



Small but Mighty!
Keeping Your Small-scale
Museum Vibrant

Session Goals

- Gain practical strategies for staffing strategies, program development, and exhibit planning for small museums with small budgets.
- Develop a tool kit of ideas for keeping things fresh on a budget for the small-scale museum.
- Provide networking opportunities with colleagues from similar, small institutions for support and new ideas.

**NORTH COUNTRY
CHILDREN'S
MUSEUM**





Ancient Hominin Ancestors

Homo erectus
1.8 million - 300,000 years ago

Homo neanderthalensis
400,000 - 40,000 years ago

Homo sapiens
300,000 - present

Acheulean Tools
1.6 million - 200,000 years ago

Oldowan Tools
2.6 million years ago



Presenters and Topics

Amarinda Keys- Children's Discovery
Museum, Waterville, Maine (Staffing)

Erin Dowdall- Wonder Works Children's
Museum, Oak Park, Illinois (Exhibits)

Rohani de Pont & Sugeidy Windster -
Children's Museum Curacao (Programs)



CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY MUSEUM OF CENTRAL MAINE

A place for curious minds



Background

Founded 1989 as a traveling museum.

Opened physical space in 1992.

Located in two locations in Augusta Maine before moving 30min North to Waterville.

Served about 10,000 visitors/year.



A Big Move



Future 3,000 sqft hall



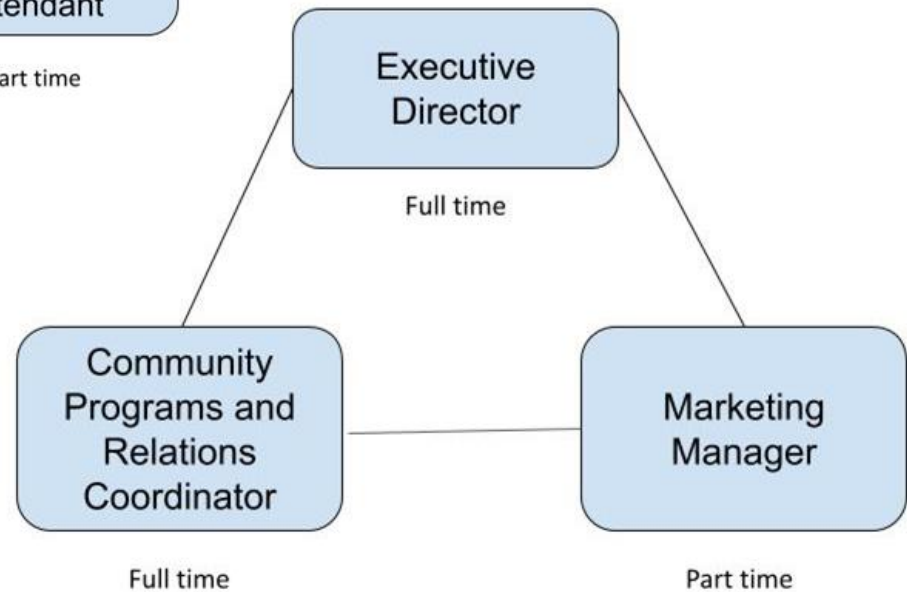
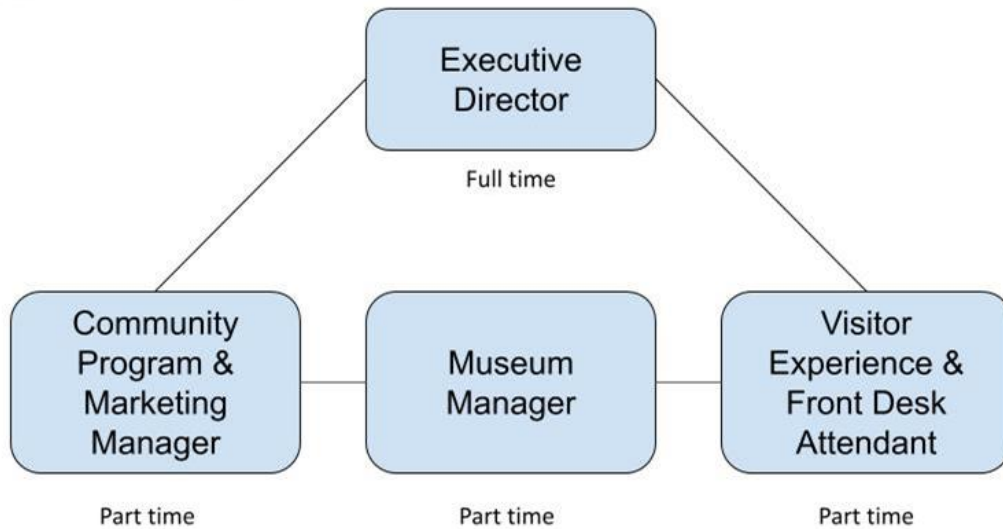


