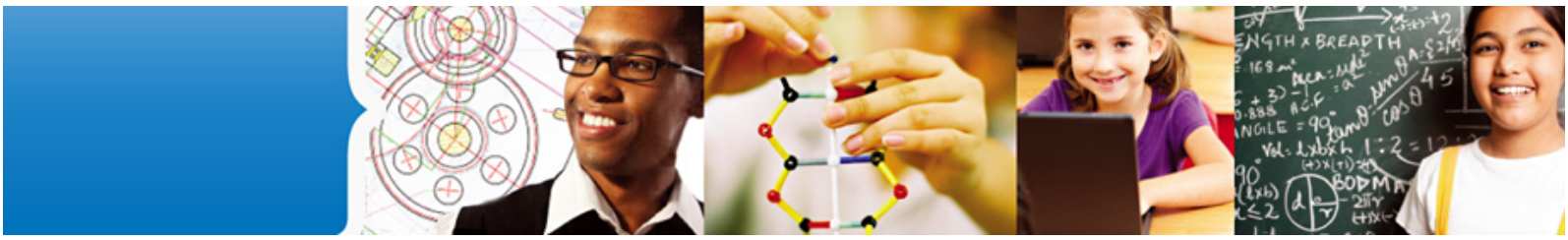

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE:
PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF CHANGE THE EQUATION

On December 6, 2017, Change the Equation (CTEq), a non-partisan 501(c)3 organization that was launched in 2010 at the White House, posted the following message on its website:

> Change the Equation is taking a critical next step in our effort to strengthen STEM education. The corporate community is granting our game-changing initiatives and substantial funding to two organizations that are poised to take our work to the next level.
>
> WestEd will lead STEMworks, our nationally-recognized initiative to identify and scale the most effective STEM education programs. WestEd, a nonprofit research and service agency that works to enhance teaching and learning across all STEM subjects, has collaborated with CTEq to evaluate STEM programs since 2012.
>
> Education Commission of the States will lead and expand Vital Signs, the nation's most comprehensive and timely source of state-by-state data on the condition of STEM education. Serving state policymakers, Education Commission of the States advances STEM education by tracking and analyzing state STEM policies.
>
> Since 2010, Change the Equation and its visionary corporate members:
>
> - Helped invest more than $4 billion to advance quality K-12 STEM learning;
> - Expanded the nation's best STEM programs to more than 4 million young people nationwide;
> - Equipped state leaders with state-specific STEM data to inform their education policy and planning.
>
> WestEd and Education Commission of the States are ideally poised to strengthen CTEq's work in states across the country. As the 2016 federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) places more control over education with states, the timing for this transition could hardly be better.
>
> CTEq is ceasing operations, but our work will go on. We hope you'll join us in celebrating our work as it moves into this exciting new phase. Bookmark the new STEMworks and Vital Signs, and use them frequently!

The announcement of a planned dissolution of CTEq caught all but 'insiders' by surprise. Our accomplishments were well-known, unique and highly-regarded. Immediate reaction from many sources was dismay, concern,

and disbelief. Yet to those of us on the inside, declaring victory after more than seven successful years while simultaneously recognizing that the changing landscape required new stewards was a natural next step.

With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, there were several clues that CTEq would opt for dissolution as the best outcome. This paper will describe the organization's accomplishments, the reasons for dissolution, and the measures taken to secure CTEq's legacy. Guiding each step was the need to preserve resources, keep work current, and recognize that the success of the work was more critical than the survival of the organization.

GETTING ESTABLISHED

Recruitment: In the wake of the Great Recession, the Obama administration launched its "Educate to Innovate" campaign, which was designed to develop a robust pipeline of K-12 students with the skills and enthusiasm needed to succeed in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Many jobs were going unfilled nationwide, often because of a lack of qualified candidates in STEM. In this environment, it was only natural that a group of CEOs came together in 2010 to create Change the Equation, a non-partisan, nonprofit with a full-time staff designed to leverage the business community's interest in K-12 STEM learning. Craig Barrett (former CEO/Chair of Intel), Glenn Britt (CEO, Time Warner Cable), Ursula Burns (CEO, Xerox), Antonio Perez (CEO, Kodak), Rex Tillerson (CEO, Exxon-Mobil, CEO) and Sally Ride (whose post-astronaut career focused on encouraging girls in science) served as CTEq's first Board of Directors and together they recruited over 100 of their corporate CEO colleagues to join the fledgling organization.

