

the
Kansas
Children's
DISCOVERY
Center



**Annual
Report
2021**



Celebrating 10 Years of Fun, Learning, and Growing.

The Discovery Center celebrated its 10th birthday in 2021. Over the past 10 years, the organization has grown significantly, gaining prominence as a regional tourist attraction and community anchor for families.

The Discovery Center features 15,000 square feet of indoor exhibits exploring science, careers, art, building and more, and a 4.5-acre certified Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom.

The museum has continued to add new play experiences, and hosted five major traveling exhibitions in the past 10 years. Access Discovery Programs, which ensure museum access for all children, now account for more than 10 percent of admissions, and thousands more children have been served in community outreach events designed to inspire a lifelong love of learning for every child.

Since opening in 2011, the museum has hosted more than 770,000 visitors from all 50 states and 23 countries.



Pillars of Play



Advocates for Children

Profoundly committed to equity and inclusion, the Discovery Center works zealously to identify and remove barriers to high-quality play experiences.

Learn more on pages 3-4



Educational Laboratory

The museum is designed with the whole child in mind. We value children as our world's most important citizens. Our child-led play experiences facilitate early learning.

Learn more on page 5



Play Activators

We are committed to working outside our walls, fostering a culture of play that places children at the center of the community and honors the way in which they learn and grow.

Learn more on page 6



Sustainable Nonprofit

The Discovery Center uses a decision-making model that emphasizes the long-term sustainability of the organization, while ensuring the mission of the museum is at the forefront of all work.

Learn more on pages 7-10

Profoundly committed to equity and inclusion, the Discovery Center works zealously to identify and remove barriers to play.



Advocates for Children

Every child deserves rich and diverse museum experiences.

More than 1 in 10 Discovery Center admissions are free or donor-subsidized. In 2021, these admissions included *Museums for All* visitors from families receiving TANF or WIC, families with subsidized memberships and field trip visitors from schools with a high percentage of children receiving free or reduced-cost lunches.

Special programs serve children with incarcerated mothers, medically fragile children, children with an autism spectrum disorder and foster families.

New in 2021: Foster Family Program

Supports children in foster care with healing play experiences in the museum and community.

In 2021, this program provided free memberships, crisis sensory kits and STEAM summer camps designed for the unique needs of children in foster care.





Discovery Kindergarten

Promotes a community-wide initiative to have every child ready for kindergarten.

Free Nights

Unites the whole community in play and learning at no cost to families.

Museums for All

Increases access to low-income families so finances are never a barrier to play.

Play Free

Helps children with incarcerated caregivers get the love and support they need to heal.

In 2021, this program mailed educational play kits to children and play guides to mothers to enhance virtual visits.

Sensory-Friendly Sundays

Provides children who have autism spectrum disorders with a safe and understanding place to play.

In 2021, a partnership with the Guggenheim Museum brought children at the Discovery Center and New York's Central Park together virtually to create art.

Medical Warriors

Honors medically fragile children or those battling life-limiting illnesses who need private play time.

Discovery Baby

Gives first-time parents the tools they need to begin a lifetime of learning.

Educational Laboratory

At the
Museum

The museum acts as an incubator and innovator, designed with the whole child in mind. We value children as our world's most important citizens. Our child-led play experiences facilitate critical learning and social skill development. New play experiences created in 2021 included:



Discovery Pond Redesign Spring 2021

A complete redesign of the pond experience to change the experience from observation to interaction.



Discover Bees! Exhibit Summer 2021

An in-house-created exhibit exploring the critical role of bees in the Kansas environment and economy.



Dino Dig Fall 2021

Installation of buried dinosaur skeletons outdoors to ignite curiosity and exploration of the natural world.



Snow-Ventures Exhibit Winter 2021

A snowy adventure in science and dramatic play that engaged families in beautiful and educational fun.

In Our
Community

Play Activators



The museum is much more than a building. We are committed to fostering a culture of play that places children at the center of the community and honors the way in which they learn and grow.

We provide ongoing education and opportunities for play experiences to come to life outside our walls. From school gyms to local parks to online classrooms—we take play on the road.

Photograph courtesy of JoAnn Shum/The Marysville Advocate

Outreach Highlight:

New Play Space in Marysville offers serious fun close to home

Building on work in 2020 to install play spaces in local parks, in 2021 the Discovery Center planned and constructed an educational play area in Marysville, Kansas, in partnership with *All in for Kansas Kids*, a project of the Children's Cabinet.

