

# Conference Tracks

These conference tracks highlight the diverse and impactful ways out-of-school time programs support children and youth across New Mexico. Grounded in relationships, equity, and innovation, sessions share practical strategies and real-world examples to strengthen quality, expand access, and deepen community impact across afterschool, summer learning, mentoring, STEM, and youth engagement.



## **Track 1: Expanding Afterschool Access & Impact**

Explore strategies for growing high-quality afterschool and summer programs across communities. This track highlights innovative funding, partnerships, workforce solutions, literacy development, and data-driven approaches that strengthen quality, increase capacity, and expand equitable access—especially in underserved areas.



## **Track 2: Mentoring in OST: Building Intentional, Culturally Responsive, and Impactful Relationships**

Strong relationships and meaningful youth engagement are central to effective OST programs. This track focuses on intentional mentoring practices and strategies for centering youth voice that help young people build confidence, life skills, and a sense of belonging. Sessions share practical tools for creating supportive, relationship-centered environments and elevating youth leadership through participatory practices that ensure programs reflect young people's interests, strengths, and needs.



## **Track 3: STEM Learning & Career Exploration in OST**

Discover ways to spark curiosity and open pathways to future careers through STEM in OST. This track features hands-on learning, project-based activities, real-world problem solving, and partnerships with industry and higher education—along with strategies to broaden participation and build staff confidence in STEM facilitation.



## **Track 4: Summer Learning in New Mexico: Policy, Programs & Impact**

Examine the role of summer learning in supporting academic growth and whole-child well-being across New Mexico. This track explores state and local policy, innovative program models, tribal and rural initiatives, and research-informed practices that strengthen equitable, culturally responsive summer learning experiences.



## **Track 5: Centering Youth Voice and Engaging Older Youth in OST Programs**

Strong relationships and cultural relevance are foundational to high-quality OST programs. This track highlights intentional mentoring practices alongside culturally responsive approaches that support youth confidence, belonging, and life skills. Sessions share practical strategies for building relationship-centered environments, engaging families, and strengthening community partnerships to create inclusive, equitable programs rooted in the strengths of the communities they serve.



# Agenda at a Glance

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

7:45 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Registration **Pre-Function**

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Spring into Summer Welcome **Sandia I-IV**

Reimagining Our Humanity Through Art, Science, and Technology Keynote with Agnes Chavez

**May Sagbakken**, Executive Director, NMOST

**Julie Brenning**, Senior Manager of Community Schools and Extended Learning Bureau (CSEL), NM Public Education Department

**Agnes Chavez**, Founder/Director, STEMarts Lab

**Robb Janov**, Musician

9:30 a.m. – 9:40 a.m. Break and Visit Exhibitors

9:40 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. Concurrent Breakout Sessions



1. The Human Thread – Cultivating Empathy Through Shared Experience **Sierra I**



2. Entrepreneurial STEAM Challenges: Elevate Student Voice Through Innovation **Sierra II**



3. Getting to the Money: Grant Writing Made Easy – Part 1 **Sierra III**



4. STEAM Activities for Your OST Program **Sandia VI**

10:40 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. Break and Visit Exhibitors

10:50 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. Concurrent Breakout Sessions



5. Explore New Mexico's STEM Innovation Network **Sandia VI**



6. Entrepreneurial STEAM Challenges: Elevate Student Voice Through Innovation **Sierra II**



7. Making it Happen: Successful Partnerships between CBOs and LEAs **Sierra III**



8. All Children Flourishing: Introduction to the Nurtured Heart Approach **Sierra I**

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. Lunch and Panel Bridging the Gap: Supporting Middle School Students Beyond the School Day **Sandia I-IV**

Facilitator: **May Sagbakken**, New Mexico Out-of-School Time Network

Middle school is a pivotal—and often complex—stage of development, and afterschool programs play a vital role in helping students navigate these in-between years. This 30-minute lunch panel brings together experienced afterschool practitioners to share practical, real-world strategies for supporting the academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs of middle school youth. Panelists will highlight approaches that boost engagement, foster positive relationships, strengthen behavior and belonging, and keep middle schoolers meaningfully connected to learning beyond the school day. Participants will leave with concrete ideas, fresh perspectives, and renewed inspiration to strengthen middle school programming in their own afterschool settings.