Their pitch was straightforward:

- The United States is losing ground in STEM proficiency at a time when many of the world's greatest challenges require a STEM-trained workforce and citizenry.
- Our nation is failing to engage young people — in particular, low-income minority students — in the sort of STEM learning that will enable them to succeed in post-secondary education, hold rewarding jobs, and participate fully as citizens.
- A new national coalition of America's leading companies, all with a vested stake in success of a STEM-ready workforce and an educated citizenry, can align their efforts around STEM education to create a significantly greater impact than would be possible for each corporation alone.

In only three months' time, over 100 Fortune 500 companies agreed to join. Such receptivity was a testimonial to the stature and persuasiveness of the Board members among their peers as well as to the 'fortuitous reality' of an economy slow to recover. Regardless of individual political leanings or preferences regarding the outcome of the 2008 Presidential election, the companies welcomed participation toward a goal that matched their own needs and those of the new Administration. In fact, a substantial number of CEOs attended the September 2010 launch at the White House with President Obama and Dr. John Holdren, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology.

Pledges to Join: Taken together, CTEq was envisioned as a transformative organization for corporate involvement in STEM education. Each company agreed to: (1) make a **public commitment** to align their K-12 STEM education efforts with other CTEq partners; (2) make a **financial commitment** to support CTEq for at least three years; and (3) **recruit other companies** to the cause.

Board members generally pledged $750,000 over three years, while most companies pledged $75,000 over the same period. Ultimately, none of these multi-year pledges were legally binding, but corporate staff members found them helpful as line-item placeholders for future budget years.

Companies were motivated to join CTEq for a variety of reasons:

- Most members funded programs developed by outside nonprofits but needed help judging the effectiveness of the program or the 'parent' nonprofit;
- A few members developed their own STEM programs, grounded in their unique core competencies (which were often different from those of other CTEq partners);
- Some members gave nonprofits funds and oversight to create new K-12 STEM programs. Here, too, corporate staff did not always have the relevant expertise to provide knowledgeable oversight.
- A small number of companies had not yet developed a portfolio of STEM philanthropy and were looking for advice in doing so; and
- A small number of companies expressed reservations about their existing STEM portfolio and sought help in reviewing and redefining their philanthropic efforts.

Despite these differences, the companies pledged to center their work around three goals:

1. **Better STEM teaching at all grade levels**, with a larger and more diverse cadre of well-prepared STEM teachers.
2. **Improved learning opportunities** inside and beyond the classroom for all students, especially minorities and girls, to increase students' preparedness and deepen their appreciation of the excitement and importance of STEM learning and careers.
3. **Sustained commitment** to an innovative STEM agenda by business leaders, government officials, STEM professionals, and others through data-based decision-making and collaboration.

Coming of Age: Even before the founding corporations made their respective pledges, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York had each pledged $1.5 million over three years. Some of the Carnegie grant paid an attorney to establish our 501c3 status and a search firm to identify potential staff members. The Gates Foundation supported a strategic planning group that did some early work envisioning what this new entity might do. The Foundation also supported a major project that crystallized in the early days of CTEq. The S.D. Bechtel, Junior Foundation provided $150,000 over three years. This seed money was instrumental in convincing the founding corporate members to make their own substantial commitment of time and money.

