

TENNESSEE AQUARIUM ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Mission. The mission of the Tennessee Aquarium is to connect people with nature and empower them to make informed decisions about water and wildlife.

--From Tennessee Aquarium Strategic Plan approved by Board of Trustees, April 2017

Audience. The Tennessee Aquarium reaches over 750,000 lifelong learners each year, providing unique, personal experiences with nature for visitors of all ages. Thirty percent of visitors to the Aquarium are classified as low-income by federal guidelines. Race and ethnicity of our visitors reflect our community's demographics and were self-defined in 2016 as 13% African-American, 2% Asian-American, 77% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, and 4% mixed ethnicity. With knowledgeable and friendly staff providing unique experiences in all of our exhibit spaces, we were rated #1 in guest satisfaction in 2016.

In 2016, the Aquarium provided more than \$2.2 million in contributions directly to our four-state core community in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina. This outreach included free student admissions and program support for education groups and other area nonprofits. More than 30,000 underserved children are admitted to the Aquarium free of charge each year and experience our excellent science and environmental education programs.

History of Operations. Prior to the 1990s, downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee, was tremendously polluted and rundown. To breathe new life back into this once-beautiful district, innovative community members proposed building an aquarium along the Tennessee River. With support from innumerable community partnerships, the Tennessee Aquarium opened in 1992.

Since our inception, the Aquarium has attracted more than 23 million visitors to Chattanooga and had an economic impact of more than \$3 billion in Hamilton County, according to a 2016 analysis by the University of Tennessee Center for Sustainable Business and Development. We continue to be a driver for growth in our community with an annual economic impact of \$115 million in Chattanooga and Hamilton County. The Aquarium supports about 1,300 jobs through operating and capital expenditures and spending by out-of-town visitors.

Over the years, the Aquarium has presented new educational opportunities and conservation messages for visitors. Our original facility, *River Journey*, focuses almost entirely on freshwater life in the Southeast United States, a region whose aquatic biodiversity is unparalleled in the temperate world. In 1996, the Aquarium added the IMAX® 3D Theatre to showcase environmental- and nature-themed films as a complement to our existing facilities. In 2005, the Aquarium opened the doors on a massive second building, *Ocean Journey*, which explores the mysteries of life in and on the fringes of the ocean. The centerpiece of *Ocean Journey* is an immense replica of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, a reef system in the Gulf of Mexico. The building also features a butterfly garden and galleries devoted to marine invertebrates, penguins and lemurs.

The Aquarium has received overwhelming acclaim for our education programs as well as our customer service and visitor experience. In 2009, the Aquarium received the prestigious National Medal for Museum and Library Service from the Institute of Museums and Library Services. The same year, the Aquarium was identified as the highest-rated U.S. aquarium based on IMPACTS, an independent, nationwide guest satisfaction survey of more than 30,000 recent visitors to U.S. attractions. This national survey also indicated exceptional public confidence in the Aquarium's animal care and education experiences. In the Aquarium's core service areas of conservation and education, recognition for our outstanding work in the community is plentiful: Conservation Educator of the Year from the Tennessee Wildlife Federation, Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award and the North American Conservation Award. Most recently, we received the 2017 Tennessee Organization of the Year by the Tennessee Environmental Education Association.

Strategic Plan Summary

In the summer of 2016, the Tennessee Aquarium embarked on a strategic planning process, emphasizing the desire to be inclusive and forward thinking. We brought on a consultant to facilitate. More than 125 staff and volunteers participated in the first stage of SWOT analysis and group discussion. We also interviewed community leaders, funders, and leaders of other Aquariums around the United States to inform our strategic plan.

With this background information, the Executive Leadership Team of the Aquarium drafted a five-year strategic plan focused around three main themes: Inspire and Connect, Act, and Sustain. After further input from other leaders at the Aquarium and the Board of Trustees, the Board approved the plan in April 2017.

This larger plan has helped codify the direction of the Aquarium's exhibits, education, and conservation work for the near and long term. A working document, our strategic plan is a high-level guiding document rather than a point by point manual, and goals and milestones are tracked and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure we are staying on track. Starting in 2017, annual planning draws from this document and the three broad themes.

Inspire and Connect: *Inspire a broad audience to love and appreciate nature and take a personal responsibility for the health of freshwater habitats and wildlife.*

Encompassing the most publicly visible activities of our mission, the strategies supporting this goal include our next five-year exhibit plan, a new comprehensive education plan, and strategies to engage diverse audiences and increase conservation messaging within exhibits and programs.

We have made a lot of progress in 2017 in laying out these plans for implementation beginning in 2018. A cross-functional internal team has identified the three exhibit areas for refresh or redesign. For example, a temporary exhibit has lasted more than nine years and employees and volunteers highlighted it as in need of a refresh. That space is the first to be redesigned and our plan is to design, fabricate, and construct the exhibit for an open date of March 2019.

