



2023 OPERATING PLAN

Fort Collins Museum of Discovery

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Introduction

Here at Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, we're your place for gathering, learning, discovery, and fun. The museum enters 2023 celebrating its 10-year anniversary along with another very exciting milestone – FCMoD's 1 millionth visitor! Each and every person who has walked through the museum's doors is part of the museum's story and it is an honor to know that we are part of theirs. No matter the generation or background, FCMoD is privileged to share in so many lifelong memories that center discovery, meaningful connections, exploration, and just plain 'ol fun!

Given this milestone year, the 2023 Operating Plan is developed with gratitude for our foundation, strength in our continued growth, and optimism for our place in the community's future. Looking back on the 10 years of this museum's history, a clear trajectory builds firmly on the original core areas of focus established by the museum's founders, partners, and advisors: **Stewardship of Self, Community, and Environment**. Even as we navigated the challenging impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, our commitment to these areas remained firm and clear throughout all areas of operation and impact. The 2023 Operating Plan tells that story through expanded lenses and depth that come with the benefit time and a curious, innovative mindset.

Museum Impact

FCMoD plays an important role in the cultural, educational, and economic ecosystem of the Fort Collins and Northern Colorado communities. Further, our national accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums recognizes FCMoD's commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards, and continued institutional improvement.

Since opening our doors on November 10, 2012, we have welcomed nearly 1 million visitors of all ages to explore, learn, reflect and to create lasting memories with friends and family. Museum visits continue to build back to pre-pandemic numbers with participants coming from within the City of Fort Collins and



surrounding areas. In 2022 we have joyfully welcomed 86,516 visits. Numbers include 53,943 visits from Larimer County of which 37,567 visits are from Fort Collins residents, 10,288 visits from Weld County, 6,091 visits from the throughout the state of Colorado, 11,010 visits from 43 states, and 134 visits from 15 countries outside of the United States.

More than 2,080 community members have a membership with FCMoD, including 490 active memberships with our Early Childhood families in Poudre and Thompson School Districts.

FCMoD engaged with more than 50 partners through 2022 to expand our impact in the areas of science, history, and culture. Summer 2022 kicked off a resurgence of field trips and group visits, and the museum saw nearly 2,220 individuals come through the museum during those months, spending more than representing 29 different camps and organizations. Museum staff provided 48 onsite programs and nearly 130 hours of direct connection in the areas of STEM, archive, collections, music, arts, and culture. FCMoD hosted two traveling exhibitions in 2022: *Food for Thought* and *Earth Matters*. Both exhibits were focused on the important and timely conversation of climate science and climate change. FCMoD continued to grow in relationship with our Spanish speaking community and partnered with Poudre River Public Library District to support literacy, connection, culture, and learning in a new-to-the-museum program *Noches en Familia*. Two events in 2022 brought 317 participants, and one more is planned before the end of 2022.

2023 Builds On 2022 Key Priority Areas

In 2022 we focused on building on the pillars that we embarked on during the pandemic including supporting community need as a place of gathering, healing, sharing, and learning by inspiring curiosity and understanding of ourselves, others, and our world.

This work came to life in the form of three priority areas that permeate all areas of the museum's operations and impact:

Community and Partnerships, Equity and Belonging, and

Foundation and Capacity Building. Our work is guided by these areas of top priority, the established Arts and Culture Master Plan, and the guiding vision set by FCMoD board of directors and city council.



The key priority areas are interconnected in nature and reflect the robust ways FCMoD builds its mission impact. As such, initiatives may fall under multiple categories, and we have done our best to align them with the priority area that takes the lead. For example, the youth-empowered MoD Squad permeates all three priority areas. Originally formed to support Sonic Spotlight in 2021, the Museum of Discovery's

youth advisory group is core to Foundation and Capacity Building, as it integrates youth decision-making into FCMoD's operations. Equally important, the MoD Squad brings together diverse voices from a key demographic to not only nurture healthy belonging within a peer group, but to incorporate equitable practices in programs that center belonging, such as the group's cornerstone initiative Sonic Spotlight. The MoDSquad is also empowered to formulate and strengthen community partnerships with regional youth leadership organizations with a goal of helping to center youth-voices at a larger community level.



