

**Subject:** STEAM Train, Inc. Selected as Part of Microsoft's National TechSpark Program to Grow Economic Opportunity in Connecticut.

STEAM Train and Microsoft to work together to ensure regional workforce development programs focused on supporting individual job seekers through digital skilling.

**MIDDLETOWN, CT, July 25, 2023** – STEAM Train, Inc. announced today that it will be working with Microsoft TechSpark to foster inclusive economic opportunity, job creation, and innovation in the Central Connecticut region. STEAM Train is committed to moving generations, especially underrepresented populations, to careers in STEM. Our Fast Track Academy (FTA) enrolls unemployed and underemployed adults for an opportunity to receive free IT training, and upon completion, qualified individuals take part in a paid IT apprenticeship with the objective of potentially being employed and transitioning into a technical support job. We are specifically addressing the digital skills gap in our community. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) expects employment of computer support specialists to grow by 10% between 2018 and 2028, which is a faster than average rate of growth, and in the state of CT there are over 2,000 unfilled entry level tech jobs. FTA intentionally recruits adults who need to acquire IT support skills to earn a living wage.

In addition to the Fast Track Academy that prepares individuals for today's workplace, STEAM Train offers a wide range of free services in our community that benefit multiple generations, from preschoolers to adults. Some of our core program for youth include Adventures in Learning STEM GEMS Camp that introduces students to the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and math through innovative learning experiences, and Connect-In-Tech Camp where highschoolers learn about computer hardware, operating systems, and electrical circuits as they refurbish laptops that they get to keep. We also partner with local school districts to enhance their STEM/STEAM offerings. This effort will be supported by a Microsoft grant to fund a TechSpark Community Engagement Fellow, who will spearhead local efforts, working with local partners to provide inclusive digital skilling. This Fellowship represents the first time TechSpark has worked in the state of Connecticut.

"To be selected by Microsoft for this fellowship is truly an honor and answer to our prayers," said Founder and CEO Donna Hylton. "STEAM Train looks forward to the growth and expansion that this opportunity will afford us. We hope to maintain a lasting relationship with Microsoft that will serve as a future pipeline for STEAM Train's constituents."

"Since we launched TechSpark in 2017, we've helped communities secure more than \$125 million in funding and helped create thousands of jobs," said Kate Behnken, Corporate Vice President, Microsoft Philanthropies. "By expanding TechSpark to all 50 states, we hope to continue our hyperlocal, partner-driven work to help communities realize the potential of technology and foster greater economic opportunity."

Earlier this year, Microsoft announced the expansion of its [TechSpark](#) program to tackle digital inclusion in four focus areas: digital access, digital skills, computer science education, and digital

transformation with local based organizations. Since its inception in 2017, TechSpark has helped its eight communities secure more than \$125 million in community funding, skill 55,000 people, and create 3,300 jobs. Read more about Microsoft TechSpark [here](#).

To learn more about STEAM Train, visit our website at <https://www.steamtraininc.org/>.