Another example of the additional planning needed to reach this broad goal is creating a robust education plan emphasizing high-quality experiences, a continuum of lifelong learning, and an environment that celebrates all people and their experiences. The first step to laying the foundation for this plan was hiring a new Director of Science Education, Dr. Brooke Gorman, in August 2017. Dr. Gorman, along with a collaborative team and feedback from internal stakeholders, created a five-year strategic plan for the Education Department, which they began to implement in 2018.

These strategies overlap and inform each other, working together to achieve our broad goal of inspiring people to love and appreciate nature and take a personal responsibility for the health of water and wildlife.

Act: *Be the leading voice for freshwater and the animals that depend on it.*

This goal, and the supporting strategies, center on our leadership in conservation science. Many of these strategies are driven by the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute and its new headquarters, opened in October 2016. The LEED Gold Certified Conservation Institute facility is the product of the last strategic plan: a dedicated space for propagation, research, teaching, and collaboration.

Scientific research, education, and conservation actions support our position as a trusted leader in protecting Southeastern freshwater habitats and wildlife. To continue and expand these programs, we will train the next generation of freshwater scientists, building conservation capacity for the future. This work includes recruiting students and scientists from diverse backgrounds. Just as the aquatic biodiversity in the Southeast is remarkable, our field should reflect the diversity of our community.

Another way we further our impact is by building a constituency of river advocates and bringing together diverse stakeholders to increase their ability to work collaboratively on freshwater issues. This will include outreach to area outdoor enthusiasts, businesses, and land trusts, who can share the importance of freshwater conservation.

Additionally, we look to model best environmental practices in our business operations by reducing the amount of plastic used in departments like retail and husbandry. For example, we no longer use plastic straws in our concessions. There is more work to do with this strategy and we will share our knowledge with other organizations on how they too can reduce single-use plastic.

Sustain: *Obtain and leverage our resources to most effectively deliver on our conservation mission today and in the future.*

In order to fulfill our mission, we must be conscientious about our internal strengths and areas for improvement. The strategies that support this goal focus on fiscal health, effective leadership, staff and volunteer development, and infrastructure needs.

One key piece of this work deals with this very strategic plan - how to best track and monitor the plan's progress so that it is not gathering virtual dust in a computer file. The Executive Team made it a point to include a strategy of ensuring that organizational planning is continuous, innovative, and responsive to new opportunities. That strategy is already playing out by tracking goals and strategies on a quarterly basis, and adjusting timelines or wording when needed. That tracking is also shared at the board level, so that the full team is kept accountable.

Another area key to continued success is a focus on our staff and volunteer development and becoming a more culturally aware and inclusive organization. This has manifested in several levels of professional development based on job function, as well as the creation of an employee Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Recommendations from the committee have started to be implemented in 2018, and based on available funding, will continue into the next several years with continued training and a refresh of recruitment and orientation policies. Our vision is for our workforce to reflect not only our surrounding community, but the guests we interact with on a daily basis.

Our strategic plan will guide us into the future as we work to *Inspire and Connect* all people to water and wildlife, *Act* on behalf of freshwater animals and habitat, and *Sustain* our work by building on strong leadership and financial stability.

1. Statement of Need

The Tennessee Aquarium is requesting funds from IMLS for a community planning project to identify our community's needs around early childhood educator (ECE) professional development (PD), and the ideal, financially sustainable model for accessible ECE PD. This project is part of our larger effort to open a children's center and associated Professional Learning Center in the fall of 2019. This community-driven planning project and its results can affect the library, archive, and museum (LAM) field across the country in the delivery of high-quality, ongoing ECE PD.

The Tennessee Aquarium has had a significant impact on the economic development of Chattanooga over the past 25 years, attracting more than 750,000 visitors and contributing \$115 million in economic impact annually. We are eager to strengthen our offerings to support a livable, sustainable community. Working with community partners such as Creative Discovery Museum (CDM), the City of Chattanooga, and the Chattanooga 2.0 action team Early Matters Chattanooga, we will address our community's identified goal of strengthening preschool learning so that all children in our area are ready for kindergarten and beyond. Specifically, the project team will create a needs assessment for ECE PD and research, draft, and evaluate an ideal, sustainable model for the Professional Learning Center.

In 2015, a group of education, business, and community leaders joined together to release a report summarizing workforce challenges along with significant educational opportunities for Hamilton County and the region. Led by the Benwood Foundation, the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce, the Hamilton County Department of Education, and the Public Education Foundation (PEF), this joint effort was started to gauge the interest in and support for a comprehensive, long-term approach to achieving academic excellence for all students in Hamilton County and to provide an educated workforce to fill the growing job opportunities in our region. The Chattanooga 2.0 effort has started a movement to provide children the resources they need from the earliest ages.

