PITSCO
EDUCATION

PITSCO EDUCATION
GRANTS GUIDE

So, you have a vision for serving your students and need the funds to make it happen. School and department budgets aren't always sufficient. Fortunately, numerous federal agencies, corporate foundations, nonprofit charities, and others exist to connect worthy projects to grants and other funding streams.

Whether you seek to fund a robotics engineering unit, a makerspace within your school's library, a rocketry and aeronautics club, or an Expeditions lab with a focus on regional industries, this guide will give you the footing needed to take the next step toward funding that could make your dream a reality.

FEDERAL FUNDING

In our era, there is great federal interest in the potential of STEM/STEAM/STREAM education to address the expected challenges of our future. The priorities of the US Department of Education are set by the agenda of the current administration, which usually reflects ongoing national trends. If your vision for students harmonizes with the Department of Education's official mission to "promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access," then your project is potentially fundable through a federal grant.

You might choose to work with your school administrators and school board to discover which federal funds are available. Though this will vary by state, laws require the information be publicly available.

One critical factor is strict adherence to the often very specific guidelines for application set by the agency. (The US Department of Education is the primary granting agency for schools, though other agencies make grants as well, depending on their agendas.) The federal grant search is markedly more formalized than grant hunting in the private sector, so every *i* must be dotted and every *t* crossed. Expect to spend a significant amount of time (possibly months) preparing and polishing your proposal.

Charter Schools
The program provides funding for purchasing equipment, supplies, or any educational materials.

Education Technology State Grant
This program aims "to improve student achievement through the use of technology in elementary and secondary schools" and "[help] all students become technologically literate by the end of eighth grade."

Gifted and Talented Students
The purpose is to help "students traditionally underrepresented in gifted and talented programs, particularly economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient (LEP), and disabled students."

Innovative Education State Grants
This is a formula grant under Title V that stimulates educational innovation by encouraging broad-based reform efforts. The funds may be used for technology, professional development software, or curricular materials.

Magnet Schools
These are competitive funds to enhance curriculum and attract racially diverse student populations.
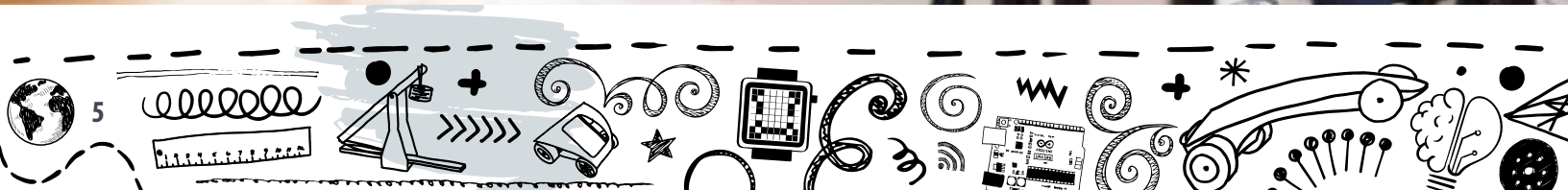
Mathematics and Science Partnerships

This program "supports projects to improve math and science education through partnerships." Funds may be used for professional development, summer workshops, and distance learning programs.

Small, Rural School Achievement Program

This program provides "rural LEAs with financial assistance to fund initiatives aimed at improving student academic achievement."

Title I

The largest of the elementary- and secondary-education programs, Title I requires states to develop standards in reading and math and assessments linked to those standards for students. The program is also structured to assist high-poverty schools in giving their students an equal opportunity to meet state standards.

Title IV

Under ESSA, this flexible block grant program authorizes an increased capacity for states, educational agencies, schools, and communities to improve students' academic achievement by providing all students with access to a well-rounded education, improving school conditions for safe and healthy students, and improving students' use of technology.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

This program provides money for before- and after-school sessions. Funds may be used for expanding learning activities or any area of enrichment.

National Science Foundation

NSF promotes and advances scientific programs in the United States and provides grants for science, math, and engineering research in education.

Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

Funds may be used for vocational and technology education activities plus professional development opportunities for teachers and counselors.

