



GOVERNOR'S STEM ADVISORY COUNCIL

at the Iowa Department of Education

Iowa Youth Ambassadors Application Rubric for New Members

The Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council strives to provide meaningful STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) educational opportunities to youth across Iowa. A key component of this effort is the Iowa STEM Youth Ambassador group which inspires and engages Iowa youth through peer-to-peer interaction and leadership.

The [Iowa STEM Youth Ambassador group](#) brings together middle school, high school and college aged students passionate about STEM. Youth Ambassadors connect Iowa STEM opportunities with schools and organizations while exploring local STEM initiatives. Guided by Iowa STEM, they help shift the conversation from teachers inspiring students to students inspiring each other to engage in STEM.

The overarching **goals** of the Youth Ambassadors are:

- to provide a youth perspective to Iowa STEM when asked.
- to expand Iowa STEM's reach to Iowa youth.

This rubric evaluates individual application responses to identify candidates who align with these goals and demonstrate the passion, skills, and vision to contribute meaningfully to the group.

Scoring

Exemplary (41–45 points): Strong candidate. Clear passion for STEM, relevant experience, and strong potential to contribute to the group.

Proficient (36–40 points): Solid candidate. Good alignment with the group's mission and room for further growth or clarity.

Basic (31–35 points): Moderate alignment. May need more depth or experience to contribute meaningfully.

Needs Improvement (0–30 points): Application does not demonstrate readiness or strong alignment with the group's mission.

AI Appropriate Usage: Applicants using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to assist with the application writing process should not rely on generative AI to fully produce or fabricate their applications. If AI tools are used, original narration and proper attribution must be provided. Example: (OpenAI, 2026)

Question to be evaluated

STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics, but it's much more than just an acronym. **What does STEM mean to you?** Share the **specific topics or career paths** you are interested in, **what or who inspired** that interest, an **example of a strong learning environment** you've personally benefited from and **how you would help create an even better** STEM learning environment. *2000 character limit*

Score	Reason for assigning the score
10-9	<p>Demonstrates a strong passion for STEM through a thoughtful and engaging explanation of what STEM means personally.</p> <p>Clearly identifies a unique perspective or enthusiasm of specific STEM topics and career interests and explains in detail what or who inspired that interest.</p> <p>Describes a strong STEM learning environment in detail and clearly explains why it was effective. Offers realistic, creative, and thoughtful ideas for how they would help create an even better STEM learning environment.</p>
8-6	<p>Demonstrates a strong passion for STEM through a clear but somewhat limited explanation of what STEM means personally.</p> <p>Clearly identifies a STEM topic and career interest with detailed explanation and explains inspiration, though explanation is not deeply compelling.</p> <p>Describes a personal STEM learning environment with some detail and with at least one idea for improvement.</p>
5-2	<p>Demonstrates a general passion for STEM through a general or vague explanation of what STEM means personally.</p> <p>Identifies a STEM topic, career interest or inspiration but provides limited detail or explanation.</p> <p>Describes a personal learning environment but mention is brief or unclear and ideas for improvement are minimal or underdeveloped.</p>
1-0	<p>Demonstrates emerging interest in STEM with little or no explanation of what STEM means personally.</p> <p>Does not clearly identify a STEM topic or career interest or inspiration.</p> <p>Does not describe a personal learning environment or lacks ideas for improvement.</p>

Question to be evaluated

List the activities you are involved in at school or in your community (e.g., clubs, competitions, projects, organizations and volunteer opportunities)? **Describe your role** and **what skills and traits you use or have developed** through these activities that will be valuable as a Youth Ambassador. *1000 character limit*

Score	Reason for assigning the score
5	<p>Lists school and community activities and provides clear descriptions of roles in each.</p> <p>Thoughtfully explains the skills and traits developed through significant contributions and effectively connects them to the Youth Ambassador role.</p>
4-3	<p>Lists school and/or community activities and provides clear descriptions of roles.</p> <p>Mentions skills or traits developed through participation and makes a general connection to the Youth Ambassador role.</p>
2-1	<p>Lists school or community activities but provides limited or unclear descriptions of roles.</p> <p>Mentions skills or traits with little explanation or weak connection to the Youth Ambassador role.</p>
0	<p>Lists few or no activities, or lacks descriptions of roles.</p> <p>Does not clearly identify relevant skills or traits, with no connection to the Youth Ambassador role.</p>

Question to be evaluated

As a youth in Iowa who has the opportunity to benefit from programs and initiatives offered by the STEM Council, share either:

1- **How your school has benefited from STEM Council** support through existing Council programs ([STEM Scale-Up Program](#), [STEM BEST Program](#), [Iowa STEM Teacher Externships Program](#), [Iowa STEM Teacher Award](#)), initiatives and events (Iowa STEM Summit). **How would you expand upon this existing program or initiative?**

2- If your school has not received STEM Council support or has not initiated Iowa STEM programs, **share an opportunity you see** for the Council to connect these with your school.

