

# 2017-2018 Annual Report

# iexplora!

### **OUR MISSION**

Creating opportunities for inspirational discovery and the joy of lifelong learning through interactive experiences in science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

# **OUR VALUES**

### Learning:

We advocate for self-directed, hands-on experiential learning as a foundation for innovation, creativity, and critical thinking.

### **Community:**

We celebrate the diversity of the community in which we live and grow, and we create Environments where all community members are welcomed and valued.

### **Generosity:**

We practice and cultivate generosity through listening, respect, and the sharing of time, ideas, and resources.

### Sustainability:

Organizational health enables us to act boldly for the long-term benefit of Explora, our community, and our partners.

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Investing in our shared future...

This past year was certainly an exciting one for Explora. We grew as an organization by adding key staff, forged new partnerships and launched new projects, and embarked upon a capital campaign to better address our community's need for high-quality early childhood education and students better prepared for the future workforce. The year was also record breaking in terms of the sheer number of children and adults we engaged in science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) learning statewide.

As Explora reached more individuals than ever before, we also continued to serve as a leading example of community engagement for museums and institutions across the country. We've become such a trusted resource because we promote and strengthen the unique assets within each community we serve. Our success comes from collaboration, not competition; from listening, not lecturing.

Of course, much work remains to be done. We know where New Mexico stands in terms of educational and economic outcomes. Contained in this report are just some of the ways in which Explora is meeting these challenges by investing in those most impacted by them. We also highlight many of the stakeholders who are helping us move the needle on closing the academic achievement gap and diversifying our future STEAM workforce—our mission focus.

Looking ahead, we are just as excited by the promise of new opportunities to learn from our partners and scale our impact. Thank you to the many donors, leaders, and allies listed here, and to new supporters we hope to inspire to join us. Together, we will continue to invest in our future by engaging, educating, and employing New Mexico's students in STEAM.

Stephen Rottler President

Joe Hastings Executive Director

### **INVESTING IN OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS**

Explora's *Cradle through Career STEAM Learning Strategic Focus* is designed to engage, educate, and employ New Mexico's students in science, technology, engineering, art, and math. A critical component of this focus is early childhood education. Explora recognizes the importance and impact of high-quality Pre-K education on improving student achievement, particularly for children from low-income families. In fiscal year 2018, we continued to promote early experiences in guided exploration, shared discovery, and interactive play alongside parents and caregivers to prime our youngest learners for robust development. Explora also expanded partner capacity for STEAM education by providing professional development workshops to pre-service and early childhood teachers, as well as librarians across New Mexico.



# Explora engages parents and caregivers in their children's learning, providing essential support that empowers adults to actively foster their children's growth.

Our Growing a Scientist<sup>™</sup> program engaged preschoolers from ages 2½ to 5 and their parents or adult caregivers in science and engineering activities that incorporate art, literature, and fun. In 2017-2018 the program was offered on-site at Explora as a semester-long program; embedded at partner sites like CLNkids and Christina Kent Early Childhood Center; and offered in a mini-series format at libraries, preschools, and other community sites throughout the state. Children in grades K–3 and their adults also engaged in fun, hands-on discovery in our Science to Grow On<sup>™</sup> program. Combined, these two programs reached more children than ever before in the 2018 fiscal year: 3,051 compared to 2,758 the year before.

# Explora also brings early childhood experiential science learning to communities across the state.

In partnership with United Way of Northern New Mexico and Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation, Explora brought Growing a Scientist<sup>TM</sup> programs to 474 young learners and their adult caregivers in northern New Mexico. 4,948 children and 4,802 adults attended Monday morning Toddler Time at Explora in 2017–2018! Explora provides high-quality early childhood programming statewide, helping to bridge gaps in resources and training across New Mexico. We reach early childhood educators as well as child and adult caregiver teams where they are, providing experiential, evidence-based curricula through engaging workshops at partner sites in the community.

- In partnership with Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), Explora's early childhood educators facilitated workshops on developmentally-appropriate math and science in the early childhood classroom for students in CNM's Early Childhood Multicultural Education program.
- In partnership with UNM Early Childhood Services Center Toy Lending & Resource Libraries, Explora facilitated 15 workshops for early childhood teachers.