TIP

When pursuing federal grants, promptness is important. Limited funds are available, as allotted by the relevant laws and the budgets approved for the granting agencies. And as the adage goes, the early bird gets the worm.
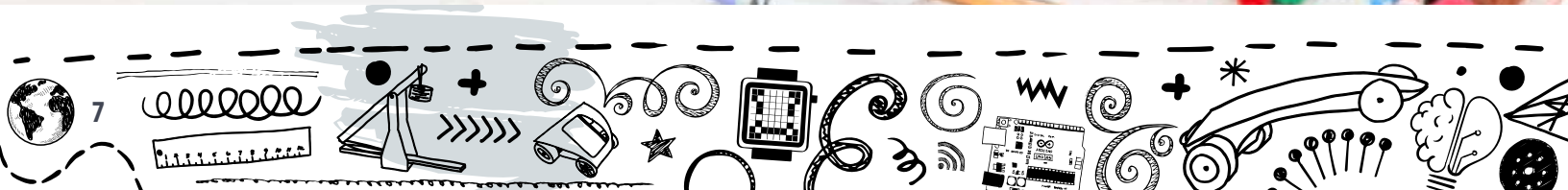
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

CORPORATIONS AND CHARITIES

Private-sector and third-sector bodies such as corporate foundations and nonprofit organizations offer a diverse and often untamed hunting ground for STEM/STEAM/STREAM funding. Organizations for charitable giving often gift funds in accord with tightly focused or niche aims targeted at specific regions or situations.

For instance, companies frequently restrict their grant funding to projects that bolster the long-term health of their industry or to communities where their employees live. Thus, beginning a grant search among companies and foundations with a local presence can be a powerful strategy. Use whatever local resources you can to track these down. Check with banks and chambers of commerce to see if local trusts have been set up. Contact businesses directly and ask if they have funding programs.

It is not uncommon to encounter atypical applications or vague requirements when dealing with private organizations. Some accept only proposals upon invitation through a request for proposal (RFP). In general, the guidelines for a letter of intent (LOI) and proposal presented in this document will be a good framework for approach in most situations.

As with federal grants, the first checklist item is reading the description closely to ensure your project is within the scope of the grant maker's aims. The more research into the organization's grant-giving history, the better. The websites of nonprofits and private foundations will often include media materials touting their previous gifting successes. This can give you additional insight into an organization's gifting habits and priorities.

TIP

Remember, a grantee and a grant maker are entering into a mutually beneficial arrangement. When making your approach, be mindful of how your project will benefit the organization as well. It is not uncommon to have a plan for securing positive media coverage of a successfully funded project.

PAYING IT FORWARD:

Pitsco Monthly Educator and Student Competition Team Grants

$350 EDUCATOR GRANT

Pitsco Education appreciates everything educators do to positively affect learners. We also know that funding enriching learning opportunities for students can be difficult. Pitsco is proud to offer a $350 grant each month to assist with making hands-on learning possible. This grant is awarded in the form of a voucher that may be used to purchase hands-on STEM products, curriculum, and more on our website.

$150 TEAM GRANT

We love seeing collaboration and connection at play and want to help make more of that happen! This grant is open to K-12 competitive teams [i.e., *FIRST*®, SkillsUSA® Robotics: Urban Search & Rescue, SkillsUSA Commercial sUAS (Drone) Competition, KidWind teams, and so on] within the continental United States and Hawaii. Pitsco is proud to offer a $150 grant in the form of a voucher that may be used to purchase competition supplies and materials from our website.
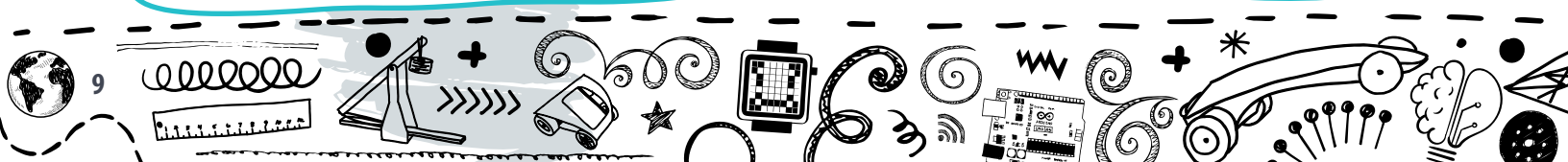
CHARITIES SUPPORTING EDUCATION GROWING RAPIDLY

According to 990 filings, US charities supporting schools grew at a faster rate than charities in general over a 15-year time span. Many opportunities exist for dedicated grant seekers.

