SFAZ puts strategic investment behind STEM work

BY WILLIAM HARRIS

With 20 percent of U.S. jobs requiring high knowledge in at least one STEM field, it is important Science Foundation Arizona continues to strengthen Arizona’s STEM education initiatives.

With funding from JPMorgan Chase, SFAZ held a STEM Club training session for more than 100 educators from across the state, and it recently awarded more than $50,000 in seed funding to 67 pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade public schools throughout the state that have agreed to start or expand STEM after-school clubs. The creation of new STEM clubs and the expansion of existing ones are critical steps toward filling the current and future skills gap with a qualified workforce.

The 2013 annual Battelle Technology Partnership Practice report showed investments made by SFAZ similar to this one are continuing to generate powerful results for Arizona and fuel innovation, discovery and talent.

Since 2007, SFAZ’s education initiatives have impacted nearly 385,000 students and 10,656 teachers at the K-12 and community college levels across 61 grant awards. It also has supported nearly 300 graduate research fellowships for doctoral students in STEM fields at Arizona’s public universities.

SFAZ’s strategically targeted investments in grant programs are producing not only for STEM education, but also for research and development partnerships and technology commercialization in all areas key to the state’s growth. The cumulative findings from the report showed that for each public dollar invested in research grants, an additional $4.83 was leveraged to support SFAZ grants.

These additional funds have had a significant economic ripple effect through the broader economy with impacts of this additional leverage now reaching nearly $600 million during the past six years.

SFAZ’s investments and oversight are paying off for Arizona, but there is a clear need for sustained funding to continue this level of results and help the state’s students compete successfully with the rest of the world.

William Harris is president and CEO of Science Foundation Arizona.