Motorola Foundations' 2010 Innovation Generation Grant Recipients Awards $7.5 million

The Motorola Foundation recently announced the 2010 grant recipients of its signature Innovation Generation program, which provides more than $7.5 million to K-12 science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education programs across the country.

Now in its fourth year, the program builds on President Barack Obama's "Educate to Innovate" campaign and federal initiatives like the Race to the Top Fund by incorporating funding, employee volunteers and intra-grantee collaboration to help boost American students' engagement in math and science.

"These grants not only help ensure that we are adequately building a pipeline of critical thinkers, but also bring together diverse organizations to create new partnerships and spur innovative thinking and programming," said Eileen Sweeney, director of the Motorola Foundation.

The grants were awarded during the second annual Motorola Foundation Innovation Generation Network Conference - keynoted by former NASA astronaut and STEM leader Sally Ride - on July 12-13, which convenes the full network of grantees and provides a forum to share best practices, leverage resources and cultivate an informed front line of advocates.

This Innovation Generation network provides an unparalleled opportunity to leverage a national system of peers eager to advance U.S. STEM education. Already, partnerships created within the network have resulted in new programming, with several receiving grants this year.

Innovation Generation grants support six distinct areas around STEM education, including programs that:

•Engage students and teachers in innovative, hands-on activities, including the FabFems Project—an Innovation Generation Collaborative Grant—which is translating Smith College's STEM content into a widely available cyber-learning environment and support system to be distributed across the National Girls Collaborative Project network. The initiative engages girls, female educators and STEM professionals in a nationwide network of STEM expertise.

•Teach STEM and develop innovative thinking and creative problem-solving skills, such as the John G. Shedd Aquarium's Underwater Robotics program, which teaches STEM principles through building a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) to investigate aquatic environments.

•Represent new models and have been operating for less than two years, such as

GameDesk, Inc.'s initiative to engage minority youth to engineer their own games in teams, utilizing inspiration from their personal lives and high-level math and technology concepts.

•Focus on girls and minorities that are currently underrepresented in the STEM disciplines, such as the Girl Scouts of the USA, which provides financial support, robotics and engineering activities, peer mentoring and adult training to the more than 200 Girl Scout teams that participate in the FIRST Robotics competition each year.

•Take place in communities with Motorola employees, such as The Field Museum's Early Elementary Science Partnership (E2SP) —an Innovation Generation Collaborative Grant with Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Northwestern University, Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago Children's Museum and Lincoln Park Zoo—which is working with CPS staff and students to address teacher weaknesses in science education. By partnering with the museum, E2SP directly links scientific resources to professional development.

•Support environment-focused learning, such as Sustainable South Bronx's FabLab program, which offers resources to local designers and entrepreneurs interested in designing products from waste streams, creating economic opportunity in the under-served area of South Bronx.

This year, bolstered by a 50 percent increase in funding commitments from the Motorola Foundation, there are 114 grantees. Of these, nearly two-thirds are new programming supported by Innovation Generation.

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