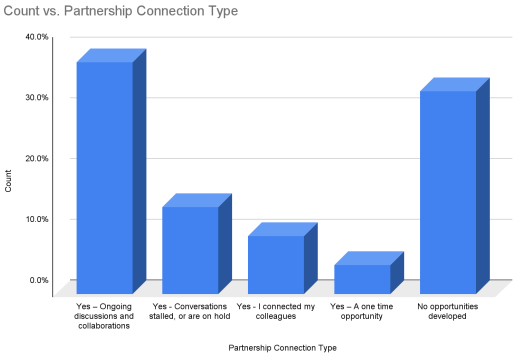


Follow-Up Conversations:

- **Several (5 or more):** 22.7%
- **A few (2-4):** 45.5%%
- **One:** 18.2%
- **None:** 13.6%

New Partnerships/Opportunities:

- **Yes – Ongoing discussions & collaborations:** 38.1%
- **Yes - One time opportunity:** 4.8%
- **Yes – I connected my colleagues:** 9.5%
- **Yes - Conversations stalled, or are on hold:** 14.3%
- **No opportunities developed:** 33.3%



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Question #3: Respondents were asked: Can you please share any specifics about the organizations you connected with, or a general idea of the type of discussions you have had?

- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Many respondents connected with organizations such as LecTec, Terra Science and Education, and the National Inventors Hall of Fame, leading to discussions, potential formal collaborations, and new programming.
- **Educational Outreach:** Several respondents engaged with public schools, charter schools, and other youth-serving community organizations to expand STEM and Invention Education programs.
- **Networking and Information Sharing:** Connections were made with other educators, non-profits, and the Newark STEM Ecosystem for ongoing conversations and sharing of opportunities.
- **Program Development:** Respondents explored partnerships for Invention Convention and identified potential users for their programs.

Takeaway: Positive interactions between vendors and school districts. The Invention Hall of Fame seemed to have the most success, suggesting their approach should be *explored further to understand engagement with schools*.

Question #4: Please add any additional information. We're happy to take suggestions for future ecosystem events, professional development opportunities and topics for the 3rd Annual Convening.

- **Networking & Interaction:** Increase opportunities for mixing, mingling, and small group interaction, potentially through networking "speed dating" or more breakout sessions, as the previous event felt like too much sitting and listening. The "fair" was very beneficial.
- **Content Focus:** Broaden the focus beyond computer science and engineering to include more data/presentations on future careers in science, medicine, and the environment. Consider offering practical professional development on technology use and troubleshooting, as some current technologies are not practical for larger groups or realistic in cost.
- **Audience Inclusion:** Incorporate disengaged students and student leaders into conversations. Explore ways to involve political figures, perhaps as a panel, to discuss pressures or pitfalls related to STEM support.
- **Targeted Content:** Implement tracks to address the specific needs of different groups, such as organizations and educators.
- **Immersive Technologies:** Provide teacher training on using VR/AR for engaging STEM learning.

Takeaways: 1.) Generate more collaboration opportunities, 2.) be more intentional in tracks, 3) More focus on a variety of STEM careers, not just CS and ENG, 4.) practical technology use (cost vs. ROI)

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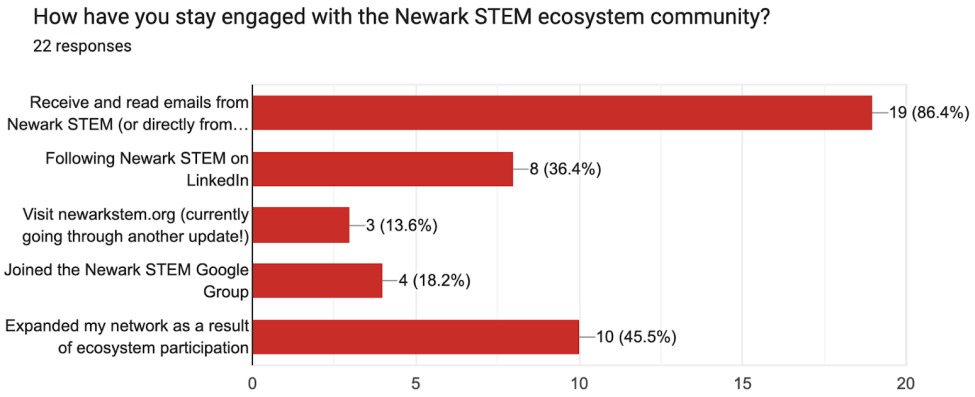
Question #5: How have you stayed engaged with the Newark STEM community?
Takeaway: 1.) Focus on creating more email communications and information sharing, 2) explore communication to keep post event collaborations moving forward, 3.) create more networking and collaboration opportunities (explore online), 4.) use a website for reference support vs destination.