15-YEAR GROWTH IN 990 FILINGS BY SCHOOL-SUPPORTING CHARITIES COMPARED TO ALL US CHARITIES		
YEAR	**TOTAL FILING US PUBLIC CHARITIES**	**TOTAL FILING SCHOOL-SUPPORTING CHARITIES**
1995	187,038	3,458
2010	399,086	9,004
GROWTH	**196%**	**260%**

Source: nonprofitquarterly.org/2015/03/27/how-philanthropy-props-up-public-services-and-why-we-should-care/

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

If you are a member of any professional organizations, this might be an excellent place to search for funding for your project. Both scholarships and grants may be offered to dues-paying members. Once again, study the criteria and giving philosophy of the organization.

- National Education Association
- American Federation of Teachers
- Rotary Club
- Kiwanis International

TIP

Local organizations have a built-in incentive to improve their communities. Local Education Foundations (LEFs) and other community foundations receive donations from area businesses and individuals and earmark these funds for awards to suitable projects. It is worth hitting the pavement to learn of nearby opportunities. You might even wish to develop an idea to suit their funding priorities.
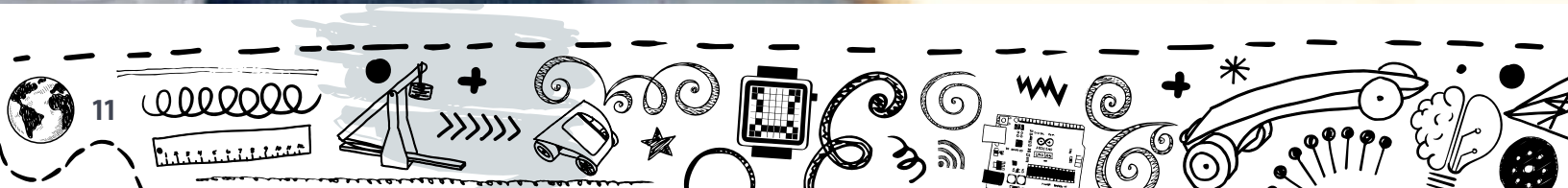
Crowdfunding

In one sense, crowdfunding offers the most open-ended form of funding search. The concept is simple. You make a pitch, and anyone who feels compelled (or anyone you invite) to fund your project may do so. There is less requirement to fit within a predefined agenda. But at the same time, there can be considerations and restrictions not present with other funding sources. For example, the platform you choose may impose certain restrictions on how or where money can be spent. Make sure you read all the terms and conditions.

DonorsChoose.org

This platform strives to help educators find funding for projects and programs outside of school funding.

Kickstarter.com

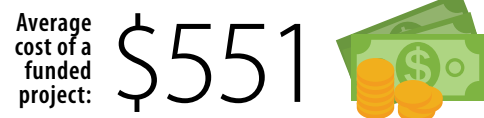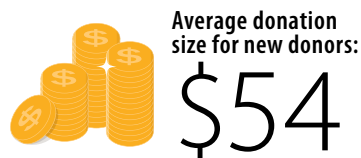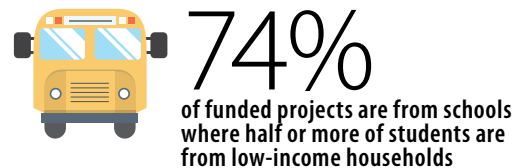Perhaps the most well-known crowdfunding platform, Kickstarter funds creative projects of all types.
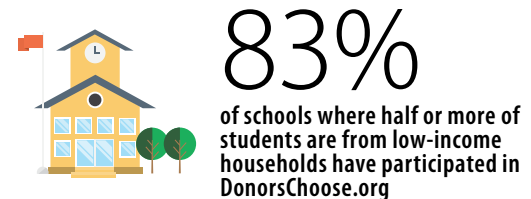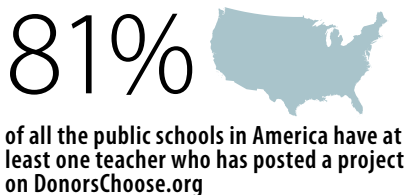
GoFundMe.com

According to the site, education is the platform's fastest-growing category.

