



# iexplora!

2024-2025 Annual Report  
July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025

An aerial photograph of the Explora museum building, featuring a prominent colorful geodesic dome. The building has a modern design with a mix of white, blue, and green roofs. The surrounding area includes a parking lot, some trees with autumn foliage, and a road. The image is overlaid with a dark purple gradient on the left side where the text is located.

# 2024-2025 Explora Annual Report

## July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025

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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:** We believe in the power of community. Through strong partnerships and meaningful input, we create inclusive, accessible, and responsive experiences, both at the museum and out in the world. We listen to and engage with our community to spark wonder, inspire curiosity, and ensure that everyone has a place in science.

**Learning:** We are learners who teach—sparking curiosity in others by growing together. Learning shapes everything we do, creating space for exploration, connection, and opportunity for all.

**Action:** We create lasting change by listening, co-creating, and taking purposeful action. Rooted in relationships and guided by community voices, we empower people to see themselves in STEAM and inspire curiosity, belonging, and shared growth within Explora and beyond.

**Hope:** At Explora, hope drives us forward. We believe in possibility, face challenges with optimism, and adapt with creativity and teamwork. With strong partnerships and a shared belief in each other, we move forward together toward a brighter future.

**Flexibility:** At Explora, flexibility means adapting with resilience, purpose, and compassion. We balance clear boundaries with creative problem-solving, responding thoughtfully to challenges while staying open to learning and change. This approach helps us serve our diverse community and support each other in delivering accessible, meaningful experiences.



Dear Friends,

What a year it's been! In fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025), the Explora team advanced a range of projects and initiatives to improve educational and economic outcomes for New Mexico students and families. We were proud to sponsor the New Mexico Governor's Conference on Economic Development, where we highlighted X Studio, our STEAM workforce development center for teens. This year, X Studio expanded with increased attendance, new programming, and growing collaborations with STEM industry partners.

We also celebrated the groundbreaking of Brillante Early Learning Center, our new full-time child care center. In partnership with Central New Mexico Community College, Brillante will strengthen the state's early childhood workforce as a lab school for pre-service educators and a hub for professional development. Together, these initiatives expand Explora's Cradle through Career STEAM Learning Campus and reflect our commitment to supporting children and families at every stage.

Explora was honored to host the 2025 InterActivity Conference of the Association of Children's Museums, welcoming more than 1,000 museum professionals from around the world. Centered on the theme "Uplifting the Community: Reaching New Heights Together," the conference explored how museums can strengthen communities through inclusive programming, partnerships, and innovation. Visitors participated in sessions, study tours of X Studio and Brillante, and a memorable evening event—all of which received outstanding feedback.

This year also marked the completion of a new strategic plan focused on excellence in cradle-through-career STEAM learning. Developed through a collaborative process with board and staff, the plan centers on five priorities: strengthening pedagogy and programs; advancing child care and workforce initiatives; deepening partnerships; expanding access across New Mexico; and investing in organizational learning and operational excellence.

Over 356,000 people visited Explora or participated in our programs this year. We are deeply grateful to the members, donors, partners, neighbors, and visitors who make this work possible.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Larese  
Board President

Joe Hastings  
Co-Executive Director

Kristin Leigh  
Co-Executive Director



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# Statewide Outreach

Explora educators are on the move, traveling across New Mexico to deliver hands-on STEAM programs and materials to libraries and schools statewide. To date Explora has served nearly every county and 95% of the state's school districts, reaching over 75,000 children and adults this year alone.

A highlight this year was our *Engineering with the Future* initiative with rural libraries in Gallup, Aztec, and Los Lunas. Alongside student programming, Explora provided librarians with professional development and 3D-printing pens, in order to support ongoing programming between Explora visits. As one Aztec librarian shared, "Parents were so engaged they asked if we'd work with the FFA and FHA clubs—of course, our answer is yes!" The library launched a bi-weekly "3D Pen Club" and new adult engineering classes. Explora also partnered with Play Sharity Children's Museum in southern New Mexico to engage families in science programs and with Walatowa Charter High School in Jemez to offer weekly programming, ranging from printmaking to robotics to land stewardship. In total, Explora continues to provide over 1,000 outreach trips annually.

