



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

RFP Response Form

RFP for Teen Programming

PROPOSER INFORMATION

Proposer Name: Assemble

Authorized Representative Name & Title: Kiera Cullen Development Associate

Address: 4824 Penn Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15224

Telephone: (412)-661-6111 ext 2007

Email: Kiera@assemblepgh.org

Website: assemblepgh.org

Legal Status: For-Profit Corp. Nonprofit Corp. Sole Proprietor Partnership

Date Incorporated: April 24, 2012

Partners included in this Proposal: NA

How did you hear about this RFP? *Please be specific.* We heard about this from an email from Tylor Hart.

Does your organization have a telecommunications device to accommodate individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing? Yes No

REQUIRED CONTACTS

	Name	Phone	Email
Chief Executive Officer	Nina Barbuto	(412) 661-6111	nina@assemblepgh.org
Contract Processing Contact	Nina Barbuto	(412) 661-6111	nina@assemblepgh.org
Chief Information Officer	Nina Barbuto	(412) 661-6111	nina@assemblepgh.org
Chief Financial Officer	Nina Barbuto	(412) 661-6111	nina@assemblepgh.org
MPER Contact*	Nina Barbuto	(412) 661-6111	nina@assemblepgh.org

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* [MPER](#) is DHS's provider and contract management system. Please list an administrative contact to update and manage this system for your agency.

BOARD INFORMATION

Provide a list of your board members as an attachment or in the space below.

Officers

Samantha Levinson

President

Kara Rubio

Vice President

Shannon Phy

Secretary

Kayla Hunter

Treasurer

Members

Christy Cianelli

Jacquie Foradori

Katelynd Gibbons

Stephen Hajduk

Elizabeth Henry

Kelly Hiser

Christina Howell

Phyllis Kim

Maddy Lafferty

Phil Light

Mary Jayne McCullough

Samuel Rotellini

Janet O'Rourke

Abigail Sanders

Kristen Wishon

Ellen Yates

Board Chairperson Name & Title: Samantha Levinson, Board President

Board Chairperson Address: [REDACTED]

Board Chairperson Telephone: [REDACTED]

Board Chairperson Email: samantha@assemblepgh.org

REFERENCES

Provide the name, affiliation and contact information [include email address and telephone number] for three references who are able to address relevant experience with your organization.

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Please do not use employees of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services as references.

Tyler Samstag, Director of Remake Learning
tyler@remakelearning.org
[REDACTED]

Erin Perry, Executive Director
Legacy Arts Project,
Partner with Assemble for the Ramp Up Fellowship
eperry@legacyartsproject.org
412-452-3847

Rick Swartz, Executive Director
Bloomfield Garfield-Corporation
ricks@bloomfield-garfield.org
[REDACTED]

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Date Submitted: 3/2/2022

Amount Requested: \$14580

CERTIFICATION

Please check the following before submitting your Proposal, as applicable:

I have read the standard County terms and conditions for County contracts and the requirements for DHS Cyber Security, EEOC/Non-Discrimination, HIPAA and Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law.

By submitting this Proposal, I certify and represent to the County that all submitted materials are true and accurate and that I have not offered, conferred or agreed to confer any pecuniary benefit or other thing of value for the receipt of special treatment, advantaged information, recipient's decision, opinion, recommendation, vote or any other exercise of discretion concerning this RFP.

Choose one:

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My Proposal contains information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information and I have included a written statement signed by an authorized representative identifying those portions or parts of my Proposal and providing contact information.

OR

My Proposal does not contain information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information.

ATTACHMENTS

Please submit the following attachments with your Response Form. These can be found at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations>.

- Partner commitment letters, if applicable
- MWDBE and VOSB documents
- Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form
- Audited financial reports or other financial documentation for the last three years
- W-9

REQUIREMENTS

Please respond to the following. The maximum score a Proposal can receive is 100 points. Your response to this section should not exceed 12 pages. (Pages 1-3 are not included in the page count).

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Organizational Experience (20 points possible)

1. Describe your organizational experience serving the target population, specifically teens from diverse communities and populations. Please include examples of ways in which your organization connects with teens.