According to the initial report from the Chattanooga 2.0 initiative, fewer than half of all children entering kindergarten in Hamilton County are ready to learn¹. That achievement gap follows through to third grade where nearly sixty percent do not read on grade level, and then on to middle, high school, and postsecondary achievement gaps.

One of the volunteer action teams formed through the Chattanooga 2.0 initiative is Early Matters Chattanooga. This group, which includes the Tennessee Aquarium and Creative Discovery Museum, is comprised of more than 30 local health, education, and early childhood organizations focusing on early childhood opportunities and challenges. The team has spearheaded successful initiatives including:

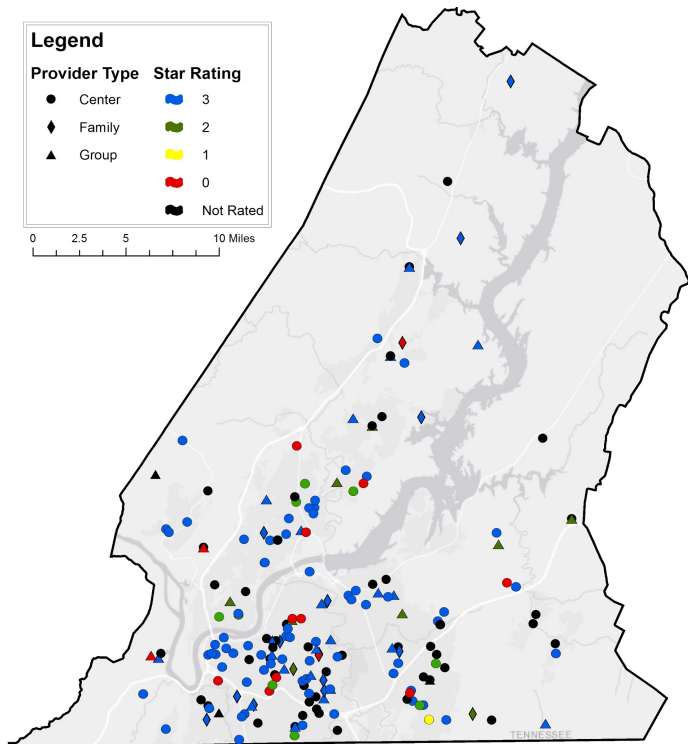
» **The Chattanooga Basics:** Based on the model developed by Harvard University, the Chattanooga Basics are five simple strategies families can use to give children a great start in life through everyday activities like reading a story or singing in the car.

» **Hospital Visitation Program:** Spearheaded by Signal Centers and United Way, this program sends volunteers to meet the parents of every infant born in local hospitals and offers resources including enrollment in the Imagination Library monthly book program, a free texting program that sends weekly messages based on the birth date of the child, and the Chattanooga Basics.

¹ *Building the Smartest Community in the South: Ten Urgent Strategies to Transform our Future* Chattanooga 2.0 report <http://chatt2.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Chattanooga-2.0-Sep.-2016-Report.pdf>

» **ACE Training Workshops:** Created in response to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), workshops are held around the community for a variety of stakeholders including educators, school counselors, medical professionals, and businesses. These workshops help move us toward becoming a trauma-informed community, which is an underlying priority for Early Matters Chattanooga.

Hamilton County, TN Preschool Programs



One of the findings from the Chattanooga 2.0 report is that even with more than 200 early childhood facilities and programs in Hamilton County, there are approximately 4,000 preschool-age children without access to a high-quality, licensed preschool program. The early childhood facilities in the county cover a range of provider types (center, group, or family) and vary greatly in quality.

The Tennessee Aquarium and Creative Discovery Museum are on the path to opening a joint children’s center to help address this current shortage of high-quality preschool seats. By opening the associated Professional Learning Center, we will combine our shared expertise in informal education, professional development for educators, research, and evaluation. While this new facility will help, our vision is broader than the number of children we will work with directly.

Research shows that early STEM skills lay the foundation for later success in school, yet less than five percent of time spent in preschool classrooms involves STEM activities.² According to the report *STEM Starts*

*Early*³, there is growing evidence that young children from diverse backgrounds learn STEM skills and habits from every day play and learning activities. One of the report’s key findings centers around teachers needing more robust training and professional development to effectively engage young children in developmentally appropriate STEM learning.

- Teacher preparation and training programs—both pre- and in-service—should include, in interconnected and meaningful ways: STEM content, training in children’s developmental learning progressions in STEM, and well-modeled and practiced pedagogy situated in the classroom.
- To counter existing attitudes towards STEM, preparation and training programs should be designed to allow teachers to experience STEM learning in the same ways that the children will. Teacher education should be driven by curiosity, should allow for tinkering and exploration, and should help teachers weave a holistic understanding of the topic areas so they can empathize and model this learning for their students.