With federal EPA and USDA funding, Explora expanded partnerships with agricultural organizations to deliver programs exploring the science and engineering embedded in traditional farming practices. With support from community partners, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, and Sprouts, Explora hosted the Outdoor Learning Conference, bringing educators together to share place-based environmental education practices. Through school programs, growers' market activities, and family events, students connected science to local agriculture and landscapes. Teachers reported increased student engagement and growing confidence using outdoor spaces to teach topics such as water conservation, soil health, pollinators, and local food systems—helping nurture environmental stewardship and youth leadership statewide.

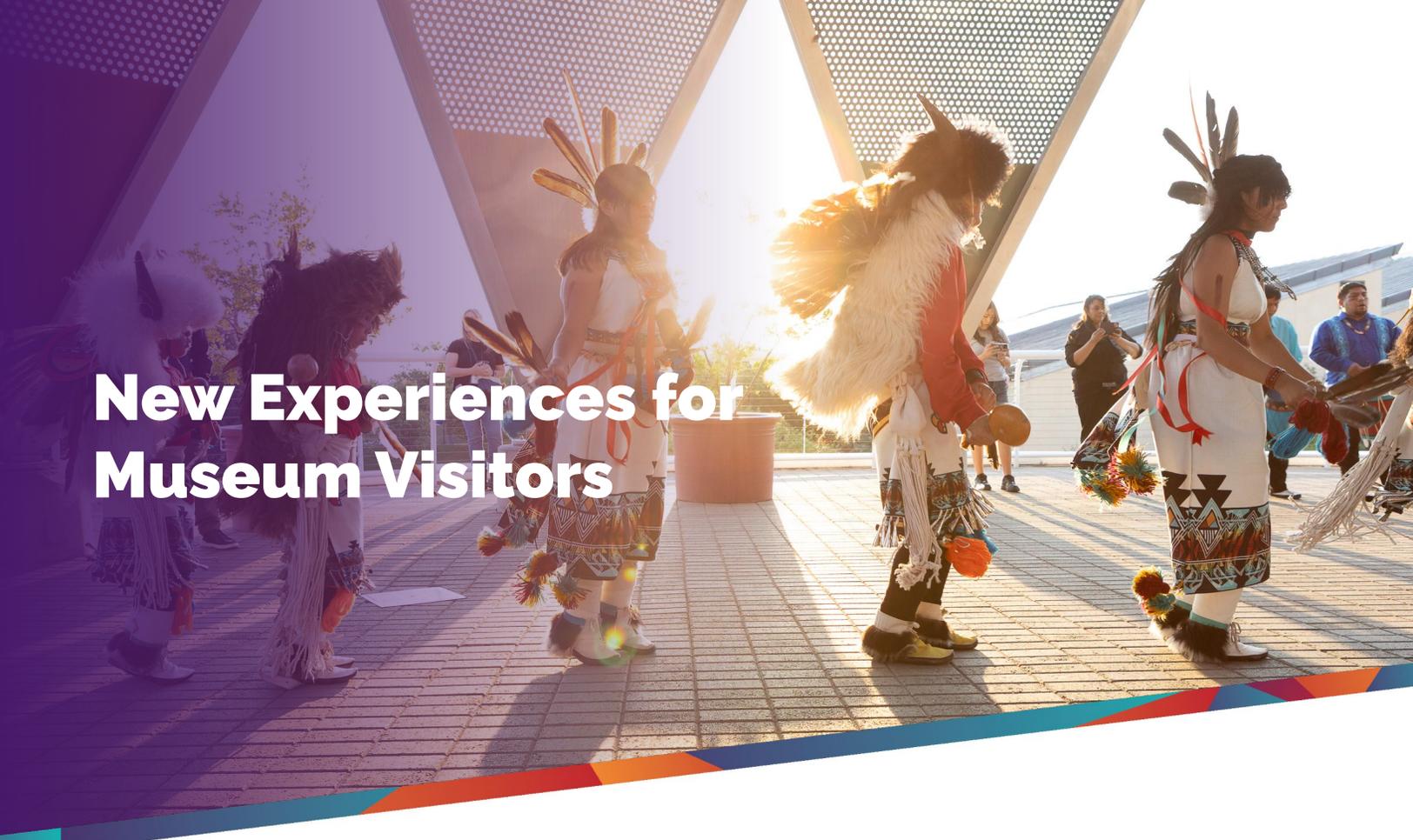
# Expanded Out-of-School Time Programming

