



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: The Lavidge Company
(480) 998-2600
Kendra States x562
kstates@lavidge.com
Joseph Valdez x540
jvaldez@lavidge.com

**Science Foundation Arizona Launches Arizona STEM Network
*Leaders Roll Out 5-Year Statewide Implementation Plan***

PHOENIX (Feb. 28, 2012) – Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz), a nonprofit public-private partnership that serves as a catalyst for revitalizing Arizona and strengthening its economic future, joined with partners today to announce the launch of the Arizona STEM Network. The STEM Network is a first-of-its-kind strategic effort to help transform Arizona’s educational system for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

A five-year plan being led by SFAz will leverage effective education practices and teaching advances including the state-adopted, internationally benchmarked Common Core Standards. The Arizona STEM Network is a unified approach that will provide educators, the business community and donors with a centralized infrastructure, tools, resources and the framework needed to measure performance and achieve collective impact in Arizona classrooms. The plan’s driving force is to help Arizona children be successful in school, careers and life.

Since 2008, the Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation has been the leading financial supporter, providing a total of \$2.2 million for the establishment of SFAz’s STEM initiative, as well as the collaboration of work leading up to the launch of the new Arizona STEM Network and plan for implementation. Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation today announced a new three-year commitment beginning in 2012, totaling \$2.1 million for operational funding that will allow SFAz to roll out its plan for the Arizona STEM Network. The plan focuses on four strategic areas:

- Integrate STEM learning into Arizona schools and districts
- Develop and deploy a predictive analytics system to measure impacts
- Strengthen teacher effectiveness in STEM teaching
- Create opportunities for the private business sector to meaningfully engage with schools

The development of the Arizona STEM Network began after Arizona Governor Jan Brewer, along with philanthropic and private sector leaders, tapped SFAz to spearhead the initiative in September 2010. Over a 14 month period, SFAz leaders logged more than 10,000 miles throughout Arizona and met with more than 1,500 individuals from the education, business and government sectors in all 15 counties and the Navajo Nation, as well as the Arizona Department of Education and the State Board of Education to determine statewide needs. Using the feedback gathered, SFAz created the Arizona STEM Network plan.

--more--

SFAz Launches Arizona STEM Network – Page 2

“Arizona must develop a globally competitive educational system and STEM disciplines will lead the way,” said Darcy Renfro, vice president of education and coordinator of the Arizona STEM Network at SFAz. “The Network will link existing STEM assets in Arizona, build on best practices and foster innovative teaching approaches for school districts to help students improve in these areas.”

Gov. Brewer, Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation and Helios Education Foundation provided major funding for the development of the Arizona STEM Network plan and were joined by Intel, JPMorgan Chase Foundation and Research Corporation for Science Advancement.

“We believe that the private sector must play an active role in developing the next generation to keep our businesses competitive and our economy vibrant,” said Tracy Bame, president of Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation. “A first-rate education that encompasses the STEM disciplines is a foundational step to provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

Arizona is one of 12 states in the U.S., with developing or existing STEM Networks, that are leading the charge to implement a proactive approach to STEM teaching which provides interactive coursework in classrooms to prepare students for successful careers in the 21st century. STEM education is an interdisciplinary approach to learning that provides project-based and relevant experiences for students.

“Helios Education Foundation’s investment in the Arizona STEM Network’s plan to transform K-12 education is really an investment in the future of our state,” said the Foundation’s Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Barbara Ryan. “STEM education is the linchpin that will better prepare our students academically and ultimately increase the number of high school graduates ready to succeed in postsecondary education.”

The Arizona STEM Network will be led and coordinated by SFAz staff with a structured system of information management tools, processes and technical assistance. The Network is in place and will be rolled out in phases, with initial pilot sites to be announced by late 2012. SFAz is currently securing additional long-term operational and program funding from other corporate partners to further support the Arizona STEM Network.

“The vision for a statewide, strategic commitment to STEM education is coming to fruition,” said Gov. Brewer. “The Arizona STEM Network will help build a common agenda for STEM education that will lead our teachers and students forward.”

About Science Foundation Arizona

Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization initiated in 2006 by the Greater Phoenix Leadership Inc., Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty in conjunction with the executive and legislative branches of state government. SFAz serves as a catalyst for high-wage, knowledge-based jobs and economic diversity through administration and strict oversight of research, development and education grants to public education and other non-profit research performing institutions. For more information, visit www.sfaz.org.

###