

Appeal for State Funding, 2023

Increasing Education Capacity to Serve a Statewide Audience

Executive Summary

For more than twenty years, the South Carolina Aquarium has delivered comprehensive formal and informal learning experiences for students statewide. South Carolina sits firmly in a corridor of exponential economic growth, driven primarily by advanced STEM industries including information technology, manufacturing and innovative health services. We know that a sustained focus on STEM education, as the foundational component of success in the modern economy, is vital to the acceleration of South Carolina's emerging status as a leader in economic development. Now, as the South Carolina Aquarium prepares to open its doors wider than ever to the students of South Carolina, doubling the volume of students we serve as we open our Learning Lab in 2024, a selection of critical transitional projects will ensure that students from across the state experience the full scale and dimension of experiences possible within our walls and emerge prepared to meet the needs of a modern STEM workforce.

The entirety of the Aquarium's footprint is a complementary learning environment. Students that visit the Aquarium, whether joining us for our K-12 core standards-based programming, or our specialized teen cohort, are exposed to tailored, hands-on curricula which occurs in our classroom spaces and is reinforced within the living tapestry of immersive exhibits throughout our facility. It is essential to reexamine and update this experience over time to ensure that students are exposed to the most current and resonant themes to bring natural science to life, and systemic barriers to access are identified and removed.

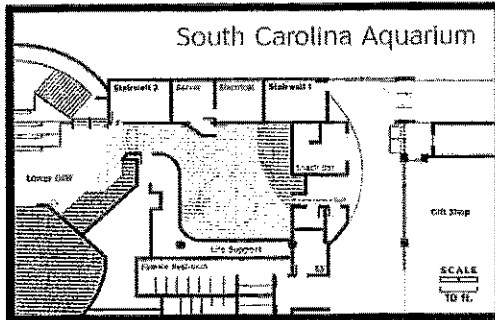
A selection of interactive spaces within the Aquarium are slated as priority learning environments for students visiting our institution. Each space delivers specific lessons and experiences that not only reinforce the robust curriculum our students are learning in their classrooms, but also provide an informal learning environment, an essential tool for cementing structured education themes. These projects reflect improvements that will enable students to understand better and learn more meaningfully and effectively in addition to facilitating improved access to students across the state.

To execute these investments which will improve access and provide critical complementary education capacity growth, the Aquarium respectfully requests state funding in the sum of \$3,500,000.



South Carolina Aquarium

The Discovery Gallery- Establish an Innovative, Interactive Learning Environment for Families to Connect with Emerging STEM Themes



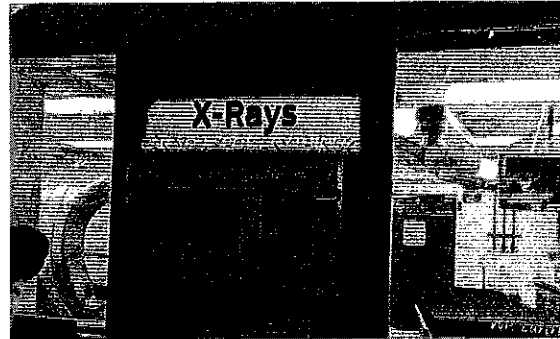
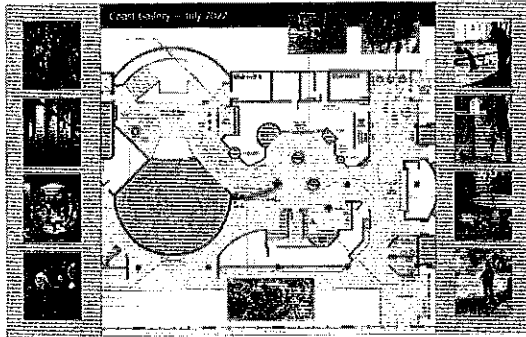
- The design of the newest exhibit, the Discovery Gallery, will coincide with the opening of the Learning Lab in 2024 as the static, onsite classroom space becomes available for transformation.
- The dynamic nature of the Discovery Gallery will connect visitors with experiences ranging from global conservation narratives to art installations, all focused on innovative technologies.
- Interactives and evolving installations will provide a constantly changing landscape to drive visitation and exploration and represents an unprecedented opportunity to deliver unique programming that appeals to all age groups.
- The inaugural exhibit will spotlight emerging technological advances, deepening student’s connections with global and local resilience themes.

The Coast Gallery- Refresh the Coast Gallery Learning Environment and Develop a Coast Gallery Education Space