Trust

**Collaboratio
n**

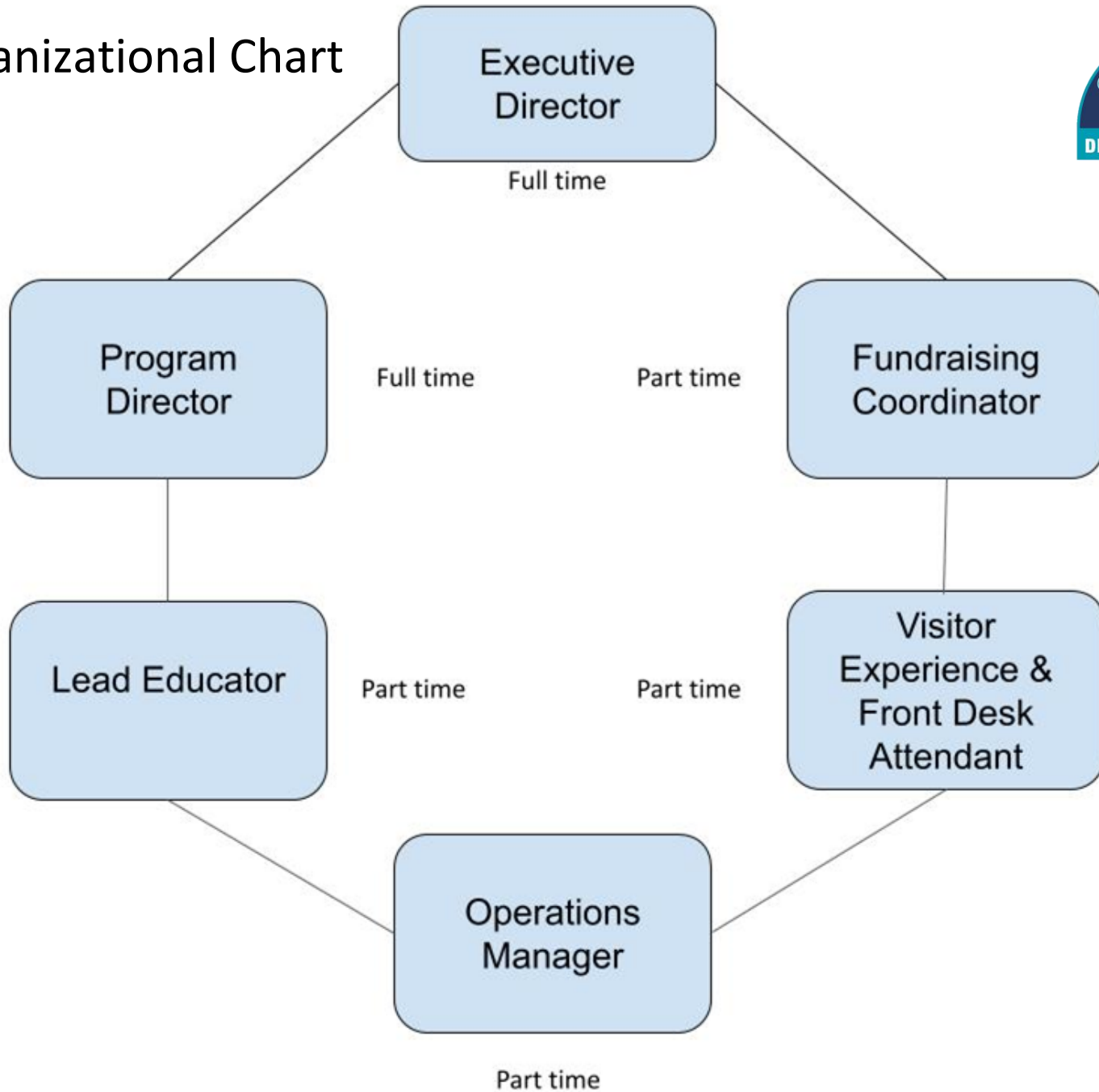
Flexibility

2019 Organizational Chart



2023 Organizational Chart

2024 Organizational Chart



Trust

Open communication

Regular check-ins

Autonomy



Flexibility



Collaboration

Partner with other organizations!

- Story walk with the **library**
- Summer camp support with **Viles Arboretum**
- Maineifest with **Maine-state Museum**
- Sunflower Gardens with **Waterville Creates**



STEM-A-Palooza

with the



MSL
MAINE STATE LIBRARY



Table Talk: 3 Minutes

