

Kansas Children's Discovery Center



Annual
Report
2024



A World of Play and Learning: Under Construction!

This year at the Discovery Center was marked by transition and excitement! The nonprofit children's museum welcomed the one millionth all-time visitor in April and hosted nearly 120,000 total visitors, more than 1 in 3 of which visited with free or reduced admission.

In September, the museum broke ground on a new \$11 million expansion project that will more than double the size of the museum.

These milestones reflect the Discovery Center's unwavering commitment to inspiring curiosity and learning through play. As the museum embarks on this exciting new chapter, the expansion will create even greater opportunities for children and families to explore, discover, and grow together. With a record-breaking year behind us and a bright future ahead, the Discovery Center remains dedicated to ensuring every child can experience the power of play.



Pillars of Play



Advocates for Children

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

Learn more on pages 5-6



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 7



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 8



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.

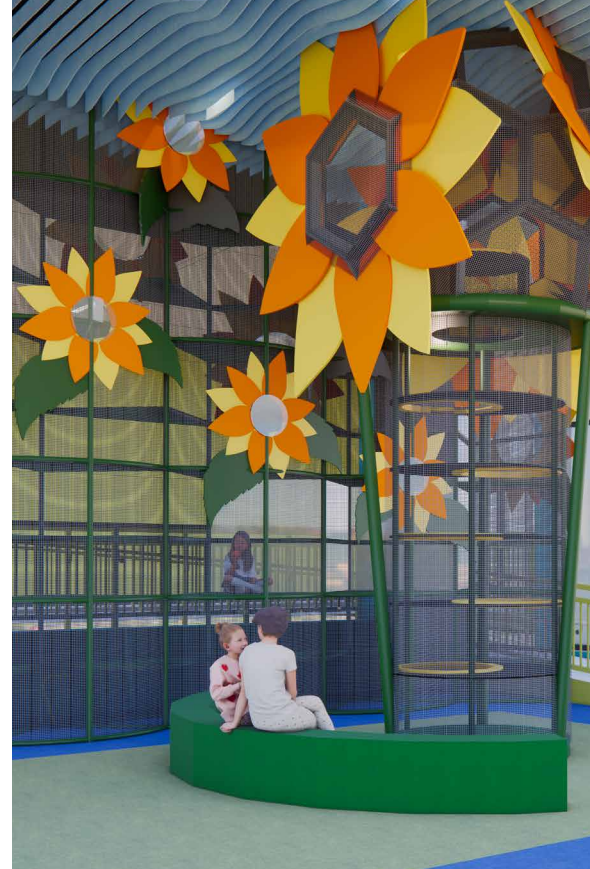
Learn more on pages 9-11

With our current building regularly at capacity, we are on the cusp of an exciting new chapter in our mission to ignite children's passion for learning.

Building Discovery

Our vision is to create a museum where every child can find exciting opportunities to explore, experiment, and learn. To achieve this, we are eager to build three new learning lab classrooms that blend a test kitchen, indoor and outdoor learning, serving as the foundation for school-aged children's STEAM learning camps and programs.

These cutting-edge learning labs will serve as hubs of innovation, alongside new exhibit space designed for traveling and permanent installations. Critical access and safety additions include a nursing room, sensory-friendly space, field trip entrance, workshop, and storm shelter.



Project Highlights



Enhanced Learning Environment

Three new learning lab classrooms that will create space for quality, STEAM-based childcare for school-age children.

A 3,000 square foot **traveling exhibit gallery** to enable the museum to host any traveling exhibit from around the United States.

Kansas-themed learning opportunities integrated throughout exhibit spaces to excite the next generation of Kansas leaders and innovators.

An **inventive makerspace** that will enable curious children to tinker, explore, and create in a collaborative environment.

Improved Safety & Accessibility

A **secondary group entrance** will reduce congestion at main entrance.

Caregivers and nursing mothers will be able to utilize a **private room for lactation**, pumping, or medical needs.

A **sensory room** for children experiencing sensory deregulation.

A **storm shelter** to provide peace of mind for families, knowing their children are safe in all weather conditions.