² Master, Allison. “Make STEM Social to Motivate Preschoolers.” NAEYC, 3/31/2017, www.naeyc.org/resources/blog/make-stem-social

³ McClure, E. R., Guernsey, L., Clements, D. H., Bales, S. N., Nichols, J., Kendall-Taylor, N., & Levine, M. H. (2017). *STEM starts early: Grounding science, technology, engineering, and math education in early childhood*. New York: The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop.

Ongoing, high-quality professional development for early childhood educators is one of the key ways to ensure high-quality programs in classrooms, and ultimately improve child outcomes.⁴ A teacher's effective use of curricula, including knowing how to tailor and differentiate instruction for individual children, requires training, guidance in classroom practice, and continuing education. Integrated, ongoing professional development and coaching are equally important to the effective implementation of curricula.⁵

In our area, there are few opportunities for early childhood professional development, despite the impact that this professional learning can have on the practices of early learning educators. However, in order to increase the opportunities, our community needs to address the challenge of determining what specific professional development needs are for ECEs and what delivery methods will work best for them.

In order to support the high-quality professional development needed in our community, we must first conduct a needs assessment to understand where gaps, needs, and opportunities lie. The project team will take a collective impact approach, seeking input throughout the project from diverse groups of stakeholders from across Hamilton County and the region: home-based and large childcare centers, new and experienced educators, part-time staff and directors.

The need for high-quality preschool seats in our community has gained traction over the past few years and has been embraced across the community. For example, the City of Chattanooga created the Office of Early Learning headed by Ariel Ford, one of the partners on this project. In his 2018 State of the City address, the Chattanooga Mayor, Andy Berke, announced a goal of creating 1,000 high-quality early learning seats before he leaves office in 2021.⁶

“That’s why tonight I am setting a new goal. Between now and the time I leave office [in 2021], we will create 1,000 additional high quality early learning slots in our city. To achieve this outcome, we all need to work together. We have terrific partners in Chattanooga 2.0, and we will need their help. This year’s budget will include some specific plans for creating new slots for kids in our community as well as turning some existing ones into high quality options for parents. I know we can do it. It’s the success story of our city.” –Chattanooga Mayor Andy Berke, State of the City Address, April 19, 2018

In 2016, the Tennessee Aquarium began collaborating with the Chattanooga 2.0 movement and several community partners to address the current school-readiness gap. As we created the 2017-2021 Organization Strategic Plan, we recognized the need for an in-depth Education Strategic Plan. One of the goals for the subsequent Education Plan is to “Serve a broader community of learners by increasing the engaging, educational opportunities available for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.” One of the associated strategies is to open a children’s center and associated professional learning center, creating resources and

⁴ “9 Higher Education and Ongoing Professional Learning.” Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: 10.17226/19401.

⁵ Phillips, Deborah A., Lipsey, Mark W., et al. *Puzzling it Out: The current state of scientific knowledge on pre-kindergarten effects*. Brookings Institute Report; 2017.

⁶ “Mayor Berke Plans Affordable Housing Fund, Expansion Of Innovation District; Creation Of Council Against Extremism.” *Chattanooga*, 19 Apr. 2018, www.chattanooga.com/2018/4/19/367233/Mayor-Berke-Plans-Affordable-Housing.aspx.

trainings for other area early childhood educators. This proposed project is in line with this goal and the supporting strategies will help us to fulfill our mission.

This project will engage ECEs and stakeholders from a diversity of settings. One of these non-traditional audiences is the group of ECEs from family childcare centers. Family childcare educators face significant barriers in accessing trainings and workshops and other professional learning supports even when they are made available. These educators often work long hours, usually by themselves, and do not have someone to substitute for them. On top of that, family childcare educators are often owners of their own business, playing the dual-function of administrator and practitioner, leaving little time and space for professional learning.⁷ Engaging and soliciting feedback from this group of educators will vastly improve our chances of providing high-quality professional development for all types of preschool educators.

2. Impact

This proposed project will directly impact our community's ECEs and thousands of young children currently without access to high-quality preschool, as well as have an ongoing impact for LAMs across the country.

Adaptable Models for Joint Efforts to Engage and Serve a Local Community.

At the outset of the project, we will convene a Planning Group comprised of practitioners, administrators, potential funders, licensure experts, city administrators, and others in order to ensure the process and model developed is holistic and sustainable. Core partners will be involved equally in visioning and planning, collecting and interpreting relevant data, communicating with stakeholders, and tracking joint program activities.