1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Concurrent Breakout Sessions



9. Youth Entrepreneurship in OST: Panel Discussion and Lessons Learned **Sierra I**



10. Getting to the Money: Grant Writing Made Easy – Part 2 **Sierra III**



11. STEM with an "A": Hands-on Art Workshop for OST Programs **Sandia VI**



12. The Human Thread – Cultivating Empathy Through Shared Experiences **Sierra II**

2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. Break and Visit Exhibitors

2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Concurrent Breakout Sessions



13. NM Teen Centers: Emerging Trends, Innovations and Challenges **Sierra I**



14. Creators to Changemakers: Using AI to Build Youth-Led Entrepreneurship in OST Programs **Sierra II**



15. Small Moments, Big Impact: The Secret to Powerful Relationships **Sandia II**



16. Summer Learning at Public Libraries Across New Mexico **Sierra III**

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Break and Visit Exhibitors

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Concurrent Breakout Sessions



17. Small Moments, Big Impact: The Secret to Powerful Relationships **Sierra I**



18. Accelerating Learning in Out-of-School Time Programs **Sierra III**



19. Get in the Game: Telling Your Unique Story to Stand Out and Win **Sierra II**



20. The "T" in STEM: Technology-Based Curricula for OST Programs **Sandia VI**

4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Wrap Up / Door Prize Drawings **Sandia I-IV**



# General Sessions

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER



### Agnes Chavez, Founder/Director, STEMarts Lab

Agnes Chavez is an artist, educator, and founder of STEMarts Lab, a nonprofit SciArt production studio and youth leadership initiative based in Northern New Mexico. Shaped by her experience as a Cuban-American artist and educator, she has developed a learning model that centers the authenticity of voices contributing to curriculum—bringing scientists, artists, and cultural practitioners into shared authorship of knowledge. Her work advances an integrated approach to learning that connects art, science, technology, and culture, moving young people from curiosity and imagination to creation, contribution, and stewardship.

For more than two decades, Chavez has designed immersive sci-art experiences and educational programs that position youth not as passive recipients of knowledge, but as co-creators, interpreters, and contributors to public dialogue across cultural, scientific, and technological domains. Through STEMarts Lab, she develops participatory installations, workforce-connected STEAM programs, and touring public works that ground innovation in ethics, responsibility, and real-world impact, particularly in rural and historically under-resourced communities. She has brought this innovative learning model into public festival contexts, including The PASEO and the International Symposium on Electronic Art, demonstrating how festivals can function as sites for youth-led learning and civic engagement.

Chavez's creative practice spans data visualization, sound, projection, and interactive media, with work presented internationally at museums, festivals, and civic spaces. She is co-founder of The PASEO, an outdoor participatory art festival in Taos, New Mexico, where she helped build a nationally recognized model for youth-led public art and community engagement.

As an educator and curriculum designer, Chavez has developed programs for partners including Scholastic, 516 Arts, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and the International Symposium on Electronic Art. Her work contributes to national conversations on the future of learning, STEAM education, youth leadership, and civic participation.



### Robb Janov, Musician

Robb Janov, multi-style violinist, firebrand educator, film/tv music coach, actor and composer, is the creator of the national award-winning 'Rock and Rhythm' program, which emboldens and inspires underserved public school students through innovative music education. The 27-year program's success, featured on the PBS Newshour, ¡Colores!, and in his TEDx Talk, has served as a model for music programs throughout the USA. Robb mesmerizes audiences with electric violin and vocal 'live-looping' joyful, dynamic grooves. His background includes music coaching for Netflix and Nickelodeon TV series as well as performances with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and Indiana University's orchestras.



**May Sagbakken, Executive Director, NMOST**

May Sagbakken is the Executive Director of NMOST and has served in this role since 2016. She is a passionate advocate for access to quality out-of-school programs for all children and youth in New Mexico, and has more than 25 years of experience as a director for local and international organizations. She has extensive experience in community collaboration and strategies for implementing community projects for change. This includes planning and implementing the Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative in APS focused on prevention of violence and substance abuse, and a successful YouthBuild program in Albuquerque.