The Board of Directors intended that, going forward, the corporate community would fully fund CTEq. Such a fiscal model would help ensure that the organization's advocacy and actions were consonant with corporate needs and perspectives. This decision enabled CTEq staff to say that CTEq **spoke on behalf of the business community**. Consequently, the organization was able to make some pronouncements from a corporate perspective that individual companies might not make on their own.[i]

At the same time, the Board recognized that each corporate partner would ultimately insist on **autonomy** in making its own philanthropic decisions about STEM learning. This established an intriguing, ongoing **challenge** for staff: recognizing the independence of each partner while also urging them to align their decisions to a shared vision for increasing their collective impact on STEM learning.

Another early decision of the Board had profound implications for CTEq's finances: staff was instructed to make CTEq's products **freely available on the web**. Board members described this decision as corporate America's 'gift' to the STEM learning enterprise, widely available to anyone who might find the resources helpful.

Those contributing to CTEq enjoyed no special privileges beyond access to advice from CTEq staff and pride of membership. This had unintended consequences for organizational long-term sustainability.

Becoming Indispensable

Gaining Stature: A proliferation of STEM nonprofits began in 2010-2011, including CTEq. The President's interest in STEM, the prospect of public and private funds available for STEM, and widespread dissatisfaction about the narrow pipeline of STEM talent gave rise to these new groups.

CTEq had to define its unique niche to corporate America from the start. Metrics included items such as: (1) the number of CTEq members reporting that they had **changed or improved their investments** in STEM education due to membership; (2) the number of members reporting in formal surveys that CTEq **added value** to their organizations; and (3) the number of high-quality opportunities for **direct member engagement** via committees, face-to-face meetings, webinars, and media opportunities. These metrics provided the blueprint for CTEq's subsequent work.

Improving Investments: CTEq enlisted the help of about a dozen companies to develop Design Principles[ii] for effective STEM learning opportunities. We soon learned, however, that companies, especially those not among the twelve participants, wanted more than just principles to guide their work. What emerged in response to this need was a list of programs that met the high bar described in the principles. CTEq created STEMworks as a searchable online honor roll of proven STEM education programs. Programs opted to submit their evidence of effectiveness to a process established by CTEq. After a third-party evaluation of this evidence, programs were either admitted to the honor roll or given private feedback on how they could strengthen their offering. WestEd, a nonprofit education research and evaluation firm, was CTEq's partner throughout, but especially in the third-party evaluation phase.

CTEq staff helped interested company representatives familiarize themselves with STEMworks and its growing list of programs. This effort took several forms over the years, but its goal was always to encourage companies to invest more of their philanthropic dollars into effective programs. As noted among CTEq's accomplishments, corporate funding allowed an *additional* 4 million young people across grades K-12 to benefit from STEMworks programs. Because we positioned CTEq as a change agent, our metric was for additional youth; we did not count the number of young people who were already in STEMworks programs due to previous corporate investments.

CTEq's Board focused on increasing the number of youth reached by excellent programs in the hopes of raising the STEM literacy of all high school graduates. Nonetheless, not all CTEq partner companies opted to support STEMworks programs, which was occasionally disappointing but also not surprising. And, despite the generosity of the corporate community—which invested roughly $4 billion in STEM education over seven years—it soon became clear that CTEq needed to use its members' influence as future employers of America's youth to secure public dollars as well. CTEq formed partnerships with several states, each tailored to a state's individual goals and circumstances, to encourage the scaling of STEMworks programs. STEMworks' grounding in a scholarly, unbiased selection process gave partner states confidence that the STEMworks programs they supported would provide a strong return on investment of public dollars. Outreach to states and to potential new STEMworks programs continues even now under WestEd's aegis.

Since its inception, STEMworks has helped companies, states, and individuals make smart investments in their communities by evaluating and cataloging programs that meet rigorous and results-driven design principles. With the pendulum returning to state-based educational decision-making as well as ongoing concern about the STEM literacy of our nation's high schools, the value of STEMworks will likely increase.

Adding Value to Members: In addition to making philanthropic investments, companies show their support for various causes such as STEM education by lending them a measure of their gravitas. CEOs often have a bully pulpit in their speeches, social media, and in-person meetings. Educators and policymakers responsible for education pay attention to CEOs' views since employers are the leading customers of the K-16 enterprise.

