EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES
Development & Design Toolkit

This is a toolkit to facilitate exhibit development and design from a fresh, open-ended play approach. By inherrently connecting to everyday experiences, this creative process challenges common exhibit assumptions and creates rich experiences that can extend throughout visitor lives beyond the Museum.

Forces At Play (FAP) is an IMLS funded gallery which was created as part of the 2017 renovation of Minnesota Children’s Museum. The project is used throughout this toolkit to give examples as it was the collaboration between the Museum and Gyroscope, Inc. on this gallery that lead to the outlined process below.

1. Define initial parameters:
   **Audience:** [FAP e.g. 4-10]
   **Primary Objective:** [FAP e.g. Critical Thinking, Familiar STEM]
   **Essential Elements:** [FAP e.g. Water and Air]

2. Brainstorm a list of possible key experiences.
   [FAP e.g. Bubble Play, Water Waves and Flow, Building Bridges, Investigation Stations, Wind Wall, Weather Works, Air Play, Engineering Challenge]

3. What is the common thread of these experiences (i.e. the essence of what you are trying to explore)?
   [FAP e.g. Cycles and Systems]

4. How does this connect with an ‘everyday’ concept?
   [FAP e.g. Cause and Effect: what happens if...]

5. What is an everyday experience that fascinates children AND embodies this common thread?
   [FAP e.g. A Car Wash]

6. Brainstorm ways that the everyday experience could extend your education goals?
   [FAP e.g. See MCM’s Powers of Play opposite].

POWERS OF PLAY

**Critical Thinking:** ask questions, make plans, solve problems and reflect. [FAP e.g. Evaluate the results of experimenting with water, soap, and tools].

**Creative Thinking:** imagine, improvise, reinvent, dare and innovate. [FAP e.g. Look beyond perceived limitations of a tool].

**(Self)-Control:** focus, make reasonable choices and regulate emotions, behaviors and actions. [FAP e.g. Being aware of own body in a crowded and kinetic space to scrub, clean, and polish the quirky vehicle].

**Confidence:** show enthusiasm, exhibit persistence and demonstrate a willingness to try new things. [FAP e.g. Self-direct the manipulation of the bubble engine tubes].

**Collaboration:** connect with others, cooperate, empathize and engage in teamwork. [FAP e.g. Cooperate with other visitors and accommodate alternative actions in this busy water area].

**Communication:** express thoughts and ideas, engage in discussions and listen. [FAP e.g. Respond to other visitors’ prompts to move the bubbles through the tubes].

**Coordination:** exhibit awareness of the body’s abilities, and develop precision strength, balance and endurance. [FAP e.g. Twist or bend to move through and around the car wash brush].
More questions to ask:

- What key/signature elements might be needed so the everyday experience is recognizable? [FAP e.g. the real car wash brush activated by visitors]

- What materials are essential to the everyday experience to feel authentic rather than fake? [FAP e.g. real vehicle parts, car wash brush, real soap, industrial feel – stainless steel, pipes, etc.]

- Does this experience allow visitors to do something they are not able to (or would rather not) do at home? [FAP e.g. scrub a vehicle with soap and water]

- How can this experience extend to conversations throughout the day? [FAP e.g. washing machine rinse, wash, dry cycle]

- How are adults supported to extend the learning both in the museum and at home? [FAP e.g. signage with open-ended question prompts]

- Will the experience delight adults as well as children? [FAP e.g. transparent systems and real vehicle parts scaffold dialogue]

- Are there cultural connections that make this a stronger experience? [FAP e.g. tractor tire to connect to strong agricultural community]

Revisit the educational goals

- What are the key connections to the broader learning objectives? [FAP e.g. keeping families together, parallel learning]

- Does the experience allow you to scaffold learning? [FAP e.g. introduce more variables to washing the car: water flow, different brushes]

Where does that leave the project?

Development and Design:

- How do you dialogue with children and confirm proof of concept?

- Are there aspects of the experience you should prototype?

- Do these experiences accommodate a variety of user loads?

- Have you presented ideas to museum leadership?

Operational:

- Have the authentic materials been vetted for durability?

- Are there enough authentic back-ups available?