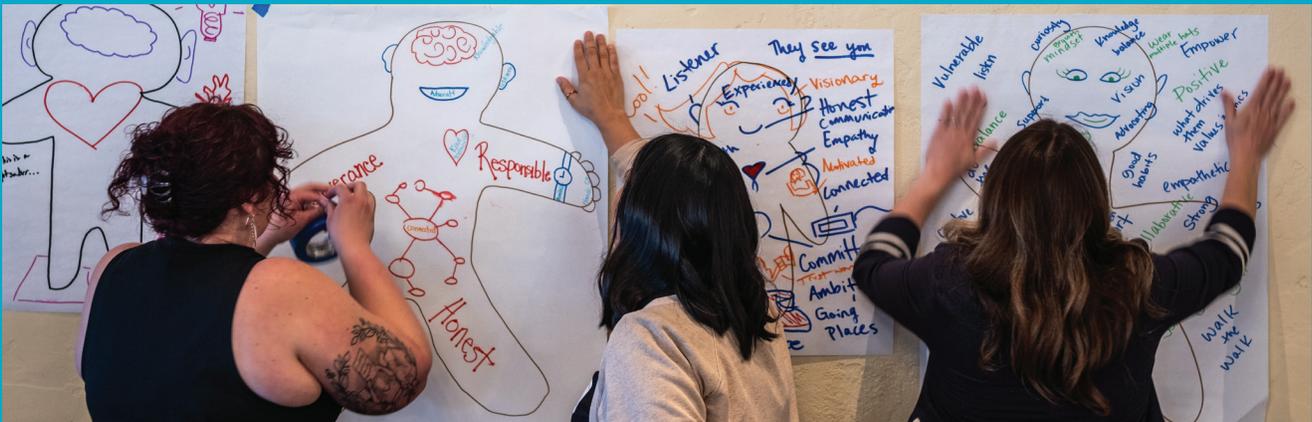
**Julie Brenning, Senior Manager of Community Schools and Extended Learning Bureau (CSEL), NM Public Education Department**

Julie Brenning is a dedicated and dynamic leader supporting community schools, out-of-school time, 21st Century Community Learning Centers and high-impact tutoring across New Mexico. She is driven by values of collaborative leadership, innovative excellence, and heart. Julie holds a Master's Degree in Asian Studies from the University of Utah, where her research focused on educational outcomes in the context of gender disparities, and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Brigham Young University.



Scan the QR code for more information on the breakout session speakers.

**Are you passionate about afterschool and summer learning?  
Are you ready to lead transformational change in your community?**



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# Session Descriptions



## 1. **The Human Thread – Cultivating Empathy Through Shared Experience** *Sierra I* **Madonna Hernandez**, Girls Inc. of Santa Fe

This interactive workshop invites youth-serving professionals to reconnect with the universal experiences of adolescence and discover meaningful parallels between their own youth and the young people they serve today. Through a guided “Common Ground” activity, participants will reflect on formative experiences, build empathy, and explore practical strategies for fostering authentic, trust-based relationships with youth.



## 2. **Entrepreneurial STEAM Challenges: Elevate Student Voice Through Innovation** *Sierra II* **Scott Mann**, VentureLab

Experience entrepreneurship in action through ESTEAM Challenges that center creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. Participants will work through a design-thinking process—empathy, ideation, prototyping, and pitching—while tackling a real-world challenge. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use ESTEAM activities and strategies to cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets in K–12 OST settings.



## 3. **Getting to the Money: Grant Writing Made Easy – Part 1** *Sierra III* **Sheneika Simmons**, Simmons Leadership Services

Identifying and securing funding can be one of the most challenging tasks for out-of-school time (OST) programs. Many program providers have varied backgrounds and experience levels, which could either help or hinder their ability to effectively identify and craft high-quality grant narratives. This workshop introduces participants to the foundational elements of successful grant writing. OST providers will learn how to identify fundable program ideas, understand common components of foundational grant applications, and align their program goals with funder priorities. Participants will also explore best practices for preparing to pursue grant opportunities. This session is ideal for OST professionals seeking to build or strengthen their grant writing knowledge and confidence.



## 4. **STEAM Activities for Your OST Program** *Sandia VI* **Amanda Smith**, Explora

Explore a variety of hands-on, interactive activities that you can implement immediately in your classroom. Participants will investigate paper helicopters, learn about soil density columns, and more using low-cost, easy-to-source materials. This workshop blends STEM learning with real-world application, offering ready-to-use activities that can be immediately implemented in OST programs.



## 5. **Explore New Mexico's STEM Innovation Network** *Sandia VI* **Erika Acosta**, STEM Innovation Network **Wanda Bulger-Tamez**, STEM Innovation Network

This interactive session introduces participants to the STEM Innovation Network and its regional hub model. Attendees will learn how hubs coordinate partnerships, share resources, and support statewide STEM priorities, including computer science, career pathways, and rural access. Facilitated networking will help participants identify collaborators and resources aligned with their community needs.