The identified initiatives are largely a continuation of work established in previous Operating Plans. To capture the stories and impact of continued and new initiatives, the team is working to operationalize progress reporting in 2023. We look forward to what we will learn during this process.



Community and Partnerships

FCMoD continues to explore opportunities to support the community in new and exciting ways, and have committed to amplifying our impact through deep, meaningful partnerships. These partnerships come in all shapes and sizes to allow the museum to expand its capacity and learnings as we build new audiences and co-create dynamic, relevant experiences.

Several examples from 2022 include supporting high school student fellows at FCMoD during the summer in partnership with The Interfaith Solidarity & Accompaniment Coalition (ISAAC). Students experienced nearly 175 hours in all operational areas of the museum and provided meaningful feedback to staff about museum brand and programs. This work also exemplifies impact in supporting individual students as they navigate systems through a social justice lens, including government and school frameworks.

FCMoD continued its partnership Imagine Zero and Alliance for Suicide Prevention to present the Teen Self Care Fair, which included participation from 22 organizations and nearly 385 people, of which 59% were teens. This event celebrates the unique diversity of community teens, while providing an array of resources, supports, and trainings for teens and caregivers to support mental health and suicide prevention. Our partnerships will continue to build as we look toward creating deeper impact in our community.

Museums Are Trusted Spaces

Museums have consistently been identified as highly trusted institutions, with more than two decades of research affirming that fact. A 2022 study called [*Museums and Trust*](#) conducted by American Alliance of Museums and Wilkening Consulting dove into the question of trustworthiness, finding that the public view museums as credible sources of information and rank museum trustworthiness second to friends and family.

2023 Planned Initiatives

- Northern Arapaho Relationships and Soldier Wolf Collection
- Alebrije Special Exhibition
- Annual *Sonic Spotlight* All Ages Music Showcase
- Early Childhood Memberships with Poudre and Thompson School Districts
- Youth Leadership Convening
- Initiatives with Poudre River Public Library District
 - Quarterly *Noches en Familia* Events
 - Annual *Día de Muertos* Community Celebrations
- Initiatives with Colorado State University Faculty
 - Co-Designing for Neurodiversity in Museums
 - Quantum and Magnetic Science Weekend Takeovers
- Learning Pathways Alignment
 - Relaunch of Field Trip and Group Visit Offerings
 - Indigenous, Science, Technology, Arts, and Resiliency Camp and Related Programs
 - Lunch, Stories, and Discovery/Almuerzo, Cuentas, y Descubrimiento
 - Summer Program Experiences



Initiative Highlight: Lunch, Stories, and Discovery/Almuerzo, Cuentas, y Descubrimiento

FCMoD will enter its 3rd year in partnership with Poudre River Public Library District, Fort Collins Bookmobile, Food Bank of Larimer County, Larimer 4H and City of Fort Collins Cultural Resources department to deliver food, literacy, culture, fun and connection for six neighborhoods throughout the summer months. The 2022 program brought summer fun and learning to nearly 900 participants and expanded to include two amazing Latinx creatives that led activities that creative adventures through music, song, dance, and art. Museum visitors can get a glimpse of the creativity by viewing a beautiful mandala created with small stones painted by people of all ages. The mandala is on display in the museum's main gallery through early 2023.





Equity and Belonging

FCMoD has moved into a more intentional space for practices and initiatives that promote outcomes of equity and belonging, both internally and externally. This is meaningful, thoughtful work, and the process continues to hold space for flexibility, learning and growth.



The 2022 Operating Plan formally introduced these values as key priority areas with our goal of exploring ways that this work is both currently present in the museum's practices and systems, as well as reveal areas of opportunity for greater focus.

We committed to exploring the following areas more deeply to guide future framework:

- The historical role of museums among community groups
- Understanding equity and belonging within the context of the workforce and workplace
- Museum's role in promoting a greater sense of belonging and connection to community

With the reemergence of in-person professional development in 2022, staff participated in several opportunities to deepen understanding of equity, belonging, inclusion, and diversity in museum and greater community spaces.