Indiegogo.com

In the words of one of the site's creators, the platform is "all about allowing anybody to raise money for any idea."

DONORSCHOOSE: AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR FUNDING SOURCE

81%
of all the public schools in America have at least one teacher who has posted a project on DonorsChoose.org

83%
of schools where half or more of students are from low-income households have participated in DonorsChoose.org

62% of projects are fully funded

74%
of funded projects are from schools where half or more of students are from low-income households

Average donation size for new donors:
$54

Average cost of a funded project:
$551

Source: Donorschoose.org/impact. Accurate as of May 14, 2019.
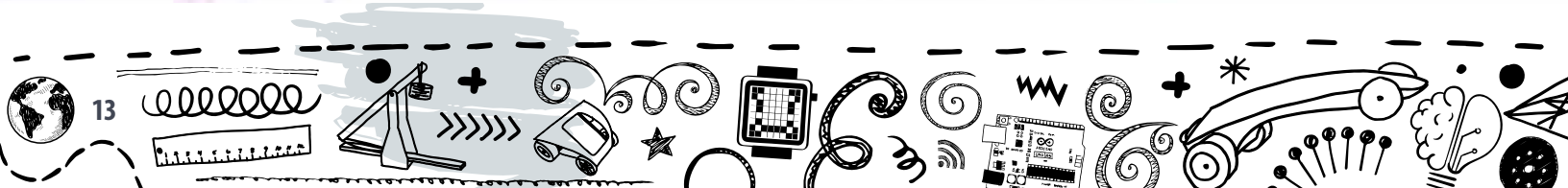
FINDING THE RIGHT SOURCES

STEM/STEAM/STREAM PRODUCTS

How do we impart 21st-century skills? The simple answer is that we let students grow these skills organically through hands-on exploration and discovery of current and emerging technology, with guidance from educators. A strong STEM/STEAM/STREAM curriculum with hands-on projects and activities increases engagement and gives students a head start on future-relevant skills.

American Honda Foundation

This organization prioritizes youth education, specifically in the areas of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, the environment, job training, and literacy.

Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation

Dominion Energy partners with the educational community through mentoring initiatives, philanthropic support, and other means to strengthen STEM competitiveness and help prepare students for tomorrow's workplace.

$41K FOR DEDICATED STEM GRANT SEEKER

Teacher Carrie Herndon of Metro East Montessori School in Granite City, Illinois, had to be resourceful when funding her dream program, so she began applying for grants and crossing her fingers. A 13-year veteran of teaching science and STEM, she targeted the Innovative Technology Education Fund that supports schools in the St. Louis, Missouri, area. Her efforts paid off in 2016 when Metro East was awarded a grant for $41,000 to fund the STEM program and activities she envisioned.

ROBOTICS AND CODING

Robotics and coding courses are being integrated into school curricula across the nation. What began as a club or after-school activity has grown into an important part of classroom learning. And for good reason. From screen-free coding solutions, such as Bee-Bot® and KUBO, for elementary students to robotics kits, such as TETRIX®, that assemble quickly and easily in the hands of middle schoolers, robotics and coding immerse students in hands-on technology of the future.
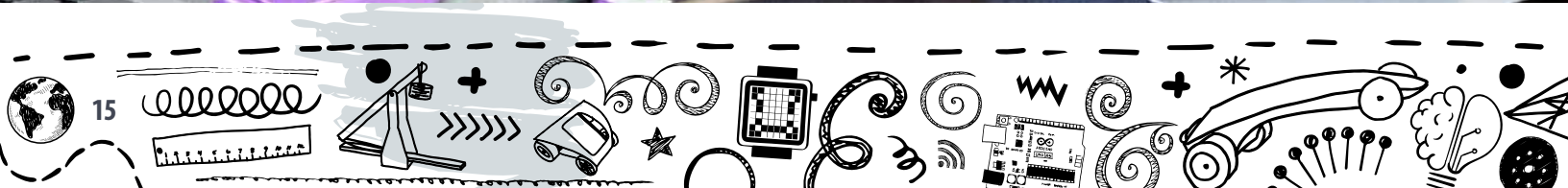
Charles Lafitte Foundation

This foundation subscribes to innovation and creativity. There is a strong investment in experiential elements for students.