## 6. **Entrepreneurial STEAM Challenges: Elevate Student Voice Through Innovation** *Sierra II*

**Scott Mann**, VentureLab

Experience entrepreneurship in action through ESTEAM Challenges that center creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. Participants will work through a design-thinking process—empathy, ideation, prototyping, and pitching—while tackling a real-world challenge. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use ESTEAM activities and strategies to cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets in K–12 OST settings.



## 7. **Making it Happen: Successful Partnerships between CBOs and LEAs** *Sierra III*

**Rae Yazzie**, Boys & Girls Clubs of San Juan County/Farmington Municipal Schools

**Sharon Bassing**, Farmington Municipal Schools

This session offers a behind-the-scenes look at a successful 21st Century Community Learning Centers partnership between Farmington Municipal Schools and the Boys & Girls Club of San Juan County. Participants will explore program design, daily operations, evaluation, and sustainability, gaining practical insights into building and maintaining strong, high-impact OST partnerships.



## 8. **All Children Flourishing: Introduction to the Nurtured Heart Approach** *Sierra I*

**May Sagbakken**, New Mexico Out-of-School Time Network

Learn how to be a powerful agent of change in your afterschool and summer program with a few minutes of positive interventions every day. The Nurtured Heart Approach is a philosophy and set of dynamic strategies with no blame, no guilt and no negativity. The principles are focused on maximizing every child's potential and greatness. The approach is simple to implement and can have an immediate and lifelong effect on children's relationships with parents, teachers, and peers. In this session you will learn how to help children feel great about who they are and how to create thriving environments allowing children to flourish no matter the current behavior, condition or circumstance.



## 9. **Youth Entrepreneurship in OST: Panel Discussion and Lessons Learned** *Sierra I*

Facilitator: **Scott Mann**, VentureLab

**Robert Stokowy**, Warehouse 505

**Kate Porterfield**, Youth Agricultural Cooperative

**Andrew Trujillo**, Youth Agricultural Cooperative

**April Christensen**, Kids Can Youth Entrepreneurship Program

**Crystal Garcia**, Rio Grande Educational Collaborative

Discover how Youth Entrepreneurship (YE) is transforming out-of-school time programs across New Mexico and learn how to launch your own initiative. Our panel of local leaders will share practical strategies for helping youth of all ages turn creative ideas into prototypes and businesses. Join us to explore how these programs foster an entrepreneurial mindset through resilience, problem-solving, and hands-on innovation.



## 10. **Getting to the Money: Grant Writing Made Easy – Part 2** *Sierra III*

**Sheneika Simmons**, Simmons Leadership Services

Building on the foundational concepts introduced in Part 1, this workshop focuses on strengthening grant narratives. Participants will learn strategies for clearly articulating program needs, outcomes, and impact using data and storytelling techniques that resonate with funders. This workshop will also cover budgeting basics, including allowable costs, budget justification, and common pitfalls that can weaken funding applications. Participants will identify potential upcoming funding opportunities and leave with practical tools and best practices to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of their grant submissions.



**11. STEM with an "A": Hands-on Art Workshop for OST Programs** *Sandia VI*

**Flo Trujillo**, Board President Northwest New Mexico Arts Council

This engaging, hands-on workshop explores creative ways to use the arts to build confidence, personal skills, and career readiness. Participants will experience open-ended activities that give students the freedom to imagine, experiment, and develop original solutions. Working in teams, participants will solve an art-based optical illusion challenge, explore aromatic therapeutic play, and experience the fun and wonder of magic as a creative learning tool. Activities strengthen fine motor skills, critical thinking, self-expression, and storytelling using materials such as chalk markers. The workshop highlights how proficiency in the arts supports social-emotional learning and prepares youth for a wide range of career pathways.



**12. The Human Thread – Cultivating Empathy Through Shared Experiences** *Sierra II*

**Madonna Hernandez**, Girls Inc. of Santa Fe

This interactive workshop invites youth-serving professionals to reconnect with the universal experiences of adolescence and discover meaningful parallels between their own youth and the young people they serve today. Through a guided "Common Ground" activity, participants will reflect on formative experiences, build empathy, and explore practical strategies for fostering authentic, trust-based relationships with youth.