In partnership with Albuquerque Public Schools, this year Explora piloted new out-of-school time (OST) programming at two local schools: John Adams Middle School and Janet Kahn Middle School. Explora educators provided daily, after-school, STEM-focused learning opportunities for students at each school. The program emphasized hands-on, inquiry-based learning designed to spark curiosity and encourage students to ask questions, test ideas, and explore scientific concepts. Through interactive activities and design challenges based on Explora's established STEM curriculum, students developed critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, while connecting their learning to real-world applications and potential STEM careers.

Explora's OST staff participated in professional development to support both academic engagement and students' social-emotional growth, helping to cultivate spaces where students felt comfortable exploring ideas, collaborating with peers, and building confidence in STEM learning.

Participating students also expanded their knowledge of STEM careers through field trips, like a visit to Presbyterian's Health Advanced Learning Lab, and presentations from speakers, like the young women from a local robotics club. Middle school is prime-time for introducing students to real-world STEM careers. A 6th grader from John Adams Middle School said about the new after-school programming, "I love it, and it's so much fun, and I would like this to be a thing when I am in seventh grade." A parent from the school said, "I am really grateful that this program is offered at the school, because it allows my student to be involved and explore interests. He really enjoys it and can't wait to show us the things he's made. Many, many thanks and appreciation to the counselors and staff who run the program!"





## New Experiences for Museum Visitors

Explora continued to host Adult Nights this year, with a variety of new activities and topics, like The Science of Kindness and Fermentastic, for which we partnered with the Fermentation and Fungi Fest. We also held a variety of special events for families this year, like a First Responders and Essential Workers Day, which exposed visitors to the STEM practices used by first responders, like police, firefighters, and EMTs. New partners, like the Albuquerque Solid Waste Department, gave visitors a chance to get up close to huge sanitation trucks, chat with workers, and learn about recycling.

With federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Explora continued to improve our accessibility for blind and low-vision visitors. The Project Team, including blind and low-vision staff members, participated in a comprehensive, six-week exhibit floor accessibility audit, which resulted in a number of modifications and new affordances. The visitor experience team received related training, and exhibits, graphic, and environmental updates were made throughout the year. Additionally, the visitor experience team developed new tactile activities for Explora's birthday party program and for blind and low-vision students attending field trips.

The museum-going experience is improved by the work of our amazing Explora volunteers. This year volunteers logged over 2,000 hours of work with the visitor experience team. These volunteers assisted guests on the museum floor, facilitated activity kits in our Experiment Bar, and prepped the supplies and materials used in Explora's various exhibits. Explora hosted high school and college-aged students completing their service learning hours and internships. Some of our program partners included the Job Mentorship Program, Future Focused Education, and Central New Mexico Community College.

# Professional Development for New Mexico's Teachers



Explora engaged with over 2,220 teachers, librarians, informal educators, and out-of-school time staff across New Mexico through professional development workshops and conference sessions. Whether the topic was microprocessors or the science of mirrors, participants explored open-ended, hands-on, standards-aligned STEAM activities.