It was not unusual for corporate staff to send an urgent SOS to CTEq staff asking for help in crafting C-Suite communications. The request was usually for some data relevant to the location of an executive's remarks or as context for some point in those remarks. Although CTEq staff was glad to help in these 'emergency' situations, we also provided a steady stream of STEM education information that companies could use in their communications efforts as needed. This demand for STEM education data was central to CTEq's second major product.

Just as STEMworks helped interested parties make sense of the wide array of STEM programs seeking their support, CTEq's robust, state-by-state Vital Signs[iii] reports helped corporate America make the case in support of STEM education by placing relevant data on the condition of STEM education at their fingertips. These reports, which present more than 50 indicators for each state in the country, provide the richest, most complete state-by-state information on K-12 STEM education ever assembled. They combine publicly available data with new data gleaned from new sources or reanalysis of data in existing sources. The data are available in brief PDF reports as well as in an interactive website that allows visitors to explore state-by-state data in more depth. These data illuminate critical areas of need in STEM education, which helped our corporate partners better target their investments in STEM education and their advocacy for change. Without sacrificing accuracy, Vital Signs reports are concise, persuasive, and visual, because our corporate partners had neither the time nor expertise to delve into traditional education research.

In addition to the state-by-state data, CTEq also produced periodic briefs, often on workforce issues from a national perspective. Our STEMtistics were infographics and compelling data points that could be easily shared via social media or inserted into PowerPoint presentations.

CTEq Vital Signs data have been cited by dozens of national and state media outlets across the country, and national legislators, state legislators, CEOs, and at least two governors have used them to advocate for greater focus on STEM learning. While Vital Signs succeeded in raising the alarm, they offered few policy recommendations companies (or others) could follow to address the problems identified in the data beyond supporting specific STEMworks programs. This decision reflected the understandable reluctance—especially with public backlash to Common Core—of the corporate community to take strong policy stands. Not surprisingly, some of the biggest fans of Vital Signs came from the education community, who used them to support their own work, especially on education policies that could affect STEM learning for a very large number of students. Although scaling up programs was appropriate for companies, changing state policy that could touch all K-12 students living in that state required an enlarged set of partners.

Direct Member Engagement: CTEq assigned a staff member the primary responsibility of outreach to each of our corporate partners to engage them in our work. Although the CEO of each company was technically the member, a clear majority of CEOs designated liaisons to interact directly with CTEq staff.

Over the seven years, member engagement took many forms. We hosted two major convocations; organized numerous "STEM Salons" on pressing issues with presentations that invited audience questions and

involvement; produced a monthly newsletter for a wide audience; organized many webinars on special topics; created relevant corporate sub-committees to advise us on STEM issues; and created a lively social media presence with tens of thousands of followers to share important insights from our research and herald the good work of our corporate partners in STEM education. These, of course, are examples of *broad* outreach to our membership. Some liaisons responded with enthusiasm; others did not. For all liaisons, it was clear that CTEq was merely one among many of their responsibilities.

We also worked with individual liaisons to acquaint them more fully with STEMworks and Vital Signs. Several partners sought strategic advice from CTEq staff about their philanthropic efforts over several months and asked for introductions to specific STEMworks programs or to other companies supporting specific programs.

Not surprisingly, natural attrition among the CEOs and liaisons had profound implications on CTEq. New CEOs did not necessarily share their predecessors' passion for K-12 STEM learning, nor did they feel the need to rally around the Obama administration several years after CTEq's launch. Even if they opted to continue a focus on STEM, they sometimes preferred moving forward on their own. Still, STEMworks and Vital Signs—readily available on the web—became resources to help their staff accomplish their philanthropic goals, even for companies that opted not to become members. CTEq staff learned that some companies that never joined CTEq would *only* fund STEMworks-certified programs. They preferred to invest all their funds directly in vetted programs.