Explora brought much-needed federal funding into the early childhood landscape in New Mexico through an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Activating Communities grant. Our IMLS-funded STEM Charging Stations for Young Children & Families project provided professional development opportunities for library staff, thereby magnifying our impact.

- Librarians around the state traveled a combined 1,900 miles to attend professional development workshops held in partnership with New Mexico State Library. These workshops focused on building the capacity of librarians to provide STEM programs integrated with literacy for young children and their families in the communities of the librarians.
- In partnership with IMLS and New Mexico State Library, Explora developed STEM to READ kits featuring developmentally-appropriate science and math activities with complementing fiction and non-fiction books. Explora gathered feedback from 27 libraries around the state on what topics would be most relevant to their communities, and additional kits were developed based on the top four ideas. During the 2018 fiscal year, library staff across New Mexico used the STEM to READ kits to facilitate programs that were attended by over 2,729 people.

# **INVESTING IN NEW MEXICO'S STUDENTS & FAMILIES**

Explora plays an important role in connecting the content that students learn during the school day to experiential, science-based learning in settings familiar and accessible to students and their adult caregivers. From single-day & week-long camp experiences, to a workshop series for parents and caregivers, to professional development that supports educators in providing inquiry-based STEAM content, Explora remains committed to increasing access to quality educational experiences for all.

### Explora takes learning beyond the classroom through fun and engaging camps!

Explora's educational camps engage students in critical out-of-school time learning during school breaks, preventing learning loss with fun, hands-on discovery of STEAM concepts. In 2017–2018, our on-site camps provided enrichment for 1,729 students from pre-K through high school, fostering students' critical thinking skills and creativity. With donor support, Explora was able to offer scholarships for low-income children to attend week-long summer camps, supporting students hit hardest by summer learning loss.

### Feedback from parents and campers:

"I love Explora and I think you all do an exceptional job of teaching children about science and making it fun!"

"My favorite thing about Explora camp was going to play with stuff."

"We chose Explora camps because we wanted our daughter to enjoy a camp of learning and discovery."

Explora increases our learning impact by offering camps outside of Albuquerque, in communities with limited access to informal STEAM-based learning experiences.

Working with partners, in 2017–2018 Explora was also able to offer camps for students in grades 6–8 in Santa Fe, students in grades K–5 in Taos and Las Cruces, and students in grades K–8 in Gallup. Explora provided camp experiences for 153 students across NM.

# Explora empowers parents, caregivers, and teachers to support student learning and achievement in science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM).

Explora and the New Mexico STEM Learning Ecosystem (STEM-NM) convened an advisory board with participants from various departments at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque Public Schools, United Way of Central New Mexico, the New Mexico Out-of-School Time Network, NM EPSCoR, and NM PTA to design a project to improve math achievement for students of color. The resulting project, Math FACESS (Families and Communities Empowering Student Success in Mathematics), is funded by the National Science Foundation under NSF INCLUDES as a Design and Development Launch Pilot project. 2017–2018 was spent planning, with implementation set to begin early in the 2019 fiscal year. The project aims to increase math confidence in the community through themed "12 Months of Math" public programs and "Math Talk" workshops that will help teachers and parents learn how to discuss math with their students.

### Explora works to strengthen the capacity of out-of-school time educators.

Together with the New Mexico Out of School Time Network (NMOST), New Mexico Public Education Department, and New Mexico State University, Explora offered professional development training to 58 out-of-school time providers in 11 counties, reaching more than 6,000 students. The workshops were designed to support and empower teachers to facilitate standards-aligned STEM learning experiences as part of their after-school programs. Participating teachers left with STEM Resource Kits that included science activities, materials, and curricula that they could immediately implement at their sites.

# Explora engages learners of all ages with hands-on exhibits that illuminate STEAM concepts and engage visitors with tools and equipment related to scientific phenomena.

In 2017–2018, Explora piloted an innovative makerspace, hosted a traveling exhibit from London, and opened an all-new water exhibit area with a new shade structure.



