

Building space for LGBTQ+ in STEAM

# 2023 Impact Report



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** Introduction
- 4** Mission
- 5** Letter From the Executive Director
- 7** Meet the Team
- 8** The PATHS Program
- 9** PATHS 2023 Data
- 11** PluralSight One
- 14** Testimonials
- 15** Events
- 16** Challenges Faced by the LGBTQ+ Community
- 17** Key Takeaways, Successes, and Challenges
- 18** More From LGBT Tech
- 18** Acknowledgments
- 18** Contact Us



# INTRODUCTION

STEAM fields play a highly influential role in shaping the world we live in. From advancements in healthcare, to building the technologies we interact with daily, to designing the infrastructure of our communities, the innovations of STEAM fields directly impact our daily lives. STEAM fields rely heavily on creativity, problem-solving, and innovation to be successful and thrive. To ensure that we are building an ethical, equitable, and inclusive world, and for the sake of advancement across STEAM industries, the LGBTQ+ community must be equitably represented within the STEAM workforce.

Currently, STEAM industries have some of the lowest rates of representation of LGBTQ+ community members across workforces<sup>1</sup>. The lack of visibility of LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals can deter new generations of LGBTQ+ individuals from pursuing careers in STEAM as

it leads to a lack of role models, and mentorship opportunities, and creates stereotypes about who ‘belongs’ in STEAM<sup>2</sup>. Prevalent workplace discrimination and non-inclusive workplace policies lead to high rates of mental health issues and significantly low retention rates for community members who pursue STEAM careers<sup>3</sup>. In the United States, STEAM degrees are among the most expensive. At the same time, careers in STEAM fields offer job security and opportunities for economic stability, something that the LGBTQ+ community disproportionately lacks access to. Studies show time and time again that diverse workforces produce the best results.

*“Not only did the funds help my thesis project which is so important for my career development, it has also connected me with a wonderful mentor. This mentor is helping me explore barriers to education and treatment in the STEAM career fields that I grew up thinking I had to accept.”*

— 2023 PATHS grantee

**By creating visibility, providing direct financial support, and building a safe and supportive space through our mentorship network, LGBT Tech’s PATHS program embraces a holistic approach to empowering the LGBTQ+ STEAM community.**

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- 1 Cech, E. A., & Waidzunus, T. J. (2017). Queer in STEM: Workplace Experiences Reported in a National Survey of LGBTQIA Individuals in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Careers. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 64(10), 1393-1413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1314167>
  - 2 Hughes, B. E. (2018). Coming Out in STEM: Factors Affecting Retention of Sexual Minority STEM Students. *Science Advances*, 4(3), eaao6373. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aao6373>
  - 3 Barthelemy, R. S., Bentley, M. A., & Gifford, B. K. (2022). LGBTQ+ physicists: Harassment, exclusion, and isolation in physics. *Physical Review Physics Education Research*, 18(1), 010124. <https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevPhysEducRes.18.010124>



# OUR MISSION



PATHS is a program to inspire and empower LGBTQ+ youth and young adults interested in careers in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) through storytelling by current LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals, and connection to the resources needed to pursue STEAM careers.





# A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Friends, Partners, Supporters and Future Supporters,

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense pride for the strides we have made together in advancing the visibility and representation of LGBTQ+ individuals in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) fields. 2023 has been a remarkable year for LGBT Tech's PATHS Program, and it is through the collective efforts of our community, partners, and sponsors that we have been able to continue fostering a more inclusive and equitable future for LGBTQ+ professionals in these critical fields.

This year, PATHS has expanded its reach, offering both mentorship and direct financial support to LGBTQ+ students and early career professionals in STEAM. We provided nearly \$75,000 in educational grants to 18 individuals, enabling them to pursue their dreams without the financial barriers that too often stand in the way of our community. Through our mentorship program, 22 mentees successfully graduated, growing not only their professional networks but also their confidence in navigating their STEAM careers. In fact, a post survey of participants revealed that 40% of these bright LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals might not have continued a path into STEAM if not for the PATHS Program. These numbers represent so much more than just financial aid or professional advice; they represent opportunity, equity, and the dismantling of barriers for future generations.

The success of our mentorship and grant programs, bolstered by our partnerships with industry, has been a driving force behind our efforts to provide real, tangible



# A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CONT.


pathways into STEAM careers. We know that increasing LGBTQ+ representation in STEAM is crucial for creating innovative, diverse, and inclusive workforces that are better equipped to shape a more equitable world for all.