In partnership with New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children (NMAEYC), Explora led virtual and in-person workshops for early childhood teachers, connecting literacy development and coding skills. 181 early childhood teachers explored coding topics with hands-on analogs, like drums, mallets, and musical patterns; sequencing activities with picture books and mazes; and Makey Makeys, devices that turn everyday objects into keyboards. These activities build foundational coding skills in young learners.

Explora also collaborated with UNM's TODOS (Teachers Organizing Diverse Opportunities Across a STEM Ecosystem) initiative. During their summer institute, Explora educators facilitated a session on "Place-Based STEAM: Agriculture Activities." These teachers, from all across New Mexico, drew on their deep knowledge of their communities to explore the intersections of science and engineering practices with agricultural traditions.

In Explora's professional development workshops, teachers report learning "how easy it is to ask open-ended questions," "the importance of making STEAM culturally relevant," and "lots of great activities to use with students."

# Explora's Seasonal Camps



When school is out, Explora camp is in! Explora's seasonal camp programs continued to grow this year. Camps were hosted at Explora and at several satellite sites across the state during school breaks and summer vacation, engaging 7,404 PreK-12th grade students throughout New Mexico. These expanded hands-on summer learning opportunities reached families where they are, strengthening access and belonging in communities statewide.

Explora further cultivated our partnerships, in order to bring meaningful STEM career exploration to our seasonal campers. In collaboration with UNM, New Mexico Tech, and Sandia National Laboratories, students explored biotechnology, engineering, coding, and renewable energy through theory, hands-on demonstrations, and direct engagement with scientists and researchers. These collaborations connect young people to real-world career pathways and expand their visions of a future in STEM.

# New Exhibits and Exhibitions



This was a busy and productive year for Explora’s exhibits team. Along with ongoing maintenance and refurbishment of Explora’s hands-on exhibits, the team completed several major new projects. In September 2024, Explora opened a pilot exhibition on *The Science of Kindness*. We partnered with The Jennifer Riordan Foundation on this important project, which also launched new work on fostering character in children’s museums, funded by the Lilly Endowment. An expanded, immersive *Science of Kindness* exhibition will open at Explora in 2026, portions of which will travel to museums in rural areas around New Mexico. The exhibition offers visitors an engaging exploration of the scientific foundations of kindness, highlighting the sociology, chemistry, and mathematics that shape this complex human behavior.

In spring 2025, ahead of hosting the Association of Children’s Museums conference, two additional exhibition projects were completed. Working with Hüttinger Interactive Exhibitions, Explora completed a comprehensive refresh of our water area, installing seven newly-built versions of classic exhibits. Eight more interactives were added across the exhibit floor, including four that enhanced the *STEM in the Burque* exhibition at X Studio. That spring also saw the debut of *Cabinet of Curiosities* in the former *Paradox Café* space, featuring hands-on explorations of tactile and visual illusions and drawers of eclectic collections of puzzles and other mind-benders.

In fall 2025, the Explora exhibits team completed *Family Science in Tiguex Park*, a new collection of outdoor STEM exhibits, developed in partnership with the City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department and the Institute for Museum and Library Services, all informed by community listening sessions. The nine outdoor exhibits invite visitors to observe and engage with natural phenomena during their visits to the park adjacent to Explora.



**ibrillante!**  
Early Learning Center

A photograph showing several children sitting around a table, engaged in a drawing activity. They are using various colored markers and crayons on white paper. The scene is brightly lit, and the children appear focused on their work.

# Brillante Early Learning Center at Explora

Explora continued to operate two classrooms of Brillante Early Learning Center on-site in the museum, while also celebrating the groundbreaking of our new 14,000-square-foot child care center and lab school with Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, marking a new chapter for Explora in early childhood education

The Brillante program experienced major growth as we advanced our mission to expand local child care capacity, build workforce development, and serve as a hub for family and community resources. We served 25 children and their families with full-time child care and preschool. Families are primarily from Bernalillo County, with additional families commuting from Torrance, Sandoval, and Valencia counties. Brillante continues to support eligible families in accessing wraparound care, so parents can work or attend school while their children grow and learn in a trusted program. Brillante also serves linguistically diverse families—19% of our students speak languages other than English, including Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, and Filipino—and we have supported families experiencing instability, including two children who have experienced homelessness and one child being raised by kin.

