



# iexplora!

2023-2024 Annual Report  
July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024





# 2023-2024 Explora Annual Report

## July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024

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# Explora's Mission and Core Values

**Explora contributes to family and community prosperity by creating accessible opportunities for inspirational discovery and lifelong learning through interactive experiences in science, technology, engineering, art, and math.**

**Community:** Explora values our role as a trusted community resource. We practice listening, welcoming, and co-creating with visitors and community partner organizations, in order to remain relevant to New Mexico communities. Explora is stronger when working in partnership with others toward shared aspirations, and we value working statewide to achieve positive collective impact.

**Learning:** Explora values curiosity and lifelong learning, along with a growth mindset and the agency that comes with hands-on exploration and discovery. Explora's environment provides unique experiences and opportunities to learn something new every day. Explora values individuals' interests, skills, experiences, and creativity and supports learning and career pathways for visitors and staff.

**People:** Explora knows that our staff members are our greatest resource. We are motivated by hard work, collaboration, relationship-building, and the ability to contribute to well-being in New Mexico. Explora team members are curious, genuine, creative people, who practice generosity through listening, respect, and the sharing of time, ideas, resources, and access. We take pride in contributing to a mission-driven organization that positively impacts our community.

**Diversity:** Explora is committed to eliminating barriers to equity and accessibility in STEAM. Authentic diversity is a source of strength; a diverse staff and board, visitors, partners, and members are critical to Explora's effectiveness. We work to change systems that have excluded people of color, people with disabilities, and others from STEAM fields, creating opportunity for all races, ages, genders, abilities, and backgrounds.





Dear Friends,

On a recent tour through the new Brillante Early Learning Center, a three-year-old student grabbed us to say, "I love this school. Why did you build this place for me?" That simple question represents significant accomplishments this year; it's been gratifying to watch Explora's Cradle through Career STEAM Learning Campus come to life.

In fiscal year 2024 (July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024), Explora did more than ever to improve educational and economic outcomes for New Mexico students and families. We celebrated the first anniversary of X Studio, our new STEAM workforce development center for teens. In addition to expanding Explora's relevance for teens & young adults, X Studio has positioned Explora as a player in New Mexico's economic & workforce development ecosystem. Teens are the future, and X Studio is their one-stop shop at Explora: to explore, hang out, and discover pathways to cool jobs that solve big problems and pay well. X Studio's tools, technologies, programs, and mentors help open doors to bright futures.

We also had the joy of opening two pilot classrooms of Brillante Early Learning Center in partnership with Central New Mexico Community College. 25 wonderful children spend their days with us at Brillante, making new discoveries daily. Brillante will develop our state's early childhood workforce, serving as a lab school for pre-service educators and providing ongoing professional development for early childhood educators and center directors from across New Mexico. We look forward to breaking ground soon on a new 14,000-square-foot child care center on Explora's campus.

Over 360,000 people visited Explora or participated in an Explora program this year, and we're honored to share more on the following pages. We are grateful to all of the members, donors, partners, neighbors, visitors, and stakeholders who've made it all possible.

