



EXTENDING RECRUITMENT EFFORTS INTO NEW SPACES, USING REDESIGNED MATERIALS

Use redesigned practices and materials in new communities to successfully recruit students from new communities to broaden participation.

STEM PUSH seeks to broaden participation of Black, Latina/o/e, and Indigenous students in STEM. Pre-college STEM program leaders in this improvement network test out ideas to move us toward that goal.

These **evidence-based improvement packages** summarize our promising ideas, offering a collection of planning guides and resources so others may try out these changes.

Are you interested in opening STEM pathways to more Black, Latina/o/e, and Indigenous youth by rethinking your recruitment practices?

This improvement package offers ideas, tools, and strategies to support recruitment efforts. You will find:

- » Ideas about how you might rethink recruitment in order to broaden participation of Black, Latina/o/e, and/or Indigenous youth into your organization
- » Examples of ways in which STEM PUSH pre-college STEM program leaders expanded their recruitment efforts
- » Data collection tools, planning calendars, and other ideas to support equitable recruitment practices

Lift



An approximation of the amount of time it will take you to implement this idea.

Leverage



An approximation of how much change you might expect to see in your program if you implement this idea.

02 The Challenge

- » Successfully recruit students from new communities in order to broaden participation.

02 The Change

- » Use redesigned practices and materials in new communities.

02 The Improvement

- » Staff/students have relationships and touch points with new families/students.
- » Staff see an increase in applications, enrollment, and persistence of students recruited in these new spaces.

05 Centering Equity

- » Plan and develop materials and recruitment practices to align with your program context, student population, and community assets and needs.

Share with Us

We would love to hear from you.

Tell us how this improvement package is supporting your work at www.stempushnetwork.org/contact-us/

Share on social.

Stay in the loop with our newsletter, and follow us on social media.



06 The Routine

1. Identify target students/schools/neighborhoods that will broaden participation in your program.
2. Build recruitment timeline.
3. Build relationships in those new communities.
4. Engage staff/students in the recruitment design of new materials and design of new recruitment practices.
5. Engage new communities/families/students in recruitment practices.
6. Reflect and refine efforts.

09 Reflection

1. What have you learned about the effectiveness of your new recruitment practices?
2. What surprised you?

10 Next Steps

- » Building on what you learned about what worked, what did not work, and what barriers are still in play for the students you seek to recruit, what will you do differently in your next recruitment cycle?
- » How will you continue to strengthen the relationships in these new spaces?

References & Connections

- » Example tests of this change:
 - Gene Team
 - Native American Science & Engineering Program (NASEP)

The Challenge

What is the problem we are trying to solve by trying out this change?

Often Black, Latina/o/e, and Indigenous students do not have the opportunities to engage in out of school STEM learning. By actively recruiting minoritized students, we can broaden participation in STEM and open up pathways for future STEM learning and engagement.

The Change

What are we trying to accomplish with this change?

We seek to redesign our recruitment efforts in order to attract Black, Latina/o/e, and Indigenous students who are not typically involved in our pre-college STEM programs. To do this, staff and/or students intentionally recruit in new communities using redesigned practices and materials that meaningfully connect with families and students in these new spaces.

What did staff and students do?

Staff and/or students engage in relationship building and material design in the planning phase of the recruitment cycle.

Staff and/or students recruit in new communities using redesigned practices.

Why might this change idea be a high-leverage way to recruit students?

Pre-college STEM programs recruit students each year. Often these recruitment efforts replicate the population of students that have attended in the past. By broadening the population of students who engage in the STEM opportunities that pre-college STEM programs offer, more and different students are likely to consider STEM futures.

The Improvement

How will you know if the change is leading to improvement?

- » Staff/students have relationships and touch points with new families/ students.
- » Staff see an increase in applications, enrollment, and persistence of students recruited in these new spaces.

For more ways to understand if the change is an improvement, see the *Measuring the Improvement* section.

Timing & Scheduling

This change happens at different stages of the recruitment cycle.

- *Before recruitment starts:* Programs identify new spaces and begin to build relationships in those spaces (e.g., reach out to leaders in churches, communities centers, after school programs, schools). As programs build relationships in new places, they are strategic about which students/staff make those connections, what materials they bring into those spaces, and how they structure the engagement. Program staff found it helpful to track their new relationship building activities and successes.
- *Active recruitment season:* Staff and students connect with new students and families, helping students fill out applications where necessary. Again, staff collected data on those connections to determine which ones were most fruitful.
- *During programming:* Staff/students support new students and families as needed.



PRO TIP: Karen found that starting her recruitment activities in the fall for her summer programs at the Chicago Botanic Gardens would pay off for broadening participation. She identified the neighborhoods that were not yet pipelines to her program, and she visited those schools, papering the neighborhoods with flyers in Spanish and English.



PLANNING QUESTIONS: Build an annual plan

- » What recruitment activities happen in each month of the year? (Use the Recruitment Timeline template, on page 11, to help you plan.)
- » How will you plan out your recruitment cycle to include this new work? Who will do the work?