But as we celebrate these milestones, we also recognize the challenges that remain. Our community continues to face discrimination, wage gaps, and underrepresentation across many industries, especially in STEAM. Legislative attacks on DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives have made our work more urgent than ever. While we have achieved significant progress, there is still much more to be done to ensure that LGBTQ+ individuals not only enter STEAM fields but thrive within them.

At LGBT Tech, we are committed to continuing this work, to expanding the reach of the PATHS program, and to ensuring that all LGBTQ+ individuals feel seen, supported, and empowered to pursue their careers in STEAM. Together, with your support, we can create a future where every person, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can contribute their brilliance to the world.

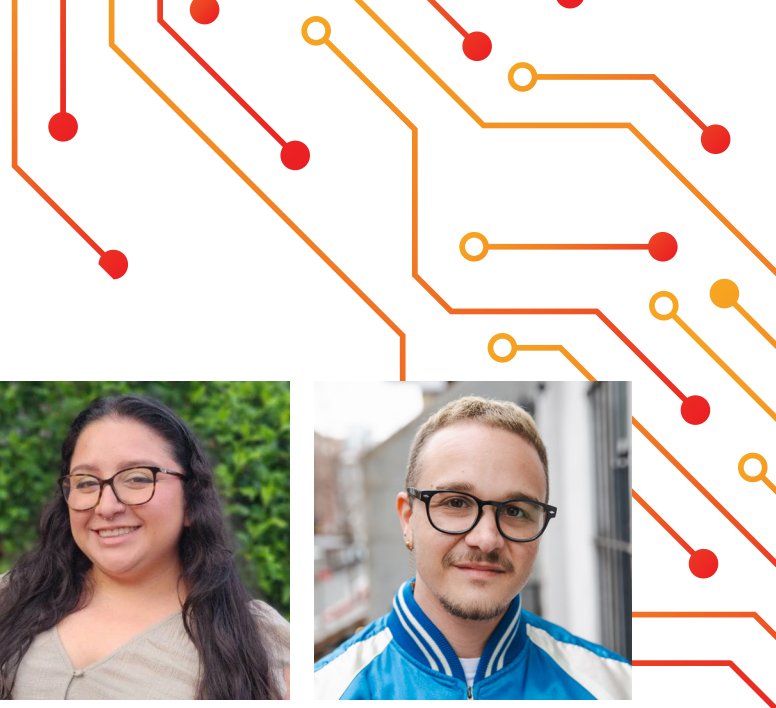
Thank you for standing with us on this journey. Together, we are building a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

With gratitude,

**LGBT** Christopher Wood  
 Executive Director & Co-Founder,  
**TECH** LGBT Tech



# MEET THE TEAM



**Christopher Wood**  
(He/Him)  
Executive Director  
& Co-Founder of  
LGBT Tech



**Kristen Kelley**  
(She/They)  
Director of Programs



**Samantha Sygier  
Cayax**  
(She/Her)  
Programs Coordinator



**Max Skaff**  
(He/They)  
Director of Photography  
and Editor



**Ellie Bessette**  
(She/Her)  
Director of Operations  
& Finance



**Tatyana Ithier**  
(She/Her)  
Communications &  
Marketing Coordinator



**Arin Rook**  
(They/Them)  
Digital Inclusion  
Manager





# PATHS PROGRAMS

## PATHS Interviews

PATHS is committed to creating visibility of LGBTQ+ professionals working across STEAM fields in order to inspire new generations of community members to follow their “paths” into STEAM. PATHS conducts interviews with current LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals in which they share their stories, experiences, and wisdom. Amplification of these experiences also helps to inform important conversations about how STEAM workplaces can be more authentically diverse, equitable, and inclusive of marginalized communities.

## PATHS STEAM Educational Grant

We recognize that while STEAM jobs offer increased financial stability, they also require resources to pursue successfully. We are dedicated to empowering more LGBTQ+ individuals to enter STEAM by removing financial barriers by providing this grant opportunity. Through the PATHS STEAM Educational Grant, LGBTQ+ individuals can apply for up to \$5,000 in grant funding to support their education in STEAM.