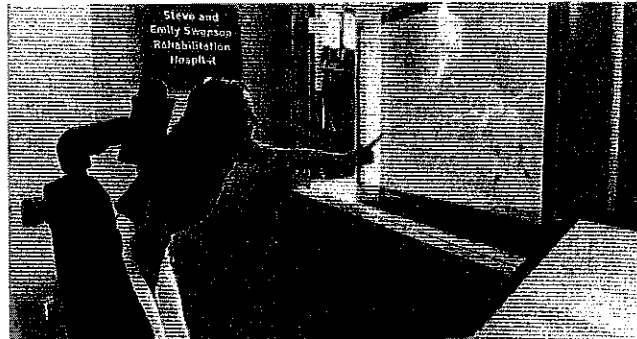
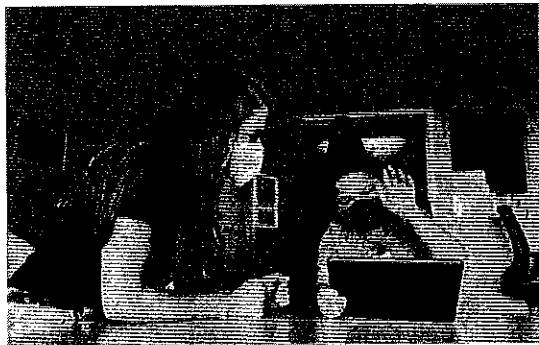
- The Coast Gallery, anchored by the immersive Touch Tank exhibit, cultivates an unmatched complementary education experience.
- The Aquarium’s Coast Gallery renovation will feature a reconceived Touch Tank Experience that will more than double the current tank space of the existing interactive.
- The Coast Gallery Education space will interpret the Aquarium’s Resilience Program, with an emphasis on living shorelines and the adaptive planning underway along the South Carolina Coast.
- This reconfigured and freshly animated gallery will establish a tactile learning environment designed for inclusivity and accessibility.

Transparent Corridor- Expose Working Back-up Spaces to Create Unique Interpretation Opportunities



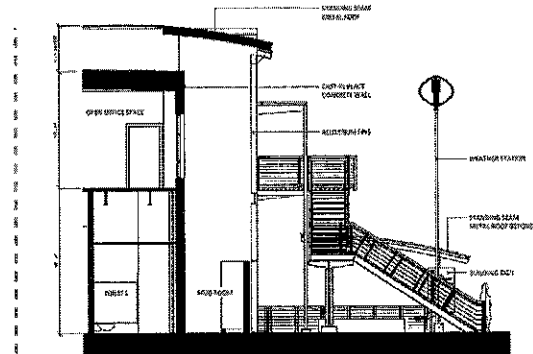
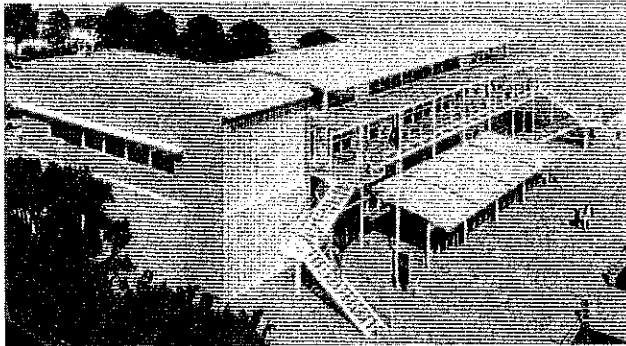
- The Zucker Family Sea Turtle Recovery Exhibit (ZFSTR), opened in 2017, was the first of its kind in the U.S. to provide guests with clear lines of site into previously obscured back-up areas, including an active surgical suite.
- The exposure of such a substantial back-up area operated as an incredibly successful proof of concept for a scaled “walls-to-windows” approach to exhibition and education.
- As the Aquarium increases capacity through the creation of the Coast and Discovery Galleries, we intend to expand the “walls-to-windows” approach, renovating to establish transparency into previously unseen work environments and facilitating new opportunities to provide unparalleled interpretive education.

Broadcast Center- Construct a Broadcast Center at the Learning Lab to Expand Virtual Programs



- In 2016, the South Carolina Aquarium established the Virtual Learning Program to broadcast educational programming to classrooms all over the world.
- The program reaches more than 50,000 South Carolina students, and thousands more worldwide, annually and creates unfettered access to STEM education by eliminating barriers caused by financial concerns or lack of access to transportation resources.
- The new Broadcast Center is critically necessary to reach landlocked and underserved communities state and nationwide by addressing prohibitive barriers head-on.

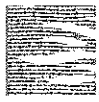
Collecting Corral- Encourage Hands-on Learning by Creating a Functional Washing Area



- The Learning Lab at the Maritime Center will open in 2024 and revolutionize the Aquarium’s ability to reach students of all ages from across the state of South Carolina.
- Four flexible indoor classroom spaces will more than double the Aquarium’s education capacity and allow students unobstructed views of the waterfront.
- The fifth classroom, an expansive outdoor space, will provide an invaluable location for hands-on, tactile learning experiences that require a resilient, easy to clean area.
- The Collecting Corral, a safe, functional washing area located adjacent to the outdoor classroom will empower students to get their hands dirty and alleviate potential teacher concerns regarding cleanliness.

Second Floor Bathrooms- Construct a New Bathroom to Address Accessibility Concerns

- Today, the only bathrooms available to guests are located on the first floor.
- The lack of a second-floor bathroom inhibits the guest experience, interrupts the educational process and inconveniences differently abled guests.
- The establishment of a second-floor bathroom is vital to cultivating a seamless and accessible environment for coastal education.



South Carolina Aquarium

State Funding Budget

Transitional Learning Environments	Transformation Expense
Discovery Gallery	\$1,500,000
Coast Gallery	\$1,000,000
Transparent Corridor	\$250,000
Broadcast Center	\$250,000
Collecting Corral	\$250,000
Second Floor Bathroom	\$250,000
Total Investment	\$3,500,000