



9/2026

To: Truckee Tahoe Airport District
From: KidZone Museum
Jen Parker
Philanthropy Officer
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RE: Request for Support

Summary

KidZone Museum has raised \$13 million for the planning, preconstruction, and construction of Phase 1 of the New Museum and Science Center at Truckee River Regional Park. Construction is now underway, with the new facility expected to open in late fall 2027. A decade of working alongside our Library friends, and the Railroad society and Food Hub, helping each other along the way, we are excited to be nearly at the finish line, and able to develop our exciting plans of partnership within the park, together.

Our final leg of fundraising is to purchase and install the exhibits and learning environments, estimated at \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million. Raising the full amount will allow KidZone to provide the most engaging and high-quality experiences, including an airport control tower incorporated into the indoor climbing structure and museum-quality microscopes for the STEAM Center.

KidZone is asking the Truckee Tahoe Airport District to invest \$850,000 toward the design, purchase, fabrication, and installation of exhibits and learning environments. KidZone will match the Airport District's \$850,000 investment, resulting in \$1.7 million toward completing these experiences. In recognition of this significant commitment, we would like to offer prominent naming of the indoor climbing structure, including the airport control tower.

Timing is critical. Funding needs to be secured by February 2027 so exhibits can be designed, fabricated, ordered, shipped, and installed before opening.

We would be honored to have the Truckee Tahoe Airport District partner with KidZone in completing the regional Children's Museum and Science Center and bringing this important new community resource to children and families across Nevada and Placer Counties and visitors to our region. We are almost at the finish line.



A Regional Community Resource

KidZone Museum has served children and families throughout the Tahoe Truckee Airport District since 1993. What began as a much-needed place for young children and families to play and connect has grown from approximately 5,000 annual visits to more than 30,000 today, and evolved into a regional resource for early learning, science and art, family engagement, and children with a wide range of learning and developmental needs.

Today, KidZone is the region's only children's museum, serving local and regional families, schools, childcare providers, social service organizations, and the many visitors who come to the Truckee Tahoe region each year.

After more than 30 years, KidZone is ready for a permanent home that reflects how our community and the needs of its children have grown. The current 3,885-square-foot temporary facility is undersized and deteriorating. The New Museum and Science Center will greatly expand KidZone's ability to serve the region, offering experiences that grow with children from early childhood through their teen years and accommodating approximately 50,000 visits annually.

Regional Community Benefit

KidZone gives children in Placer and Nevada Counties and surrounding areas access to learning and developmental experiences that are unique in our region. The New Museum and Science Center will provide the only imaginative play exhibits specifically designed to support developmental milestones, the only public sensory center, and the only public STEAM center. Families, health, education, and social service partners will have access to these spaces for their students and clients five days a week. Experiences will grow with children from early childhood through high school.



Most importantly, the museum will ensure these opportunities reach underserved children and families and help address important regional gaps:

- Approximately 30% of children in Truckee Tahoe schools live at the poverty level. KidZone’s scholarship programs and free museum experiences remove financial barriers, giving low-income children access to enriching, hands-on learning outside of school that they may not otherwise experience. These opportunities reinforce classroom learning and build literacy, math, STEAM, creativity, and developmental skills.
- Nearly 70% of English Language Learners are below proficiency in math and reading. At KidZone, children build vocabulary and literacy through storytelling, conversation, and imaginative play. Early math develops naturally as children sort, count, compare, experiment, and build. As children progress through school, the Museum scaffolds these learning skills into more complex projects and hands-on experiences in the STEAM Center, Field Station outdoor classroom, and The Grove Teen/Tween Studio, such as designing and building Rube Goldberg machines or investigating how flight works by creating wings that mimic the shapes and movements of birds and testing how they fly.
- Spanish-speaking staff, longstanding community partnerships, and outreach initiatives help create culturally responsive experiences where Spanish-speaking and English Language Learner families feel welcomed, included, and able to fully participate.
- For children with sensory, auditory, and developmental needs, the Sunrise Spot sensory center provides a welcoming place where children can comfortably participate, regulate, explore, and learn. It also fills an important regional gap for health and education providers seeking hands-on experiences where their students and clients can practice and strengthen sensory development.
- The Grove Teen/Tween Studio fills a regional gap in opportunities for older youth looking for meaningful ways to connect with peers and their community. It provides a safe, engaging place to socialize, explore science and art, design and build projects, develop leadership and creativity, and discover new interests. These opportunities for positive social connection, belonging, and engagement support youth well-being and help address concerns about isolation and mental health in our region.

All children benefit from access to enriching learning and developmental experiences, but these opportunities are especially important for children who have fewer opportunities to access them. By ensuring underserved children can participate, KidZone helps close opportunity gaps and gives children the skills, confidence, resilience, and foundation they need to succeed in school, discover their potential, and be prepared for their future.



Unique Spaces for Learning (photos of museum steam related exhibits)

The New Museum and Science will bring public learning environments to the region that are not currently available together in one facility. The spaces were developed around documented community needs identified through five years of community meetings, surveys, focus groups, and direct engagement with families, educators, teens, health providers, schools, and social service partners. For decades, STEAM and aeronautics exhibits and programs have been a regular part of our educational offerings. These opportunities will be expanded in the new facility.

Play Floor: Imaginative play environments for infants and young children specifically designed to support early literacy, gross and fine motor development, social-emotional learning, cognitive development, and developmental milestones.

Children will explore science, technology, engineering, art, and math by experimenting, investigating, designing, building, solving problems, and learning that mistakes are part of discovery.

Sunrise Spot Sensory Center: Designed for children with sensory, auditory, and developmental needs and for families, schools, pediatric therapists, and early intervention specialists who work with them. The space will support sensory development, self-regulation, exploration, and learning.