Sincerely,

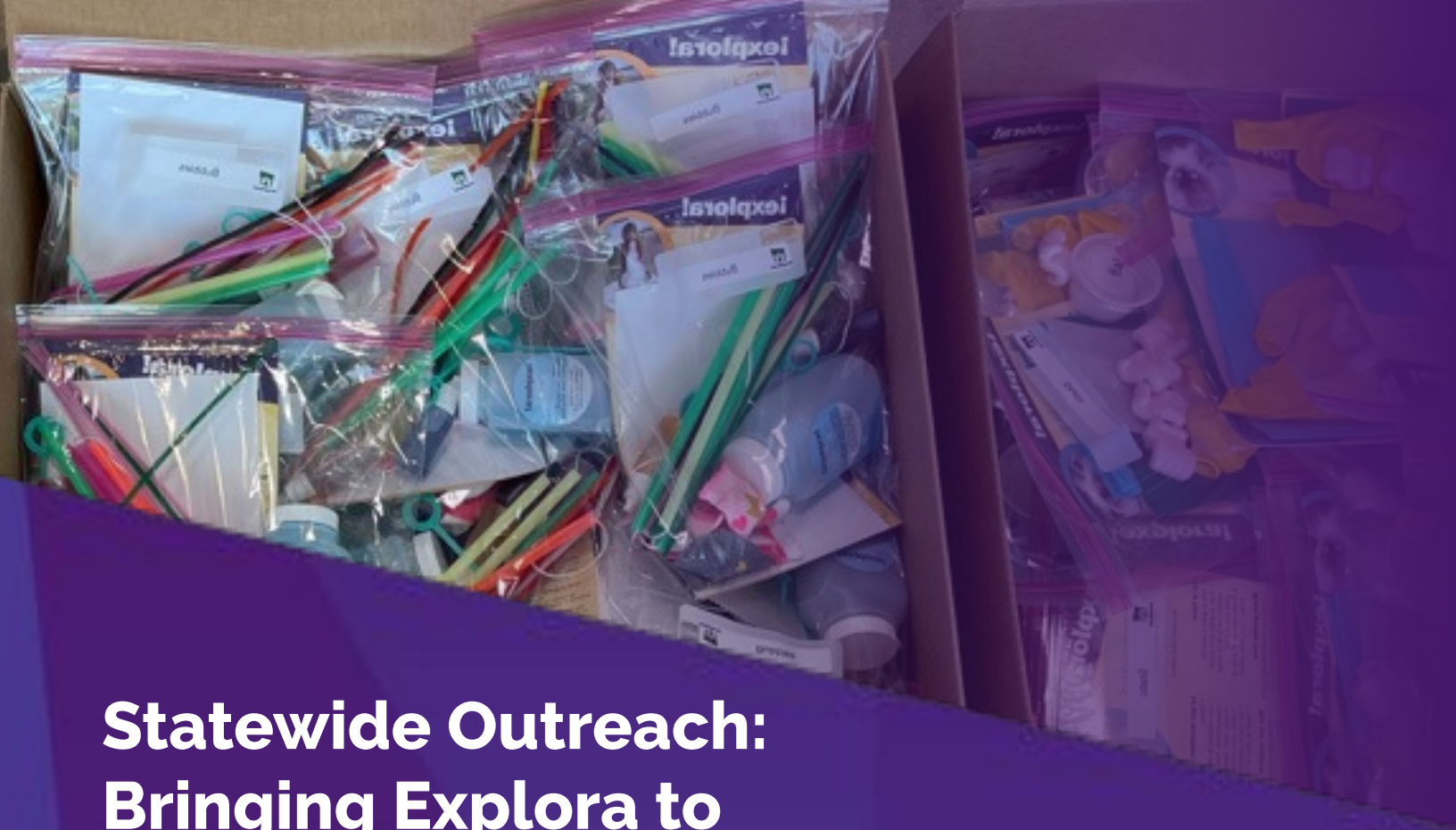
Hilma Chynoweth  
Board President

Joe Hastings  
Co-Executive Director

Kristin Leigh  
Co-Executive Director







# Statewide Outreach: Bringing Explora to Communities Across the State

Explora educators travel to communities across New Mexico to bring hands-on STEAM education to thousands of children and families; Explora has served every county in the state and 95% of the state's school districts. Additionally, Explora developed and shipped over 5,400 STEAM Learning Kits this year, self-contained science activities with materials and instructions in English, Spanish, and Diné, which were mailed and delivered statewide. Explora's *Inspiring Discovery!* project provided over 500 free STEAM and foundational reading and writing kits to Doña Ana County students to keep those most in-need engaged in STEAM learning. Kits were distributed at preschool storytimes at the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library and through home visits and community events with Ngage New Mexico. Each kit included a book and bilingual curriculum to encourage family engagement through exploration, observation, and problem solving. Families were encouraged to use easily-found household items for further exploration.

"Home care providers operate on a shoestring budget and sometimes need more resources to provide learning activities to the children they serve. Being able to distribute to them the STEAM kits from Explora was a honor." – Home Visitor in Doña Ana County

With support from New Mexico Community Trust, Explora was able to focus on rebuilding our Gallup Hub to its pre-pandemic scale, in order to better serve students, families, and teachers in the northwest corner of New Mexico. In partnership with the Octavia Fellin Public Library in Gallup, Explora joined monthly STEM and Maker programs at the library this year, along with bi-monthly programs at the local mall. We love hearing students say: "I want to stay longer. I could ask my mom if we can stay longer!"





# After School Support Programs

With support from the NM Public Education Department and ESSER funding, Explora partnered with **Dorn Community Charter School** to run an after school program, during which students explored the STEAM concepts embedded in local farming and gardening practices. Students conducted experiments, worked in the community garden, met local professionals in food, agriculture, and conservation of natural resources, and increased their identities as scientists, gardeners, and stewards of the land.

In partnership with **Albuquerque School of Excellence**, Explora educators hosted after-school programs four days a week for middle school students. Throughout the course of the year, students developed the 21st-century skills of design, engineering, and innovation by designing bridges, learning to program micro:bits, delving into 3D printing, and animating their own clay models.

