

BOONSHOFT MUSEUM OF DISCOVERY

Public Funding Case Study – Boonshoft Museum of Discovery

The Boonshoft Museum of Discovery is the premier regional provider of interactive science learning experiences, which enrich the lives of children and adults, enhance the quality of life in Southwest Ohio, and promote a broad understanding of the world. In fulfillment of its mission, the museum reaches approximately 220,000 children and adults annually and serves approximately 47,000 students through school groups on field trips.

Boonshoft is unique in that it is a natural history museum, science center, children’s museum, planetarium, observatory, and zoo – all in one. Its programs and exhibits provide hands-on experiences in archaeology, astronomy, biology, chemistry, engineering, geology, paleontology, physics, robotics, and nearly any other subject found in the world of science. Students engage in learning that would be impossible anywhere else in the region.

The Museum’s commitment to expanded educational opportunities for youth brought them to LMK Advocacy to address the shortcomings of the museum facility. Over the last several years, funding has been secured to update numerous areas for both exhibits and the upkeep of the building, which is especially critical given the vast number of important artifacts housed there.

LMK has paved the way for the Museum to receive a high priority ranking by local economic development leaders during the Dayton Region Priority Development and Advocacy Committee (PDAC) process every year. LMK organizes tours for committee members and spends a great deal of time educating them about projects as well as about the Museum’s countless efforts in the community.

After the Museum receives a high regional prioritization ranking from PDAC, LMK works with Museum leaders to share that same message with the regional legislative delegation and House and Senate leadership. Legislators are welcomed to the museum for “behind the scenes” tours and to participate in discussions about the significant educational impact of the Boonshoft.

Thanks to LMK’s briefings, legislators in the House and Senate understand the importance of the Museum and its programs and have repeatedly supported funding to ensure the Boonshoft remains a preeminent facility in the region. LMK has been able to secure the following Capital funding:

- 2015–2016: Capital Improvements for STEM Education Center; \$1 million
- 2017–2018: Capital Improvements for Distance Learning Project/Zoo Relocation/Ancient Egypt Exhibit: \$250,000
- 2019–2020: Capital Improvements for HVAC Upgrades: \$200,000
- 2021–2022: Capital Improvements towards HVAC Upgrades: \$100,000

Additionally, the Boonshoft’s most important assets – outstanding educators, an extensive collection of artifacts, and exhibits – present opportunities to support Ohio students beyond the walls of the museum. Even pre-COVID, Ohio’s education system needed more quality-blended learning science education opportunities. Districts and charter schools with tight budgets often are not able to provide diverse science education to students, and homeschool families must work to find quality learning experiences that meet Ohio standards. To meet this need, the Museum has been providing high-quality blended learning opportunities since 2010.

To ensure access to these programs for all Ohio students, LMK assisted in the development of the Ohio Institute for Informal Science Education housed at the Boonshoft. The project began with a Pilot Program focused on the Aerospace curriculum in collaboration with The National Museum for the U.S. Air Force and Wright Patterson Air Force Base. Materials for the programs are sent directly to schools or families and supplemental curriculum is provided for students in kindergarten through high school.

The beauty of this program is that it is hands-on despite being remote. Students work on a project alongside the Museum educator by using the materials sent to their school or home.

LMK was able to secure funding in the Operating Budget to support the pilot program and provide high-quality blended education to all Ohio students.

2021–2022: Educational Programming Ohio Institute of Informal Science Education project: \$750,000

LMK Advocacy’s successful efforts to secure both Capital and Programmatic funding for the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery shows the depth of their relationships with leaders in the local business and nonprofit communities as well as their strong working relationship with members of the Ohio Legislative Delegation including members of leadership. These relationships are crucial to successfully navigating the landscape of public funding in Ohio.