

the
Kansas
Children's
DISCOVERY
Center



**Annual
Report
2023**



A Year of Museum Milestones and Family Memories

The Discovery Center celebrated a significant milestone this year, welcoming an unprecedented 120,002 visitors—a 22% increase over our previous record. What makes this achievement even more noteworthy is the concurrent success of our expanded Access Discovery programs, bringing joy to 50,000 individuals through free or reduced-cost admissions, and our Mobile Museum, reaching thousands more outside our walls.

At the heart of our mission lies the conviction that children learn best through play. The joyful shouts of “look, I did it!” resonate throughout our museum, showcasing the invaluable skills children acquire through child-centered experiences. At the Discovery Center, families strengthen their bonds and create lifetime memories together.

Embracing this milestone, we are driven to expand our reach and create additional capacity for families, ensuring that the museum continues to enrich the lives of children throughout Kansas and beyond.



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 7-9

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



Advocates for Children

The Discovery Center is committed to ensuring every child has rich and diverse museum experiences.

In 2023, more than one in three Discovery Center admissions were free or donor-subsidized.

These admissions included record-setting numbers of *Museums for All* visitors from families receiving food stamps or WIC, families with subsidized memberships, military families, and field trip visitors from schools with a high percentage of children receiving free or reduced-cost lunches.



Access Highlight: Free Admission on Third Thursdays

12 free admission nights

3,422 served, ↑ 11% from 2022

The museum completed the fourth year of monthly free admission nights in 2023. More than 12,000 visitors have attended these events, making them a critical part of our work to keep the museum accessible for all families. Any family may attend free nights, uniting the whole community in play and learning.



Discovery Baby

105 attended classes
Gives first-time parents community connections and the tools they need to begin a lifetime of learning.

Sensory-Friendly Sundays

944 served
Provides children with autism and their families with a safe place to play at no cost.

Museums for All

3,365 admissions
↑ *81% from 2022*
Increases access for families so finances are never a barrier to play.

Discovery Kindergarten

4 camp sessions, 1 fair
378 attended
A free community-wide initiative to help ensure every child is ready to begin school.

Foster Families

150 free family memberships
Supports children in foster care with free family memberships and summer science camps.

Medical Warriors

64 served
Honors medically fragile children, or those battling life-limiting illnesses, who need free, private play time and accommodations.

Play Free

363 served
Pioneering program to support children with incarcerated caregivers. Play Free celebrated 1,000 participants served since 2018.

Partnerships with local social service organizations strengthen families. In addition to foster families, 97 family memberships and six organizational memberships provided over 4,000 admissions.

Educational Laboratory

At the
Museum

The museum acts as an incubator and innovator, designed with the whole child in mind. Our child-led play experiences included 184 educational programs built to facilitate critical learning and social skill development. New exhibits created in 2023 to ignite play and inspire learning included:



Traveling Exhibits Spring & Winter 2023

Visiting Daniel Tiger and Curious George exhibits brought STEAM to life with beloved characters.



Toddler Town Spring 2023

An immersive, outdoor play environment designed just for toddlers to learn, play and, grow.



Pollinator Pavilion Summer 2023

Installation of a prairie entrance to kick off a multi-year Native American Public Art Installation Series.



Camp Kansas Summer 2023

A playful celebration of opportunities to explore the outdoors in the Sunflower State.

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 community festivals—we take play on the road.

Mobile Museum

The Mobile Museum delivers STEAM-based educational play in parks, schools, and neighborhoods. Launched in 2018, the museum has served more than 18,000 people at 100 events, 18 of which took place in 2023. The museum has pulled into Hays, Dodge City, Nicodemus, Kansas City, and everywhere in between, bringing communities together with the power of play.

Growing demand for the Mobile Museum means a van and trailer will be replaced in early 2024 with larger vehicle capable of transporting serious fun to even more communities with bigger and better play experiences.



Grown Up Play Days

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

Discovery Classroom

Engaging engineering experiences delivered in local schools by museum educators.

Sustainability

At the
Museum

The Discovery Center has grown and thrived by operating sustainably, while ensuring the needs of children are at the forefront of our work. The museum welcomed a record total of 120,002 visitors in 2023, surpassing the previous attendance record of 97,989 visitors set in 2019.

The museum also experienced a notable surge in out-of-town visitors, with 45,945 individuals traveling from outside Shawnee County.

How is the Discovery Center Funded?

- Admissions
- Memberships
- Field Trips
- Discovery Shop Sales
- Birthdays and Rentals
- Donations
- Paid Partnerships
- Sponsorships
- 15% of Gage Park Improvement Authority (GPIA) Sales Tax Revenue



Volunteers
are a critical
part of museum
operations



In Our
Community

Economic Impact



Community Anchor

The Discovery Center had 120,002 visitors in 2023 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 35,000 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.