As a museum-school, we expanded our role as a field leader by welcoming national audiences and deepening partnerships with cultural institutions. For the May 2025 Association of Children’s Museum conference, Brillante leadership hosted tours, led discussion panels, and showcased documentation that shared Brillante’s pedagogical model. Sharing our work with close to 1,000 museum professionals strengthened our identity as a museum-based preschool.

Brillante continued to build the systems needed for sustainable scale—increasing our leadership team capacity and refining keystone practices and visitor protocols that protect the integrity of children’s learning, while supporting broader engagement with our work. Inside the classroom, educators strengthened reflective collaboration cycles and built a classroom-wide “studio practice,” while updating lesson planning and portfolio guides to capture a more holistic picture of each child’s learning journey. To share this work and further develop our role as the lab school for CNM’s Early Childhood Multicultural Education program, we hosted over 300 hours of job shadows, practicum experiences, and mentorship for future early childhood educators.

Our commitment to quality was affirmed through strong family feedback, licensing compliance, and participation in recognized quality processes (including a 5-star FOCUS visit and a CLASS observation). After celebrating our second PreK graduation with more than 70 attendees, we also were awarded funding from ECECD to launch a home visiting program—extending Brillante’s family-facing work and bringing additional resources to 50 new families as our impact continues to grow.



# The Coalition for Science Learning in Early Childhood

The work of the Coalition for Science Learning in Early Childhood, housed at Explora and Brillante Early Learning Center, was anchored by our 2024 Summit for Early Science Learning, which brought together over 320 early childhood professionals to share best practices and seed new collaborations. The Coalition's reach also expanded significantly through vibrant events celebrating the national Week of the Young Child, serving 769 people in Shiprock, NM and another 332 people at Explora. Beyond these milestones, we've deepened our community roots through leadership in the 100% Bernalillo County Initiative and through translation of our strategic plan into Spanish, expanding our bilingual resources to ensure equitable access for all Coalition members.

Family engagement remained the heart of the Coalition's work, with monthly "Families Group" sessions covering everything from nurturing a growth mindset to the Abriendo Puertas curriculum. From hosting national study tours for the ACM conference to facilitating cross-sector "Data Chats," the Coalition is not just planning for the future of early science, we are building the infrastructure and community advocacy and engagement to sustain it.



Dixie  
Finalizing  
Planning  
Welding

more days!

magic wand,  
would you

|                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Problem        | Pol holes        |
| Solution       | Truck            |
| Audience       | Drivers          |
| Cost/Materials |                  |
| AI model       | \$1000/m         |
| Pol filler     | add on           |
| Additive       | Manuf            |
| CAD software   | detect pol holes |
| Perfection     | Too              |



A photograph of three teenagers in a STEM laboratory. A young man in a black t-shirt is seated at a computer workstation, looking at a monitor. A young woman in a plaid shirt stands next to him, pointing at the screen. Another young man is partially visible behind them. The background shows various educational posters and equipment. The image is overlaid with a teal and orange gradient.

# From Interest to Opportunity: Workforce & Youth Development

The energy was palpable all year at X Studio, Explora's STEM workforce development center for teens, where specialized programming served 10,930 teens this year. 3,008 young people stopped in during X Studio Open Hours to take on independent projects, like building a full suit of armor out of leather, making beaded jewelry, 3D-printing controllers for robots, and more. 2,933 teens participated in educator-led Design, Art, and Fabrication Workshops, and 1,141 teens explored digital media topics and created their own content. 894 teens attended new Teen Nights, and 158 participated in Teen Science Cafés with local STEAM professionals, in order to learn more about the STEAM career pathways available to them. 267 teens participated in a multi-session workshop series on entrepreneurship that strengthen real-world problem solving and leadership skills. In evaluation of this year's X Studio programming, 92% of students surveyed reported increased STEM interest, 81% reported developing applicable and relevant workforce skills, and 99% reported an increase in life skills.