Greater Discovery

An **artful, cohesive addition** to the north of the current building will more than double the size of the museum.

An **iconic indoor climbing structure** anchored by the tallest climbable sunflower in the world.

Eleven **new exhibit experiences** exploring science.

Profoundly committed to museum access, 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 2024, more than one in three Discovery Center admissions were free or donor-subsidized, nearly 50,000 total admissions.

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.

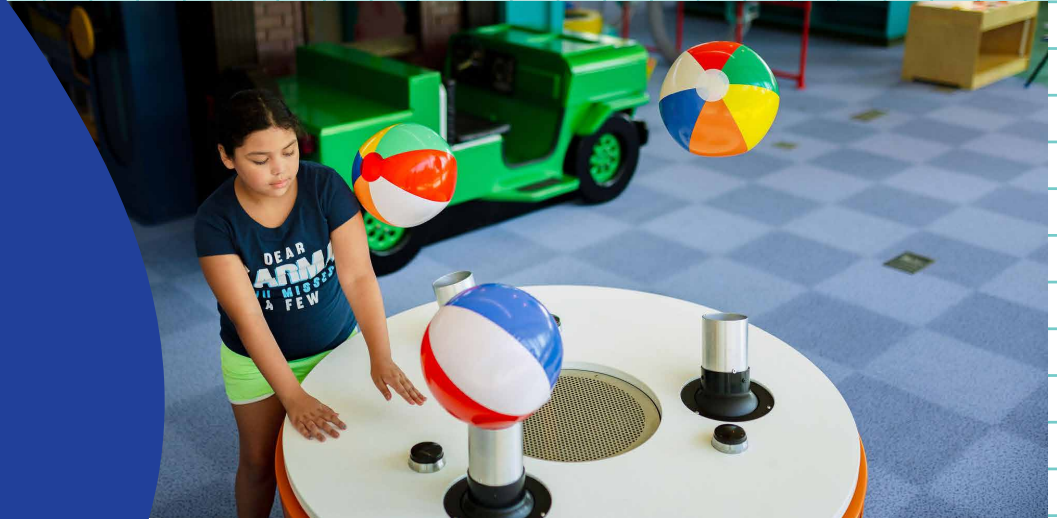


Access Highlight: Play Free Expands to Serve Dads, Kids

15 sessions held in 2024

688 served, ↑ 90% from 2023

The museum's pioneering program to support children with incarcerated parents expanded this year to serve fathers, juvenile parents, and their children across the state. Continued Play Free sessions in Topeka served record numbers of incarcerated mothers and children. Play Free creates child-centered bonding time for families outside the prison walls.



Discovery Baby

35 attended classes

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

Sensory-Friendly Sundays

690 served

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

Museums for All

4,275 admissions

↑ *27% from 2023*

Increases access for families so finances are never a barrier to play.

Discovery Kindergarten

5 camp sessions

133 attended

A free community-wide initiative to help ensure every child is ready to begin school.

Social Service Memberships

119 free or reduced family memberships

Partnerships with local social service organizations strengthen families.

Medical Warriors

107 served

↑ *67% from 2023*

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

Free Night

3,062 admissions

Free admission nights held monthly to unite the entire community in playful learning.

In 2024, 119 family memberships and six organizational memberships provided over 4,000 admissions to foster families and other families with unique needs.

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 252 educational programs built to facilitate critical learning and social skill development. New exhibits created in 2024 to ignite play and inspire learning included:



Traveling Exhibits Winter & Fall 2024

XOXO and Emotions and Play with Pixar's Inside Out brought joy, new visitors, and endless fun.



Flexibit Science! Spring 2024

Two new science experiences: Circuit Maze Challenge and Shake Table encourage playful experimentation.



Children's Butterfly Art Summer 2024

Children's artwork became dozens of whimsical metal butterflies filling the prairie with sound and color.



Picture the Dream Spring 2024

The 70th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision was marked with children's book art.

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 20,000 people at 130 events, 18 of which took place in 2024. 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 required the original van and trailer to be replaced in 2024 with a box truck 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 the 1 millionth all-time visitor in 2024, and a total of 118,771 visitors in 2024, nearly 50,000 of which visited with free or reduced admission.