Founded in 2011, Assemble is a community space for arts and technology located in Garfield, in the East End of Pittsburgh. We envision diverse neighborhoods of empowered people who create, connect, learn, and transform together. Our mission is to build confidence through making by uniting communities of artists, technologists, makers, and learners. By bringing people together, we provide a platform for experiential learning, open creative processes, and building agency within the youth and neighbors we serve.

Assemble's pedagogy shines at the intersection of three disciplines - Learning, Content, and Community. Within Learning, we expand and utilize educational theories of human development as well as social-emotional learning. Within Content, we expand and explore the fundamentals and contemporary advancements of science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM). Within the Community, we practice culturally and contextually relevant methods, truly bringing STEAM learning into the everyday world of the student, fostering their self-efficacy, and opening up paths for career exploration and identity realization. This intersection is where the making and creative experimentation thrives throughout our programs, and we center the learning experience in the hands of the learner.

We offer programming in our physical community space in the neighborhood of Garfield and across Pittsburgh. We continuously present a welcoming and inviting environment, which allows us to bring together a diverse array of individuals to learn from and grow with one another. For youth, the connections that they are exposed to through our interdisciplinary programming and collaborations with guest makers, artists, and technologists during our afterschool programs have lasting impacts. The lessons learned within our programs help to build confidence, reinforce information learned in formal educational environments, and empower them to succeed in other endeavors, such as in school or in their local neighborhood. It helps kids to know that they belong not only in our space, but in their potential STEAM careers.

Assemble's vision for the future is to see many communities of people, outside of our immediate geography, who create, connect, learn, and transform themselves and their surroundings together. We are cultivating the creative change-makers of the future and setting them up to fill the jobs that do not yet exist. Our work empowers these change-makers at their earliest stage, by positively impacting youth and exposing them to diverse and relevant programming. Equipped with the skills and motivation to do so, we hope that our youth will inspire their communities (and beyond) to fulfill their own vision and missions for the future.

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We already see the seeds of this change-making developing in our four walls. As youth shift their mindset from a consumer of information to a producer of learning experiences, we begin to see them embody the idea that, “someone made up the world around me. I can, too.”

Assemble programs have engaged teens through a few offerings across the years. Our earliest teen centered program was Teens as Teachers from Fall 2013 to Spring 2016, a program started by a teen for teens to learn how to teach, build leadership skills, and share what they know while providing STEAM enrichment in their own communities. Once Caroline, the teen that started this program, went to college, we decided to redesign our teen programs to be focused on what all teen participants want, expanding beyond teaching toward a more personalized experience.

We launched our next iteration of teen programming, called Hack the Future, in the fall of 2018. Hack the Future is a social justice and innovation-focused program for students in grades 9-12. Learners get paid to learn the latest in technologies, untold histories, LGBTQIA+ issues, social justice issues, leaders, and more. Participants choose their own social justice issues to explore for the duration of the program. Through this process, learners are empowered to use their own creativity and the design process as a means to address problems that are important to them. Students build a direct working relationship with Assemble educators for guidance, support, and to map out their plans and achievements. They also build camaraderie with each other, sharing beyond the class time. Guest experts join some of the meetings to provide expertise in specific fields as well as provide direct connections to the workforces students may be interested in.

2. Describe your organizational experience working in high-need communities.

Over the past 10 years, Assemble has been steadily gaining the capacity to serve youth both in Garfield and across the city. Garfield is home to nearly 10,675 Pittsburgh residents, with 27.1% living under the poverty line. With a median income of \$31,441, the neighborhood lags far behind other Pittsburgh neighborhoods and national averages. Assemble provides a space for learning, community, and public art to improve the quality of life for Garfield residents. Outside of Assemble programmatic offerings, there is limited access to STEAM opportunities for the Garfield community. Assemble is embedded into the Garfield community, and we work closely with many organizations in the area. Serving our community is our top priority, so we make all programming free to Garfield residents. We love our community and helping build connections, so we often have guest experts and artists that are from the neighborhood. We are expanding outside of Garfield to other high-need communities through our out-of-house programming and partnerships with schools.