## PATHS Mentorship Program

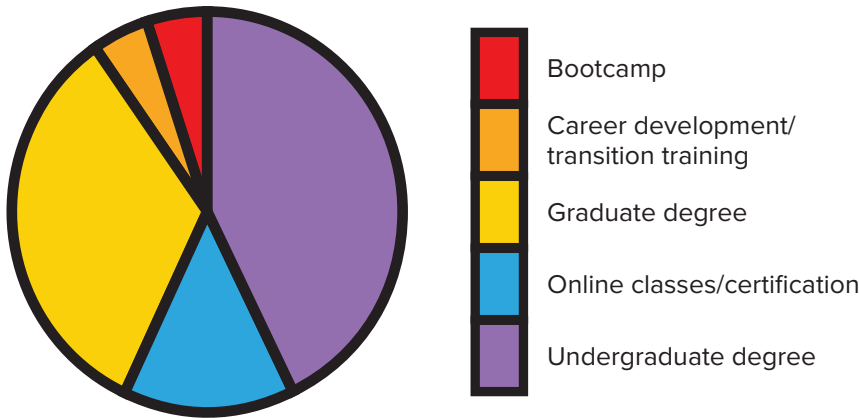
The PATHS Mentorship Program connects LGBTQ+ individuals starting out in STEAM to a network of mentors and peers in order to ensure they have the guidance, resources, and support necessary to be successful in their pursuits into STEAM. We aim to build not only a network of support, but an entire community of LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals in which PATHS mentees will one day have the opportunity to be mentors to the next generation of community members entering STEAM.





# PATHS 2023 DATA

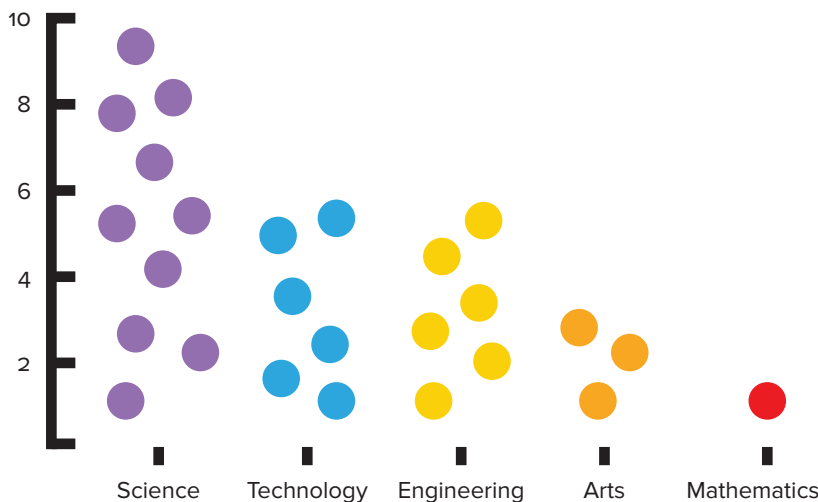
## Grantee STEAM Educational Program Breakdown



*I loved being a part of the program because I finally felt welcome and seen in my STEAM career. I felt so alone for a long time being both a woman and queer in the STEAM profession and I struggled tremendously to find people like me.*

— 2023 PATHS grantee

## 2023 PATHS Program Participants Were Pursuing Education in the Following STEAM Fields:



## IN 2023, PATHS:

Provided  
**\$74,952**

in education grants to  
**18 LGBTQ+ students**  
in STEAM fields

Graduated  
**22 mentees**

from the first annual cohort of the PATHS Mentorship Program

Received

**29,537 views**

of PATHS interview content

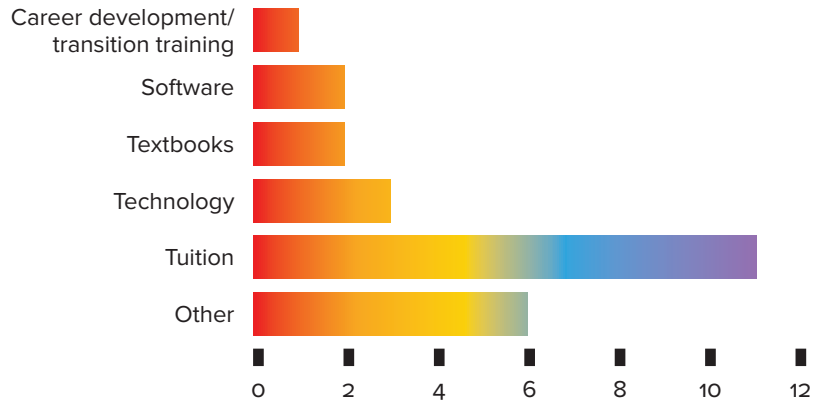


# PATHS 2023 DATA

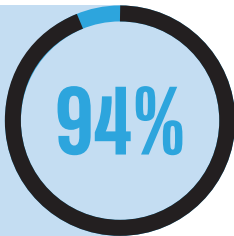
## How Grantees Used PATHS STEAM Educational Grant Funds