STEM PUSH drivers targeted: Primary driver – Recruit more and/or different Black, Latino/a/e, and Indigenous students. Secondary drivers: Seek out Black, Latino/a/e, and Indigenous students who are not typically recruited by PCSPs; Center interests of local Black, Latino/a/e, and Indigenous communities in PCSP content and communication.

Is your program ready to engage in this routine?

- Consider the students in your program. Are there schools, neighborhoods, and/or communities that are not currently sending students to your program?
- Do you have capacity to build new relationships, materials, and programming to extend into these new spaces?
- Can you engage students in the design and/or recruitment work?



FIELD NOTES: Every summer, Becky from Gene Team has students from 8 of 10 Pittsburgh Public High Schools join her program. In order to bring students to her program from the missing schools, she built relationships in both communities by engaging families in activities at the community centers. In addition, she ran free, hands-on sessions for students after school.

Ensuring continuity

What existing recruitment efforts can you connect with this work? How will you integrate this recruitment activity into your existing routines/structure?

How might you connect with new families and students?

Suggestions include:

- Target schools and after-school programs in your neighborhood that may engage students with whom you do not currently have relationships.
- Identify people/places where families have established trust (e.g., community centers, churches) and build relationships with those people/places.
- Build materials that will help you connect with those spaces. This might include flyers in multiple languages and/or paper applications or access to computers to apply online.



PRO TIP: Becky found building relationships with students at the schools to be most effective. When she was able to join an existing activity at the community center (a monthly dinner), she made connections to more families. Pairing these activities allowed her to build relationships with students at the school and their families at the community center.



PLANNING QUESTIONS: Identify new spaces and materials needed

- » In which new spaces would you like to expand your recruitment practices?
- » To whom will you reach out as you begin to build connections in the new spaces?
- » What new materials will help you build connections with people in those spaces?
- » How can your current students help you?

Centering Equity

Recruiting in equitable ways takes intentional effort and reflection. We offer the guidance below to help you think about key dimensions of equity in your practices.

Reflecting on your learners

Who are the learners in your program?

- Do your program participants reflect the demographics of the recruitment pool?
- Do you serve Black, Latina/o/e, and Indigenous students at similar rates to their presence in your recruitment area?
- From which neighborhoods and schools do they come?
- Are they primarily students who have been served well by formal schooling, with exceptional grades and advanced coursework in math and science?
- Have they participated in STEM out of school programs before?

What if you began to recruit students who might excel in STEM but have not yet found their way to opportunities like your program? What if you recruit students who are in schools without access to advanced STEM courses or who have rigid barriers to enter those courses?

- How might you find those students to recruit?
- What neighborhoods, schools, and communities are not currently represented in your program?
- Where are the trusted spaces where those students and families go?

Building meaningful connections

As you think about new spaces to enter, consider how to center the needs and interests of the families and youth in those spaces.

- How might you enter those spaces? (e.g., integrated into existing gatherings, through a trusted leader)
- Who might do that outreach?
- What would that outreach look like? (e.g., integrated into an existing routine, hands on activities)
- What materials might you bring with you as part of that outreach that will resonate in the space? (e.g., flyers in multiple languages)
- What barriers to participation might learners from these spaces have that you can reduce or eliminate? (e.g., paper applications? transportation? a generous stipend to offset the need for a summer job?)

Routine & Resources

This routine has six steps:

1. Identify target students/schools/ neighborhoods that will broaden participation in your program
2. Build recruitment timeline
3. Build relationships in those new communities
4. Engage staff/students in the recruitment design of new materials and design of new recruitment practices
5. Engage new communities/families/students in recruitment practices
6. Reflect and refine efforts

While you may tailor any of the framing to align with your program's language and context, particular decision points and areas to customize are called out with an "→".

STEP 1: Identify target communities

→ Identify spaces in which you would like to expand your recruitment efforts. Where do families spend time? Where are the trusted spaces?

- Schools in your neighborhood that are under-represented in your program.
- Trusted community spaces (e.g., churches, community centers, after school programs)

See "Centering Equity: Reflecting on your learners" for more ideas on how to do this.

STEP 2: Build recruitment timeline

→ Map out your recruitment cycle for the year. Think about when each activity happens, who is responsible for that activity, and how you might integrate your students into that activity. See the Recruitment Timeline template on page 11.

STEP 3: Build relationships

→ Identify the people in those new spaces with whom you will connect. You might reach out via email, or you might choose to call them or visit them. Establishing relationships takes time, and adding a personal touch can help to accelerate the process.

