

Empowering Female Diversity in STEMM

Innovative Young Minds Charitable Trust | 2026

2026 has been a year of both delivery and development for Innovative Young Minds (IYM). While continuing to provide immersive STEMM experiences, we have also tested a shorter, scalable online model designed to reach many more young women across New Zealand and beyond.

Opening new pathways through IYM Online

Our 2026 IYM Online Programme brought STEMM directly into students' homes. Across four online sessions, participants explored aerospace, health and medicine, research, coding, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and STEMM communication. They heard from women working in these fields and collaborated on a real-world STEMM industry problem. The programme included attendees from the Pacific, demonstrating the value of an online model that is not limited by geography.

"I will definitely be looking into a STEMM based career path now. It has given me more options."

Mia, IYM Online 2026

The Affinity Satellite: piloting the model

In June 2026, IYM partnered with Affinity Medical Imaging to pilot a short-format online STEMM experience. Students were taken behind the scenes of a working medical imaging clinic and introduced to X-ray, CT, ultrasound, MRI and nuclear medicine. They heard directly from professionals, explored study and career pathways and asked questions about what it is really like to work in medical imaging.

249

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

116

SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

99%

SATISFACTION

97%

MORE MOTIVATED TO EXPLORE
STEMM

The reach and response showed the potential of focused online events to connect large numbers of students with real workplaces, technologies and role models. One participant said, "I was unsure about medical imaging but now I know I do want to pursue it." Another valued discovering medical imaging jobs she had not known existed.

SEE THE PILOT IN ACTION:

[Read the Affinity wrap-up and watch the virtual tour on the IYM website](#)



2026 delivery and learning

What we delivered, what we learned and what comes next

The Affinity Satellite was a practical pilot of the model at the heart of our GlobalGiving project. It showed how one focused online experience could connect hundreds of young women with a real STEMM workplace, career pathways and female role models. Alongside IYM Online and the Residential Programme, it gave us valuable evidence about how different programme formats can work together to broaden access and deepen engagement.

What the Affinity pilot showed us

The Affinity pilot demonstrated that a focused online event can attract a large and geographically dispersed audience while retaining strong participant satisfaction and motivation. It also showed the value of combining workplace access, direct conversations with professionals and clear information about study and career pathways in one accessible experience.

What a difference a week can make! At the time of writing this report, our Satellite Pilot page has been up for 3 days and in that time we have had over 480 (and counting) page visits and almost 200 viewings of the Affinity video. A great example of reach beyond the event alone.

2026: ONLINE DELIVERY • AFFINITY PILOT • 10TH RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMME

Learning from 2026 delivery to inform the next stage

Building lasting value from 2026 delivery

The Affinity virtual tour and event wrap-up are now available through the IYM website, extending the value of the live event beyond the original participants. This experience will inform how future online content can be prepared so that students, teachers and families can return to trusted STEMM career information when it suits them.

Ten years of opening doors

2026 also marked the tenth year of the IYM Residential Programme. Thirty-nine Year 11 and 12 students spent a week exploring STEMM workplaces and career pathways across Wellington. Through workplace visits, workshops and the IYM Innovation Challenge, participants encountered a wide range of STEMM fields while building communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills. The programme complemented our online work by providing a smaller cohort with an intensive, in-person experience.

“It opened my mind to other opportunities in STEMM careers and made me think more about other options rather than just sticking to one.”

Lucy, IYM Residential 2026

What we have learned in 2026

Across our online, satellite and residential programmes, 2026 has reinforced the value of giving young women direct access to STEMM workplaces, professionals and career pathways. The Affinity Satellite has also shown that a focused online format can engage a large and geographically dispersed audience, even after the event. These insights will inform the design of the planned 10-experience series and the supporting resources made available post-satellites.

The next stage is to apply these lessons as IYM develops the planned 10-experience series for 2027, which we can deliver with your help.

PROJECT INFORMATION: [Empowering Female Diversity in STEMM on GlobalGiving](#)