Broadening Reach into New Communities with Existing and Potential Partners

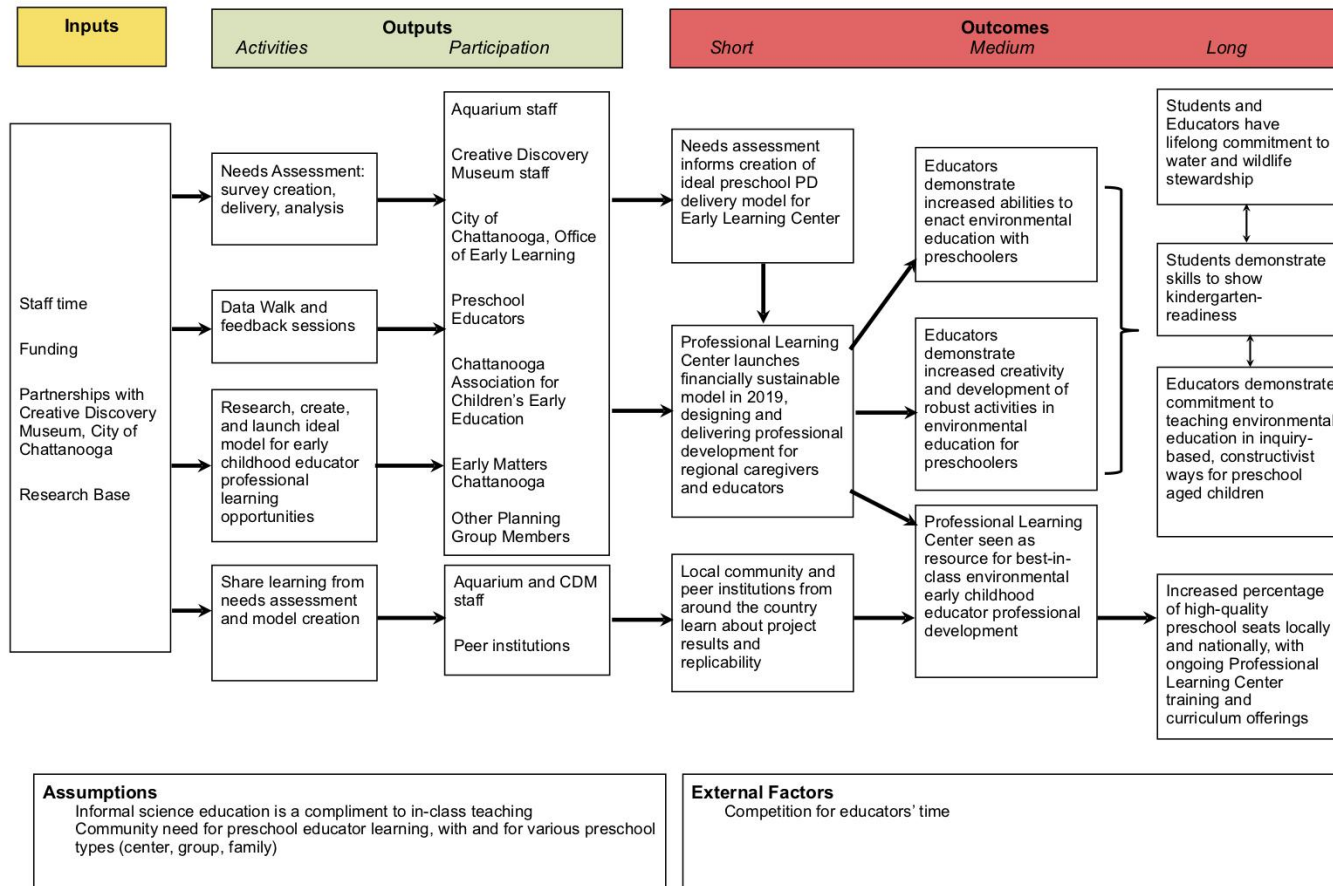
Current partners that are championing and supporting change include Chattanooga 2.0, Early Matters Chattanooga, CDM, Hamilton County Department of Education (see supporting materials for news clippings of recent community work and letters of support).

What is missing from the work of these community groups is a deep understanding of the needs of a variety of ECEs in terms of professional development (content, delivery method, accessibility, timing, cost, etc.). Our vision is for a financially sustainable model of high-quality professional development, accessible for all ECEs in the community and region.

⁷ "9 Higher Education and Ongoing Professional Learning." Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: 10.17226/19401.

Community Planning for Professional Learning Center: Logic Model

Situation: With only 40% of Hamilton County children ready to learn when entering Kindergarten, and 4,000 preschool-aged children without access to high-quality preschool, the Tennessee Aquarium will work with community groups and early childhood educators to carry out a needs assessment and planning for an ideal, financially sustainable model of year-round early childhood educator learning opportunities.



The Planning Group will be instrumental to ensuring diverse community representation in defining the opportunities and needs, creating a collective vision for impact, and providing ongoing feedback and guidance throughout the project. This group will include representatives from:

- the project partners, the Tennessee Aquarium and Creative Discovery Museum
- Office of Early Learning, City of Chattanooga
- Early Matters Chattanooga
- Chattanooga Association for Children's Early Education (ChACEE)
- University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
- Local departments of education
- Practitioners
- Licensure
- Local funding community

The Planning Group will meet at the beginning of the project period to review the project timeline and vision, as well as kick off the needs assessment work. While the Project Director, Project Manager, and Evaluator will be charged with creating the survey tool, the Planning Group will provide insight into the best delivery mechanisms to ensure a diverse and inclusive set of survey responses. For example, by including licensure expert, we can better understand how to connect with non-licensed childcare programs. The Planning Group

will also come together to discuss the survey findings, national research on ECE PD models, and provide feedback to the first draft of the Professional Learning Center PD model.