Many appointed liaisons were champions for CTEq, making the case internally for continued support. They also had to respond to company changes. As their chain of command turned over, their responsibilities changed or even moved away from STEM education entirely. Add to this churn the natural attrition of liaisons. We often found ourselves making the case for CTEq to new liaisons who were experiencing their own steep learning curve about a new position.

Where did this leave CTEq: The number of corporate partners providing support to CTEq declined over the life of the organization. Staff succeeded in recruiting new members. But clearly the model of sustaining CTEq solely on corporate contributions—an explicitly stated goal of the Board from the early days—was not likely viable.

With an uncertain future, we immediately moved to conserve CTEq resources. Natural staff attrition enabled us to reduce the size of our already small staff, from seven to five, which immediately saved money. Near the same time, the Overdeck Family Foundation expressed interest in giving a grant to CTEq to expand its STEMworks efforts to secure state partnerships. This was the first time since CTEq's launch that funding from a source other than a company was used to support our work. Overdeck soon became a good thought partner as well.

Together, cost-savings and fundraising gave us a solid fund balance of more than $2 million, enabling remaining staff to: (1) rally more funders—corporate, public, and private—in support of STEMworks, (2) ensure that more corporate investments targeted actual areas of need, (3) help more STEM learning programs measure up to rigorous principles for quality and impact, and, most importantly, (4) figure out an organizational path forward that did not depend primarily on corporate donations.

SECURING CTEQ'S LEGACY

Seeking advice from the STEM community: With CTEq at a crossroads, we asked nearly 25 people representing an array of relevant perspectives for their confidential ideas about possible next steps for CTEq. Three options emerged from these conversations:

- **Reinvent CTEq** with a new STEM mission that did not necessarily rely solely on business engagement or corporate funding;
- **Acquisition of CTEq** by an organization seeking entry/expansion in STEM learning and assign CTEq's IP assets and some staff to this partner to ensure continuity and quality control;
- **Declare Mission Accomplished** with a legacy 'communications campaign' about CTEq's accomplishments, and assign CTEq's initiatives to appropriate, interested (c)3 organizations.

Many interviewees mentioned CTEq's uniqueness and said they would regret the loss of the corporate voice in STEM education. They also made clear that CTEq's original vision and mission were still relevant, timely and unfinished. People spoke of the ongoing need for new sources of funding for STEMworks programs, suggested that more STEM education programs needed help measuring up to quality standards, and emphasized the importance of corporate America's need for STEM talent as part of the national conversation. We also heard that most existing STEM nonprofits already had full agendas that benefited, in part, from CTEq's leadership and vision on STEMworks and Vital Signs. One or two people also wondered if it was time for CTEq to 'declare victory' since it had accomplished all that it could do as an organization.

Armed with these insights and committed to maintain CTEq's business credibility, CTEq's Board, in the summer of 2016, encouraged staff to explore potential partners who might acquire CTEq, and what that might mean.

The Business Roundtable: CTEq's Board was intimately familiar with the Business Roundtable (BRT), a larger organization than CTEq, which regularly convened CEOs from many business sectors. This active engagement of CEOs held great appeal, as did the potential of a broader corporate audience to support STEMworks programs and to make use of the Vital Signs data in advocacy efforts. The Board directed staff to explore BRT's interest in acquiring CTEq.

BRT staff were intrigued by the possibility of a close partnership. Selling points included additional staff dedicated to education issues, help with STEMworks and Vital Signs for interested BRT members, and coordination among business organizations to expand impact and conserve resources. BRT was also interested in creating from scratch an analogous READINGworks and Vital Signs data for reading, using the same model that CTEq had developed for STEM.

A Memorandum of Understanding was drafted describing a partnership between BRT and CTEq. Not a formal acquisition, *per se*, but an arrangement that was mutually beneficial and focused on K-12 education. However, despite several months of exploration, a major leadership change at BRT before the MOU was signed resulted in an indefinitely postponed discussion.

With the BRT option off the table, staff began anew to explore possible next steps.