Of note, FCMoD organized two offsite, in person workshops titled "Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion for Museums" for the Board, City partner, and all museum staff. Led by American Alliance of Museums senior staff, each session was tailored to specific learnings and discussions including alignment around common language, SWOT analysis, governance practices, and future opportunities.



In spring, staff from Archive, Collections, Exhibits, and Community Connections attended The Inclusive Museums Conference, an international convening designed to create inclusive action around the future role of museums. To create wider reach of conference learnings and other professional development experiences, the museum created a regular professional development series in the Digital Dome where all team members can view available sessions and reflect on learnings, together.

Additionally, FCMoD continues daily work to center community voices and needs in the creation of programs and how we communicate the museums' brand in service of our mission, for all. Much of the work planned in 2023 is a continuation of the shifts we have made, and relationships built.

2023 Planned Initiatives

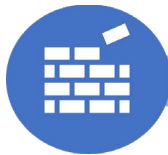
- Continued Professional Development
- Continued Access Program Expansion
 - Early Childhood Membership
 - Priority Access for Title I and Free and Reduced Lunch Status Schools
- Inclusive Language Implementations
 - Internal Wayfinding Signage
 - Membership Category language
 - Commitment to Spanish language access
- MoD Squad Expansion
- Annual Teen Self Care Fair
- Annual Autism Resource Fair
- Community Mental Health Efforts for Youth
- Carnegie Center for Creativity Program Planning



Initiative Highlight: Indigenous, Science, Arts, and Resiliency Camp (ISTAR)

The place now recognized as Fort Collins and the surrounding area has always been Indigenous space. It is still recognized as homeland and ancestral territory of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute peoples and has also long been a site of gathering, trade, and connection for many other Indigenous nations. The ISTAR camp started in 2020 and brings together Native American students and their families to connect with traditional Native technologies, science, and arts. Led by CSU Ethnic Studies Department faculty, student mentors, and community leaders, ISTAR's culturally responsive programming centers community-identified goals in its curriculum. In 2022, ISTAR expanded to a two-week camp and brought together more than 40 campers. The museum is honored to play a supportive role in hosting this camp as well as other gatherings throughout the year in partnership with community.





Foundation and Capacity Building

The Foundation and Capacity Building priority area explores who we are, how we get the work done, how we value our teams, and how we communicate and evaluate our progress. Lessons and experiences from the pandemic helped validate and prioritize our core business functions, key value areas, and revealed greater opportunity to seek alignment and develop sustainable strategies to meet the work before us. The public-private partnership structure lends additional strength as the museum continues to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and grow toward its bright future.

In 2022, the organization heavily focused on building out the Adaptive Network Model launched in July 2021, while simultaneously bringing fully back online reimagined pre-pandemic program areas and assets. This new organizational model was designed to more effectively position the museum's internal resources to support a people-centered service model for community impact.



Values embedded into the design prioritize adaptive flexibility, collaboration, open communication, and shared outcomes, while still placing relevance on subject-matter expertise. The Network Model also decentralizes ownership of educational programs, leveraging talent and expertise across core museum teams as well as facilitating greater integration of partnership with community experts.

After a 13-month implementation, FCMoD saw 11 internal promotions to support reimagined roles, added a new functional unit to support Nonprofit business operations, increased 2 positions from part time to full time, and welcomed more than 20 new employees to fill internal vacancies and rebuild to pre-pandemic staffing levels. As we move into 2023, we continue to build and grow our team culture to ensure continued creativity, employee well-being, sustainable practices, empowered decision-making, and an inclusive culture.



FCMoD's partners also embarked on compensation studies in 2021-2022, including market-rate analysis and cost-of-living analysis to better understand gaps and opportunities in compensation. In addition to new positions, the 2022 budget included pay adjustments, most notably with the Nonprofit Partner to address internal parity with the City Partner. The 2023 budget includes adjustments that increase minimum wage to \$15 per hour and provides parity in planned increases for both

partners. As part of its commitment to maintain a strong foundation that employs highly valued team members with competitive wages, FCMoD is expecting to continue its compensation work annually.