**Explora's new Makerspace** provided interactive, makerfocused experiences for visitors, school groups, and educators alike. Featuring low-cost and accessible tools and materials, including unlimited cardboard, the exhibit space demonstrated that all communities can get involved in the maker movement! Explora hosted **Curious Contraptions**, a traveling exhibit featuring exhibits from the Cabaret Mechanical Theatre and Science Projects, London, from February 17 to May 20, 2018. Visitors explored science, art, and engineering through miniature mechanical sculptures known as automata. Water Flow Patio, featuring seasonal outdoor water exhibits, opened March 24, 2018. These exhibits offered endless possibilities for investigation into the intriguing properties of water. Visitors of all ages experimented with water towers and fountains and engaged in friendly competition around dam building.

# **INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY**

One of the ways Explora expresses our commitment to community is by working to expand access to learning opportunities for all New Mexicans. Explora is able to serve more people and provide more meaningful engagement in STEAM thanks to the strong partnerships we have formed with schools and organizations across our state.

# Explora increases access to our museum's science-rich learning exhibits and programs for low-income families.

In fiscal year 2018, Explora worked with 110 community partners to provide 22,555 no-cost memberships to low-income families, an increase of nearly 900 memberships distributed over the previous year. We also engaged families with students in Title I schools in Albuquerque and surrounding areas through Family Science Night (FSN) events, which help prepare underserved students for educational success, introduce families to STEAM careers, and increase excitement for learning. Explora hosted a total of 17,003 attendees, including school teachers and principals, at these FSN events last year.

### Through dedicated outreach, we bring Explora to communities throughout New Mexico, engaging tens of thousands of students, parents, and teachers in STEAM learning opportunities they otherwise would not have.

Beyond the Albuquerque metro area, many communities across our state continue to struggle to provide youth with quality science education and lack resources for students to enjoy informal educational experiences. In response, Explora collaborates with partners such as schools, libraries, Chapter Houses on the Navajo Nation, and community centers across New Mexico to bring informal STEM learning to communities and community hubs.



Explora engaged 35,961 children and adults in statewide outreach in 2017–2018!

"The Explora Family Science Nights are an amazing opportunity for inter-generational fun and learning. Explora has provided these opportunities to the remote tribal communities on the Navajo reservation where these experiences are rarely available." – Alana McGrattan, DCA, State Tribal Libraries Coordinator

# In partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and United Way of Central New Mexico, Explora continues to learn from those we serve to better support the needs of all families in our community.

In 2017–2018, Explora and the New Mexico Autism Society (NMAS) embarked on the second year of a nationally-recognized co-creation project to help families with autism have successful and more meaningful visits to our museum. Explora trained an additional 46 staff to support visitors on the autism spectrum, refined our toolkit of resources for families to use, expanded our offering of Sensory-Friendly Hours and science camps for children with autism spectrum disorder, and provided 206 free annual memberships to NMAS families.

- In March 2018, we hosted 60 students and educators from Albuquerque Public Schools' Aztec Special Education Complex and Highland Complex. In partnership with Holmans Foundation for Autism, we closed Explora to the general public to allow these students to engage deeply and freely with our hands-on exhibits.
- In June 2018, 15 children were able to participate in a week-long camp designed specifically to support children with autism spectrum disorder in Gallup, NM.
- In April, 2018, Explora partnered with NMAS for a special sensory-friendly Explora Family & Community Science Night for families in Roswell, NM.
- With federal IMLS funding, Explora trained three other museums to serve as pilot sites and partners in this work. Staff from Omaha Children's Museum, The Works (MN), and Sciencenter (NY) came to Albuquerque for a training workshop and to learn about our sensory kits, staff trainings, and sensory-friendly events. They then took sensory toolkits home with them and implemented the toolkits and sensory-friendly programs at their institutions.