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3. Describe your organization's commitment to serving all individuals regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), intellectual or physical ability, English language proficiency or life experiences. Provide specific approaches used and examples of how they are reflected in your work.

Assemble operates its center, services, and programs in a way that empowers people to create, connect, learn, and transform together. Increasing diversity and visibility is critical to Assemble's mission and it is important to both internal and external stakeholders. At Assemble, we define diversity as a microcosm of people who bring their uniqueness, perspectives, and backgrounds together for the collective good. The leadership, the board of directors, and staff are committed to diversity and to uniting artists, technologists, makers, and learners. Collectively, we recognize the need for individuals from all walks of life to embrace their distinct characteristics. We believe that the acceptance and respect of others make our communities more ethical and progressive. We believe that an appreciation for diversity should be instilled in everyone who uses our space. Embracing diversity enables individuals at Assemble to have respect for one another while building agency and fostering collaboration. We pride ourselves on a culture that successfully motivates and generates the highest productivity of all stakeholders, across lines including race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, age, political affiliation, and disability.

Assemble is committed to highlighting the achievements of under-represented folks through programming such as Hack the Future, Girls Maker Night and our Afrofuturism curriculum. We prioritize hiring a diverse staff that represents our community. We value the importance of continued learning, and having hard conversations to better serve all of our students. We provide professional development opportunities to staff to make time for this continued learning.

Program Design (55 points possible)

4. Provide an overall description of your proposed Programming and how it will provide teens with the opportunity to engage in enriching and interesting activities. If applicable, include how input from teens and/or best practice research was/will be taken into consideration in the design of the Programming.

Hack the Future is a social justice and innovation-focused program for students in grades 9-12. Learners get paid to learn the latest in technologies, untold histories, LGBTQIA+ issues, social justice issues, leadership skills, and more at Hack the Future.

This program dives deep, focusing on a cohort of about ten to fifteen learners, supporting their participation through a stipend. Participants choose their own social justice issues to explore for the 12 weeks of the program. Empowering learners to use their own creativity and the design process as a means to address problems that are important to them, Hack the Future focuses on developing an intentional, rigorous approach to the design process while centering on student autonomy and agency in the planning and implementation of a project. Through Hack the Future, teens will become full-fledged makers, artists, and technologists!

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Students build a direct working relationship with Assemble educators for guidance, support, and to map out their plans and achievements. They build camaraderie with each other, sharing beyond the class time. We bring in guest experts to build career connections as well as the community. Some of the guest experts who have presented to the 2020-2021 Hack the Future cohort include Ahmed “K” Bey and Amos Levy to teach about narrative digital and analog gaming such as Augmented Reality Games, Jessica Rothwell from Arizona State University lead a workshop on sci-fi character design and racism, and Paolo Pedercini, a game developer, artist, and educator from Carnegie Mellon University, will be leading a workshop on disruptive video games.

Hack the Future occurs every Friday from 4 pm- 6 pm, excluding major holidays. The program begins mid-October and carries on throughout the school year. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Hack the Future has been meeting virtually on Google Meet and Zoom. We continue to offer students the choice between in-person meetings or virtual meetings, depending on what works best for them. We have other communication channels such as discord so students can continue to work together, or chat outside of meeting time. This also gives students more access to the teachers if they have questions or need support. Students are compensated \$14.50 per two-hour session that they attend every six weeks. By the end of the 30 sessions of the program, each student will be compensated up to \$435. That rate is comparable with Pennsylvania’s minimum wage. Having the students being compensated for their work allows them to fund their projects, even beyond our time together.

Hack The Future is a program that fosters teen learners through STEAM-based, social justice-oriented opportunities to become leaders. By connecting Maker and 21st Century skills with the real-life issues of the students, Hack the Future encourages students to reimagine the world and find agency in their context and is modeled to engage diverse groups of youth. Outreach includes recruitment and mailings targeting a variety of schools and organizations. There is a simple application process with opportunities for assistance. Our main goal is to serve youth of color, girls, LGBT youth, and those who find themselves within the intersections of many identities.

