

IBM to Grant \$5 Million in-kind for Public Schools Globally to Better Prepare for Growing Ransomware Threat

- Thanks to IBM Service Corps volunteers, IBM will provide in-kind cybersecurity support to schools across the United States, as well as Brazil, Costa Rica, Ireland, and the United Arab Emirates.

- The grants will focus on the need to establish programs that help address cybersecurity resiliency in schools, including against ransomware.



ARMONK, N.Y., May 24, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- IBM (NYSE:IBM) today announced it will provide in-kind grants valued at \$5 million to help address cybersecurity resiliency in schools worldwide. For the second year in a row, six school districts in the United States will be awarded these grants. This year the program is also expanding overseas with four additional grants in Brazil, Costa Rica, Ireland, and the United Arab Emirates. As part of each grant, sponsor teams of IBMers will help schools proactively prepare for and respond to cyberattacks.

In 2021, in the U.S. alone over 1,000 schools across the country suffered from a ransomware attack, according to Emsisoft [research](#). Financially motivated cybercriminals are taking advantage of schools' need for uptime, their scarcity of cybersecurity defense resources, and lack of expertise compared to other potential targets. Cybercriminals' focus on schools is also increasing on a global scale. In a recent report, [IBM Security X-Force](#) observed globally that the percentage of ransomware attacks against the education sector more than doubled from 2020 to 2021, with most cyberattacks taking the form of adware (33%) or ransomware (22%) attacks.

"For schools, a large barrier to strengthening their cybersecurity posture often comes down to constrained budgets, which financially motivated threat actors bet on," said Charles Henderson, Global Managing Partner and Head of IBM Security X-Force. "By pursuing targets with lower defenses, threat actors can reap quick rewards and yield a higher return. In the event of ransomware attacks, the extreme added pressure schools experience to pay a ransom to recover their operations is a profitable wager for the bad guys. As a leader in the security community, it's our duty to help our educational institutions strengthen their cyber preparedness."

The grant, created as part of IBM's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, will be an in-kind contribution in the form of resources and hours performed by IBM Service Corps teams. Through IBM Service Corps, IBMers use their professional skills

to help communities tackle complex challenges in education, humanitarian efforts, cybersecurity, and economic development. Through this grant program, volunteers will help schools establish programs to address cybersecurity resiliency and will provide services including developing incident response plans and ransomware playbooks. The programs will address the need for updating operating systems, providing cybersecurity training for staff, students, and parents, and implementing strategic communication plans to use in response to a cyber incident.

"Our access to IBM's cybersecurity professionals allowed us to reframe our perspective on how vulnerabilities may originate, and how to educate our school community about cybersecurity safety practices," said Ra'Chel Ford, Chief Operating Officer at KIPP Metro Atlanta Schools. "We thought cybersecurity concerns were limited to sharing passwords and email phishing, but we now realize that cybersecurity breaches come in many forms. Cybersecurity is now viewed as part of our School Safety Plan and Crisis Response Plan. Everyone plays a part – board members, families, scholars, staff, and vendors. This was one of the best decisions we made for our organization."

Last year, IBM received more than 250 applications from school districts across the United States seeking to strengthen their security postures in response to the growing threats in the education space. After a careful review of applications, IBM selected six recipients based on their cybersecurity needs and experiences, community resources, and potential risks: Brevard Public Schools in Viera, Florida; Denver Public Schools in Denver, Colorado; KIPP Metro Atlanta Schools in Atlanta, Georgia; Newhall School District in Valencia, California; Poughkeepsie City School District in Poughkeepsie, New York; and Sheldon Independent School District in Houston, Texas. This year, IBM is increasing this program to a total of 10 grants, valued at \$500,000 each (\$5 million in total).

K-12 public school districts based in the United States that are interested in applying for IBM's education cybersecurity grant can apply via IBM.com here: webportalapp.com/webform/ibm-cybersecurity. School districts in the United States can apply through June 21, 2022.

For more information about IBM's cybersecurity grants for schools visit: <https://www.ibm.com/impact/initiatives/security>. For more information about IBM Security X-Force's services and capabilities visit: <https://www.ibm.com/security/xforce>

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IBM Corporate Social Responsibility

IBM's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives enable IBM's technology and talent to address society's challenges at scale. Pro bono consulting initiatives such as IBM Service Corps, which demonstrate the power of technology when combined with humanity, enable employees to assist communities with economic development, education, safety, sustainability, and more. To learn more about IBM's CSR and companywide Good Tech initiatives, please visit IBM.org.

IBM Service Corps deploys teams of IBM employees worldwide who perform multi-week pro bono consulting engagements to help the prosperity and well-being of communities, helping them apply technology and related know-how involving projects that touch education, environmental sustainability, and public health and safety. Since 2008, IBM Service Corps has engaged over

4,000 employees in teams to undertake 456 projects in 54 countries.

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