Explora continued its partnership with **Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP)**, whose mission is to promote resilience among Zuni youth, so they will grow into strong and healthy adults connected to Zuni traditions. Explora and ZYEP worked together to develop programs that highlighted STEM practices in agriculture and traditional ways of knowing. Students engineered and built bee hotels to encourage pollination.





# Supporting New Mexico Educators

With support from partners, like Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children, Navajo Transitional Energy Company, and Albuquerque Public Schools, over 2,500 educators, librarians, out-of-school time staff, and pre-service teachers participated in professional development workshops this year, improving their science teaching practice and support the state's *STEM Ready!* science standards. When asked why they attended, teachers' responses included:

- “(to know) how to tie all the informational parts of a lesson into fun parts”
- “I am excited to learn more STEM so I can implement it into the classroom” and
- “I’m enhancing ideas for my robotics teams competitions, facilitating teacher workshops in the summer.”





## STEM Summer Camps

Explora hosted an extensive camp program this summer, both on our campus and at several satellite sites around the community. We also partnered with Pueblo of Isleta Department of Education for hands-on summer learning in Isleta and collaborated with the Office of Diné Youth through professional development workshops, STEAM kits, and outreach programs at Office of Diné Youth sites on the Navajo Nation.

We worked with other organizations to provide new STEAM content this summer. For example, a group of middle school students learned about a renewable energy-powered future with Sandia National Laboratories scientists and engineers, who provided theory and hands-on demos as part of a new camp sponsored by funding from the DOE's Water Power Technologies Office and Sandia's Community Involvement Office.



# New Experiences for Explora Visitors and Members

The Explora exhibits team worked on a variety of projects this year. The team installed two traveling exhibitions, including *Mechanics Alive!*, a collection of automata—machines designed to carry on complex sequences of actions—from a group called Cabaret Mechanical Theatre in the U.K. and *Mosaic of Marks, Words, and Material*, an atelier and exhibition created by the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, which uplifted the power of art and narrative in young children's learning.

During the year, the team also was developing and prototyping exhibits for two upcoming Explora exhibitions: *The Science of Kindness* in partnership with the Jennifer Riordan Foundation and Lilly Endowment and the IMLS-funded *Family Science in Tiguex Park*. In collaboration with UNM professor Francesca Cavallo, the team began development of a new exhibit called *What Is Quantum Computing?*, which is currently on display within the X Studio's *STEM in the Burque* exhibition space. The exhibits team also worked with UNM to present the 2024 Shared Futures exhibition, marking the second year of our partnership.

The exhibits team partnered with accessibility experts to implement upgrades across exhibits and museum spaces to improve accessibility for blind and low-vision guests and staff. The team completed refurbishments of several popular exhibits and showcased artworks acquired as part of the state's *Art in Public Places* program.





**ibrillante!**  
Early Learning Center





# Inspiring Our Youngest Scientists

Explora is committed to fostering early childhood education by offering vital STEAM learning experiences that help bridge opportunity gaps. We provide essential support to both parents and educators, empowering them to enhance the learning journeys of young children. The achievement gap between children from low-income backgrounds and their more economically advantaged peers begins to emerge as early as 18 months (Hart & Risley, 1995). Research consistently shows that investing in high-quality early childhood education delivers significant long-term returns (HeckmanEquation.org).

Explora is stronger through partnership and works with over 90 other community-based organizations to improve educational outcomes in our state. For example, Explora partnered with Saranam this year for parent-education programs focused on supporting parents' engagement with their children in STEAM activities.

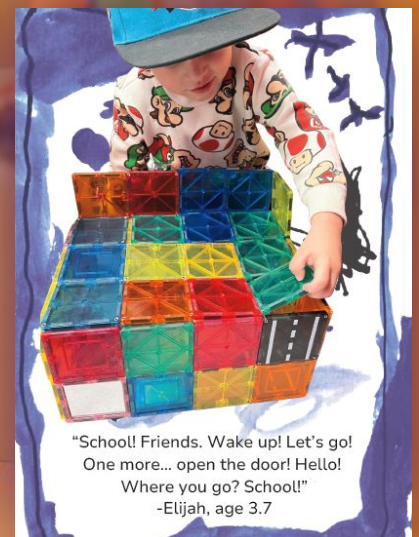
Jennifer Mullen, Program Director at Saranam, shared with us the importance of these opportunities to the families served by Saranam: "The parents have so much fun interacting and laughing with their children while making their own instruments, creating tracks in cornmeal, or mixing paint colors by blowing through a straw or rolling marbles around on a tray. The Explora activities show parents how simple things like picking up paper clips with magnets or playing in different temperatures of water fascinate young children. Some of our parents did not have these kinds of hands-on experiences growing up and really enjoy the pre-school activities themselves. The Explora facilitators demonstrate how to teach kids in a way the parents may not have seen, which will enable them to better teach their children in the future. The Explora activities also create positive associations with science for both adults and children."