Share your staffing structure at your museum. What works well? Are there ideas from the presentation that resonated and might work in your institution?

EXHIBITS



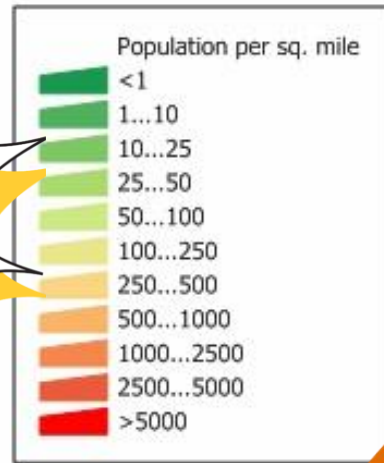
WONDER WORKS CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

WONDER WORKS' MISSION IS TO SPARK CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY IN ALL YOUNG CHILDREN THROUGH POSITIVE, PLAY-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

ERIN DOWDALL
PROGRAMMING &
EDUCATION MANAGER



SNAP SHOT OF WONDER WORKS



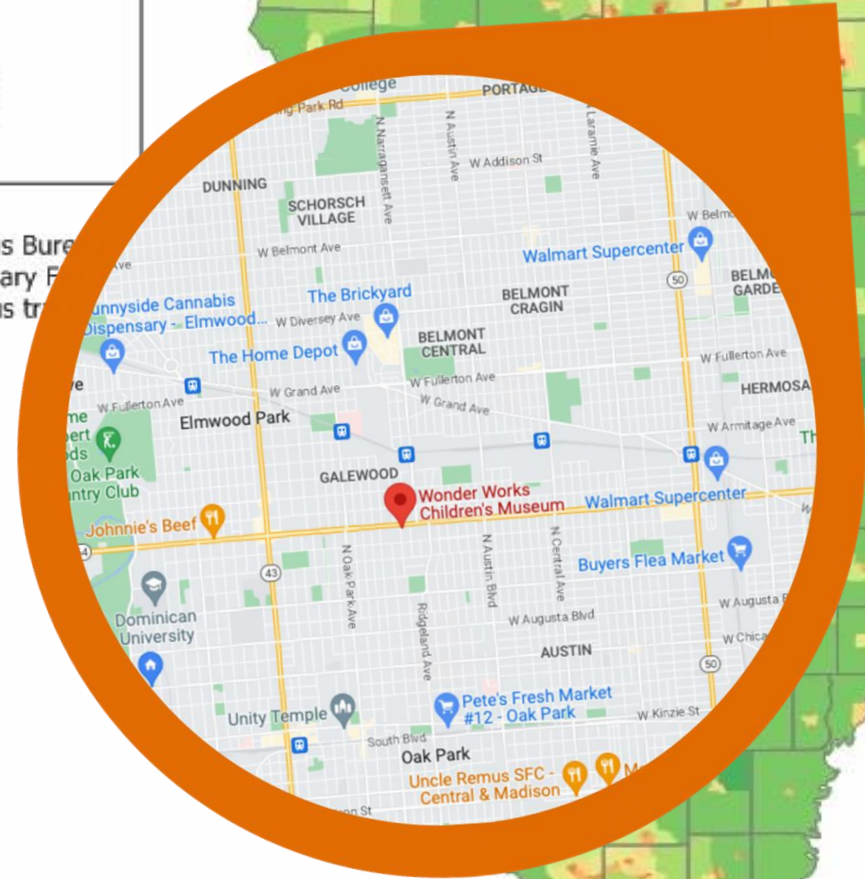
Source: U. S. Census Bureau
Census 2000 Summary File
population by census tract