Teens in New Mexico continue to struggle with numerous challenges, and the X Studio team received training in social-emotional learning, trauma, mental health, and more this year. Teens in our Advisory Group continue to express the importance of wraparound services for teens, whose basic needs must be met in order to support their STEAM career exploration. 527 teens engaged in social-emotional programming, and wrap-around services supported 2,002 teens. This included individualized support, like tutoring, job and internship prep, FAFSA and college application support, and connections to community resources for food and housing.

X Studio's partners help make our work possible. Partners this year included Sandia National Laboratories, APS and local charter high schools (like ACE, Health Leadership, and Siembra Leadership high schools), Horizons Albuquerque, the Office of African American Affairs, the UNM Health Sciences Center and School of Engineering, Junior Achievement, Esperanza Bicycle Safety Education Center, the City of Albuquerque, AFRL, and many other community partners, like US Eagle Federal Credit Union and the National Society of Black Engineers of Greater Albuquerque.

# More to Explore at X Studio

In its third year, X Studio expanded its opportunities for youth-led experiences that connect teens to real-world issues, careers, and community leadership. Through the national *Co-Creating with Communities* project, led by a team at Arizona State University, Explora hosted the Teen Summit on the Future in September, bringing together teens from Horizons Albuquerque, X Studio, and Future Focused Education for a full day of dialogue, creativity, and action planning. Teens explored environmental stewardship, identity, and innovation through keynote talks, peer-facilitated discussions, a professional panel, local artist performances, and a shared design challenge. The teens' ideas are informing future programs, as well as a youth-inspired exhibit and mural project.

New Mexico teens also gained leadership experience through their participation in X Studio's robotics team, Robot X. Team members continued building leadership and technical skills through the FIRST Robotics program, culminating with participation in a regional competition in Plano, TX. After a difficult start with a broken robot in Plano, students and mentors turned a hotel room into a makeshift Makerspace, in order to repair their robot and persist through competition, earning them the Rising All-Star Award for their resilience.

With federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, X Studio launched its new Health Career Pathways programming in September. This initiative included six listening sessions with nearly 70 students, 12 school visits, a summer camp serving over 260 youth, two Teen Science Cafés with healthcare professionals, and a Black Health Care Career Expo, serving 180+ students and 50 adults in partnership with UNM's Health Sciences Center. This programming addresses the serious need for an expanded health care workforce and prepares students for health-related career pathways.



# Explora's Career Pathways Internship



Explora's Career Pathways Internship (CPI) offers high school juniors and seniors a two-year, paid internship that fosters personal and professional growth in STEM. This year participants gained access to educational and career pathways, while building transferable skills, confidence, resilience, and perseverance. Each year approximately twenty interns participate in the program, with a graduating cohort moving on to college, study abroad programs, or other post-secondary educational opportunities. This year, graduating interns also accepted positions at Explora in the visitor experience and IT departments.

The CPI program features weekly training that covers life- and work-skills development, STEM content deep-dives, financial literacy, social-emotional learning, and college preparation, including help with scholarship and FAFSA applications. Interns also participate in immersive field trips to institutions such as New Mexico Tech, the University of New Mexico, and the Presbyterian Health Advanced Learning Lab. Through mentorship, specialized workshops, and introductions to local STEM professionals, CPI prepares participants for long-term success in STEM fields.