Toyota USA Foundation

The Toyota USA Foundation supports K-12 education with a focus on math, science, and environmental science.

SYSTEMS

When the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University's College of Education published a report in 2017 stating that student exposure to Pitsco STEM Expeditions® had elevated MAP science scores 20% above the scores of a control group, this finding was highly encouraging. Yet it was not surprising because this system – like all of Pitsco's systems – is anchored in proven approaches to student success.

Braitmayer Foundation

The foundation is interested in proposals utilizing innovative practices in K-12 education throughout the United States. Of particular interest are curricular and school reform initiatives.

Westinghouse Charitable Giving Program

The program places emphasis on STEM programs.

GRANTMAKER AND STREAM LAB BOTH BENEFIT

At Bridgeton Elementary School in New Bern, North Carolina, a Pitsco STREAM Missions lab was funded in part by a $25,000 grant from Duke Energy. Both school and company benefited, as Duke Energy Government and Community Relations Manager Millie Chalk explains, "We want a workforce that can take us to the next level. And that to me is what STEM is providing us, and that is what our commitment to STEM education in North Carolina is really about. How do we build a better workforce? How do we grow our economy to be more productive and to do more and be more? That comes from a grassroots effort in education."

TIP

Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and call an organization's program manager if you have any questions about how your project could fit in with the organization's vision.

COMMON APPLICATION INFORMATION

Though the grant application process can be complex and confusing, it is frequently formulaic. After you find a promising funding source, your next step is to make contact. The letter of intent and proposal guidelines given here will serve you in most instances, though the specifics will always need to be tailored to your circumstance. And, of course, the cardinal rule when making your approach is to take time to understand the needs, requirements, and expectations of any grant maker you are pursuing. If a grant-making body requests a different set of information or a different form entirely, follow their instructions.

Resist the temptation to send out "form letter" proposals to multiple grant makers with only a few words changed. If you produce thoughtful documents that show you have considered the organization's perspective and their potential stake, you are more likely to be rewarded. Besides, grant-making bodies sometimes receive large numbers of queries. A dirty little secret of the proposal review process is that even small diversions from the requirements are used to cull applicants down to a manageable number.

LETTER OF INTENT

An organization may request that you send a letter of intent (or sometimes called letter of inquiry or letter of interest – in any case, it's abbreviated LOI) before sending a full proposal. Sometimes you will simply see a statement that no proposals are accepted. It is appropriate to send an LOI in this case as well. A successful LOI will lead to a request for a full proposal.

Writing the LOI

The LOI is essentially a condensed version of a proposal in the form of a business letter. Its purpose is to introduce your project and organization to the grant maker and entice them to learn more. A general rule is to keep the LOI to one or two pages.

The opening paragraph should provide, with extreme brevity, the essential information about your organization and your project. Relate your project to the expressed interest of the grant-making body you are writing to. If you are responding to a request for proposal, state that here.

In the rest of your letter, expand on your intended project. State your needs clearly and describe your methods succinctly. Connect these to the outcomes you expect to achieve. Draw a picture of the benefit to your students, school, or community. It is appropriate to extol the achievements and distinctions of your organization. Though you won't need an itemized budget, let the grant maker know your funding needs in brief and provide the total requested amount.

As with a standard business letter, conclude by thanking the grant maker for their consideration and providing contact information. Don't forget the signature!