OAK PARK, IL 60302

CELEBRATING OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY
IN OUR LOCATION THIS MAY!

WE ARE SMALL BUT MIGHTY!

- HUNDREDS OF VISITORS DAILY
- 400+ ZIP CODES A YEAR
- WITHIN 10 MILES OF:
 - 15+
 - TOWNS & VILLAGES
 - CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS
 - 6 UNIVERSITIES
 - CTA & PACE BUS LINES
 - METRA TRAINS
 - 2 CTA "L" TRAINS





OUR SPACE

6 INDOOR

Built It
Farm to Market
Great Outdoors
Wall of Wonder
Lights, Camera, Action!
North Ave Art Room

2 OUTDOOR

Becky Boyce Nature Play Space
Children's Garden

OTHER

Small Lunch Room
Front Storage Room
Entrance + Front Desk
Back Office
Small Storage Closets
Offsite Storage



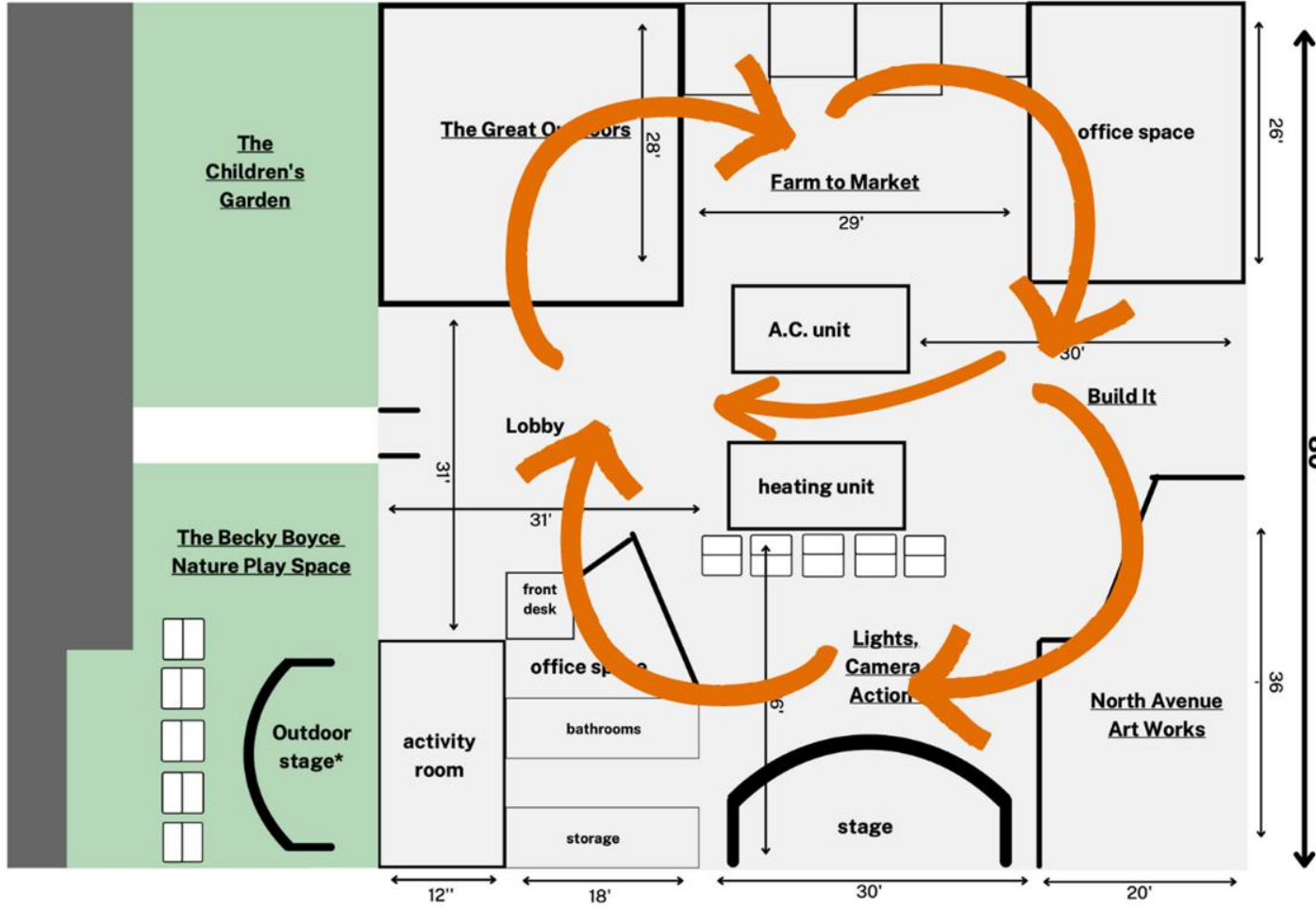


Wonder Works Children's Museum Floor Plan



6,400 SQUARE FEET
LARGEST INDOOR EXHIBIT - 900 SQ. FT.
LARGEST OUTDOOR EXHIBIT - 1200 SQ. FT.

DESIGN MUSEUM IN THE ROUND



All exhibits
(with the exception of the Art Room)
are open concept
that flow into
one-another

PERMANENT STRUCTURES

- Stage
- Farm to Market
- Buildings -
- Crank -
- Tree House

*This exhibit is still under construction

The Lights, Camera, Action exhibit is our theater room.

*Seating in this area does not leave the room

HOT WHEELS™: RACE TO WIN™

Exhibit Specifications

**Size: 4,000 square feet;
372 square meters**

**Target Audience: Families
with children 6 to 12 years old
(but fun for all ages!)**

Duration: Three months

Specifications
10 square feet;
96 meters

**Target Audience: Families
with children 6 to 12 years old
(fun for all ages!)**

Duration: Three months

BLUE ZONE (DESIGN)
What makes one car faster than another? Getting ready to race means choosing the right body and tires designed to maximize your speed. In the Blue Zone, find out how racers adjust their cars to give them the edge to win!

YELLOW ZONE (POWER)
What makes a car GO? Every car needs an engine to get off the starting line. In the Yellow Zone, find out how engines use fuel to spin the wheels and burn up the track!





TRADITIONAL EXHIBITS NOT FEASIBLE FOR US!



think
OUTSIDE
the BOX



WHAT WORKS FOR YOUR MUSEUM?



