

**Proven
Solution**

Future Leaders



HeForShe

Exelon

Growing future women leaders in STEM



Global Context

According to a National Science Foundation 2017 report, approximately 30% of scientists and engineers are women. Additional research shows that African Americans make up 11 percent of the U.S. workforce but represent just 9% of STEM workers, while LatinX comprise 16 percent of the U.S. workforce but only 7% of all STEM workers.

Exelon is dedicated to ensuring that young women are part of its solutions. However, an Exelon Foundation survey points to some challenges: while most teen girls believe their actions impact climate change, less than half feel prepared to deal with the issue. In addition, the survey found that while nearly two thirds of teen girls are confident that women have the skills needed to address climate change issues, only half agree that women will lead the efforts, and fewer than half believe there will be many jobs for women in the field.

In response, over three years the Exelon Foundation engaged 460 high school girls in its free, intensive summer STEM Innovation Leadership Academies. The company built those relationships and fostered new ones through school year STEM Days and monthly communications to increase awareness of and access to STEM careers, particularly related to solving climate change issues.

“By creating opportunities for young women to learn about and pursue STEM-related careers, we are helping develop the workforce of the future. We recognize that a diverse team of people – with different backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and perspectives – makes for a better, more innovative company and a stronger community partner.”

**Chris Crane,
President and CEO, Exelon**



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Key Stages of Implementation

1

In early 2018 as Exelon began to formulate its concept of STEM Innovation Leadership Academies, the company reached out to a variety of existing partners for expert advice and resources to create the most valuable program for young women in high school.

Step 1 Developing the initial Academy format

We reached out to the University of Maryland College Park and Illinois Institute of Technology to reserve dorm rooms and meeting spaces. These universities have been longtime partners for Exelon's HR department and send many graduates to work at Exelon's companies. In 2019, Exelon added an Academy at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

Exelon continued to consult with experts in youth programs, and particularly those focused on STEM, to develop these elements for a free, one-week summer program:

- Approximately 60 young women (rising juniors and seniors in high school) at each Academy
- Hands-on activities
- Field trips to Exelon work locations
- Panels and other interactions with a wide variety of Exelon employees
- A special dinner where students could network with Exelon executives and hear from a panel of civic and corporate leaders
- An "energy challenge" to be worked on throughout the week by teams of students.

2

Step 2 Refining the Academy content

While Exelon arranged visits to its work sites and recruited employee speakers, it turned to longtime partner, The National Energy Education Development Project (NEED), for expertise in developing the Academy schedule, curriculum, and "energy challenge." NEED brought its 35+ years of expertise to shape the Academy schedule and the activities to ensure students had fun while learning about energy and Exelon's business. NEED was also contracted to hire all teachers/chaperones as well as manage all transportation, catering, housing, supplies, student applications and family registration packets.

Step 3 Recruiting students

Exelon contacts in school districts and nonprofit partners in the Baltimore, Chicago, and Washington, DC areas helped promote applications to high school girls in their sophomore and junior years, primarily at public schools in under-resourced communities.

In Chicago, Exelon used those same contacts to promote two free spring STEM Days in 2018 that served to connect Exelon to students, many of whom also applied to the summer Academy. These events offered behind-the-scenes tours, hands-on activities and panel discussions with leaders.

School districts and nonprofit partners, along with NEED's contacts, were critical to getting the word out to schools and students. The Academy applications are intentionally easy to fill out to avoid barriers to student participation. There are no GPA or course requirements. For 60 spaces in each

3

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Academy, approximately 75 students are accepted, and a wait list is offered.

Exelon and NEED host family orientations in Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia and Washington, DC to meet families, provide details about the program and answer questions

Step 4 Assessing and improving the program

Exelon always seeks ways to engage its employees in the programs it funds. At the summer Academy and STEM Days, employees embrace the opportunity to share their career paths, personal challenges and successes, and specific expertise with students. It's been rewarding for students and employees to network and learn from each other, especially in specific activities such as the "energy challenge."



Step 5 Assessing and improving the program

Exelon hired Arabella Advisors, a philanthropic consulting company, to evaluate the program after the first year. While best practices may vary depending on geography and socio-economic factors, the research recommended:

- High school programs that nurture an existing interest in STEM
- Long-term, high-intensity programs for encouraging a STEM major/career
- Project-based, hands-on, student-centered, and team-based inquiry rather than "transmission of information"
- Girls in late high school, particularly those who will be first-generation college students, need direct exposure to career options through site visits
- Regular contact with students and parents to share information and build relationships among peers and staff.

Based on those research results, Exelon increased interactive STEM Day programming



in our key cities to stay connected with students during the academic year and expose students to career options. Nonprofit partners such as museums, universities, and environmental organizations provide free content while Exelon pays for any catering and space rental and company employees attend to network with students. Two to three STEM Days occur in each of our four cities on Saturdays or after school and attract 15-30 students each. We also initiated STEMInist, a monthly e-newsletter to students and parents.

Because leadership development is a focus of the program, Academy alumnae are hired as junior counselors for the summer Academies, hosts at STEM Days, focus group participants and content providers for STEMInist e-newsletter.

Several evaluation tools help Exelon and NEED continuously identify program successes and areas for improvement:

- NEED surveys the Academy participants on the first and the last days to assess what they have learned about energy during the week.
- Each evening, Academy participants take a quick survey to rate the day's activities.
- Academy participants also take the PEAR Survey developed by Partnerships in Education and Resilience to measure a variety of STEM-related attitudes, including STEM engagement, STEM career knowledge, and STEM identity; using this national survey allows Exelon to compare responses from its program participants with students across the United States.


In 2020, due to COVID-19, all programs successfully moved to a virtual format.

Resources

Collateral and assets such as flyers, internal and external communications, videos, photographs, and employee volunteer mentors.

 **Exelon Community Education**
<https://www.exeloncorp.com/community/education>

 **Exelon STEM Leadership Academy**
<https://exelonstemacademy.org/>

 **Exelon and Exelon Foundation Surprise Seven Female STEM Students with Full Ride College Scholarships**
<https://www.exeloncorp.com/newsroom/exelon-and-exelon-foundation-surprise-seven-female-stem-students-with-full-ride-college-scholarships>

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