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For immediate release

Explora is Awarded \$172,000 Federal Grant to Develop a New Initiative, √*Roots: supporting Black scholars in STEAM*

Albuquerque, NM: Explora, New Mexico's premier science center and children's museum in Albuquerque, NM, has been awarded a \$172,000 Museums for America grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, an independent federal agency that provides library and museum grants, policy development, and research. Explora will partner with the New Mexico Black Leadership Council (NMBLC), The Greater Albuquerque Housing Partnership, the Community School at Emerson Elementary, and the Sandia National Laboratories' Black Leadership Committee. The initiative strives to expand Explora's relevance to the local Black community and serve more Black students with STEM learning opportunities. To achieve this goal, the Project Team will co-create a holistic, place-based approach to STEAM learning that incorporates a growth mindset and changes perceptions about who can do STEAM.

The grant will support the expansion of Explora's current STEAM programming to include more Black voices and communities. Explora focuses on cradle-through-career STEAM learning, especially for students underrepresented in STEM due to systemic barriers; STEM fields are ripe for enrichment by Black minds, voices, and perspectives. Right now, only 7% of STEM professionals are Black (NSF, 2019). The New Mexico Black Leadership Council Founder and Director, Cathryn McGill, says, "This project is not about equations or formulas. Once we show unwavering belief in our students and we show them they can learn, math and science is the easy part. Our challenge will be to take a hard look at a system that has disenfranchised whole segments of the population through implicit bias and other forms of overt and covert discriminatory practices. Our children are so capable of learning and becoming brilliant STEM professionals—we have failed them in not believing they could. We own this failure and we are excited about what we do with our resolve to course correct and serve our brilliant students henceforth." Together, the Project Team will adapt Explora's program development process and make it more collaborative, culturally-responsive, and community-driven. The Program Team also will provide opportunities for students to connect with Black STEAM professionals who can increase students' abilities to see themselves in STEAM.

Explora's Deputy Director, Kristin Leigh, says, "Explora is thrilled to continue our work with the New Mexico Black Leadership Council to increase Explora's relationships with and relevance to Albuquerque's Black communities, to increase opportunities for Black students in Albuquerque to pursue STEAM, and to collaborate on an approach to STEAM learning that changes perceptions about who can do STEAM. Community is one of Explora's Core Values, and we believe partnering with other local organizations is critical, in-order to address systemic barriers to STEAM and advance real change. We are so excited about the upcoming work on the *Square Roots* project, and we're grateful to IMLS for its support." A reviewer from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) wrote, "This project stands to serve as a model for how museums can construct and sustain a community-based approach that embeds the museum in the community, but doesn't center it....demonstrating a true willingness to listen to the community and recognizing the need for iterative program co-development."

For more information about this grant, or other Explora programs, please contact Kristin Leigh, Deputy Director, Explora, 505.600.6365, kleigh@explora.us Explora, 1701 Mountain Rd. NW, Albuquerque NM 87104, www.explora.us