Analysis SWOT to Plan Exhibit Spaces



STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

S

W

T

O

OPPORTUNITIES

THREATS



Analysis SWOT to Plan Exhibit Spaces



STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

S

W

B

OPPORTUNITIES

NEEDS

NO

BUDGET





Analysis SWOT to Plan Exhibit Spaces



STRENGTHS

- Loose Parts
- Specially Trained Staff
- Intimate Space
- Museum Design

WEAKNESSES

- SPACE!
 - No Designated Classrooms
 - No Large Exhibit Space
- Storage
- Structure & Location

S

W

B

NO

NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

- Need: Multipurpose Space
- New Exhibits
- Opportunity: Storage
- Opportunity: Programming
- Get Creative!

BUDGET

- Understand
- Track
- Target
- Get Creative!

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

WE USE MODELS AND APPROACHES THAT
FIT OUR INSTITUTION



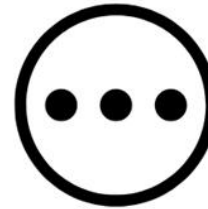
REFRAMED OUR
UNDERSTANDING
OF OUR SPACE &
HOW WE USE IT



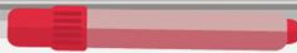
CHANGED OUR
BUDGET MODEL



REIMAGINED
WHAT WE PUT IN
THE SPACE



CONTINUALLY LOOK FOR
NON-TRADITIONAL
EXHIBIT
OPPORTUNITIES





HOW DO WE USE OUR SPACE?

- Exhibits must be multifunctional
 - All items must be able to move
 - Art Room & Lunch Room serve dual purposes
- Items are swapped out on rotation
- Storage becomes and active space



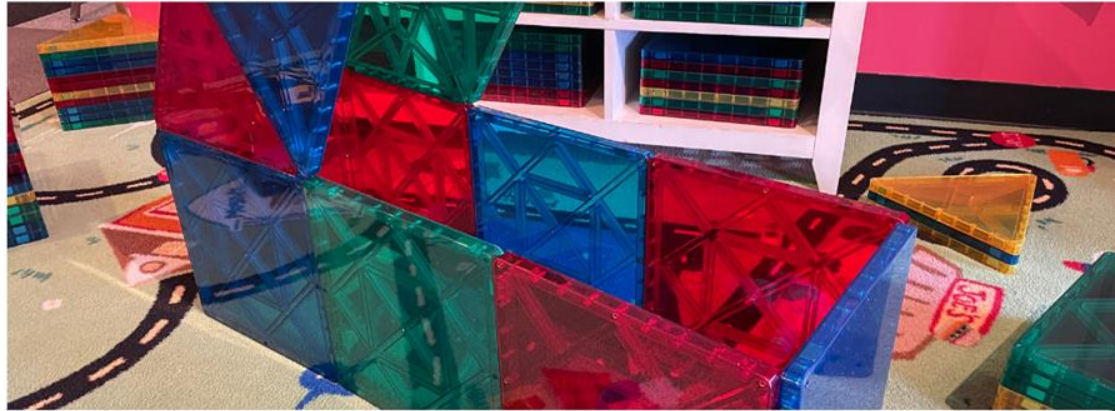
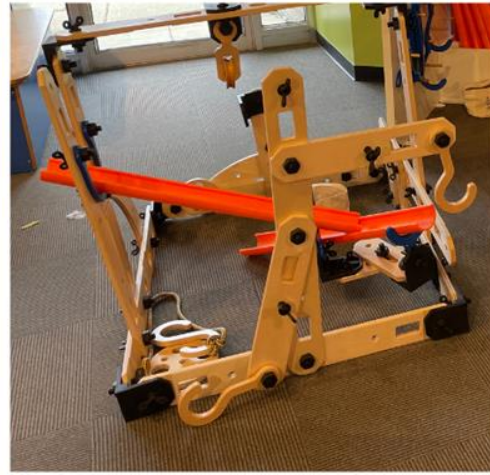


WHAT DO WE PUT INTO OUR SPACE?

