

SFI Discover Centres Network

Background

The SFI Discover Centres Network (DCN) was established as part of the Discover Primary Science and Maths programme in 2005. Since then, the network has grown to over 50 Discover Centres. Centres include the Zoo, national parks, interpretive centres, observatories, aquariums and a fab lab.

The DCN offers accredited workshops and outreach programmes for primary schools on a range of themes encompassing Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Space.

The SFI Discover Science and Maths Awards provide a flexible model that facilitates schools in dictating their own STEM learning journey and supports the delivery of the [STEM Education Policy and Implementation plan](#). Schools can gain credit towards their SFI Discover Science and Maths Awards by visiting a Centre or engaging in outreach programmes.

[The STEM Education Policy Statement](#) reflects how STEM is multi-faceted and goes well beyond the main STEM disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. It allows students to learn and apply content, practices and skills of the STEM disciplines to situations they encounter in their everyday lives to develop STEM literate students. Young children naturally engage in early STEM exploration through hands-on multisensory and creative experiences that develop **curiosity, creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking** skills, which are built on through their primary school experience.

This Policy Statement recognises that STEM learning opportunities present themselves in both formal and informal settings within an evolving eco-system.

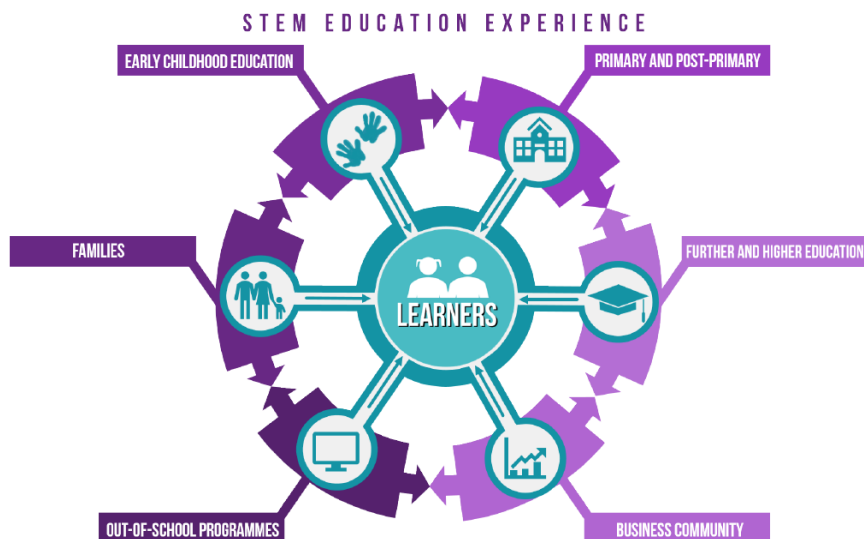


FIGURE 2: THE STEM EDUCATION ECO-SYSTEM

STEM learning in informal settings is delivered across a multi-stakeholder, multi-programme landscape with contributions from government departments and agencies, business and industry, professional bodies, science centres, community organisations and third level institutions. Bodies, including Science Foundation Ireland, support and promote engagement of the Irish public with STEM learning across informal settings which include competitions, exhibitions, science fairs, after-

school clubs and STEM Weeks. The Policy Statement will bring greater cohesion to the diversity of STEM activity already taking place in our schools and communities, by recognising the role each stakeholder has to play in creating and maintaining an eco-system for STEM education.

Purpose

The purpose of the network is to:

- Support primary schools to engage in informal STEM education outside of the classroom in a curriculum relevant and inquiry-based way.
- Provide opportunities for children to meet STEM professionals, and experience STEM in action in everyday life.
- Support primary schools in attaining the SFI Discover Science and Maths Awards.
- To provide a platform for knowledge sharing and cooperation amongst leading informal STEM experience providers across Ireland.

There are a range of benefits for accredited Centres from sharing ideas and best practice at quarterly network meetings hosted at SFI Discover Centres to CPD opportunities and promotion through the programme website and the DPSM quarterly e-newsletter.

Membership

Visit the DPSM website for up to date details of centres nationwide

<https://www.sfi.ie/engagement/discover-primary-science-and-maths/discover-centres/index.xml>