### Explora celebrates New Mexico's many STEAM resources with the community.

In partnership with New Mexico's nationally-designated STEM Learning Ecosystem, STEM-NM, Explora organized the 2018 New Mexico Science Fiesta, one of the largest celebrations of science, art, and technology in the state. Free and open to the public, the week-long celebration attracted over 4,000 people. The Fiesta included an EXPO with more than 70 interactive booths, mind-blowing demonstrations, and performances that took place at neighboring Tiguex Park, Explora, and the NM Museum of Natural History & Science. Albuquerque First Lady and STEM professional Elizabeth Keller served as Honorary Event Chair. The Fiesta also included a week of science events in schools and community organizations throughout Albuquerque.



# **INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE**

In Explora's Cradle through Career STEAM Learning Strategic Focus the bookend to our early childhood programs is our work with teens and young adults. We also collaborate with industry leaders to keep students on pathways to STEAM courses of study and careers. To improve educational and career opportunities for youth in our community, Explora focuses on three core areas: 1) quality, evidence-based STEM programs for youth; 2) STEM programs and support networks for educators; and, 3) the STEM-NM Ecosystem of local professionals, industries, and communities through internships and mentoring programs.

# For the past decade and more, Explora has provided skills-based education and job training to at-risk students in Albuquerque.

Explora's Youth Intern Program is a STEM education and workforce development initiative employing 30 low-income, culturally diverse teens annually. Over their 2.5 years in the program, interns receive training in Explora's hands-on STEM curricula and pedagogy, engage in one-on-one mentorships with Explora staff, and develop the skills and confidence to facilitate STEM programs for 10,000 students per year—all while earning a stipend which allows them to help support their families. Explora also supported 30 middle school students in our Youth Apprentice Program, a summer program for youth ages 12–15.



Explora develops and implements a variety of programs and professional development opportunities for classroom teachers, out-of-school time providers, and other educators. Our goal is to prepare educators to engage students with science and engineering content, build STEAM identity, and support pathways to STEAM careers.

In 2017, Explora became a regional partner of the national nonprofit Code.org to increase female and minority K–12 student participation in computer science (CS). With additional support from Sandia National Laboratories, Explora selected and trained facilitators who then prepared teachers throughout the state to adopt and use Code.org's CS curriculum in their own school classrooms. In just one year, we provided instruction for over 150 teachers and 3,000 students who were primarily female or otherwise underrepresented in CS!

### Role Models Matter...in STEAM and in life!

Explora understands that teens and young adults don't just need experiences with science, technology, engineering, art, and math; they also need to meet role models and work with mentors. Meaningful interactions with STEAM mentors, role models, and workplace settings can help students develop their STEAM identity and support pathways to academic and professional fulfillment. This type of interaction is an impactful way for students to hear first-hand what it is like to both become and work as a STEAM professional. In 2017–2018, Explora provided the following opportunities for this meaningful engagement:

- Over 25 college students developed their public speaking, facilitation, and general science knowledge skills by spending a semester or more working with Explora educators in programs both at Explora and in the community. Here's just some of what they had to say about their experience:
  - "Opened up a potential career path to me."
  - "Gave me a sense of purpose."
  - "Gaining skills to help myself in the future; learning new things."

"Instead of explaining things, I try to take a step back and start asking questions. I can explain or ask questions. Helping them find the answer is more beneficial, and sticks with them longer."

- 225 teens participated in 9 Teen Science Cafés held at Explora. A Teen Science Café is a free, public presentation on a STEAM topic for local teens. They are not only a fun, informal way for teens to explore STEAM topics affecting their lives, but also an important opportunity for teens to meet STEAM professionals and understand their career pathways.
- During the 2018 New Mexico Science Fiesta, seven STEM professionals visited 20 classrooms and 400 students during the Fiesta's "Classroom Connections" program. In addition, 18 STEM professionals interacted with more than 70 Science Fiesta participants as part of the "Borrow a Scientist" program. These STEM professionals not only described what it is they do, but also told the story of their career pathway. They talked about what they are passionate about, what is important about what they do, mentors and teachers that were important to their career pathway, and much more.



### ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH: By the numbers, July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

Explora's dollar allocations for fiscal year 2017–2018 from audited year-end reports



# ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH: By the numbers, July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018



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