Granting CTEq's assets: Just as the Board originally 'gifted' the STEM education community with free web access to our *main* assets—STEMworks and Vital Signs—we realized that the business community's legacy to the broad community should be the continuation of these two powerful tools. The business community's insights and priorities had shaped them, and business resources could launch these instruments in new homes better suited than CTEq to the current educational environment.

Securely launching them in new homes required CTEq to give those organizations substantial financial grants along with the assets themselves. Good intentions and interest by potential grantees would not suffice; CTEq needed to provide funds enabling a new home to sustain an asset for a year or (preferably) more while simultaneously implementing a business model to sustain (and likely improve) it. Therefore, CTEq undertook several further cost-cutting measures to preserve CTEq's capital. One staff member took a job out of town and another received a severance package when her position as member liaison was no longer needed. Our small staff was down to three. We also gave the required six months of notice on our office space lease, knowing that we could telecommute thereafter, if necessary.

What would a new home look like? First, CTEq's articles of incorporation required that in the case of dissolution, all remaining property and assets of the Corporation be given to entities whose mission included strengthening K-12 STEM learning. Second, CTEq's aim to ensure that *all* high school graduates are STEM literate could best be served by an organization with a national footprint. Third, a new home must be highly regarded, especially by those with responsibility for making decisions about K-12 education, along with a solid fund-raising record and prospects.

Using these three signposts, CTEq staff talked with nonprofits we thought might be interested in securing the IP to one or both of our assets. During this period it was very important to us to maintain confidentiality about our plans, even as we continued our work. We hoped to manage the eventual narrative about CTEq's likely dissolution, and there were activities already in the pipeline that would enhance our assets and contribute to the broad STEM education community. We didn't want rumors about dissolution to interfere with the release of new, strong CTEq information. We kept Vital Signs data up-to-date, released new Vital Signs briefs, continued discussions about new state STEMworks partnerships, used vibrant social media to shine a light on STEMworks programs and effective STEM learning policies, and maintained efforts to help existing STEM learning programs improve their product.

We had in-depth phone conversations and meetings with potential grantees to gauge their interest and then asked each to respond in writing to questions about how they would support CTEq's vision for the future of the assets. We wrote, for example:

- The STEMworks grantee should be able to maintain STEMworks's current strengths—improving design and implementation of STEM programs, curating effective programs for interested funders, and helping states establish ROI for their use of public funds—while expanding its reach and impact.[iv]
- The Vital Signs grantee should be able to take advantage of its devoted following of STEM education advocates who value its straightforward visual presentation of compelling and up-to-date data, even as they move to engage a larger audience of educators, business leaders, state and local policymakers who could increase its impact. Finally, the ideal host organization would take Vital Signs to the next level through strategies such as adding new data, information, functions, or outreach strategies to increase its impact.

Questions to potential grantees centered on four criteria: (1) the organization's **vision for the future** of the asset and the ways in which it could serve their mission and integrate with existing work, (2) the organization's ability to **reach critical audiences** with the asset, (3) the organization's plan to **sustain the asset**, and (4) the organization's **connection to the business community**.

There was considerable interest from several viable organizations for one or both of CTEq's assets. Although one group eventually withdrew from consideration due to timing and other obligations, CTEq had the happy

prospect of a good number of competitive proposals. When necessary, we asked each potential grantee to clarify certain aspects of its proposal before we began evaluating in-depth what they had submitted.

Making the Decision

We found ourselves in an enviable position, with sufficient resources to make sizeable grants that would sustain each asset for more than a year, and strong organizations vying for the assets each with a deep appreciation of the value and vitality of CTEq's legacy. We needed a thoughtful process to make the best selection.

To judge the proposals, CTEq staff developed a rubric based on our questions and our knowledge of the strengths and potential of each asset. We knew, for example, that the process to review prospective STEMworks programs likely should be streamlined to conserve time and money. Vital Signs did not include policy recommendations to help turn around unsatisfactory data outcomes about STEM learning. When it came to state influence, the business community focused mostly on policies related to their core business. But widespread change in STEM education probably required new policies that could be based on Vital Signs data.