2023 Planned Initiatives

- Mission and Brand Study and Implementation
- Collections Storage Furniture
- Curatorial Agreement Relaunch
- Digital Dome Community Impact Plan
- WiFi Upgrade Completion
- Security Camera Upgrades and Lighting Study
- Asset Management Study
- Hybrid Workspace Completion
- Annual Fundraiser and 10 Year Celebration Events
- Commercial Insurance Review
- Annual Financial Audit
- HR and Financial Management Software Implementation
- Implement Internal Initiative and Budget Reporting Process



Initiative Highlight: Collections Storage

In 2013, FCMoD Nonprofit Partner purchased and installed roughly half of the storage furniture needed for our on-site artifact collections. Following approval of City of Fort Collins 2023-24 Budget, FCMoD will purchase and install collections furniture to safely house the museum historic artifact collection. As the primary repository of historical artifact collections and archival materials in Fort Collins and Northern Colorado, FCMoD has a community responsibility to preserve the integrity of these materials. With the installation of the collections furniture the museum will have state of the art artifact housing for our on-site collection.

The museum also has 5,000 square feet of off-site storage, primarily for household and other large artifacts in a building valuable in both historical nature and proximity to the museum. As previously identified as a priority need, this building presents difficulties in maintaining appropriate climate controls and a space free of pollutants, pests, and water. In future years we will seek out a new off-site storage facility.



Initiative Highlight: Mission and Brand Alignment Work

As the museum enters its 10th year following three transformative years from the COVID-19 pandemic, the board, staff, and community partners have reflected considerably on Fort Collins Museum of Discovery's brand, community impact, future vision. Consensus remains that the museum continues to remain true to its purpose of serving as a space of gathering and facilitating meaningful connections and experiences in the interconnected spaces of science, history, and culture for Northern Colorado. But the questions remain: Have we changed "how" we deliver on our impact? Have we stepped fully into the museum's capacity? How can FCMoD, as a trusted learning institution, fully support a vibrant Northern Colorado? Do people know about what we do?

At an August 2022 retreat, FCMoD's board of directors agreed to explore the museum's mission statement and brand identity, and the 2023 budget includes funds to support the work. We will hire an outside consultant and embark on an inclusive process to create a mission statement and brand identity that more deeply aligns the museum's current work and future vision.

Financial Outlook

As a public-private partnership, FCMoD has the benefit of leveraging and integrating assets and tools available through both a city government and nonprofit entity. It is through this innovative, co-created process that we serve our mission and deepen our impact.

These strengths and levers have helped the museum navigate the multifaceted and challenges impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. From a financial perspective, the Nonprofit Partner experienced great hardship and, like so many in the cultural sector, continues to rebuild toward full financial recovery. In the face of challenges, the museum's Operating Plan and annual Budgets shine light into the bold steps museum leadership have taken to secure FCMoD's optimistic future and continued generational impact.

2023 Annual Budget

FCMoD's combined 2023 operating budget projects \$3.8 million in expenditures, supporting a robust staff team; ongoing and new museum experiences; investments in technology, community relations and engagement; donor stewardship and cultivation; and exhibit maintenance and updates.

2023 BUDGET	Nonprofit Partner	City Partner	Total
Beginning Balance	\$456,576	-	\$456,576
Revenue	\$2,011,021	\$1,340,064	\$3,351,085
Total Operating Funds	\$2,467,597	\$1,340,064	\$3,807,661
Total Expenditures	\$2,467,597	\$1,340,064	\$3,807,661
% Partner Revenue	60%	40%	



CITY PARTNER FUNDING

The City Partner's 2023 budget of \$1,340,064 supports 8.5 classified, full time equivalent employees and 3.85 hourly, non-classified employees. The City of Fort Collins is increasing its minimum wage to \$15/hour, and planned increases are included in the 2023 budget to support competitive wages and cost of living adjustments. The City Partner receives revenue from the General Fund as approved through the City's Budgeting for Outcomes process. The City allocates this funding as per the Operating Agreement in the following order: (1) City staff salaries and benefits; (2) building operations such as: janitorial services, communication services, insurance, maintenance materials, exhibits support; and (3) collections care and exhibits.