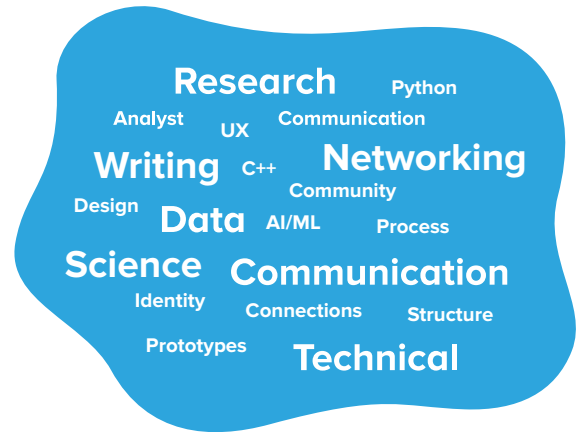
## PATHS STEAM Educational Grant Funds Use



94% of grantees reported that the PATHS STEAM Educational Grant relieved financial stress for them.



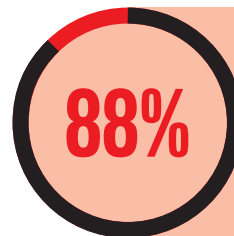
## Skills or Knowledge Gained to Support Job Seeking Through PATHS Mentorship Program



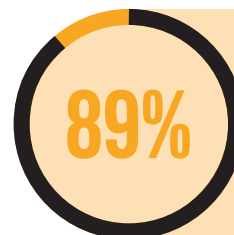
53% of grantees reported that without the PATHS STEAM Educational Grant they would not have been able to participate in their educational program.



## Mentees Reported Learning the Following Skills



88% of mentees reported that the PATHS Mentorship Program enabled them to grow their professional network.



89% of mentees reported that the PATHS Mentorship Program enabled them to grow their professional network.

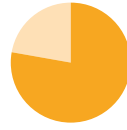


# PATHS 2023 DATA



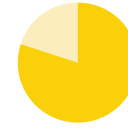
**23%**

of grantees saw an increase in their income level during the program.



**78%**

of grantees reported that after 12 months of participation in the PATHS program they felt increased levels of confidence in their STEAM subject matter.



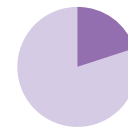
**80%**

of participants were employed upon graduation from the program, 83% of which were employed within STEAM fields.



**95%**

of program participants reported that participating in the PATHS Mentorship Program provided them with community and safe space to navigate their STEAM education and career goals.



**20%**

of program participants reported an increased sense of feeling welcomed in their STEAM education program or STEAM workplace as an LGBTQ+ person upon completion of the PATHS Mentorship Program.

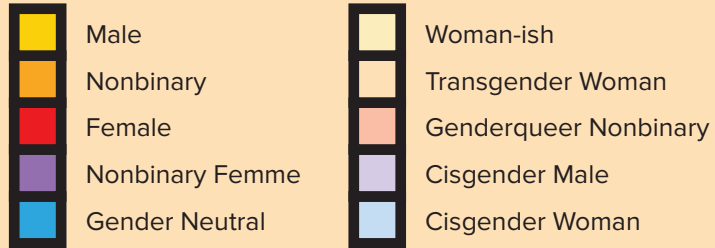
## PLURALSIGHT ONE

**PLURALSIGHT one** In 2023, Pluralsight One generously supported the PATHS program with a donation of 200 Pluralsight licenses. We worked closely with the Pluralsight One team to develop various educational course tracks around STEAM and job readiness skills customized for PATHS participants. The licenses provided access to courses and certifications that supported recipients' pathways into careers in tech, including courses around software architecture, coding languages, cybersecurity, professional skills, and much more.



# 2023 PATHS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

## Gender Identity



\*Gender identity is self-defined by participants.