- Loose Parts Theory of Simon Nicholson

"The idea that loose parts, materials which can be moved around, designed and redesigned, and tinkered with; create infinitely more opportunities for creative engagement than static materials and environments." *

- Invest in Museum Quality Toys
- Programming
 - Take Over Events
 - Themed Weeks
 - Art Room Series



* https://www.lecs.act.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/326276/Loose_Parts_at_LECS.pdf



BUDGET

- Changed Budget Model from Yearly Forecast to Monthly Cashflow
- Deep Dive into Budget Categories, Line Items and Sources
- Recategorized Certain Line Items
- Planned purchases & upgrades





OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- Becky Boyce Nature Play Space
- Donor Wall, 1/2 walls separating lobby and hallway
- Glass Windows
- Street & Parking Lot



Table Talk: 3 Minutes

What resources/companies/products have you used to keep your exhibits fresh on a budget and to scale?

Any fun new things you have bought that are not typical items visitors play with at home?



CHILDREN'S MUSEUM CURAÇAO
DISCOVER THE POWER OF PLAY

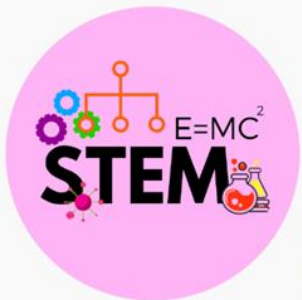
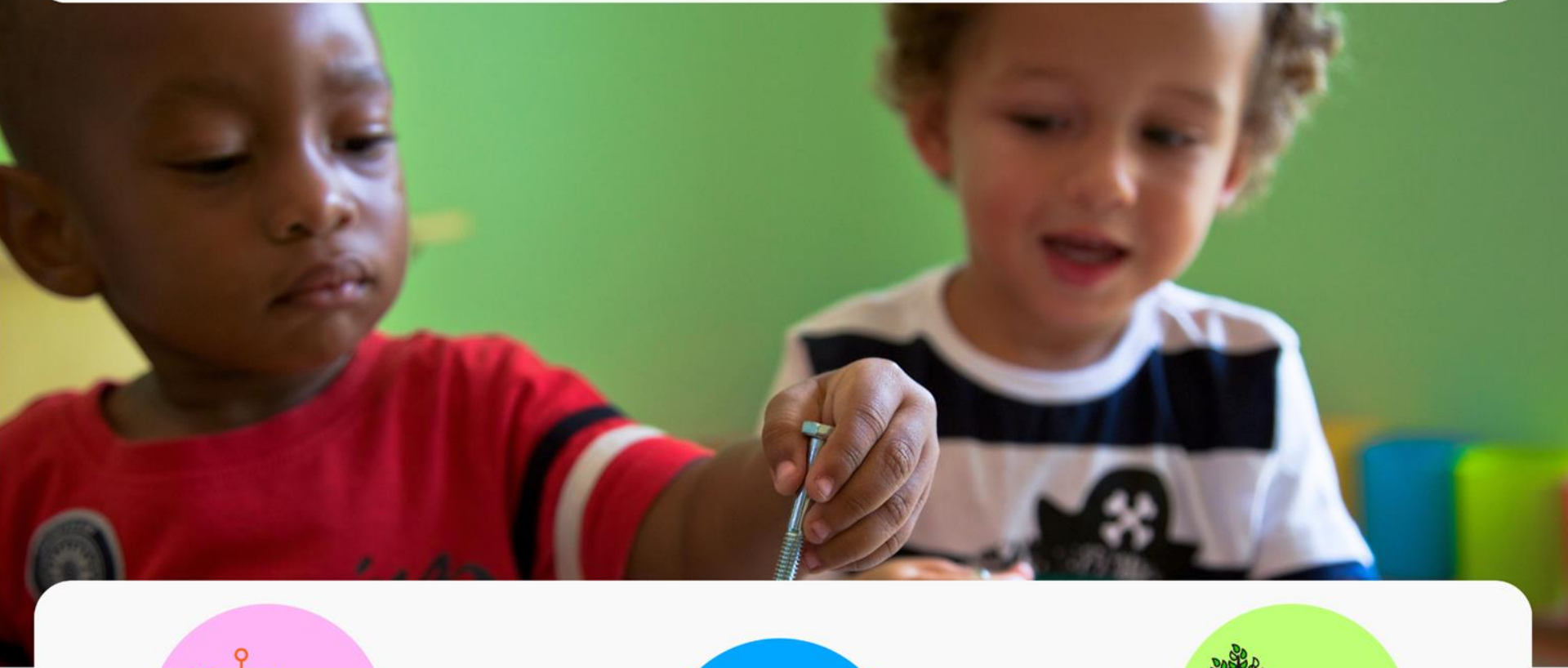
SMALL BUT MIGHTY: PROGRAMMING