Hack the Future connects youth to community members and professionals who utilize STEAM techniques for creative solutions to complex social justice issues, building career connections, and providing examples of everyday application. The course is scaffolded to build from exploratory sessions to those with a developed focus on students refining their designed inventions of interventions. In the end, Hack The Future will culminate in a capstone project. Hack The Future aims to build confidence through making space and support for the next generation of thinkers, creators, and activists to envision a more equitable world, a world that they want to see.

5. Describe how your Programming will provide a physically and emotionally safe space for teens.

Our space provides a welcoming, fun, and relaxed environment where youth are able to engage in STEAM-based activities and explore their passions. There is no shortage of creativity within Assemble’s youth and a desire to learn something new. Our programs make the space for this

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creativity to thrive, take risks, fail, and open up new imaginative possibilities as new information is learned and wrestled with. As noted above, a key component of our work is introducing youth to guest experts to provide career connections across disciplines and their connections to the arts community. We work to recruit experts who provide examples of gender and racial diversity and with whom the youth can directly identify. Assemble recognizes the need for a diverse range of role models, we strive to provide that through our staff and guest experts.

Assemble's home at 4824 Penn Ave is meant to be a space where learners of all ages can explore, learn and develop interests. In order to foster this learning environment, we need all learners to feel safe and supported. We take multiple steps to ensure we are creating safe spaces. First, we strive to hire a diverse staff who are able to relate and be role models for our students. We provide diversity and inclusion training for all staff, because we feel it is vital for all staff to maintain a safe space. We create community guidelines with students so that everyone's boundaries are respected, this also allows students the autonomy to make their own decisions. We strive to continue learning how to be a better space for our students and our community.

6. Describe how your Programming will provide teens with opportunities to make positive connections to peers, adults, and their community.

Access, opportunity, and diversity are at the core of what we do; Assemble strives to work with youth and their families and take a forward-looking approach to build a more just world together. We recognize the need to create continual lines of discovery, communication, and both peer-to-peer and mentorship interactions for young learners who are at the cusp of adulthood. By customizing experiences with their own control and driven by personal interests, while at the same time devising scientific, technical, historical, social, and other lessons, Hack the Future is uniquely able to fill a gap and make way for teen learners to conceptualize and craft ideas to build the futures they want.

Our Hack the Future program is designed to help teens find the autonomy to decide what they care about in the world. How do they want to solve problems that affect them and their community? Hack the Future gives teens the opportunity to meet and work with guest experts who utilize technology to address social justice issues. As students learn, they are able to make an impact on their community, and then decide what they want to do with the skills they developed at Assemble. Students are also given the space to explore their identities and work through personal challenges with a supportive community. Throughout the years' Hack the Future has been operating students have bonded deeply with their cohorts, many of whom have come back for more programming with Assemble.

7. Why do you think teens will want to participate in your Programming?

We believe teens want to participate in Hack the Future because it is a fun and inclusive way to learn about the tech industry and social justice all in one place. We have had many participants come back for multiple years because they enjoy the program and want to continue developing their skills. Assemble offers a safe environment for teens where they can learn, grow, and have

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fun. This program is unique because there aren't many spaces available to teens like this, especially in Garfield. We are able to offer them support in many different ways whether it help with researching a topic or talking through personal challenges, Assemble staff are available to help. Participants get paid for their time, which offers another layer of incentive to learning and having opportunities to make connections.

8. Describe how you will market your Programming and open referral pathways.

Assemble has partnerships with Pittsburgh Public Schools, Pittsburgh Charter schools, and other educational organizations that help connect students with Assemble. We have strong connections with librarians, educators, and other folks in the community who also refer students to Assemble's Hack the future programming. Many of our youth grow through Assemble's programs, starting in afterschool and summer camp programs then moving to Hack the Future as they become eligible. Assemble partners with the Remake Learning Network who serves as another referral point for teens. We of course share our programming opportunities with parents and guardians through eblasts, newsletters and social media. We post flyers throughout Garfield. The rest of our marketing takes place primarily through social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter where teens can directly access information.. We have also had success through word of mouth from teens to their friends and classmates.

9. Describe how you will staff your Programming and the strategies you will use to recruit, hire and retain racially diverse staff, staff with relevant lived experience and staff that reflect the population served.