*Receiving the PATHS grant helped me focus on my studies... at the beginning of my STEAM grad program. Instead of worrying about money, I could get the [gender affirming] treatment that I needed and focus on making connections and learning in school while presenting as my true self.*

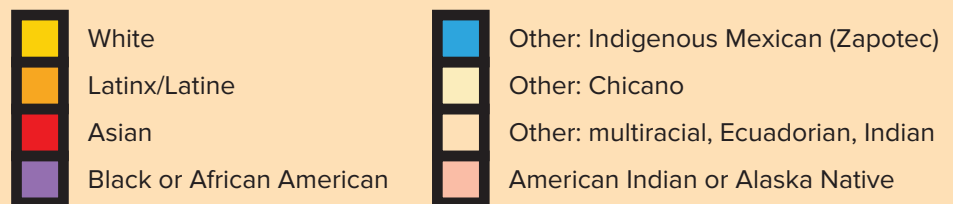
— 2023 PATHS grantee

## Sexual Orientation



\*Sexual orientation is self-identified by participants. 35% of participants identified with two or more of the following categories.

## Race



\*Many participants identified with two or more of the following racial designations.





# INTERVIEW DATA

In 2023, PATHS filmed and published two seasons of interviews with LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals. Season 3 was filmed in Austin, TX during SXSW. Season 4 of PATHS was filmed in New York, NY. Season 5 of PATHS was also filmed in 2023 and released in 2024.

In 2023, PATHS published **14 interviews** with LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals and students. Interviewees spanned industries including:

- Cybersecurity
- Technical Writing
- Filmmaking
- Virtual Reality
- Mathematics
- DEI
- Material Science & Engineering
- UI/UX Design
- Software Engineering
- AI, Inclusion, and Accessibility
- Earth and Environmental Sciences
- Digital Art
- Art, DJ, and Production

*“Ultimately tech is part of our society. If we want to try to achieve a more just society, we need all kinds of people at every level. That includes diversifying the people who are creating our tech”*

— Jack Farzan, Site Reliability Engineer



In 2023, PATHS interview content received:

**29,586**  
views

↑ **147% increase**  
from 2022

**64,553**  
impressions

↑ **243% increase**  
from 2022

**1,370**  
hours of watch time

↑ **131% increase**  
from 2022

*“I think queer people, we bring a resilience and resourcefulness that other people don’t have”*

— Tony Edgington,  
Environmental Scientist



*“It is important to see queer folks in STEAM, for visibility... For young people to be able to imagine their futures in all spectrums of life, the queer lens needs to be brought into all spaces.”*

— Melika Dave, Artist, Producer + DJ, &  
PATHS Mentee



# TESTIMONIALS



*"I've grown more confident in my abilities, not just academic, but professionally and socially. Seeing numerous queer people in STEAM showed me that I was not alone in my field. My mentor also greatly assisted with my professional writing when applying for internship/research opportunities. I have always struggled with internship applications, but I believe that the next one I apply to will be easier and more manageable. This goes hand in hand with my growth in confidence through the program."*

— 2023 PATHS Mentee

*"It has made it so I don't have to worry about choosing to continue to work towards my career or choose to afford to continue living, as now I'm able to do both comfortably."*

— 2023 PATHS grantee

*"The PATHS grant contributed to my goals in pursuing a STEAM career as it eliminated the need for me to take on additional jobs so I could apply and interview for jobs in the STEAM field. This allowed me to secure a job at Genentech this September as an analyst in their operational rotational development program."*

— 2023 PATHS grantee

*"Receiving the PATHS grant helped me focus on my studies...at the beginning of my STEAM grad program. Instead of worrying about money, I could get the [gender affirming] treatment that I needed and focus on making connections and learning in school while presenting as my true self."*

— 2023 PATHS grantee



*"My mentor works in academia, like me. This means that we've had many meetings discussing challenges in academia for LGBTQ+ people and tried to cope with these challenges. We also shared similar ethnic backgrounds. His family was from the Philippines and mine was from China. Our parents were similarly opposed to the idea of us being LGBTQ+. We were able to be each other's support as we navigate our lives as LGBTQ+ people."*

— 2023 PATHS mentee





# EVENTS

## LGBTQ+ VOICES IN STEAM

On Tuesday, September 26th, 2023 PATHS hosted its second in-person panel discussion and networking event, *LGBTQ+ in STEAM: Building Space and Amplifying Voices*. The event included two panels, “Building Space,” which spotlighted different organizations and their work uplifting the LGBTQ+ community in STEAM, and “Amplifying Voices,” in which LGBTQ+ professionals discussed their personal experiences in STEAM. Panel participants included speakers from LGBT Tech, TransTech Social, and Latinas in Cyber, as well as other influential industry voices. The event welcomed students, as well as industry professionals, to the AT&T Forum for Technology, Entertainment & Policy in Washington, DC. Attendees and participants participated in a networking hour following the presentation.