Through the City's Budgeting for Outcomes process, the museum requested additional funding for the purchase and installation of storage furniture for the museum's artifact collection. The funding source for this project is the City's General Fund and the City Partner's reserve in the amount of \$300,000. In addition, the City's Office of Emergency Management submitted an enhancement for security cameras and following City Council approval, will be installed at the museum in early 2023. The Cultural Services Department's budget leverages \$150,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to support program and admission access across all Cultural Services facilities, as well as projects that provide language access. FCMoD will use available funding to support the museum's long-standing Opportunity Program.

The City of Fort Collins has returned to a biennial budgeting process, and the City Partner projects a 2024 budget of \$1,385,637, with three percent projected in the extended, three-year outlook.

NONPROFIT PARTNER FUNDING

The Nonprofit Partner's 2023 projected operating budget of \$2,467,597 supports 18 full time employees and 18 part time employees. This is an increase from the 2022 budget of 16 full time employees and 12 part time employees. Like the City Partner, NPP is increasing its minimum wage to \$15 per hour and planned increases are included in the 2023 budget to support competitive wages and cost of living adjustments.

The Nonprofit Partner receives revenue from general admissions, membership, dome theater admission, store and cafe sales, grants, sponsorships, and donations. Staff continues reviewing the museum's



earned an contributed revenue streams, and in 2023, will review and make recommendations for areas such as the membership program, field trip fee structures, and rental opportunities. In accordance with the Operating Agreement between the NPP and the City, the NPP allocates this funding in the following order: (1) NPP staff salaries and benefits; (2) insurance, advertising and marketing, fundraising, and other museum operating expenses as needed; and (3) programming, exhibits, and other museum activities as needed.



The Nonprofit Partner's 2023 budget includes support for several key infrastructure and programmatic initiatives, including \$150,000 allocated for mission and branding development and deliverables; \$25,000 for expanded field trip access for schools with high populations of families experiencing low-income (also ARPA supported); and approximately \$170,000 to support 2023 special exhibition and planned payments for future traveling exhibitions. Restricted funds continue to support future planning and investments in the Music and Sound Lab and Digital Dome. Of note, the

Nonprofit Partner maintains a board-restricted operating reserve funded at the equivalent of 3 months of operating expenses. The 2023 recommended budget includes \$140,000 of new funding into established reserves to support increased operating expenses.

Given the Nonprofit Partner's financial recovery from the pandemic and economic outlook, the Nonprofit Partner is maintaining a single-year budget. The NPP anticipates realigning with the City's biennial budgeting process in 2025 following several more years of structural recovery and growth.

Extended Financial Outlook 2024-26

Like many cultural entities, the Nonprofit Partner's financial model has relied considerably on earned revenue from areas such as admission, memberships, retail sales and programs. In 2020 alone, the museum experienced more than four months of mandated closures and experienced required capacity reductions of up to 90% through much of 2021. The financial implications for the Nonprofit Partner were unavoidable. The board of directors and leadership team took swift action to mitigate structural impacts to the museum's financial outlook, putting in motion plans to strategically rebuild and reimagine over the coming years.



Federal, state and local recovery program dollars serve as the largest contributor to the Nonprofit Partner's financial outlook with more than \$1.1 million secured over a 12-month period. These important,

one-time dollars are bridging gaps in earned revenue, stabilizing potential operational fluctuations, and launching FCMoD into spaces of experimentation to fuel learnings for the museum's bright future.

While significant, these recovery program dollars are part of the museum's short-term fiscal strategies that support FCMoD's continued financial solvency. FCMoD's long term health will always center on our unwavering commitment to serve as a community hub, a commitment that comes to life with support from our dear partners. Through the pandemic and as we emerge, the museum continues to experience extreme generosity from individuals, foundations, partners and sponsors whose contributions provide necessary and sustained support to serve our mission and optimize our impact in Northern Colorado.

As visitation nears pre-pandemic levels, engagement with new, lifelong audiences reflecting greater cross-sections of Northern Colorado fuel an even more impactful, sustainable, and exciting future. Looking toward the next 10 years, we know that this moment in time serves as another pivotal milestone in our unique story. We are proud of the strength, resolve and vision demonstrated over some of our history's most challenging moments secure the museum's optimistic and bright future.