The Play Space design was workshopped with members of the Marysville community using Zoom calls to gain feedback and get ideas for design elements. The result is a space that draws heavily on Marysville's local culture and history, while integrating play and school readiness information.

Mobile Museum

Serves families in outreach events across the state of Kansas, where visitors can build, paint and play.

Corporate Play Days

Promotes the power of play for all ages with facilitated, play-based team-building for former children.

STEAM Ahead to Discovery Library Kits

Museum educators produce STEAM-based literacy and learning kits in partnership with the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library.

Discovery at Home

Over 165 free online learning activities, developed during the pandemic closure, continue to serve as a resource to families all over the world.

Sustainability

At the
Museum

Celebrating 10 years of play in 2021, the Discovery Center has grown and thrived by operating sustainably, while ensuring the needs of children are at the forefront of our work. Even in the midst of pandemic closure, our team worked to serve families and generate revenue with learning kits, play installations in local parks, free online learning videos and special programs to serve children in need.

The museum survived the pandemic despite losing 93% of projected revenue in 2020. Local and regional visitors are confidently returning to a museum full of new experiences alongside familiar favorites. The Discovery Center will continue to serve families, but only with donor support.

How is the Discovery Center Funded?

- Admissions
- Memberships
- Field Trips
- Discovery Shop Sales
- Donations
- Sponsorships
- Paid Partnerships
- The Discovery Center currently receives no ongoing public dollars.



Volunteers
are a critical
part of museum
operations

In Our
Community

Economic Impact



Community Anchor

The Discovery Center hosts more than 95,000 visitors in a typical year for innovative learning and play experiences. Nationally, museums generate more than \$50 billion in direct and indirect spending (AAM).



Tourist Attraction

More than 1 in 4 museum visitors live outside Shawnee County, making the museum a major tourist attraction and driver of tourism spending. The museum generates more than 25,000 out-of-town visitors annually.



Quality of Place

We love Topeka. Establishing quality of place and community pride for the next generation of Topekans is an intentional part of our work and drives our outreach, exhibit design and programming.



Cradle to Career

We are engaging the next generation of dreamers and leaders in science, technology, engineering, art and math through STEAM play.

2021 Revenue | \$1,562,008*

Key Revenue Numbers

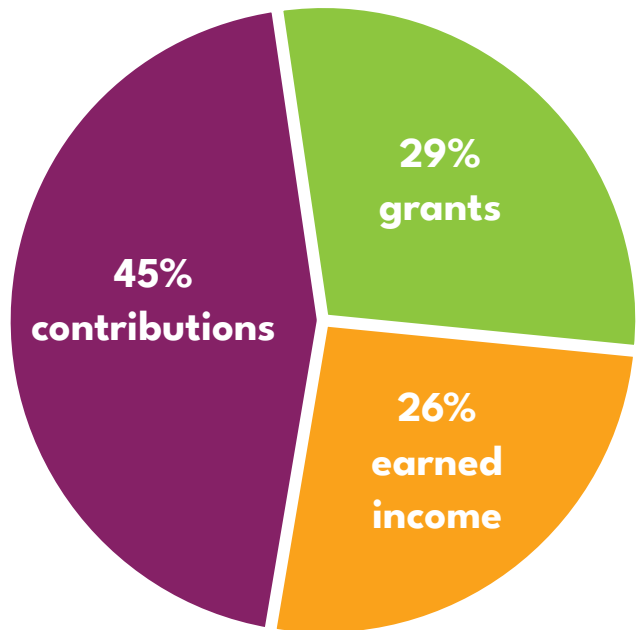
41,906 total visitors

1,169 member families

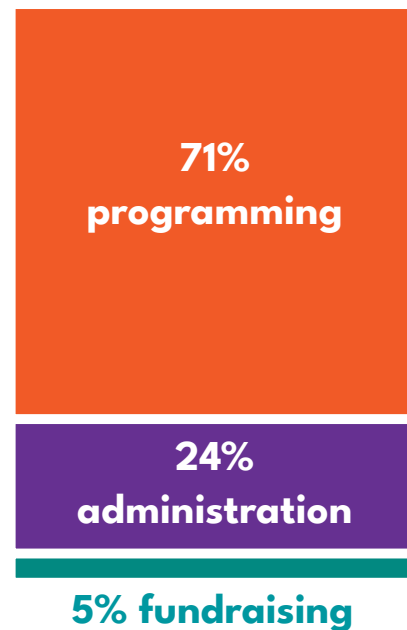
1,278 field trip students

978 birthday party attendees

\$134,925 raised at Evening of
Discovery Gala



2021 Expenses | \$957,672*



* unaudited financials



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