Organization Type

We looked at Convening results based on the type of organizations that were represented, looking at the post event collaboration and what category of individuals are most active

Chart 1: Follow Up Conversations by Organization Type

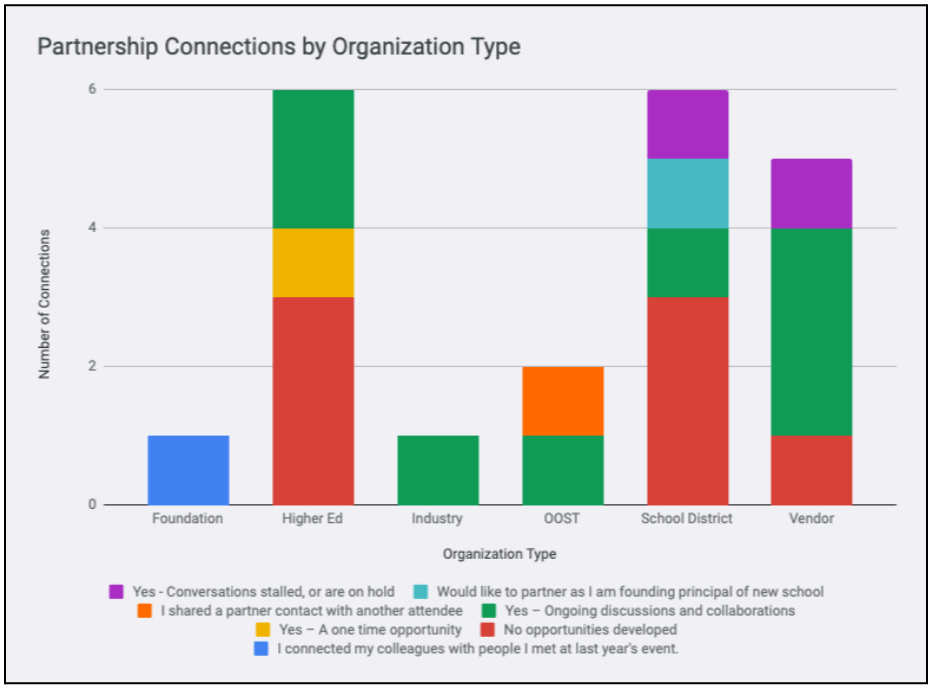


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Chart 1 illustrates the distribution of follow-up conversations attendees have had since the 2nd Annual Convening, categorized by their 'Org Type'.

- **Overall Conversation Levels:** The chart indicates varying levels of follow-up conversations across different organization types.
- **Key Conversation Outcomes:**
  - A significant number of responses fall into the "0" conversations category, suggesting that many attendees, regardless of their organization type, did not have follow-up
- **Organization Type Breakdown:**
  - **School Districts** show a broad distribution across all conversation levels, including a notable number in the "10+" category, suggesting active follow-up from this group.
  - **Higher Ed** participants also report follow-up conversations, with a presence in the higher engagement categories.
  - **Non-Profit** organizations, similar to School Districts and Higher Ed, show a mix of conversation levels.

In summary, the highest activity was from school districts, vendors and higher education. This may be due solely on the number of individuals attending from their categories. *Look closer at the interactions BETWEEN these categories for learnings to explore and exploit in the future.*