We were looking for organizations that demonstrated agility and thoughtfulness in the description of their plans. Specifically, for STEMworks, we were interested in each organization's: (1) ability to persuade key state STEM leaders to adopt STEMworks, (2) vision for the future, including cost-savings ideas for the review process, (3) fund-raising capability, (4) STEM reputation, and (5) staff capacity. The list for Vital Signs was similar, but also tailored toward assessing an organization's : (1) track-record for getting heard by state leaders; (2) vision for the future of Vital Signs, (3) fund-raising capability, (4) STEM research capability, especially in easy-to-digest formats, and (5) positioning as opinion leader in STEM learning.

With identifying information removed, CTEq staff reviewed and scored the proposals in the fall of 2017. It was clear that WestEd offered the best plan for STEMworks, and Education Commission of the States for Vital Signs. Representatives from both organizations were thrilled with our selection, and CTEq's attorney sent draft MOUs to each to initiate the legal transfer of the IP and funding via a grant agreement.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Two new voices, that of WestEd and ECS, had to be considered as we undertook a delicate sequence of steps defining how, when and to whom to communicate CTEq's important decision. Each organization had its own constituency, its own communication channels and its own governance procedures that deserved respect and consideration. With the future success of the assets at stake, the three organizations readily converged on a plan to notify people of the grants and to try to control the narrative about the changes. That it also meant the demise of CTEq was secondary.

We quickly agreed on the contours of the grand finale.

- On a mutually agreed-upon day and time, CTEq, WestEd and ECS would send a broadcast email to their respective mailing lists announcing the grants and turnover of the IPs.
- On that same day and time, CTEq's website would transition to the message that opened this paper, which included hyperlinks to the new sites for STEMworks and Vital Signs. WestEd and ECS would simultaneously publish the pages associated with the hyperlinks.
- CTEq had a small list of special friends—such as former Board members, state partners and STEMworks program directors—who would be notified a few hours in advance.
- With thanks to our corporate partners, CTEq's legacy and contributions would continue to thrive.

Accomplishing this vision took several steps, deft agility, and organization.

Legal Issues: There were many moving parts to coordinate, but the timeline from CTEq's perspective was driven by two primary considerations. First, we wanted to ensure that CTEq was dissolved by the end of the calendar year, so that our 990 Tax Form for 2017 would be our last. In fact, we pre-paid our auditor for his work to complete our 990 in the early part of 2018. That meant all bank accounts had to be closed and all final payments made and cleared before December 31, 2017. Second, to maximize the amount of the grant going to each organization, we again instituted cost reductions. Without rent and overhead—we were now telecommuting—our biggest line item was associated with salaries. When one employee decided to move out of town for another opportunity, the remaining two staff members—myself as CEO and the COO—resolved to have everything done by mid-December.

CTEq's attorney, whose practice centers on nonprofits, cautioned us about the myriad details that we would be facing. She certainly spoke the truth, as I soon learned! But fortunately, she also remained by our side as we tackled issues as diverse as notifying three different bureaucratic offices of the District of Columbia government that we were shutting our doors,[v] to negotiating the final contracts with our grantees, to ensuring that the Board took the necessary steps to dissolve a 501c3, among many others. We also pre-paid the attorney's firm, based on her best estimate of the outstanding legal work. I am almost certain that the estimate did not fully cover the time needed.

Each grantee had its internal process to accept the grant and sign the grant agreement. One moved forward immediately; the other, due to personnel issues unrelated to the grant, moved more slowly. The immediate impact was an unfortunate time differential in the technology transfer. Until the agreement was signed, it was premature to give our grantees access to administrative sites for Vital Signs and STEMworks. Yet each grantee needed access to those sites to begin the work of incorporating STEMworks and Vital Signs into their own respective websites aesthetically and technically. Of course, everyone works on their own schedule to get things done! We dipped into our reservoir of patience during the process.