# Brillante Early Learning Center

In August 2023, Explora made exciting steps forward in early childhood education by opening the first classrooms of Brillante Early Learning Center within the museum. Brillante is the state's only full-time, museum-based STEAM early learning center, drawing inspiration from the renowned Reggio Emilia approach, which fosters hands-on learning through exploration. This provides endless ways and opportunities for our children to express themselves creatively. This pilot program, which lays the foundation for the larger Brillante Early Learning Center, serves families with full-time care from 7:30am to 5:30pm, Monday through Friday at low- to no-cost. Our first classroom filled up quickly, with over 100 families still on the waitlist, and we received many inquiries about infant and toddler care. It was not long before we opened a second classroom for 2-year-olds in May 2024. By the end of our first school year, we achieved 5-star accreditation, the highest level of care through New Mexico's FOCUS accreditation system.





# Empowering Early Childhood Educators

Explora continues to be a leader in early childhood professional development. In September, we hosted our annual Summit for Early Science Learning, bringing together 245 educators and advocates for an immersive, hands-on experience focused on STEM learning with young children. We also brought the *Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material* exhibition from Reggio Emilia, Italy, which attracted families and educators statewide. Additionally, in June 2024, Explora hosted the summer conference of the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, which drew over 290 attendees from 25 states and three countries. We were proud to coordinate scholarships for 57 New Mexico educators to attend this unique professional development opportunity.

Brillante has partnered with Central New Mexico Community College to develop the early childhood workforce. Brillante is serving as CNM's lab school. In addition to serving 25 families—many of whom are CNM students attending school while parenting—our Brillante pilot classrooms have hosted many CNM practicum students studying to become early childhood educators. Brillante provides evening and weekend child care to non-enrolled little ones, whose parents are using X Studio for tutoring or quiet study time.









# Supporting Future Leaders: Workforce & Youth Development

This year Explora continued to support teens on their educational and career pathways through hundreds of programs and open hours at X Studio. As Explora's teen center, X Studio invests in the next generation of great minds in STEAM by focusing on STEAM education and workforce development. Through innovative programming and high-touch support, X Studio aims to:

- increase engagement in, awareness of, and motivation to pursue STEAM careers among local low-income teens of color,
- increase awareness of local STEAM careers and possible pathways to achieve them among local families,
- shift beliefs about capabilities, skills, and understanding of STEAM and STEAM careers,
- and develop 21st-century skills.

Explora





## X Studio

In this year's X Studio programming, 93% of students surveyed reported increased STEAM interest, 90% of students surveyed reported increased self-awareness, 90% reported that they developed and practiced relevant workforce skills, and 91% of students surveyed reported an increase in resilience and persistence. In FY24, X Studio served 15,776 middle and high school students! 4,062 students attended *Teen Nights* or high school proms at Explora, 307 attended *Teen Science Cafés*, 330 participated in music production programs, 1,806 attended *Expression through Digital Media* workshops and events, 1,743 students practiced *entrepreneurship* skills in real-world scenarios, over 10,000 students attended *Design, Art, and Fabrication* workshops, and 500 students participated in *SEL Weekly Meetups*. *Wrap Around Services*, including tutoring, job prep, FAFSA workshops, and more, were offered to 1,780 students. Some of our partners included: U.S. Eagle Federal Credit Union, National Society of Black Engineers of Greater Albuquerque, Girl Scouts of America, True NM, Horizons Albuquerque, Junior Achievement, Esperanza Bicycle Safety Education Center, AFRL-NM, and more.





# Career Pathways Internship

Explora's Career Pathways Internship (CPI) program offers high school juniors and seniors two-year paid internships that foster personal and professional growth in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) and provide access to pathways that further their education and careers. Interns build scalable and transferable work skills; gain confidence, resilience, and perseverance; and deepen their interest and knowledge in STEAM fields and associated careers.

One CPI graduate said: "I am grateful for the time I've spent here and for every wonderful person I've had the pleasure to meet. Your kindness and support have truly made a difference in my experience, and I will always remember every memory."