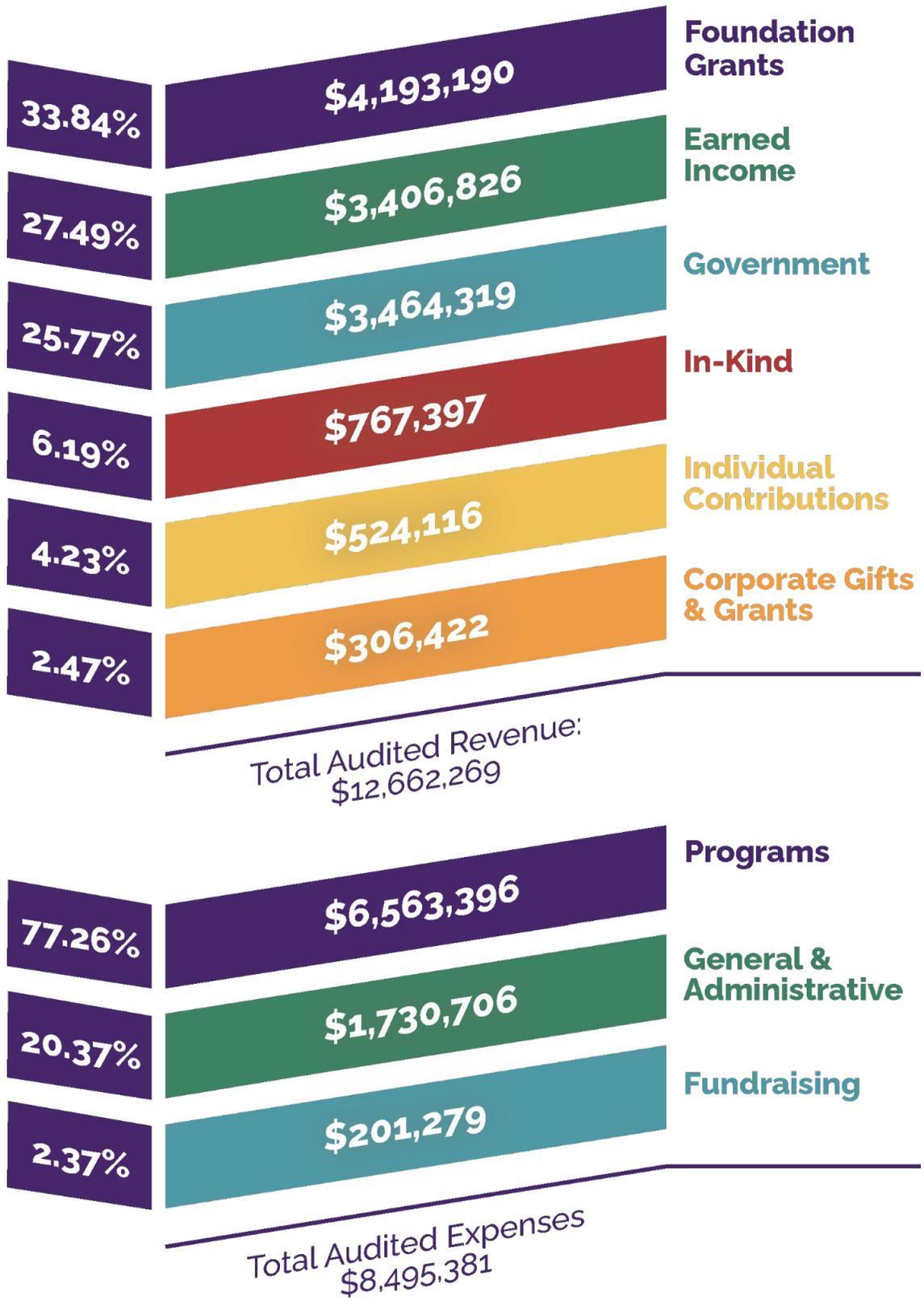


## STEM Scholars

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!

