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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025

Bill Number	<u>SB107</u>	Sponsor	<u>Pope/Garratt/Gurrola/Gonzales</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.229411.2</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>NMSU STEM Center of Excellence</u>		
Analyst	<u>Hicks</u>	Original Date	<u>1/24/2025</u>
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FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 107 (SB107) would establish and fund a statewide innovation network for science, technology, mathematics, and engineering (STEM) resources and programs to support education and workforce development. The proposed STEM innovation network would be required to create a steering committee and have a “principal hub” to manage the network’s activities. The proposed network would also be allowed to establish regional and tribal hubs statewide. The following components of the network would be created:

1. A **steering committee** comprising government agencies, kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) educators, industry and business leaders in STEM fields, tribal education officials, and community partners that would also oversee selection of regional and tribal hubs;
2. A **“principal hub”** which the bill requires to be the center of excellence for innovation in STEM housed at New Mexico State University (NMSU); and
3. **Regional and tribal hubs** located around the state, which SB107 directs to be selected by the steering committee.

SB107 also establishes annual reporting requirements, requires the steering committee to meet regularly, and specifies purposes of the STEM innovation network including fostering access to education and employment opportunities, strengthening STEM initiatives, and connecting educators to STEM professional learning.

FISCAL IMPACT

SB107 would appropriate \$6 million from the public education reform fund (PERF) to the Public Education Department (PED) for expenditure in FY26 through FY28 to support the operations of the STEM innovation network. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY28 shall revert to the PERF. The LESC recommendation for public school support for FY26 includes \$6 million in funding from the PERF to support a STEM innovation network.

As a center of excellence, the principal hub located at NMSU would also be allowed to actively seek out and accept public and private funding to finance the initiatives of the network, including seeking additional resources through the research and public service project (RPSP) process.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Throughout the 2024 interim, LESC staff studied the state’s existing STEM landscape and heard stakeholders identify a need for a comprehensive, coordinated statewide vision for STEM education and workforce development in New Mexico. SB107 would create structures that could allow for greater connections between K-12 education, higher education, industry, and communities across the state to provide educational and career pathways in STEM.

Steering Committee Structure and Role. Under the provisions of SB107, a steering committee charged with overall governance of the network would be created and directed to meet at least once per quarter of each fiscal year. SB107 directs PED, the Higher Education Department (HED), the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD), the Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS), and the Indian Affairs Department (IAD) to provide agency representatives to the steering committee. PED would also be required to appoint a K-12 teacher representative, an out-of-school time representative, a charter school representative, and representatives for the Navajo Nation, Mescalero Apache Tribe, Jicarilla Apache Nation, and the All Pueblo Council of Governors; HED would appoint a higher education STEM faculty representative; and DWS would appoint a STEM industry representative.

Regional and Tribal Hubs. The steering committee would be responsible for establishing criteria governing the application process for regional and tribal hubs. This application process would be administered by the principal hub, which the bill identifies would be housed at NMSU. Following the completion of this process, the steering committee would then select statewide regional and tribal hubs. A maximum of eight regional hubs would be selected. SB107 specifies any federally recognized tribe, nation, or pueblo in the state would also be eligible to establish their own specific hub. The proposed language defining which entities can serve as hubs is broad, allowing for a local government, tribal government, private organization, or a consortium of multiple parties to become hubs. LESC staff analysis of the proposed measure indicates that tribes, nations, and pueblos would be able to operate network hubs specific to their own communities, which could allow for recognition and respect for the right of these sovereign governments to self-govern, self-determine, and make decisions about education policies, programs, and curriculum that align with their cultural values and priorities.

STEM Readiness. Given the high demand for careers in STEM fields in the modern workforce, New Mexico students would benefit from exiting public school with a strong grasp of math and science concepts. According to [employment projections](#) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in STEM occupations is projected to increase by 10.8 percent between 2022 and 2032, compared with 2.3 percent for non-STEM occupations. According to a DWS [data focus report](#), the median STEM occupation wage in New Mexico is \$76.2 thousand per year, compared with a median non-STEM wage of \$46.8 thousand.

New Mexico’s STEM Ready! [math](#) and [science](#) standards, in turn, place a strong emphasis on preparing students for a 21st century economy and society increasingly driven by the impacts of STEM. To support greater student engagement with STEM topics, New Mexico has also launched the [Governor’s STEM Challenge](#). By coordinating efforts around the state under a shared vision for education and workforce development, it appears the proposed STEM network would aim to better prepare New Mexicans for a STEM-driven society and improve access to STEM resources.

Despite the importance of STEM education, data shows New Mexico students are not adequately prepared for the current and future job market. [NM Vistas data](#) from the 2023-2024 school year finds that about one in four New Mexico students (23 percent) are proficient in math, while just under two in five students (38 percent) are proficient in science.

There is also an underrepresentation of various demographic groups in the STEM workforce. [Data](#) from DWS suggests males have historically held nearly 75 percent of all STEM occupations in New Mexico. In terms of race and ethnicity, the most recently available data from DWS from 2018 shows non-Hispanic white workers made up 57.2 percent of all STEM workers in New Mexico, above New Mexico's total proportion of non-Hispanic white residents (36.8 percent), while Hispanic/Latino, Black, and Native American residents made up smaller percentages of the STEM workforce compared with their representation in New Mexico's overall demographics.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SB107 would require several state agencies (PED, HED, ECECD, DWS, and IAD) to allocate staff time to serve as members of the steering committee and adopt processes for identifying and selecting representatives for the STEM network steering committee.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Centers of Excellence. SB107 amends Section 21-1-27.11 NMSA 1978 to create a new center of excellence at NMSU to “work toward innovation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.” The bill proposes additional language that would allow centers of excellence to administer programs provided for by law. In practice, this change authorizes the STEM center of excellence at NMSU to serve as the STEM network's principal hub. New Mexico law currently designates four centers of excellence at higher education institutions across the state. The current centers of excellence focus on topics such as cybersecurity (New Mexico Institute of Technology), sustainable agriculture (NMSU), renewable energy (San Juan College), and bioscience (University of New Mexico).

National and State Context. At the July 2024 hearing of the LESC, both national and state advocates for STEM education and workforce development, along with PED and LESC staff, presented on the potential of a STEM innovation network. Panelists cited the state's low proficiency rates in both science and math, as well as the siloed nature of existing resources, as barriers to workforce development and academic excellence in STEM. Testimony from STEMx, a national STEM organization supporting STEM networks in other states, [outlined](#) best practices in various states' networks, which this proposal appears to align with.

Structurally, the proposal for a New Mexico STEM network in this bill is most like that of Louisiana. [LASTEM](#), overseen by an advisory council and divided into nine geographic regions, is housed under the Louisiana Board of Regents, and is responsible for developing a statewide definition of STEM education and providing students and educators with access to STEM internship programs, professional development, out-of-school time programming, and funding.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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