Though the LOI is not as robust as a proposal, it must demonstrate that you have thoroughly considered the purpose and logistics of your project.
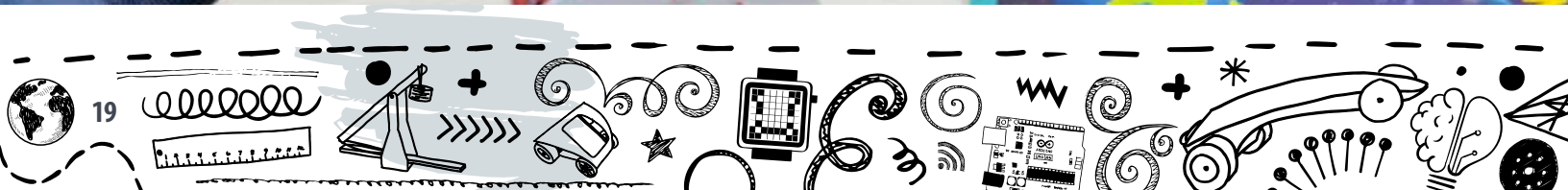
PROPOSAL

The proposal gives the full case for your project and for the requested funding. Most proposals will follow a formulaic approach. However, every proposal should be tailored to the grant maker in question. It is better by far to reach out to only a few organizations with proposals well suited to their aims than to take a scattershot approach with a generic proposal. Attention to detail and fidelity to all requirements will be rewarded. The proposal is a thorough document that could take months to write.

Abstract

In the space of one page or less, provide an overview of your organization, your project, and the outcomes you intend to achieve. State the cost of your project and the amount you are requesting. Include the timeline for your project.

This section is a key to the whole proposal. It should be comprehensive yet concise. But most essentially, it must intrigue. A reviewer who reads a poor or unengaging abstract might pass on the proposal without reading the rest.

Needs Statement

Clearly state the need that your proposal seeks to address. Express the need in terms of the benefit to your students and community, not yourself or your organization. At the same time, seek to establish credibility by contextualizing the need within the larger goals or philosophy of your organization.

The more evidence, data, and research you provide to bolster the need you describe, the better. Reviewers should have no doubts in their minds that this is a real need with tangible consequences.

Goals

Provide the reviewer a clear understanding of the outcome sought. In other words, how will the situation described in the needs statement change for the better after your solution is implemented? State the intended outcomes in measurable terms. Grant-making bodies seek projects whose success can be objectively determined. Make sure that your goals are realistic.

TIP
Aim to submit a proposal at least two weeks before the deadline.

Program Design

This section is sometimes called Methodology or Approach. This is the part of the proposal where you describe in detail the program, procedures, and tools you will use to achieve the goals stated in the previous section.

Make a case that the program you put in place will achieve this. Cite research and relevant case studies. Describe the various activities covered and explain why they are relevant. Show that you have given thought to the practical realities of your project by including a plan and timeline for implementation. List the staff involved in the project and their qualifications.

Budget

Lay out how you will use the requested funds. Give a full accounting of costs, including the cost of staff, materials, and transportation as well as any indirect costs or associated overhead. Include a discussion of long-term sustainability. That is to say, explain how the program will continue after the funds from the grant have been exhausted.

Provide a spreadsheet or table of budget numbers. If required, include a budget narrative. And check your math multiple times! Go knocking on the door of your school's math teacher if needed. Be as realistic as possible. Too much guesswork could undermine your credibility with reviewers. Or you could end up receiving funding only to discover too late that the amount is inadequate.

Appendix

An appendix should be included only if required by the grant. List all items as they appear in the appendix. Include information on the school board, superintendent, principal, and other key players. Provide the qualifications of these key players in the form of résumés, CVs, and so forth. Include any letters of support.

TIP

The timeline for your project is important. Give a clear sense of the start, middle, and end point. If it will be ongoing, explain how it will be sustained.

APPLY NOW!
$350 MONTHLY
PITSCO GRANT

Pitsco is proud to offer a grant each month in the form of a gift certificate that may be used to purchase hands-on STEM products, curriculum, and more here on our website.

$350 MONTHLY EDUCATOR GRANT

$150 MONTHLY STUDENT TEAM GRANT

Hunting for grants is a daunting process, especially for a newcomer. Achieving liftoff for your new classroom project really can be 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. But stay the course and don't lose heart. The impact you make in the lives of our young people is worth the sweat and even the tears. With experience, you will become a master.

And remember, we've got your back.

PITSCO EDUCATION

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