Based on the results and analysis of the needs assessment, the project team will draft a model of the Professional Learning Center's program delivery methods. The team will use a Data Walk⁸ process to gather feedback to the proposed model from participants of the 2019 Week of the Young Child professional development sessions, organized by ChACEE, as well as from the Planning Group. The project team will monitor the number and types of educators providing feedback, and will solicit additional input from other groups if needed.

The Urban Institute developed a tool they call a Data Walk as a means of sharing data and research findings with stakeholders. A Data Walk focuses on data sharing as the platform for collaboration and can be used whether or not the community has been engaged from the beginning. A Data Walk has several objectives: to share key data and findings with community residents and program participants; to ensure a more robust analysis and understanding of the data; to help inform better programming and policies to address both the strengths and the needs of a particular community or population; and to inspire individual and collective action among community agents.

The Performance Goal for this project aligns with IMLS Agency-Level Goal 2: Community, 'Strengthen museums and libraries as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities.' We will use the performance measure statement 'My organizations is better prepared to provide a program or service that addresses community needs,' as this project will prepare us to serve the community with high-quality professional development for preschool educators.

Key metrics for this project include diversity of groups represented in the Planning Group; a minimum of 300 respondents for the needs assessment survey; and a minimum of 50 participants in the Data Walk feedback exercise.

Part of the responsibility of the Project Manager will be tracking the project's progress and reporting that to the larger project team and Planning Group. If and when any roadblocks arise, the team will act quickly to resolve the issue and make up time. The team will also share regular updates with the wider stakeholder group at venues such as the regular Early Matters Coalition meetings.

Project results will include the needs assessment findings, as well as the overall methodology for the project, which may be used or adapted by other LAMs. We anticipate sharing these results via website and conference presentations.

The demographics, opportunities, and challenges presented to ECEs in Hamilton County, TN are similar to those facing educators and LAMs around the country, and the findings from this project will likely translate to other LAMs. Additionally, the process, methodology, and tools used for this project will support ongoing application across LAMs. A unique aspect for this project is the partnership of two types of museums (aquarium and children's museum) with additional community partners. As more funders and community projects demand increased collaboration, the learnings from this partnership will provide additional insight to LAMs and the partnership process.

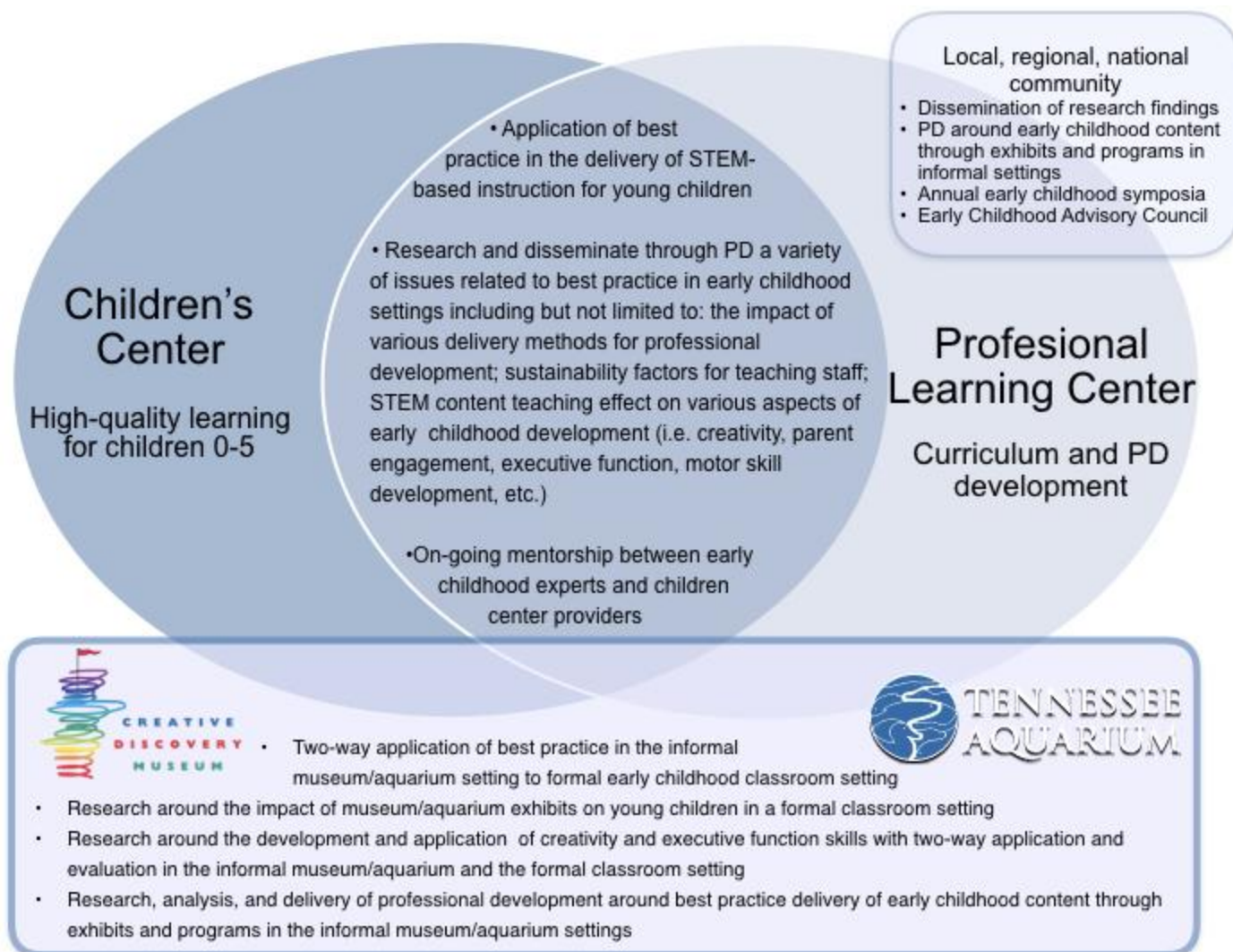
⁸ Murray, Brittany, et al. "Data Walks: An Innovative Way to Share Data with Communities." *Urban Institute*, 10 Nov. 2015.

