



MINNDEPENDENT

November 2025 Newsletter

Dear friends of private and independent education,

In January 2026, MINNDEPENDENT will mark the 50th anniversary of its founding. **A golden anniversary calls for much celebration!** There will be several opportunities to come together and celebrate five decades of connection, collaboration and impact. More to come, but keep your eyes out for some fun times!

The annual [STEM Grant Program](#) is open. This program has nearly 20 years of impact – investing more than \$1.8 million in grants, programs and services directly in member schools. Keep an eye on the [program calendar](#) to make sure your school does not miss out on this fantastic member benefit. You can also review the [types of projects funded over the last 11 grant cycles](#) on that same page.

Social media guru, [Andrea Gribble](#), will provide her annual update on the constantly changing social media landscape. Sign up for the webinar [Social Media Success in Private & Independent Schools: The Latest Trends & Time-Saving Tricks](#) on Thursday, January 15, 2026. Andrea will highlight the latest trends and engagement techniques that are currently making waves. Be ready for a fast paced and insightful session!

In this season of gratitude, we extend our heartfelt and sincere thanks to you – you empower our mission as a trusted partner to private and independent schools.

Tim Benz, President

ASK THE PRESIDENT

Have a question about issues like school transportation, Title funds, current legislation, etc.? Want Tim's take on the Vikings season? Ask the President! Click the button below.

Ask Tim

MINNDEPENDENT has negotiated a discounted rate for member schools interested in participating in the [#SocialSchool4EDU](#) Membership Program

READ MORE

MINNDEPENDENT Jobs Board

Member schools can post job listings for free.

READ MORE

Hats & Mittens is a nonprofit committed to providing hats and mittens for local children in need. Learn more and get involved!

[READ MORE](#)

Share your school's news!

Whether it's a noteworthy student achievement, a remarkable teacher initiative, or a collective success that deserves recognition, we want to share it! Drop us line below.

[EMAIL US](#)

The MINNDEPENDENT Newsletter is sponsored by

BUILDING FOR YOU

We know you're driven by mission and purpose, and at Opus, so are we.

We empower your mission through the buildings we deliver. Our purpose is to create meaningful spaces where people and communities can achieve their goals and truly thrive. In that spirit, we're pleased to introduce our team of industry-leading real estate design and construction professionals, with experience in the educational and institutional sectors.

We'd love the opportunity to learn about your organization's goals, share more about what we do and how we do it, and discuss how we can deliver value for you.

We look forward to meeting you at the Minndependent 2025 School Leadership Conference.

Let's Connect!



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2026 STEM Grant Program

MINNDEPENDENT is excited to announce the launch of our **2026 STEM Grant Program**, designed to empower your school's STEM initiatives and foster innovation. We offer four distinct grant opportunities to support your specific needs:

Innovation Grants (up to \$5,000): Fund innovative STEM projects that align with your school's goals.

Starter Grants (up to \$1,500): Launch new STEM programs or initiatives.

Sustainability Grants (up to 20% of the original

grant, not to exceed \$1,000): Provide supplemental funding for previously funded STEM projects.

Community Partnership Grants (We Share Solar):

Support hands-on solar education and service-learning for students in grades 7-12 in partnership with We Share Solar.

Take this opportunity to advance STEM learning at your school and inspire the next generation of innovators!



Current Grant Cycle Now Open

Submit your Letter of Interest by January 13, 2026 (6:00 p.m.)

See the Impact of Prior STEM Grants

"The MINNDEPENDENT STEM Grant Program was a huge help in reviving our school's robotics program. Through this project, students not only developed their technical STEM skills in designing, building, and programming robots, but they also enhanced their presentation and collaboration skills." **Nativity of Our Lord Catholic School (St. Paul)**

"We were able to set up an area for assembly of aircraft components. This has given us the first steps towards adding vocational options in our school. This grant extends our aviation classes (also supported by MINNDEPENDENT) from flight- related careers in aviation to aircraft maintenance careers. Some of our students had never seen a rivet gun nor assembled components from drawings." **Gene Poole, United Christian Academy (Bloomington)**



Ready to take the next step?

Express Your Interest: Must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) to be eligible to submit a grant application.

- [PDF - Reference Form](#)
- [Link to complete and submit Letter of Interest in Survey Monkey](#)
- **Deadline - Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026, by 6 pm**

Apply for a Grant: If your LOI is approved, you'll be invited to submit a full grant application.

- [PDF - Reference Form \(all grant types\)](#)
- [Link to complete and submit an application in Survey Monkey](#)
- **Deadline - Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026, by 6 pm**

Visit our STEM Grant Resource Page to LEARN MORE

STEM GRANT RESOURCE PAGE

Key Resources:

- [STEM Grant Program Calendar](#)
- [STEM Grant Program Applicant Guide](#)
- [Academic Standards and Other STEM Resources](#)
- [Resources for Inclusive STEM Learning](#)
- [Community Partnership Grant \(We Share Solar\) Program Overview](#)
- [Project Descriptions of STEM Grant Awarded Last Six Years](#)

Unlock new possibilities, inspire students, and shape the future of STEM education at your school.