Financial Issues: We decided to pay the grantees in two installments: one when the grant agreement was signed, and then an amount greater than or equal to the first installment on the day of the public announcement. Although the ballpark amount for each grant was clear, the exact dollars and cents were not. The possibility of unanticipated expenses led us to be cautious in emptying our bank account prematurely, although fortunately we faced few such expenses. We also had to make certain that the last check cleared our bank account before we moved to close it. It was all a delicate dance.

The same was true for all outstanding invoices. Our bookkeeper, for example, was going to transfer CTEq's Quickbooks records to the auditor for the 990. Not only did we need to pay her firm in advance, we also had to get the final checks into our records and paid by the bank. The designer who helped with the final website posting, along with the technical folks who worked with our grantees on the technology transfer all needed to be paid. Very careful recordkeeping and informed estimates helped tremendously.

Tasks that sounded easy proved not to be. Closing our corporate credit card for example must have taken 4 or 5 different phone calls. Ending our relationship with the company that wrote our paychecks, but not until the final paychecks had been distributed required a well-thought out tactical approach.

It was all worthwhile, however, because our careful budgeting yielded bigger grants for STEMworks and Vital Signs than we had anticipated.

Archiving Records: We were judicious about what to save, being careful to preserve a record of our work and accomplishments and select financial documents. We shredded years of bills, bank statements, defunct contracts, and other paperwork that filled many file drawers. Because we paid most of our bills online, we had an electronic archive of financial transactions and supporting documents that was easy to back up on a single CD. Because our most important legacy were STEMworks and Vital Signs, we backed up all the electronic files that contained critical financial and programmatic information on these two initiatives. This information will help both initiatives prosper into the future.

Fortunately, both grantees hired my CTEq colleague as a consultant to ensure a smooth transition for each initiative, and we made clear our willingness to be thought partners if they would find it helpful.

The Big Day: My colleague and I each had a list about 30 people we wanted to reach out to individually. This was done electronically, but the notes were personalized. Although labor intensive, the gratifying responses made it worthwhile. People appreciated our thoughtfulness, especially in our thanks for their special contribution to CTEq over the years. We anticipate that these people will continue to value and use STEMworks and Vital Signs going forward.

POSTSCRIPT

In the ensuing four months, WestEd and ECS have enthusiastically absorbed STEMworks and Vital Signs into their respective operations. Their future is bright.

I am very proud of CTEq's accomplishments, going from a start-up to a viable, highly-functioning organization in a short period of time. But perhaps I am even prouder of the integrity that guided our decision to dissolve. We could have continued for at least another year, but the work itself might have suffered. By making the proactive decision to dissolve and place our initiatives in other organizations, we were able to ensure that the initiatives we worked so hard to build continue to advance CTEq's mission to produce STEM literate high school graduates, even in CTEq's absence.

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[i] Perhaps the best example of individual corporations' reluctance to take stands on education policy issues emerged when CTEq advocated for the Mathematics Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. Political resistance to both efforts made many companies reluctant to rally around them publicly, but they welcomed CTEq's efforts to provide a well-reasoned voice about the value of these high standards.

[ii] This is a hyperlink to WestEd, the new home for STEMworks, at the dissolution of CTEq. The material is now branded for WestEd but pays homage to the original work done by CTEq with no substantive text changes.

[iii] This is a hyperlink to Education Commission of the States, the new home for Vital Signs, at the dissolution of CTEq. The material is now branded for ECS and includes ECS' collection of research along with compilations of relevant state policy around STEM learning.

[iv] We felt a keen responsibility to honor existing relationships, so we called out seven current states that already had forward-looking plans to maintain their partnership around STEMworks and we confidentially listed other states that expressed similar interests but had not moved to a formal partnership.

[v] Even with official letters from local government acknowledging our decision to dissolve, I continue to receive correspondence citing CTEq for non-compliance on this or that. Our attorney responds on our behalf pro bono. The wheels of bureaucracies move slowly!