

Executive Summary: 2026 Convening Attendee Survey

This summary compiles feedback from the 2026 Convening post-event survey to evaluate impact, identify improvements, and gauge future commitment. [See metric comparison vs. 2025 event.](#)

Respondents reported an overall high approval rate, and overwhelmingly defined the Greater Newark STEM Ecosystem (GNSE)'s core roles as a **Connector** (bringing stakeholders together), a **Resource/Information Hub**, and a **Collaborator** that aligns efforts to strengthen STEM knowledge and workforce preparation. This confirms the shift in the summer of 2025 to focus on these three areas.

Key Highlights and Collaboration Interest

- **Most Valuable Aspects:** Networking and Connections, Sharing Resources and Learning about Local Initiatives, and gaining Industry Insights.
- **Future Collaboration:** A significant majority (72.7%) expressed interest in collaborations focused on increasing partnerships with education/business/industry, engaging service providers, and participating in Teacher Externships and Professional Development (PD).

Future Convenings

For the second consecutive year, feedback indicated a strong desire for more focus on **STEM implementation**, with PD sessions delivered by successful teachers, and greater representation from K-12 school districts, students, and teachers on panels and as speakers. This suggests a potential need to evolve the convening format, perhaps by splitting it into two distinct tracks: smaller, regional workshops for teachers and a separate annual gathering for industry and school administrators.

Forward Action Items (2026-2027)

Clear directions for the ecosystem's work have been identified, leading to the following actions:

- **Connector:** Increase localized workshops to support teacher development and learning.
- **Collaborator:** Establish working groups, initially focused on Educator professional development/instructional capacity and building equitable access to STEM materials, programs, and resources.
- **Resource Hub:** Launch a regularly scheduled newsletter and ensure continuous updates on relevant news and information.

This document was authored by Brad Schenker, co-lead and coordinator for the Greater Newark STEM Ecosystem. AI tools assisted in efficiently gathering, scanning, and organizing raw data, and was a thought-partner in the writing process. This final document is grounded in the group artifacts, the author's direct experiences, and interactions with STEM education stakeholders nationwide.

2026 CONVENING REGISTRATION AND ATTENDANCE

Category Tracked	Registered		Attended		Survey Respondents	
Unique Emails	193		97		22	
Unique Org.	125		65		21	
Adults Attendees	96-116 (estimated)		96 (actual check-in)		N/A	
Student Attended	24 (estimated)		26 (actual check-in)		N/A	
Adult Attendees by Sector	Formal PK	34.8%	Formal PK	31.3%	Formal PK	31.8%
	Higher-Ed	17.4%	Higher-Ed	17.7%	Higher-Ed	22.7%
	Biz & Industry	17.4%	Biz & Industry	19.8%	Biz & Industry	4.5%
	STEM Experts	17.4%	STEM Experts	17.8%	STEM Experts	22.7%
	OOST	9.5%	OOST	11.5%	OOST	18.2%
	Government	2.1%	Government	2.1%	Government	0.0%

**Survey conducted at the end of convening and closed February 5th. Note: At some point after January 28th, there was a glitch in the survey that put some people into a loop and could not finish the survey. The glitch was fixed by January 31st.*

General Questions and Overall Feedback

What do you see as the role of the Greater Newark Ecosystem after participating in this year's convening?

- **Networking and Connection:** The primary role is to act as a connector, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders including K-12, higher education, industry/business, community, and program providers.
- **Resource and Information Hub:** Serve as a hub and infrastructure for sharing information, resources, current programs, techniques, and hardware updates, enabling initiatives across the ecosystem.
- **Collaboration and Alignment:** A collaborator that helps align organizations, educators, and community programs to collectively work towards common goals.
- **Strengthening STEM:** It aims to **strengthen STEM knowledge and exposure** to STEM professions, preparing students and candidates to meet the needs of the workforce.

What support do you need from the GNSE in your STEM education initiatives or industry-education collaboration?
Networking and Connections

- Continue and add networking events
- Cross-sector connections and relationship building
- Serve as a platform and coordinator for connecting

STEM Resources and Info

- Classroom Resources
- Hardware materials
- Dissemination of services, events, and activities

PD and Collaboration

- PD and curriculum integration support
- Opportunities to pilot and co-design initiatives
- Supports to develop and assess durable skills

The following questions were asked about Event Experience and Content Relevance, on a scale of one to five, with five being the best (Percentage of respondents giving a 4 or 5)

How relevant was the content presented to your current work in STEM or workforce readiness?	68.2%
How well did the convening help you understand the current challenges and opportunities in STEM and career-connected learning?	68.2%

What was most beneficial for you in this convening? Your biggest takeaway(s)?