The Great Outdoors and Field Station: A 9,000-square-foot outdoor learning and nature-play environment with climbing, building, and imaginative play where children can run, explore science and nature, experiment, create, and participate in special projects in the Field Station.

The Grove Teen/Tween Studio: A dedicated space for older youth to socialize, explore science and art, design and build projects, develop leadership and creativity, and connect meaningfully with peers and their community.



STEAM, Aviation, and Future Learning (photos of museum STEAM related programs)

The Truckee Tahoe Airport District has identified promoting youth STEAM education as a priority and is working to bring together the many STEAM partners connected to the Airport. KidZone's New Museum and Science Center can help advance this effort by providing another regional location where STEAM partners can meet in our flex space, plan, collaborate, and offer hands-on STEAM programs directly to children, families, and visitors.

The Museum and Science Center will significantly expand KidZone's role in science and technology education. The STEAM Center and Field Station will give children opportunities to experiment, investigate, design, build, test ideas, make mistakes, and try again. This inquiry-based approach builds curiosity, critical thinking, creative problem solving, confidence, and resilience.

Experiences can include designing and building Rube Goldberg machines, using museum-quality microscopes, experimenting with airflow, launching and testing rockets, and investigating flight through biomimicry by observing birds and creating wings that mimic their shapes and movements.

There is a natural connection between this learning and aviation. With the Airport District's investment, an airport control tower can be incorporated into the indoor climbing structure, creating a playful early connection to aviation while introducing children to science, engineering, technology, and future technical career pathways.

The partnership creates opportunities beyond the exhibits themselves. Airport-connected STEAM organizations could use the Museum and Science Center for meetings and collaborative planning and offer programs and special events for museum visitors. This would extend the Airport District's STEAM initiative into a public learning environment that reaches children from early childhood through high school, along with their families.

The Airport District's investment would therefore do more than help fund exhibits. It would strengthen a regional network of STEAM partners and create another place where children can experience science and aviation, meet people working in these fields, and begin to see possibilities for their own futures.

Public Agency and Community Partnerships

The New Museum and Science Center is being built at Truckee River Regional Park through a significant partnership with the Truckee Donner Recreation and Park District. TDRPD is providing the land for the New Museum and Science Museum and Science Center, with an estimated value of \$1.2 million. This contribution does not include the substantial staff and Board time dedicated to coordination, reporting, and partnership oversight that will continue for decades.

Public agencies and health, education, and social service organizations fund programs or use the museum to serve their students, clients, and families, including Tahoe Forest Hospital, Tahoe Truckee Unified School District, First 5 Nevada County, First 5 Placer County, the Family Room, Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC), Sierra Community House, Elevation, Healthy Babies, and Sierra Teen Education and Parenting Program (STEPP).

KidZone also participates in the Tahoe Truckee Community Collaborative, working alongside regional partners to develop programs that respond to identified community needs.

Regional Resilience

The New Museum and Science Center will provide modern infrastructure, ADA-accessible spaces, filtered indoor air, and heating and cooling. KidZone already serves as a refuge during extreme heat, winter storms, and poor air quality. When road closures strand residents and visitors in Truckee, the museum has stayed open late for visiting families trying to locate lodging and transportation. During wildfire smoke and poor air quality, the museum provides families with an indoor environment with filtered air, which is particularly beneficial for children with asthma.

This role is especially important in a mountain community where extreme weather, wildfire smoke, road closures, and large numbers of visitors can place additional demands on local resources.

Economic and Visitor Benefit

KidZone currently generates approximately \$300,000 annually in local spending that would otherwise leave the

region, according to an independent economic feasibility study. With increased visitation to the New Museum and Science Center, that economic impact is projected to grow to approximately \$500,000 annually.

The expanded museum will further support the regional economy through increased visitor spending, local employment, purchases from local vendors, year-round activity, and additional reasons for visiting families to stay and spend time in Truckee.

Why This Investment Aligns with the Airport District

An investment in KidZone provides sustained benefit to the entire Truckee Tahoe region. The New Museum and Science Center will advance the Airport District's goal of promoting youth STEAM education and strengthening connections among regional STEAM partners, while expanding educational opportunities for underserved children, serving residents and visitors across Nevada and Placer Counties, strengthening regional resilience, supporting working families, strengthening public agency partnerships, and contributing to the regional economy.

The project also creates a visible connection between the Airport District and a community resource that children and families will experience for generations.

Conclusion

KidZone has already raised \$13 million for the planning, preconstruction, and construction of Phase 1 of the Museum and Science Center. The final \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million campaign will fund the indoor and outdoor exhibits and learning environments that bring the building to life.

KidZone is requesting an \$850,000 investment from the Truckee Tahoe Airport District toward the design, purchase, fabrication, and installation of these exhibits and learning environments.

KidZone will match the Airport District's \$850,000 investment, resulting in \$1.7 million toward completing these experiences.

In recognition of this significant investment, KidZone would like to offer the Truckee Tahoe Airport District prominent naming of the indoor climbing structure, that will include the airport control tower experience.

Timing is critical. Funding needs to be secured by February 2027 so exhibits can be designed, fabricated, ordered, shipped, and installed in time for the Museum and Science Center's opening. Without sufficient exhibit funding, KidZone will need to scale back or make alternative choices for some of these experiences.

We are grateful for the Truckee Tahoe Airport District's past support of KidZone and its investment in organizations that strengthen our community. We would be honored to have the Airport District partner with us in completing this next chapter for a community resource that has served generations of children and families for more than 30 years.

We have raised the funds to construct the New Museum and Science Center. Now we need to bring it to life.

Thank you for your consideration in supporting this community project.