MINNDEPENDENT's STEM Program: How to Write a Winning STEM Grant Proposal & Intro to Community Partnerships

In this session, new and experienced grant writers will gain tips for writing stronger MINNDEPENDENT STEM Grant applications and learn about what our STEM Advisory Committee looks for when reviewing grant proposals and making funding recommendations.



Beth Murphy Ph.D.
STEM Program Manager

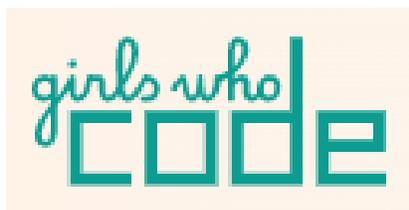
**RECORDED
WEBINAR**

QUESTIONS

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STEM SCOOP



Build Tech Skills and Confidence with Girls Who Code Clubs!

Start a free [Girls Who Code Club](#) for your students and get everything you need to build community, inspire curiosity, and show young people how coding connects to the world around them. Clubs meet just

1-2 hours per week and can run after school, during lunch, integrated into an existing program, or even online—whatever works for your schedule. Sign up and you'll get access to the free curriculum for 3rd-12th graders, training, and facilitation resources.

Ready to get started? Complete the Clubs Application at girlswhocode.com/clubsapply and make sure to list MINNDEPENDENT as your Community Partner on the application!

Minnesota STEM Curriculum

[Bridge UP! Curriculum](#)

MnDOT's Bridge UP! curriculum provides free classroom resources for teachers using bridge design and construction principles as the foundation for learning.

[Cedar Creek Education Digital Library](#)

Library of mostly K-2 ecology activities from Cedar Creek Ecosystem Reserve in northern Minnesota.

[Chemistry Outreach](#)

Chemistry Outreach is a University of Minnesota program that does chemistry demonstrations and discusses chemistry careers in local schools and at larger events.

[Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education](#)

Discover K-12 online resources including engaging videos and interactive modules about storm drain education, the Mississippi Rivers, Lake Superior and more!

[Living River Online](#)

This online program demonstrates how organisms live within an ecosystem. Three interactive stations feature exciting videos and fun learning modules about floodplains, mussels, pike and the Mississippi River! The course explores different ways to look at the

[Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom Virtual Field Trips](#)

Virtual field trips to numerous Minnesota farms representing a diverse array of agriculture. Includes distance learning, in person, and connected curriculum.

[Energy Trailer, Minnesota State Energy Center of Excellence](#)

The Mobile Energy Classroom Trailer is a resource for teachers who would like to use tools and equipment to engage their classes deeply in energy generation, efficiency, and exploration labs. These are meant to be hands on opportunities to help meet classroom needs. Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, Agriculture, Career and Technical Education teachers are welcome to request the trailer.

[Minnesota Zoo's Educator Resources](#)

A wide array of activities, resources, and curriculum to support schools and youth groups. Explore Moose Mission, a new educational platform to learn about the science of moose in Minnesota.

[MnDOT's STEM Education and Outreach](#)

MnDOT has created new ways to help students explore STEM topics in the real world! Activities are free and easy to download or schedule.

[No Boundaries to the Boundary Waters](#)

An educational program of Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness designed to bring the ecology and wonder of the Boundary Waters into classrooms across Minnesota. Free units are provided, including teacher resources.

[STARBASE Minnesota](#) STEM Unit and Kits for Schools

Free Destination Mars kits and curriculum.

Young Naturalists

Minnesota Conservation Volunteer magazine's Young Naturalists series is designed to engage students with a wide variety of nonfiction topics on natural science and outdoor life.

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Thrivent Choice® celebrates 15 years of giving!

- **Is your school a Thrivent Choice Recipient?**
- **What does Thrivent Choice mean for your school?**

The Thrivent Choice charitable grant program engages Thrivent clients and Thrivent Member Networks by providing grants to support their favorite churches, nonprofit organizations and causes...like YOUR School. Thrivent clients receive Thrivent Choice Dollars they can direct to causes they care about.

15 Years of Generosity!

Let's celebrate 15 years of **Thrivent Choice®** and an impact of over \$620 million. This October, join in the celebration. When eligible

members direct Choice Dollars ®, their selected organization(s) could be one of 15 randomly selected to receive a \$15,000 grant from Thrivent.

If you've already directed Choice Dollars in October — thank you. Your organization(s) is entered. (Maximum one entry per organization).

Thank you for helping us make an impact — today and for the next 15 years to come.

Note: Winners will be notified by the end of November. You can check [here](#) to see which organizations received the grants.

If your school is not a [Thrivent Choice](#) Recipient contact OR if you'd like more information, please reach out.



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MINNDEPENDENT Preferred Partner Spotlight



Dr. Jules Nolan

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Serving non-public and independent schools in Minneapolis-St. Paul and greater Minnesota with counselors and support for parents, teachers, and administrators.



Preferred Partnership Program

This exclusive program recognizes the top 30% of our partners who have demonstrated a strong commitment to our mission and member schools. By partnering with Preferred Partners, schools can access a comprehensive ecosystem of trusted resources to provide the best possible products and services to their communities.



Important Dates to Remember

- **January 13, 2026: STEM Grant LOIs due by 6pm**
- **January 15, 2026: Social Media Success webinar with Andrea Gribble**
- **February 10, 2026: Final STEM Grant applications due by 6pm**

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For Private & Independent Schools



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