- **Time to Network and Connect**
- **Share Resources and Learn about Local and Broader Ecosystem Initiatives**
- **Industry Insights** on career readiness and helping relate to students' experiences.
- **SPARK Talks:** Appreciated walking away with new information and ideas from others in STEM.
- **Discussion and Collaboration** in small groups, problem-solving with similar organizations

Is there anything you would like to be improved, or done differently? Additional topics you would like to cover?

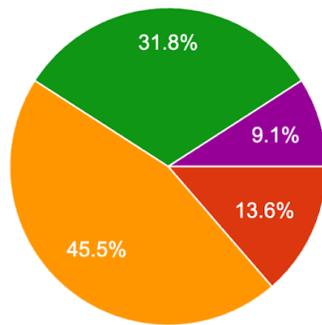
- **More Focus on Implementation and PD:** Training on how to better implement STEM and CS, especially from teachers who have had success recruiting, implementing, and growing these programs.
- **Increased Representation and Input from K-12:** Desire for more participation from Newark and surrounding K-12 school districts, superintendents, C&I Directors. Input from students and grade 3-12 STEM teachers regarding their needs, programming ideas, and how outside organizations can help.
- **Improved Panel Discussions and Keynote Speaker:** Stronger focus on areas for growth for education/industry partnerships, shorter intros, and a preference for a strong keynote speaker.
- **More Interactive and Actionable Sessions:** Less presentations and more working groups, stronger closing session with large-group share-outs, recaps, calls to action, and more actionable follow-up.
- **Additional Comments:** Managing funding cuts, identifying grant opportunities, strategies to close gaps (ie NJSLA - Science assessment). Better lunch, more networking time, and plan day ahead of time.

Networking & Connections

<i>(Questions asked and percentage of respondents giving a 4 or 5)</i>	
How valuable was your time with the Exhibitors?	81.8%
How valuable were the networking opportunities provided during the convening?	72.8%

How many exhibitors did you interact with?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-9
- 10-15



How many new, meaningful connections did you make during the convening?

5-7 Connections	36.4%
3-4 Connections	31.8%
1-2 Connections	31.8%

What types of collaborations or partnerships do you envision developing from connections made today? Select all that apply	Interested
Increase collaboration with education (or business/industry), Engaging one of the service/program providers that exhibited today, Teacher Externships, Teacher PD	72.7%
Collaboration with Higher-Ed, Student internship opportunities, Teacher Externships, Increase collaboration with education (or business/industry), Teacher Professional Development	40.9%
Teacher Professional Development, Collaboration with Higher-Ed	40.9%
Engaging one of the service/program providers that exhibited today, Engaging Pre-College Programs, Student internship opportunities, Collaboration with Higher-Ed	36.4%
Student internship opportunities	31.8%
Teacher Externships	22.7%
Regional or county education programs	22.7%

Future Commitment and Support	
How likely are you to participate in future STEM Ecosystem events? <i>(responded 4 or 5)</i>	81.8%
Are you planning to participate in NJ STEM Month in March? <i>(responded yes)</i>	50%
Did you stay for the post lunch group session? <i>(responded yes)</i>	45.5%

How can GNSE help you stay engaged with our work & other contributors? (Select all that apply)		
Engagement	Interested	Current GNSE Action
In-person opportunities within your county	63.6%	<i>Will be seeking funding</i>
Monthly or Quarterly Newsletters	59.1%	<i>J. Lipuma handling monthly</i>
Facilitating continued conversations / working groups	59.1%	<i>Requires funding to coordinate</i>
Regular virtual meetups	54.5%	<i>Need volunteer or funding</i>
Shared online resource platform	50.0%	<i>Requires funding to coordinate</i>
Updates via LinkedIn page	40.9%	<i>Since June, 2025</i>
Submission platform to share events / oppt. <i>(Submitted)</i>	4.5%	<i>Use the NJSPN calendar</i>
Highlight region's edu. oppt. that worked/ not worked, to understand obstacles in the region. <i>(Submitted)</i>	4.5%	<i>See "resource platform above)</i>

