

The Case for Play



bay area
DISCOVERY
museum



2024

A message from Kelly McKinley, CEO



Why does play matter?

Dear Friends,

2024 marks the midway point in our 5-year plan to serve 500,000 Bay Area children, families, and educators annually by the year 2027, with an emphasis on reaching more families of low-income. We are excited to share our progress and the impact that expanded access to playful learning experiences has had on our community.

Why does play matter?

Play is the most natural and powerful way that children learn and develop. Play strengthens connections between children and their caring adults, laying the foundation for their long-term academic success, health and happiness, and overall family well-being.

We are committed to ensuring every child in the Bay Area has access to quality play-based learning opportunities. Because when children and families thrive, our communities thrive.

What is the museum's impact in our community?

By creating playful learning experiences that inspire a lifetime of discovery in every child, the museum is fostering community health and happiness. How do we know this? Well, through our evaluation work, visitors and program participants tell us consistently that they experienced a **feeling of belonging**; made **connections with others**; witnessed their child **learning through play**; and **experienced joy** together. These are all essential components of child and family well-being. We are excited to share some of the results of this impact research in this report.

To all of you who share and invest in our vision of a world in which every child grows and thrives through joyful play: we thank you. The progress and success outlined in this year's Impact Report belongs to all of us.

Here's to a year filled with joy, discovery, health and happiness across our region!

Kelly McKinley
CEO, Bay Area Discovery Museum



In 2024...



340,151

people served, a 7% increase over 2023.



24%

of people served accessed the museum for free or at a reduced cost. That's a 5% increase in just one year.



99%

of people served tell us they experienced joy.



Experiencing joy during play helps children develop emotional regulation, resilience, and motivation to learn, all of which contribute to their well-being and healthy growth.

At the Museum

11,263

families in our membership community.

98%

of families felt a sense of belonging, fostering the emotional security and confidence that inspires children to explore with curiosity.



“ My son asks to visit the museum at least once a month. In a world where kids have to follow adult direction so much of the time, it’s so special for him to have “his” place – he can roam, play, create, and explore in an environment created for him. The museum is a true Bay Area treasure for kids and families. ”

– Member Parent

76%

of visitors made connections with others, building social skills and growing community amongst caregivers.

2,236

member families received annual memberships for free or significantly reduced cost: 13% more families than last year!

Across Our Region



34,815

students and educators participated in play-based learning across **344 STEAM Workshops, Try It Truck visits, and field trips.**



Over 65%

of students and educators served received full or partial scholarships.



99%

of those served saw how children learn through play, inspiring caregivers to support playful activities that lead to cognitive, social, and emotional growth.



Our Partnership with San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)



37 SFUSD Schools

We are supporting the rollout of Universal Transitional Kindergarten across all SFUSD elementary schools.



3,834 Learning Moments

across SFUSD through classroom visits, museum field trips, family workshops and professional development for educators.

We are launching similar play-based learning partnerships with neighboring public-school districts, including San Rafael City Schools.

“ I strongly believe that play is the most effective learning tool we have, and I love learning new ways to make my role more effective within it. ”

– SFUSD TK Educator, Professional Development Participant

Thank you to the following donors, for gifts received September 1, 2023 - August 31, 2024

Every donation to Bay Area Discovery Museum ensures every child in our community has access to our joyful learning experiences.

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