**13. NM Teen Centers: Emerging Trends, Innovations and Challenges** *Sierra I*

Facilitator: **Sandy Campbell**, True Kids 1

**Robert Stokowy**, Warehouse 505

**Christian Naea**, Boys and Girls Club of Santa Fe

**Sheldon Hamilton**, Explora

This panel discussion will bring together leaders from four New Mexico teen centers to explore the realities of serving teens in out-of-school time settings. Through open dialogue and shared reflection, panelists will discuss key topics such as mentorship, teen mental health, food access, creating safe and inclusive spaces, youth-driven program design, and staffing considerations. The session will examine what is working well—and what continues to be challenging—in teen programming, how programs have evolved since the pandemic, and the funding and operational realities unique to teen centers. Participants will gain practical insights, real-world examples, and a deeper understanding of current trends and challenges shaping teen services across New Mexico.



**14. Creators to Changemakers: Using AI to Build Youth-Led Entrepreneurship in OST Programs**

*Sierra II*

**Saul Nuñez**, Gadsden Independent School District

This hands-on session explores how AI tools can support youth creativity, storytelling, and entrepreneurial thinking in OST programs. Participants will engage with accessible platforms like Adobe Express and Canva to explore brainstorming, design, and content creation. Emphasizing equity and responsible AI use, the workshop provides adaptable project ideas that empower youth to turn ideas into action.



**15. Small Moments, Big Impact: The Secret to Powerful Relationships** *Sandia VI*

**Dr. Angela Redondo**, New Mexico Highlands University

**Dr. Dawn Berry**, New Mexico Highlands University

Everyday interactions hold the power to shape young people's confidence, growth, and sense of belonging. This session explores how intentional mentoring and relationship-building can transform routine moments into meaningful

opportunities for learning and connection. Participants will gain practical strategies to help youth feel seen, supported, and empowered—because when relationships are strong, programs thrive.

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**16. Summer Learning at Public Libraries Across New Mexico** *Sierra III*

**Kelly McCabe**, New Mexico State Library

**Brynn Cole**, Rio Rancho Public Library

Summer Reading Programs are a cornerstone of community learning, offering far more than books and prizes. This session highlights the statewide impact of summer learning at public libraries, featuring data, best practices, and a local case study. Participants will explore partnership opportunities and discover how libraries support literacy, engagement, and access to enriching OST programming across New Mexico.

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**17. Small Moments, Big Impact: The Secret to Powerful Relationships** *Sierra I*

**Dr. Angela Redondo**, New Mexico Highlands University

**Dr. Dawn Berry**, New Mexico Highlands University

Everyday interactions hold the power to shape young people's confidence, growth, and sense of belonging. This session explores how intentional mentoring and relationship-building can transform routine moments into meaningful opportunities for learning and connection. Participants will gain practical strategies to help youth feel seen, supported, and empowered—because when relationships are strong, programs thrive.

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**18. Accelerating Learning in Out-of-School Time Programs** *Sierra III*

**Elizabeth Rojas**, RTS Learning Foundation

This workshop explores how thoughtfully designed afterschool and camp programs can accelerate student learning while maintaining a joyful, youth-centered environment. Drawing from real-world OST leadership in a Title I community, participants will examine practical strategies for structuring learning time, grouping students, embedding tutoring, and using simple data to guide instruction. Attendees will leave with adaptable tools to strengthen engagement, consistency, and academic outcomes.

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**19. Get in the Game: Telling Your Unique Story to Stand Out and Win** *Sierra II*

**Laurel Meister Schmuck**, The Grant Plant Inc.

In this energetic, gamified workshop, participants will explore fundraising through storytelling, collaboration, and friendly competition. Working in small groups, attendees will brainstorm ideas, match projects to funder profiles, and participate in a Shark Tank–style pitch. Whether new to fundraising or looking to sharpen skills, participants will gain practical insights and hands-on experience to strengthen their funding strategies.

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**20. The "T" in STEM: Technology-Based Curricula for OST Programs** *Sandia VI*

**Kelsey Moore**, NMSU STEM Outreach Center

**Rina Viramontes**, NMSU STEM Outreach Center

Dive into hands-on technology experiences that showcase how innovation comes to life in OST settings. Participants will rotate through interactive stations featuring circuits, digital media, and virtual reality career exploration. This workshop offers a practical overview of technology-based curricula that spark curiosity, build skills, and connect students to real-world STEM and career pathways.