



Framing Your Elevator Pitch (Before and After Examples)

This routine interaction is a great framing opportunity, so make the most of it! Instead of starting with your title, which communicates what you do, use a value to help people understand why you do what you do and explanatory metaphors to explain how you do it. Focusing on the why and how of your work—rather than just the what—helps people understand the value of afterschool and summer STEM programs to our society and the need for policies and resources to support that programming. The examples below illustrate how to reframe a brief pitch about your work to maximize your framing effectiveness.

Elevator Pitch #1: Talking about disparities in access to afterschool and summer STEM learning

Before

Hi, I'm [name], and I'm [title] at [name of organization]. At [name of organization], we support and create STEM learning opportunities for kids in afterschool programs. Our goal is greater parity in STEM education and in STEM careers, so we focus our work on students who are underrepresented in these fields, such as girls, low-income children of color, and kids from rural areas. We know that students who major in STEM subjects in college are more likely to find good jobs and earn higher salaries when they graduate from college. That's why afterschool STEM programs are so important—they help build kids' interest in STEM subjects, which helps them prepare for future careers and financial success. And they help our nation stay competitive in our global economy.

Spell out the STEM acronym to ensure people understand what it means—and that it's about more than just science.

In discussions of disparities, STEM advocates often focus on groups that are underrepresented in STEM careers. Doing so reinforces the idea STEM is good for *some*, but not all, kids.

Appealing to future financial success doesn't support thinking about STEM education on a societal level.

Appealing to *Global Competition* cues doubts about whether the US can "catch up" to the rest of the world—or it puts people on the defensive about US economic dominance. Worse, talking about differences between countries cues biases against different groups, including in the US.

After

At [name of organization], we help ensure that all kids—whatever neighborhood they live in and no matter their background—have opportunities to learn about science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM subjects, in afterschool programs. We think of afterschool STEM learning opportunities as a kind of charging station where children can “plug in” and super-charge their learning. Some students attend schools with strong afterschool programs, or have access to a rich diversity of community programming, but others are in learning dead zones. We help create a reliable network of afterschool charging stations so all kids, in all neighborhoods, can power up their STEM learning. Creating a strong afterschool system across the city will help all students have high-quality opportunities to develop the STEM skills they’ll need to participate in the 21st-century workforce and propel our economy forward.

Instead of drawing attention to specific groups, prime people to think about fixing disparities across places. Talking about fairness across places is more effective than naming disadvantaged groups.

The *Charging Stations* metaphor explains how disparate outcomes are rooted in disparate learning opportunities—and how a strong national network of afterschool STEM improves STEM proficiency.

Instead of focusing on financial success, emphasize that developing STEM skills will build a 21st-century workforce that benefits us all.

**Elevator Pitch #2:
Talking about the value of afterschool STEM programs**

Before

In our state, thousands of children don’t have access to afterschool STEM programs, which means they aren’t developing the skills they need to succeed in 21st-century careers. At [organization], we provide grants to communities to develop afterschool STEM programs, so more children have opportunities to explore STEM subjects in and out of school. Afterschool STEM programs teach kids more than just math and science—they teach kids to develop the critical-thinking and problem-solving skills they need to succeed in school and in life, and which drive our economy forward.

Avoid crisis language, which causes people to think that problems are too big to solve.

Avoid appeals to career success, which shift thinking away from public investments in afterschool STEM programs.

The public doesn’t understand that “real” learning takes place in a variety of contexts in and out of school. This piece doesn’t explain that.

After

At [organization], we focus on getting our state ready for the future by making sure all children have opportunities to explore science, technology, engineering, and math. Our grant programs support afterschool STEM learning opportunities so more kids can develop the skills they need to participate in the 21st-century workplace. STEM learning doesn't just take place in school; it also takes place after school, on weekends, and over the summer. Think of it like an ecosystem: A thriving ecosystem contains lots of biodiversity, and the plants and animals all play a role in maintaining the whole system's health. In the same way, STEM skills develop well when children have plenty of diverse, high-quality opportunities to practice what they learn. When the STEM ecosystem is missing vital components, like quality afterschool programs, it is harder for children's STEM skills to thrive.

The reframed pitch explains that developing children's STEM skills supports the long-term vitality of our society. Remember that the goal is to foster a can-do spirit, not feelings of crisis or despair.

Use the *STEM Ecosystem* metaphor to help people understand that children need lots of opportunities to explore STEM subjects to build STEM skills.

Be sure to give metaphors "room to breathe." Extend them with words, phrases, and images that solidify the analogy and make it memorable, or "sticky."



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