Co-Designing Our Future Workforce

<i>(Percentage of respondents giving a 4 or 5)</i>	
How much did you enjoy the sprint (short duration) of this session?	60%
How engaged were you with the group?	80%
How effective and helpful was your facilitator?	80%
Did you sign up to continue this work after the convening?	20%

If working groups, or Communities of Practice, are formed, which group (s) would you want to actively participate? (check all that apply)	
Group (Ranked by level of interest)	Respondents Interested
Group E: Widening Equitable Access to STEM Materials, Programs and Resources	6
Group G : Educator Professional Development & STEM Instructional Capacity	6
Group B: STEM and Career-Connected Program Implementation,	5
Group C: Creating Bridges to Higher Levels of Education & Opportunity	5
Group A: Developing Persistence in Young Students to Envision STEM Careers	4
Group D: Rethinking STEM Learning & Creating Small “Moments of Impact” through a Student’s Entire Day	4
Group F: Embedding Industry-Aligned Skills Throughout K-12 Education <i>(there was no group at convening)</i>	1

Please add any additional information specific to this session. Due to the rushed and shortened time, the small groups were not executed in an optimal manner. Some feedback

- Session details should have been shared at convening kickoff
- Needed more time to choose groups, and explain the process and outcome goals
- There was not time for sharing (though summary of the groups will be widely shared)

Individual Sessions	<i>Questions asked and percentage of respondents giving a 4 or 5</i>
Table and Exhibit Time	71.4% (no rating below a 3)
Welcome and Introductions	81%
Panel Discussion: Industry Insights	71.4%
SPARK Talks (3 post panel)	Respondents rated presenters between 75=79% with a 4 or 5
Lunch Q&A with Students	81%
Co-Designing Our Future Work	61.1%

- **Conference comparison:** One respondent suggested mirroring the format of the [Rutgers conference](#)
- **Future involvement:** A desire to be included in the planning for group G was expressed, along with a note about a technical issue where the survey kept looping.
- **Positive sentiment:** One response encouraged continuing to support STEM.

Attending Organizations

4D Math Alliance	H2M Architects and Engineers	Morris Plains School District	Prime Factors
Arman Roy Foundation	Hanover Park Regional HS	Morris School District	PSE&G
Brainy n Bright	Hillside BOE	Morristown High School	Quintilian.ai
Busy Bees Learning Center	Hillside Public Schools	Nat. Inventors Hall of Fame	Rekindle Education
Career Carnival for Kids	Honeywell	NSTA	Rutgers Univ. - New Brunswick
CHS Consulting Services LLC	IEEE	Near Surface Geophysics	Rutgers University - Newark
CSHL - DNA Learning Center	InventEd	NJIT	Sanofi
CIANJ	Jersey City Public Schools	NJ Science Teacher Assoc.	Schenker Consulting Group
Drew University	Langan	Thirteenth Ave. School (NPS)	STEM Art Center
Drizzle Weather	Lectec	NewGeo	Students 2 Science
East Orange School District	Liberty Science Center	NJ STEM Pathways Network	Thorlabs
East Side High School	Little Ivy Academy	NJIT WIC Society	UCNJ
Fairleigh Dickinson University	Livingston Public Schools	Panasonic North America	Urban League of Essex County
Federal university of oye	Maplewoodshop LLC	Parsippany Troy Hills Public Schools	US Navy Maritime Industrial Base (MIB) Program Office
Global Solutions, Inc.	Marion P. Thomas Charter School	Passaic Public Schools	Westfield Memorial Library
Green Quotient Solutions, LLC	Maximize Ed / Infento / Riders	Paterson Public Schools	Yogi Berra Museum & Learning Center

Comparison to 2025 Convening

Category Tracked	2026	2025
Registrations (People/Unique Orgs.)	193 / 125	220 / 125
Attendees (People/Unique Orgs.)	97 / 65	120+ / 86
Top 3 Sectors Attending		
Formal PreK-12	31%	39%
Industry	20%	8%
Higher-Ed	18%	10%
STEM Providers	18%	19%
Convening Content Relevancy	68%	86%
Helped understand current challenges & opportunities	68%	79%
Would participate in future event	82%	88%
3 or more new connections made	68%	58%
Support Sought from the Ecosystem		
Local in-person events	64%	2%
Newsletters	59%	67%
Support for working groups	59%	2%
Virtual Meet Ups	55%	37%
Online Resources Platform	50%	61%