Rohani de Pont
Director

OUR 5 PILARS

Target group: 1 - 10 y/o



ORGANIZING OUR PROGRAMMING

WHAT - WHEN - BUDGET - EXAMPLES



REGULAR
PROGRAMMING



SPECIAL
PROGRAMMING



COMMERCIAL
PROGRAMMING



EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMMING



WHAT - WHEN - BUDGET - EXAMPLES

REGULAR PROGRAMMING

Recurring activities within the museum

- Recurring programming
- Repeated days
- Costs within yearly budget, determined by targeted visitor amount.
- Examples: STEM Saturday – Sunday Funday – Art of the Week project





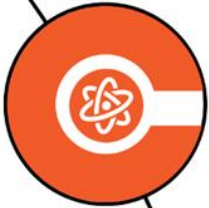
WHAT - WHEN - BUDGET - EXAMPLES

SPECIAL PROGRAMMING

Related to special events / occasions

- Event linked to special days
- Holidays / special occasions
- Costs no more than break-even.
No Profit Motive!
More important to be relevant.
- Examples: Mother's Day -
International Child Rights Day -
King's Day





WHAT - WHEN - BUDGET - EXAMPLES

COMMERCIAL PROGRAMMING

Programming activities with a profit motive

- Event with a profit motive
- Any day after opening hours
- Costs are percentage of the expected profit. Determined by the minimum capacity for this event.
- Examples: Kids Night Out (Drop Off) – Halloween – Sinterklaas





WHAT - WHEN - BUDGET - EXAMPLES

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMING

Educational, school-related activities

- School related events, within the museum or outreach
- Week days
- Costs are kept low, mostly done with donations.
- Examples: School visits –
Teacher Workshops –
Museum on the Go



ORGANIZING OUR PROGRAMMING

WHAT - WHEN - BUDGET - EXAMPLES



REGULAR PROGRAMMING

Recurring activities
within our museum



SPECIAL PROGRAMMING

Related to special events /
occasions



COMMERCIAL PROGRAMMING

Programming activities with
a profit motive



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Educational, school-related
activities

BUDGETARY CHALLENGES TIPS & TRICKS

- Material costs
- Minimum number of entries
- Collaborate
- Development of programs: Re-use!



Sugeidy Windster
Programming & Education
Manager

LET'S GET INTERACTIVE



You'll receive a bag with loose parts...
Let's think outside of the box!

But first a handy tool 



	REGULAR PROGRAMMING	SPECIAL PROGRAMMING	COMMERCIAL PROGRAMMING	EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING
STEM				
ART				
NATURE				
LITERATURE				
CULTURE				

CAN WE DO IT IN TERMS OF...

Profitable?				
Planning?				
Staffing?				

BE CAUTIOUS OF BLANK SPOTS! DID WE THINK OF THE FOLLOWING...

Audience driven				
All-inclusive				
Partnerships				
Open-ended				

PROGRAMMING CHECKLIST

To what does your Programming activity comply?

on your hand-out!



Table Talk: 5 Minutes

You just received a bag with loose parts of less than \$1,-.

What can you think of as a programming activity with the received materials? To what items of the checklist does your activity comply?

Q & A for the Panelists

Peer Networking

What idea from this workshop can you try when you get back to your museum?

What idea may be a long-term goal?

Get (at least) two business cards/contacts from your networking time.