Assemble prioritizes having a diverse team of teachers and staff. We are currently hosting a fellowship to support young teaching artists in developing skills and gaining professional experience called Ramp Up. We are partnering with Legacy Arts to host workshops and have fellows shadow, then teach classes. A team of staff members is also working on developing a plan to diversify our board and staff as new positions are created. We acknowledge that it is important for youth to have a diverse set of role models to look up to, we want to be a space where that is available. We are working on expanding our reach to get a more diverse pool of applicants for new positions. We also value "non-resume" skills throughout the application process, skills that may not be put on resumes but are vital to providing quality education. Many of our staff members have worked in education for under-served communities for years, they have developed deep connections with the material and curriculum.

10. Describe how your Programing set teens on a positive trajectory toward adulthood and any skills you expect teens to gain (e.g., socioemotional, leadership, workforce-related, conflict resolution skills).

Assemble's programs work to positively empower the learners who will set about designing the kinds of futures they want to see. Hack the Future is all about helping teens reach the future roles they want, exploring career paths they may not have thought they could access before. We empower teens to study what they are interested in, connecting them with guest experts on these subjects and providing a safe and welcoming environment to experiment in. We offer a space for

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teens to work through whatever challenges they are facing, supporting socioemotional growth. We utilize checkins and a space to question and discuss to support this socioemotional growth. We also offer opportunities to learn important life skills like networking through meeting guest experts and going on field trips and, we also offer professional development opportunities through projects like installations in local galleries. This past fall the students were able to present their work in the Thomas Martin Center. They planned the installation, worked with gallery professionals, and were able to present their work to the local community. We support students by connecting them with opportunities outside of Assemble, such as with universities, scholarships, and other workshops. We help support the next step by helping students physically or virtually access these opportunities by providing laptops or bus passes for in person events. Our goal is to help students discover their identity both professionally and personally.

Implementation Challenges (15 points possible)

11. If your Program experiences low attendance, how will you engage more teens?

If we are facing low attendance, we first reach out to the Teens who are already a part of the program to try to figure out why they are not able to attend meetings. We understand that teens have many responsibilities and may not always be available to join our lessons, but we also want to make sure everything is going okay and if they need support. If we find that we have more room in our programming we will utilize our existing outreach methods, working with schools, educators, librarians, and other community partners to refer teens to our program. We also talk with teens currently in our program to see if anyone in their network would be interested in participating. We often reach out to youth that previously participated in our other programs who have since aged up to be eligible for Hack the Future. We also utilize other marketing tactics that may reach teens outside our community, by posting on social media, making and posting posters and flyers, and sending out mailings to.

12. If one of the teens in your Program experiences behavioral or mental health issues, what will you do?

Assemble's staff is trained in Mental Health First aid which is offered annually. This training provides the staff with base knowledge and skill to begin addressing mental health issues with students, but of course does not make them therapists. For any issues beyond staff capabilities, we refer students to resources in the community such as Steel Smiling, professional therapist, and Persad. If we have an emergency situation we connect the teen to the Resolve Crisis Center. We always ask for consent from the teen before involving their family or guardians. Protecting our student's mental health is a top priority. We try to be as open and communicative as possible with students so they know we can be a resource for them. If they need to talk to someone, many of our staff members are more than happy to help.

When handling behavioral issues we acknowledge that most of the time there is a root cause we may not see right away. As an organization, we exercise restorative justice practices. We work together to find solutions and take into consideration everyone's affected needs. We are always

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learning and growing from moments of discomfort. We have had mediated conversations between students, trying to give students a path for open communication in a safe way. We will involve parents or guardians in these conversations as needed. We really try to address the root challenges that are causing students to have behavioral issues. We are constantly reflecting on how we are balancing the space for everyone. We also know conflicts are part of social-emotional growth for youth, and that we need to give them a safe space to work through these challenges with others and teach them how to get through conflict.

13. If a parent of a teen in your Program expressed the family’s need for support outside of what your Program can provide, what will you do?

As an education Nonprofit we know we can not do it all but we can have strong connections with other organizations with different focuses. Whenever a family has needs we can not fulfill we put them in contact with an organization that can. We also meet families where they are, if they are running a fundraiser, we share it out, if they just want to talk about options, we supply potential options.