*“It helped to see others in similar career paths and living as their true authentic self. Very few LGBT staff are in my federal workplace and fewer in my education program. Seeing other like-minded individuals thrive in their respective areas helped immensely.”*

— 2023 PATHS mentee

## SXSW

PATHS hosted a panel at SXSW 2023 entitled LGBTQ + DEI: Queer Representation in STEAM. The panel was moderated by LGBT Tech Director of Programs Kristen Kelley and featured three PATHS interviewees to talk about their experiences as transgender employees in STEAM workplaces and how companies can work to authentically support and empower employees from the trans and wider LGBTQ+ communities.



An audio recording of the full panel is available here: <https://schedule.sxsw.com/2023/events/PP128235>

Building Space Panel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJS5UpvugJM>



# CHALLENGES FACED BY THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY IN STEAM



LGBTQ+ individuals in STEAM fields face significant challenges, including underrepresentation, discrimination, and a lack of inclusive environments. Many do not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity at work or in academic settings due to fear of discrimination and harassment. Studies<sup>1</sup> highlight that LGBTQ+ professionals and students often experience microaggressions, exclusionary behaviors, and bullying. These negative experiences contribute to higher rates of mental health issues like anxiety and depression, and a lower sense of belonging, which can hinder their academic and professional performance.



Career advancement for LGBTQ+ individuals in STEAM is also impacted by a lack of networking and mentorship opportunities, and they are less likely to be promoted compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers<sup>2</sup>. LGBTQ+ individuals who also belong to other historically marginalized groups, such as people of color, face compounded discrimination and additional barriers. Efforts to address these issues include adopting inclusive policies, creating support networks like the PATHS Mentorship Program, and conducting ongoing research to advocate for systemic changes. These steps are crucial for fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ professionals and students in STEAM fields.

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1 Barthelemy, R. S., Bentley, M. A., & Gifford, B. K. (2022). LGBT+ physicists: Harassment, exclusion, and isolation in physics. *Physical Review Physics Education Research*, 18(1), 010124. <https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevPhysEducRes.18.010124>  
Jankovic, N., Matejkic, P., Bajic, M., & Tanic, N. (2023). The impact of LGBTQ+ inclusivity on the well-being of healthcare workers: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 11, 10364828. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.10364828>

2 Cech, E. A., & Waidzunus, T. J. (2017). Queer in STEM: Workplace Experiences Reported in a National Survey of LGBTQA Individuals in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Careers. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 64(10), 1393-1413.





# KEY TAKEAWAYS, SUCCESSES, AND CHALLENGES

With the introduction of the PATHS STEAM Educational Grant and Mentorship Programs in 2023, we are very proud of the growing reach and positive impact that the program is already having on the community. We look forward to continuing to grow our resources and expand our reach and support the LGBTQ+ community. However, as DEI programs come under legislative attacks across the country and our community continues to face challenges such as wage gaps and workplace discrimination, we know there is still much work to be done.



# MORE FROM LGBT TECH

## Digital Navigator

Through our Digital Navigator program we are building a digitally inclusive future for LGBTQ+ communities through innovative programs and resources that promote digital literacy, online safety, and equity. Learn more at [www.digitalnavlgbtq.org](http://www.digitalnavlgbtq.org)

## PowerOn

LGBT Tech's PowerOn program works to bridge the digital divide for the LGBTQ+ community by directly providing technology, resources for internet access, and connection to vital information, research, and advocacy to LGBTQ+ community members and the organizations that serve them. Learn more at [www.poweronlgbt.org](http://www.poweronlgbt.org)



## Follow Us



## Contact Us

[pathslgbtq.org](http://pathslgbtq.org)

## Acknowledgments

Our achievements in 2023 would not be possible without the support of our generous sponsors who continually invest in our work and program outreach.



We thank you for your continued support of our efforts to build space in STEAM for the LGBTQ+ community.