3. Project Design

Specific questions for this project include:

1. What are the professional development needs of community ECEs, specifically around STEM?
2. Do those needs differ in terms of content, baseline knowledge, delivery method, pricing structure, and/or time of delivery based on type of preschool facility (center, group, family)?
3. What are the effective professional learning models used in other areas around the country, and would those meet the needs of our community?

This project is housed within the larger framework of the children’s center, professional learning center, and the complimentary research, practice, and learnings between the two (see visual below).



The project described in this proposal encompasses the needs of community ECEs in both content and delivery method for professional development. The Tennessee Aquarium and Creative Discovery Museum are planning for additional pieces of the framework above over the following year.

Through the creation and delivery of a survey in partnership with the Planning Group, we will gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The Project Manager will be responsible for de-identifying data from surveys,

focus groups, or any other form of feedback. The Project Manager will also be responsible for tracking the data and working with the project team to analyze and report findings.

The assets of the Tennessee Aquarium and Creative Discovery Museum include strong education teams with STEM and early childhood expertise, leadership buy-in and support community respect, and facility space for project gatherings. Both institutions are anchors of the community and key leaders in the field of childhood and community development for our region.

Project Leadership and Key Stakeholders

Project partners are the Tennessee Aquarium, Creative Discovery Museum, and City of Chattanooga's Office of Early Learning. Partners will meet at least monthly to ensure ongoing involvement and ownerships.

Key Stakeholders include Early Matters Chattanooga, ChACEE, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, local departments of education, practitioners, licensure professionals, and funders. Stakeholders will receive updates of project at regular meetings and via electronic communication. We will work with these groups to recruit survey and data walk participants.

Community members include early childhood educators, childcare facility directors and administrators, practitioners, and funders. We will solicit input and feedback from this group via the survey, focus groups when needed, Data Walk, and other methods as identified by the Planning Group. We will also share back out the results of this project with the larger community.

Brooke Gorman, Ph.D., Director of Science Education for the Tennessee Aquarium and Jayne Griffin, Ed.D, Director of Education for Creative Discovery Museum will serve as co-PIs for this project, providing overall leadership and accountability. As leaders of informal education in the community, they both have the experience, relationships, and ability to lead and steer this project.

Project Manager (to be hired, see supporting documents for sample job description and qualifications) will manage the overall project including coordinating meetings, survey design, implementation and data analysis, ongoing communication with project partners and key stakeholders, researching models of early childhood professional development across the country, and incorporating overall feedback and evaluation into the draft structure for the Professional Learning Center.

Sarah Sweat, GIS Analyst for the Tennessee Aquarium will digitize the survey instrument and provide asset mapping support when needed. Aubrey Henricksen, Evaluation Coordinator for Creative Discovery Museum will consult with the team on the creation of the survey questions, Data Walk presentation and questions, and any additional focus group or individual interviews deemed necessary by the team. By using her expertise in evaluation, the questions asked will be less biased and easier to understand.

Ariel Ford, Deputy Administrator for the City of Chattanooga's Office of Early Learning will serve as project partner, bringing the voice of early childhood needs for the City of Chattanooga and leveraging staff time and office resources to ensure efficient and effective project implementation.