Budget (10 points possible)

14. In the space below, provide a detailed one-year, line-item budget that reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with implementing and sustaining the Programming.

Assemble, Inc. 2022 Budget			
Approved at January 2022 Board Meeting			
Income	Operating Budget	Hack the Future Budget	Requested from DHS Allegheny County Teen RFP
	2022 Proposed Budget	2022-23 school year	
Income			
40000 Unrestricted Donations	\$200,000		
41000 Restricted Donations	\$520,000		\$14,580
42000 Restricted Contracts	\$80,000		
43000 Government Grants	\$5,000		
45000 Program Service Revenue	\$20,250		
Total Income	\$ 825,250	\$ -	\$ 14,580
Gross Profit	\$ 825,250	\$ -	\$ 14,580
Expenses			

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60000 Salaries and Benefits			
61000 Salaries	\$ 672,365	\$18,880	3000
62000 Benefits			
62100 Payroll Taxes	\$ 104,687	\$ 2,940	
62200 EE Health Insurance	\$ 18,000	\$505	
62300 Paid Time Off			
62400 Workers Comp	\$ 9,671	\$272	
Total 60000 Salaries and Benefits	\$ 809,723	\$ 22,597	\$ 3,000
70000 Facilities			
71000 Rent	\$ 25,200	\$1,785	
72000 Utilities	\$ 5,740	\$407	
73000 Leasehold Improvements	\$ 2,000		
74000 Repairs & Maintenance	\$ 3,600	\$255	
75000 Furniture & Equipment	\$ 2,000		
Total 70000 Facilities	\$ 38,540	\$ 2,447	\$ -
80000 Operating Expenses			
80100 Marketing & Advertising	\$ 10,000	\$100	
80200 Travel	\$ 500	\$100	
80300 Business Insurance	\$ 4,000	\$283	
80420 Accounting & Tax	\$ 7,000		
80430 Payroll Services Fees	\$ 1,620		
80440 Consulting & Contractors	\$ 15,500		
80450 Honorarium	\$ 10,100	\$1,000	\$1,000
Total 80400 Professional Fees	\$ 34,220	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
80500 Food & Beverage	\$ 5,000	\$1,800	\$1,217
80600 Professional Development	\$ 20,000	\$1,000	
80700 Memberships, Dues, and Subscriptions	\$ 4,000		
80800 Supplies & Materials	\$ 24,000	\$ 1,750	\$ 1,750
80900 Student Stipends	\$ 7,613	\$ 7,613	\$ 7,613
Total 80000 Operating Expenses	\$ 109,333	\$ 13,646	\$ 11,580

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15. In the space below, provide a budget narrative that clearly explains and justifies all line items in your proposed line-item budget.

Our request of \$14,580 will be divided between three major categories; personnel, operations, and stipends.

Personnel:

\$3,000 of the requested funds will go toward program staff salaries to compensate for lesson plan creation, training time, prep time, teaching time, clean up and other necessary working time needed to run all of our programming. Quality staff is a necessary part of strong OST programming. Program staff members include our teachers, coordinators, and program manager. An additional \$1,000 of the requested funds will go towards our guest expert honorariums. Guest experts are a vital part of our programming and provide many resources to students and staff, they are compensated for their time with us.

Operations: in total \$2,967 of the requested funds will go towards our operations budget. \$1,217 will go to support healthy snacks and food for our teens. \$1750 will go towards materials for the projects students are creating. Materials and supplies include all the materials needed for the hands-on STEAM activities the youth will use. This includes and is not limited to electronics, art supplies, science materials, building materials, and other consumables. This does not include equipment such as computers.

Stipend: \$7613 will go to the stipends for the teens who participate in the Hack the Future program. We awards the teens \$14 an hour, for one hour a week during the 12 week program. This is comparable to the Pennsylvania minimum wage. We typically have 15 teens participating in the program.

All costs not included in our budget will be covered by other grants obtained by Assemble. Those costs include guest expert honorariums, rent, clearing costs, healthcare costs, marketing and outreach costs.