Be sure to include **how you would improve upon existing STEM learning environments** and please explain in at least a few sentences about **how you would use your platform as a Youth Ambassador to communicate with your school's administration** about the opportunities. (Hint: Don't know? Check with your teachers!) *1500 character limit*

Score	Reason for assigning the score
10-9	Displays a clear understanding of how their school has benefited from STEM Council support <i>or</i> offers at least one clear, achievable opportunity for the STEM Council to connect with their school. Thoughtfully describes an idea for expansion or improvement. Clearly describes communication with school administration, with specific examples, and how they would use their role as a Youth Ambassador to communicate opportunities and advocate in support of the group's mission.
8-6	Displays an understanding of STEM Council support/ opportunities relevant to their school. Describes an achievable idea for improvement. Describes communication with school administration with some detail and demonstrates some understanding of the group's mission.
5-2	Mentions STEM Council support/ opportunity but provides limited explanation. Ideas for improvement are vague or underdeveloped. Describes communication with school administration in general terms or demonstrates misunderstanding of the group's mission.
1-0	Provides little or no explanation of STEM Council support/ opportunities and does not clearly describe improvements. Provides little or no explanation of how they would communicate with school leaders about the opportunity as a Youth Ambassador or demonstrates misunderstanding of the group's mission.

Question to be evaluated

Youth Ambassadors may be asked to share with groups of peers or community members about STEM Council activities. **How comfortable are you** communicating to groups? **What experiences have you had** communicating to groups? *500 character limit*

Score	Reason for assigning the score
5	Clearly describes comfort communicating to groups and demonstrates confidence, reflection and readiness to share about the STEM Council to peers or community members. Provides specific examples of past communication experience that demonstrate effectiveness.
4-3	Describes comfort communicating to groups with a general readiness to speak about the STEM Council to peers or community members. Provides at least one example of past communication experience.
2-1	Briefly mentions comfort communicating to groups and readiness to share about the STEM Council to peers or community members is unclear. Past communication experience is vague or limited.
0	Provides little or no evidence of comfort communicating to groups. Lacks past communication experience.

Additional evaluation criteria

Grammar, spelling and punctuation

Score	Reason for assigning the score
10-9	Writing is free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Writing is polished and easy to read. Most responses are clear, specific and organized.
8-6	Writing contains only a few minor errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation that do not interfere with readability. Most responses are clear, specific and organized.
5-2	Writing contains several errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation that slightly interfere with readability. Some responses may lack organization, structure or clarity.
1-0	Writing contains frequent errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation that make it difficult to understand. Responses may be incomplete, unclear, off-topic or not within the character limit.

Letter of reference: Applicants should request a letter of reference from an unrelated acquaintance familiar with experiences that make you a good fit for the Iowa STEM Youth Ambassador group. Letters should be no more than one page and must be emailed **in PDF form** to **info@iowaSTEM.org**.

Score	Reason for assigning the score
5	Letter clearly demonstrates strong support and provides specific examples of the student's skills, character, and experiences that make them a good fit for the Iowa STEM Youth Ambassador group. Writing is generally clear and professional with an enthusiastic and credible tone.
4-3	Letter shows support and provides examples of the student's skills, character, or experiences. Writing is generally clear and professional with a positive tone.
2-1	Letter shows some support but provides vague or limited examples of the student's skills, character, or experiences. Writing may be somewhat unclear or lack professionalism with a positive tone.
0	Letter shows little or no support. Examples of the student's skills, character, or experience are missing or unclear. Writing may be disorganized or unprofessional or tone is unenthusiastic or flat. Letter is more than one page.

Additional Materials

New applicants must also submit a signed media consent form. Please choose the appropriate media consent form, have it signed, scan it and email it **in PDF form** to **info@iowaSTEM.org**.

- *If you are under 18 years old*, please submit a signed [parent/guardian permission form](https://educate.iowa.gov/media/11456/download?inline).
 - <https://educate.iowa.gov/media/11456/download?inline>
- *If you are over 18 years old*, please submit a signed [media consent form](https://educate.iowa.gov/media/11455/download?inline).
 - <https://educate.iowa.gov/media/11455/download?inline>