Chart 2: Community Engagement by Organization Type

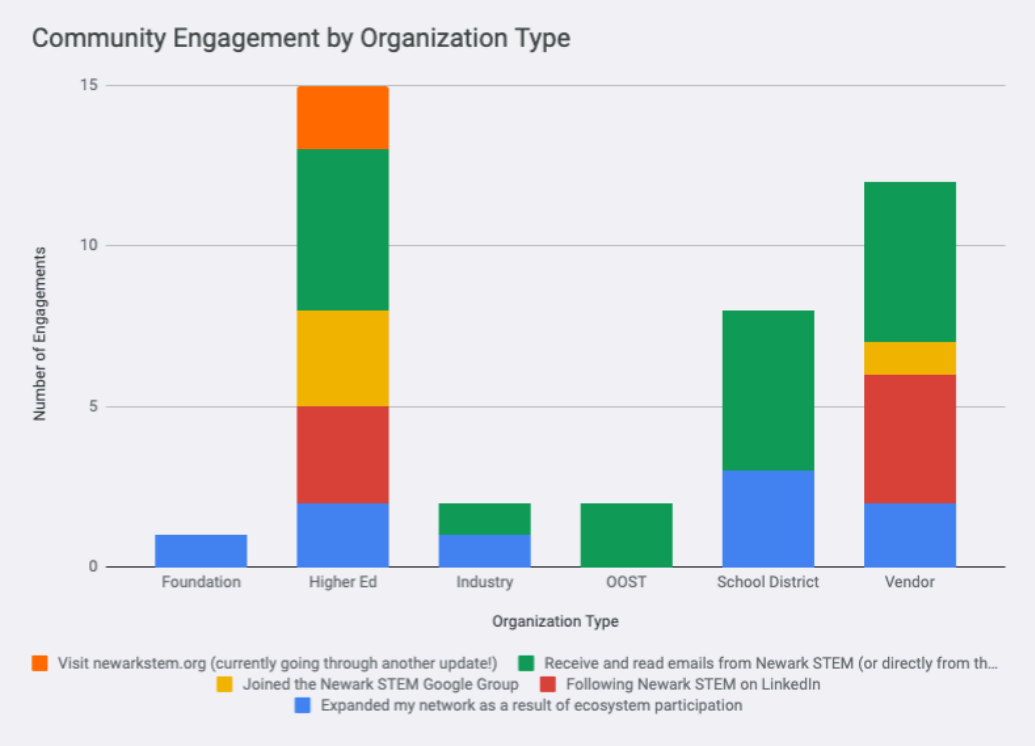

Chart 2 visualizes how different 'Org Types' have stayed engaged with the Newark STEM ecosystem community, detailing various engagement methods.

- **Overall Engagement Methods:** The chart reveals a variety of ways in which organizations are engaging with the community.
- **Key Engagement Types:**
    - "Receive and read emails from Newark STEM" is a common method of engagement across several organization types, now correctly represented as one option.
    - "Expanded my network as a result of ecosystem participation" and "Following Newark STEM on LinkedIn" also appear as significant forms of engagement.
    - "Joined the Newark STEM Google Group" and "Visit newarkstem.org (currently going through another update!)" represent more specific ways of contributing to the ecosystem.
- **Organization Type Breakdown:**
    - **School Districts** are actively engaged through multiple methods, including receiving and reading emails and expanding their network.
    - **Higher Ed** also shows diverse engagement, with a focus on receiving and reading emails, following on LinkedIn, and joining the Google Group.
    - **Vendor** organizations are engaged through various means, similar to School Districts and Higher Ed.

In summary, the chart demonstrates that the Newark STEM ecosystem community *benefits from diverse engagement methods* from various organization types. Receiving and reading emails, expanding networks, and following on LinkedIn are key ways in which organizations contribute to and stay connected with the community.

Outcome from National Inventors Hall of Fame (NIHF) Participation

As part of NIHF's sponsorship and participation in the 2nd Annual Convening, they offered ecosystem schools the opportunity to submit for a mini-grant to fund an Invention Project experience.

The results speak for themselves: from that January convening, NIHF scaled to six school districts, two private schools, and two NGOs by summer, reaching:

- 1,000+ students in PreK-8th grade
- Provided leadership experience for 49 teens and young adults
- Trained 29 educators
- Engaged 35 families in hands-on workshops
-

This wasn't a pilot program - this was proof that when you connect the right partners, innovation education scales rapidly.

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Taking Action: Opportunities for Improvement

Improvement Opportunity #1: The networking and relationship building opportunities the conference provided. Newark STEM can be more proactive following an event to help facilitate conversations and ensure the connectings made have the opportunity to produce an impact within the ecosystem

Improvement Opportunity #2: The National Inventors Hall of Fame had significant traction following the convening. Newark STEM should work with NIHF to understand their approach, record it, and explore how it can be shared and implemented with other organizations

Improvement Opportunity #3: Create more collaboration opportunities whether they be face-to-face, virtual, or in digital communications. Focus on being the 'central resource"

Improvement Opportunity #4: Specific to events (and convening), be more intentional about any tracks and learning opportunities, by being clear in the intended audience (i.e. specific to grade levels).

Improvement Opportunity #5: Broaden discussions beyond CS & ENG to a wider variety of STEM careers.

Improvement Opportunity #6: Provide more discussions around implementations and practical technology use, including its costs and return on investment