# STEM Scholars

At Explora, we believe that children should have equitable access to learning opportunities that keep all doors open. Explora's *STEM Scholars* scholarship program provides financial support that can help alleviate the burden of tuition fees, textbooks, and other educational expenses, making it more feasible for local teens to pursue STEM degrees. This year Explora awarded \$2,500 scholarships to 4 New Mexico high school seniors. These students were recognized at an evening event in June, where we celebrated their hard work and accomplishments. The scholars all now attend New Mexico higher-education partners, where they'll keep their knowledge and talents in-state.

Through *STEM Scholars*, Explora directly supports the aspirations of amazing students seeking to earn STEM degrees right here in New Mexico, and we can't wait to see what they do next!

## 2024 *STEM Scholars*:

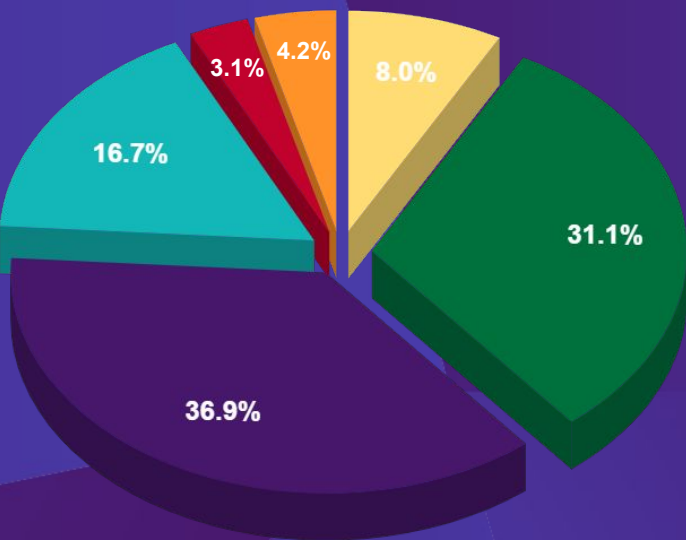
- Ajanae Brown
- Sudhir Desai
- Maryce Martinez
- Noelle Morales



# Financials - Explora Organizational Health

## July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

Audited numbers for Expenses and Revenue

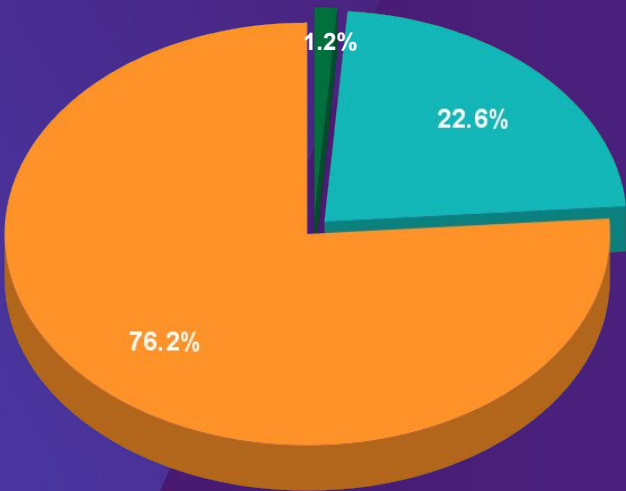


- ◆ In-Kind: \$760,960
- ◆ Earned Income: \$2,974,194
- ◆ Government: \$3,529,288
- ◆ Foundation Grants: \$1,595,730
- ◆ Corporate Gifts & Grants: \$292,800
- ◆ Individual Contributions: \$399,606

TOTAL AUDITED REVENUE:  
\$ 9,552,578

- ◆ Fundraising: \$105,093
- ◆ General & Administrative: \$1,943,844
- ◆ Programs: \$6,549,240

TOTAL AUDITED EXPENSES:  
\$ 8,508,177





# Explora City Partners & Board of Directors

Explora is honored to be in a public-private partnership with the City of Albuquerque.

**Mayor Tim Keller**

**City Councilors: Brook Bassan, Isaac Benton, Pat Davis, Tammy Fiebelkorn, Renee Grout, Trudy E. Jones, Dan Lewis, Klarissa J. Peña, Louie Sanchez**

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# Explora Corporate Donor Societies

Explora is grateful for its support from the State of New Mexico.

**Governor Michelle Luján Grisham**  
**Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales**

**New Mexico Senate**

**New Mexico House of Representatives**

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New Mexico Community Trust  
New Mexico Library Foundation  
New Mexico Oil and Gas Association  
New Mexico Out-of-School Time Network  
New Mexico Public Education Department  
NextFlex Learning Programs/The Boeing Company  
NM EPSCoR  
NM Governor's Commission on Disability

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The Stocker Foundation  
Thornburg Investment Management  
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TLC Plumbing  
Twin Cities Public Television  
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United States Department of Agriculture  
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