Sequence of Activities

Project Kickoff - Key Decision Point: hiring Project Manager; Risk: unable to find qualified candidate, will mitigate by recruiting before start date with condition of funding approval from IMLS.

Needs Assessment

1. Create survey instrument.
 - a. Decision point: survey structure, length, and content.
 - b. Risks: disagreement about content or delivery method, which will be mitigated by discussion prior to the start of the project and commitment from partners to keep to the timeline. The Planning Group will also provide input at the start of the project to ensure delivery methods are appropriate for a diverse and inclusive set of responses.
2. Implement survey instrument - activities include recruiting educators and directors, ensuring survey is available via the TAQ website.
 - a. Risks: technical issues and lack of participation. Technical issues will be mitigated by project staff monitoring the site, and including contact information on all communications with invited survey participants in case they run into any technical problems. If any invited survey participants are unable to access or use the online survey, the project team will offer the survey via paper copy or over the phone on a limited basis (as staff time permits). For the low-participation risk, the team will work with key stakeholders to recruit diverse participants from a variety of settings (center, group, and family). The team will also offer incentives for completing the survey. For participants who are interested, they can include their email address to be entered to win a limited number of gift cards (winners drawn at random once the survey period closes).
3. Analyze survey results. The Project Manager will first ensure that all survey results have personally identifying information removed before compiling survey results and beginning the analysis to see what, if any, key trends emerge. The project team will work together to review trends and decide on best way to present the data to Key Stakeholders and community members.
 - a. Risk: insufficient time for complete analysis, which the team will mitigate by having the Project Manager take on full time for at least one month following the close of the survey instrument.
4. Present Data.
 - a. Key Decision Point: how to present the data. The project team will first present findings with Key Stakeholders, such as the Early Matters Coalition for initial feedback. Based on their feedback, the team may revise the presentation of data and share via a Data Walk to a larger group of community members. The team will plan for the Data Walk to coincide with the 2019 Week of the Young Child, a time when ChACEE presents a number of professional development workshops for educators.

Ideal Model Structure

1. Research current models across the country. The Project Manager will begin this research in tandem to the survey creation and through the beginning of 2019, taking time for literature review, evaluation findings, and phone interviews when available and/or necessary. The Project Manager will present the findings to the full team to help inform the ideal structure for the Professional Learning Center's professional development offerings.
2. Use needs assessment data to draft ideal structure. The Project Manager will incorporate trends found in the survey data, along with direction and feedback from the team, to draft a financially sustainable structure for the Professional Learning Center.
3. Present Draft Structure for Feedback. During the Data Walk outlined above, the draft structure will be a key point for feedback from participants. Key pieces of feedback will include reactions to content offered, timing of programs, and pricing.
 - a. Risks: participants will not feel comfortable providing feedback in person. The team will mitigate this risk by providing opportunities for verbal feedback, written feedback during the Data Walk, as well as contact information for the Project Manager for feedback after the event.

4. Finalize Structure and Launch. In the summer of 2019, the team will finalize the ideal, sustainable structure and present to Key Stakeholders for final review. The Professional Learning Center's calendar of professional development opportunities will launch September 2019.

Share Learning with Peer Institutions and Wider Community

1. Present findings to Key Stakeholders and community members. Along with the continuous communication with Key Stakeholders throughout the project, at the end of the project year, the team will present an overall presentation of the project, its findings, and results during the ChACEE annual conference in September 2019, reaching additional educators and directors.
2. Present findings to Peer Institutions. Two members of the project team will present at the 2019 AZA Annual Meeting and 2019 ASTC Annual Conference, sharing the project design, process, and results, along with the lessons learned along the way. The team will look for additional opportunities to share the findings after the completion of this funding opportunity.

The Tennessee Aquarium respectfully requests \$103,055 from IMLS to support staff time, along with \$6,000 in travel to IMLS meetings, incentives for survey and Data Walk participants, and 10% to cover indirect costs. Facility usage costs are covered as cost share, along with planning costs to develop the physical space for the Professional Learning Center.

As described above, Creative Discovery Museum and the City of Chattanooga's Office of Early Learning will partner with the Tennessee Aquarium on this project. These partners complement the Tennessee Aquarium's competencies through evaluation skills on staff, relationships with area funders, and respect in the wider community as valuable assets. Along with regular partner meetings, held at least monthly, the team will keep key stakeholders apprised of the work at regular meetings of the Early Matters Coalition. The Data Walk and ChACEE annual conference are two additional opportunities for communication to the broader community. Additionally, the team will present at the annual meetings of both the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Association of Science-Technology Centers in 2019. Both of these presentations will be at the end of the project year, allowing the team to share methodology, results, and lessons learned with peer institutions. The presentation may also be offered as a webinar through the Association of Children's Museums.