The museum also experienced a notable number of out-of-town visitors, with 46,569 individuals traveling from outside Shawnee County.

How is the Discovery Center Funded?

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



257 volunteers
contributed 2,588
hours in 2024



In Our Community

Economic Impact



Community Anchor

The Discovery Center had 118,771 visitors in 2024 for innovative learning and play experiences. The museum generates an estimated \$5.8 million in annual economic impact to the Greater Topeka region.



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 40,000 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

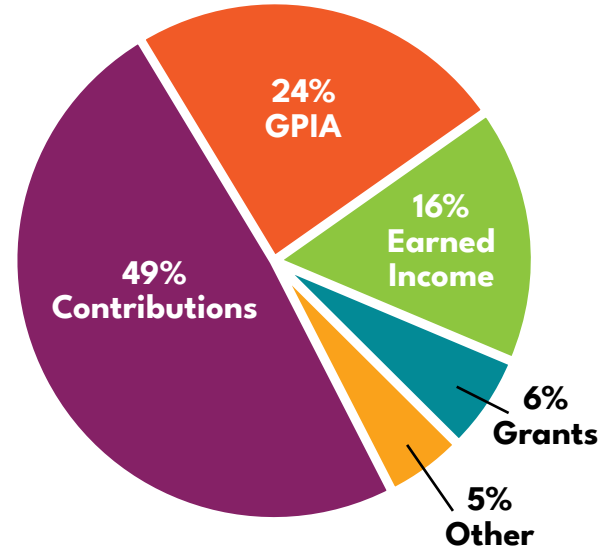
118,771 total visitors, 47,341 of which visited with free or reduced admission

2,155 member families

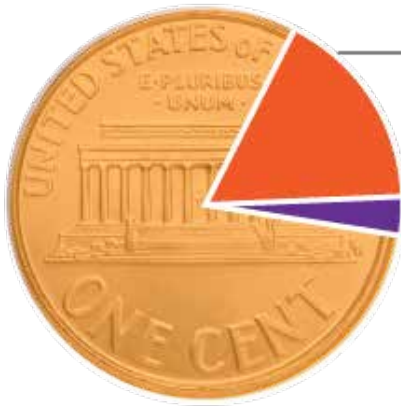
7,604 field trip students

\$238,720 raised at Evening of Discovery Gala

2024 Revenue | \$5,582,008.68*



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

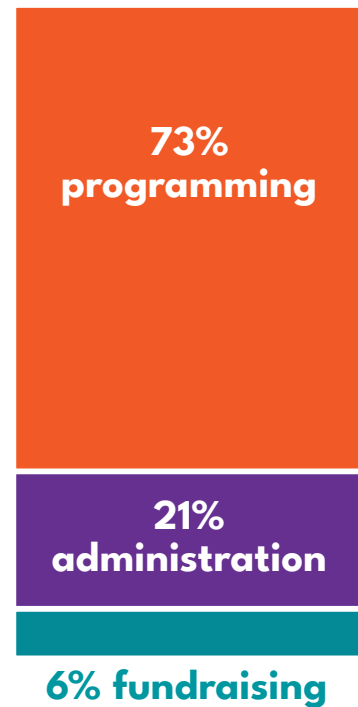


Total GPIA entity distributions in 2024: \$9,004,491.15

Discovery Center portion in 2024: \$1,358,258.77
15% of total

Permanent Exhibits	\$1,252,446.40
Special and Traveling Exhibits	\$33,968.18
Facility Updates and Repairs	\$65,028.66

2024 Expenses | \$1,586,108.12*



* unaudited financials

A young child with spiky black hair, smiling and holding a silver cup. The child is wearing a blue and yellow floral shirt. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a red wall. The image is framed by a large circular cutout with a red and white background. There are decorative green and purple shapes on the left side of the image.

**“We don’t stop playing
because we grow old;
we grow old because
we stop playing.”**

- George Bernard Shaw



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Kansas Children's Discovery Center

Thank You!

Thank you for making 2024 an amazing year! Please continue your support. Give today at www.kansasdiscovery.org/give





Kansas Children's Discovery Center



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