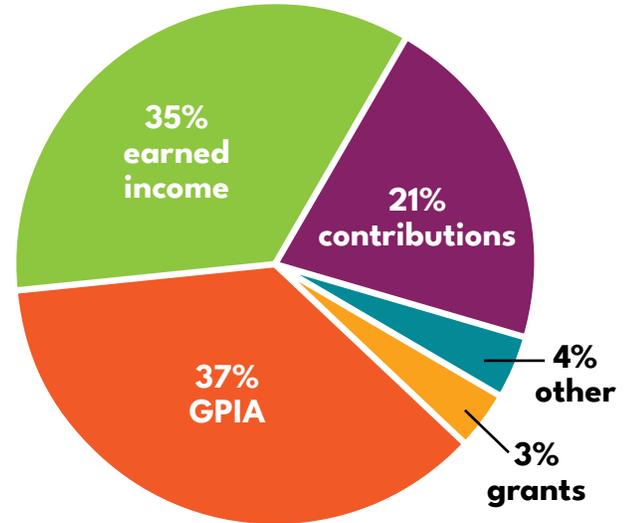
Cradle to Career

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

Key Revenue Numbers

- 120,002 total visitors
- 2,118 member families
- 8,709 field trip students
- 111 birthday parties
- \$212,903 raised at Evening of Discovery Gala

2023 Revenue | \$2,649,997.16*



The Power of 2/10 Penny: GPIA Sales Tax Impact

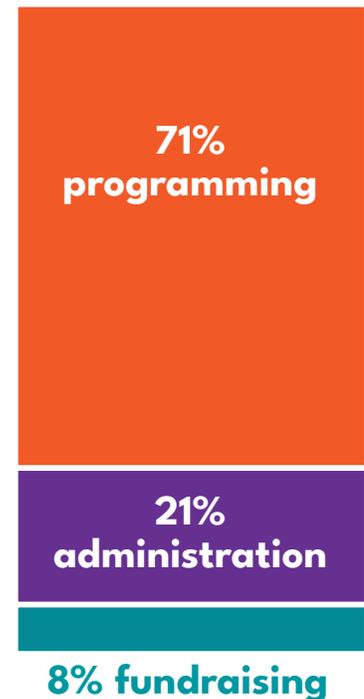


Total GPIA entity distributions in 2023: \$6,467,246.53

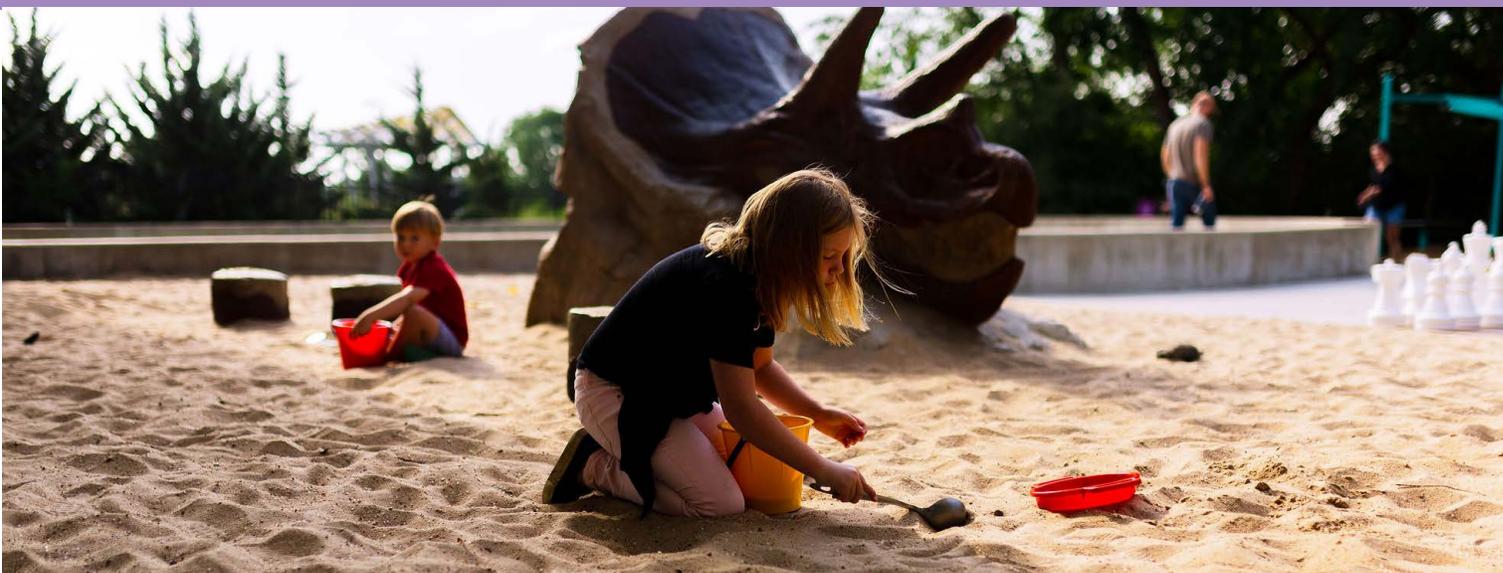
Discovery Center portion in 2023: \$970,086.98
15% of total

Permanent Exhibits	\$82,926.06
Special and Traveling Exhibits	\$172,614.30
Facility Updates and Repairs	\$104,470.67
Future Projects	\$110,075.95
Building Discovery Expansion	\$500,000

2023 Expenses | \$1,523,323.09*



* unaudited financials



2023 Board of Directors

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Kansas Children's Discovery Center



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