# Explora Financials

## July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025



# Explora Corporate Donor Societies

## Wu Society

Anesthesia Associates of New Mexico  
Anonymous  
AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP  
Bank of Albuquerque  
Barbara F. FUNd  
Bernalillo County  
Bradbury Stamm Construction  
Delta Dental  
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The Jennifer Riordan Foundation  
U.S. Eagle Federal Credit Union  
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VanDyke Software  
Vintage Albuquerque

## Daly Society

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National Science Foundation  
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Sandia Foundation  
The Bank of America Charitable Foundation  
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Urban Enhancement Trust Fund at the City of Albuquerque  
Wells Fargo Foundation  
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## Golda Ross Society

Air Force Research Laboratory - New Mexico  
Anonymous  
Central New Mexico Community College (CNM)  
City of Albuquerque  
Institute of Museum and Library Services  
Intel Corporation  
Lilly Endowment Inc.  
McCune Charitable Foundation  
PNM Resources Foundation  
Rotary Club of Albuquerque  
Sandia National Laboratories  
State of New Mexico  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

# Explora Mission Partners

2540 Group, LLC  
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ABQ Low Rider Community  
Air Force Research Laboratory New Mexico (AFRL NM)  
Albuquerque Community Foundation  
2 Anonymous  
Argosy Foundation  
Association of Children's Museums  
Association of Science-Technology Centers  
Bank of Albuquerque  
Banner Foundation  
Barbara F. FUNd  
Caterpillar Foundation  
Chan Zuckerberg Initiative  
Charles Stephen & Co  
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CNM Foundation  
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Los Poblanos Historic Inn & Organic Farm  
Lovelace Women's Hospital  
MediaDesk  
Meta Platforms, Inc

Miami Children's Museum  
Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District  
National Science Foundation  
Navajo Transitional Energy Company, LLC  
NDB and CEB Fund  
Network for Good  
New Mexico Community Trust  
New Mexico Library Foundation  
NextFlex Learning Programs/The Boeing Company  
NMAEYC  
Noisy Water Winery  
Pattern Energy  
Peacock Law  
PNC Foundation  
PNM Resources Foundation  
Robert and Elizabeth Wertheim Foundation Fund  
Rotary Club of Albuquerque  
Sandia Foundation  
Sandia National Laboratories  
Sandia Peak Tramway  
Sandia Sunrise Therapy, LLC  
Santa Fe Brewing Company  
Santa Fe Community Foundation  
Schimmel Security, LLC  
Sheehan Winery  
Sprouts Foundation  
State of New Mexico  
Stennis Giving Fund  
Sunward Credit Union  
Swire Coca-Cola  
T. Steven Lee CPA  
The Bank of America Charitable Foundation  
The Cherry Picker Foundation  
The Encantado Foundation  
The Jennifer Riordan Foundation  
The Johnston Company  
The Newsom Family Charitable Fund  
Thornburg Investment Management  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
United Way of North Central New Mexico  
VanDyke Software  
Vara Winery  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
Walmart  
Zimmer Community Fund

# Explora Individual Donor Societies

## Eames Society

Rex & Barbara Allender  
Dr. Dale Alverson & Jennifer Bean Alverson  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
John & Ellen Bell  
Marci Blaze  
Brian & Jada Bower  
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The Family of Jane Geist  
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Joe & Jasmin Hastings  
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Tom Taylor  
Janet M. Thompson  
Kyla & Roger Thompson  
Craig & Lynn Trojahn  
Frank T. Walker  
Catherine W. Woodward (in honor of Woody Woodward)

## Galileo Society

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Anonymous  
Del & Rebecca Archuleta

Julie Bowdich & John Carey  
The Family of Jonathan Callender  
Jim & Geri Cramer  
Beth Corbin, Andy Hsi, & David Hsi  
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Benjamin Gardner & Tina Patel  
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Richard & Ann Leonard  
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## Mexia Society

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Drs. David & Kathy Hsi  
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Terry & Debra Pierce

## Da Vinci Society

Anonymous  
Anonymous  
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Kay Collins  
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## Johnson Society

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