**PRO TIP:**

- In the fall, Grady maps out all of the high schools in the Cleveland area and visits each school. He talks to someone at each school, recording their name, explaining his program (HIT in the CLE) and leaving them with a flyer.
- After the flyer drop-off to the schools in the fall, it is imperative that someone follow up with each school to make sure the flyers were passed out, if the school would like someone to come in and talk to the students/parents about the program, and—most importantly—identify the point person at the school who will interact with the STEM program.
- He then follows up via email in January, when applications open, to again ask for them to suggest students who might benefit from the free coding program he offers.
- This is very labor intensive, so over time he narrows his focus to schools where he has an established relationship and schools that have a student demographic he hopes to engage.

STEP 4: Design new activities/materials

→ As you seek out new spaces, you want to consider how to engage in meaningful ways with those communities, families, and students. You want to be intentional about how your program will connect with the interests and needs of the community. You also want to be intentional about what materials and activities will resonate with them. Suggestions include:

- Design a hands-on activity to engage families—include younger siblings in the activity.
- Design materials that are in the language spoken by the community.
- Engage current students and/or alum to design materials that speak to them. Are there ways to share the information digitally?
- How might students be part of the engagement within these new spaces? Can they lead the hands-on activities? Can they design the fliers? Can they tell their stories? (See Peer Recruitment for more ideas and strategies to engage students in the recruitment process.)

STEP 5: Engage new communities

→ Engage in the work. There are numerous ways to do this, so you will customize the actual engagement that works for the students you seek to recruit.

This is iterative work—you enter the space multiple times, perhaps in multiple ways. You follow-up. You offer support in the application process.

STEP 6: Reflect and refine

How well have your efforts worked? How do you know? (See Data & Evidence for more ideas about this.)

MEASURING THE IMPROVEMENT

Is your change leading to improvement?

If you try out this change, how will you know if you are seeing improvement?

Here are some ways that members of the STEM PUSH network measured the effectiveness of this change.

Question

How did STEM PUSH improvers answer this question?

Will we have success in meeting new families and/or students in our recruitment efforts?

How many new students/families did we make contact with through these efforts?

Will we have new students apply to our program from these efforts?

How many students applied to our program from these new touchpoints? (Make sure you add a closed-ended question to your application to gather this data.)

Will these students be from demographic groups that are currently under-represented in our program?

Will we increase the number of completed applications from students in demographics that are under-represented in our program?

Will newly recruited students end up enrolling?

Will newly recruited students persist?

Collect demographic data on your application specific to your target population. Compare it to previous years to track improvement.

Will newly recruited students complete the program with high quality (as defined by you)?

Will newly recruited students have strengthened interest in STEM?

Collect specifics to your target population. Compare it to previous years to track improvement.

What barriers to applying do we notice?

What barriers to enrollment did our target students experience? If interested families do not enroll their students, why not?

What barriers to completion did our target students experience?

If our target students did not engage in the program with the same level of quality as their peers, why?

Empathy interviews
Follow up phone calls if accepted students do not enroll
Observation data (staff)



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- » Looking at data over time helps you understand if your change is leading to improvement. What data do you have from prior years that you can use as a comparison?
- » What data systems, tools, and trackers do you need to put into place in order to understand if this change led to improvement?
- » Have your changes led to improvement?
- » What will you keep doing in your recruitment routine? What will you change next year?

Reflection

How did it work?

Reflecting on the data:

- *How many new students/ families did you connect with?*
- *Did students from the new spaces you targeted apply to your program?*
- *Did they attend?*
- *Did they persist?*
- *Did the program, as currently constructed, adequately support these newly recruited students to success in the program?*
- *Are they more interested in STEM pathways?*

Reflecting on the cycle:

- *What worked, for whom, and under what conditions?*
- *What patterns do you notice about Black, Latina/o/e, and Indigenous students?*
- *What have you learned about your students?*
- *What have you learned about your program?*
- *What surprised you?*
- *Decision - Will you adopt, adapt, or abandon this routine? Why?*
- *If you will adapt this routine for future implementation, what modifications will you make?*

Next Steps

As you plan for your recruitment process next year, think about:

- » How well did your new outreach work?
- » What might you do differently to improve it?



FIELD NOTES: After her first round of testing, Becky from Gene Team identified these key learnings:

- Building relationships takes time. Initially, this was very labor intensive, but over time we expect these new connections with families and students to pay off.
- Engaging families in an existing routine (the community dinner) was a more effective way to connect with new families than holding a stand-alone session.
- Offering a free, 6-week, after-school program allowed us to build relationships with students that then led to their application to and enrollment in our summer program.
- This change idea uncovered a new challenge: Many students need to earn money in the summer; attending our program interferes with that need. In order to remove this barrier, we are seeking additional funding to pay a more competitive stipend.

Recruitment Timeline (Sample)

Month	Recruitment Steps	What do staff do?	What do students do?	Notes
September				
October				
November				
December				
January				
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				

Share with Us

We would love to hear from you.

Tell us how this improvement package is supporting your work at www.stempushnetwork.org/contact-us/

Share on social.

Stay in the loop with our newsletter, and follow us on social media.



*Copyright/Creative Commons, 2022, STEM PUSH
Network www.stempushnetwork.org*