

# REDISCOVER CENTER

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

WWW.REDISCOVERCENTER.ORG



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



When I joined reDiscover 10 years ago, the organization was emerging from the 2008 recession and looking to reinvent itself. In the 2000s, reDiscover had created wonderful environmental art and creative reuse programs for early childhood education, but as the recession impacted revenue, the organization was exploring adjacent programs that could generate a new type of growth. That growth came from Tinkering Programs, first as a licensed camp curriculum, then as a homegrown set of programs for schools, families, and communities across LA. On the strength of serving elementary and middle school students with versatile tools and “rediscovered” materials, we expanded from 2 staff to 10 and made enormous gains in the number of youth served and the depth of their engagement with our creativity education programs.

2020 started great. reDiscover’s core programs were growing dramatically. Attendance was up. We had new school clients looking for more and more maker education services. Our board had brought on three fantastically dynamic new members. We hired our first ever Development Director to take our community support to a new level and expand our scholarships and services. We were bursting at the seams and about to sign a lease on 4,000 sf in West LA to double the size of reDiscover Center.

Then COVID hit LA. In March, we closed reDiscover Center’s in-person programs. Our school partners and community events all went into lockdown. Earned Income fell off a cliff. Our 2020 attendance target suddenly went from 12,000 youth to just 1,000. We put our plans to move to a larger space on hold. This has been an extraordinary year. A transition year. While we went into it in a stronger position than in 2008, we have needed to rapidly reinvent reDiscover to see us through these tough times, help kids meet the challenges of the moment, and create the systems and programs that will take reDiscover successfully into its next phase. It has all worked better than I could have imagined. I am so proud of our staff, of our board, and of our government and foundation supporters who have been outrageously generous helping to keep us on our feet.





We've provided distance learning through newly invented programs to over 600 youth. We put in place health and safety protocols that allowed us to maintain our flagship Tinkering Camp program. We were able to keep our key staff in place. We supported one another through the scary and emotional roller coaster that we've all faced this year. I look to 2021 with excitement. Excitement that the end of the pandemic may be coming into focus. Excitement that the great project of invention and self-discovery that reDiscover has been doing for the past nine months is going to create a stronger camp program, stronger after school programs, and stronger in-school programming. Excitement that our organization-wide discussion of race, racism, and anti-bias work is leading us to fulfill our promise to serve all of the youth of Los Angeles County.

I recall the freefall scary feelings from the spring slowly settling by summer into a sense of "We can do this," followed by a forward-looking autumn. We have great expectations for the coming year, with plans for upgraded facilities, programs that integrate intensive in-person engagement with ongoing home and school-based maker education, and a focus on serving youth that have systematically been left behind by racist and sexist decisions.

When we survey and interview our clients, two things stand out for why people love reDiscover: the tools and the personal connections. Besides reDiscover, there is nowhere most kids can go that trusts them with real tools. That trust is possible because our staff connects with each and every youth who comes into our programs. On that foundation, we can provide a makerspace where children can create just about anything. I am proud to be a part of this organization, of what it was able to accomplish in this annus horribilis. I am excited that we are "tinkering" with what reDiscover is to improve what it will be next.

I invite you to be a part of the next step. reDiscover is a community organization, made up of staff, volunteers, board members, donors, parents, teachers, community members, and youth. We continually co-create and renew this organization as we teach children how to be creative, using versatile tools and sustainable materials. This year has proven the resilience of that community.



# 2020 BY THE NUMBERS

**7**

Online program formats prototyped, tested, and deployed: MakerChats, Online Tinkering Camp, At Home Tinkering Together, Online Tinkering Class, Video Library, Tinkering Tool Kit Training, and Virtual Field Trips.

**4,768**

Number of youth served, including 4,116 pre-pandemic and 652 during the pandemic.

**\$159,500**

COVID relief funding from government and private funders, representing 31% of reDiscover's 2020 income.

**1**

Location open for limited capacity in-person camps and classes during the pandemic, June-December.

# COVID NECESSITATES FACILITIES CHANGES

Starting in Mid-March, we implemented numerous changes to our facility to meet the safety needs of public health. We closed Open Hours, Tinkering Club, and in-person materials shopping. We limited the number of staff in the building, requiring pre approved scheduling, masks at all times, and temperature/symptoms checks before entering the building. We used the building's closure during the spring to complete an office renovation started in February to accommodate our growing staff amid a long term shift towards expanding offsite grant-funded and contract programming.



When summer came, public health protocols for day camps allowed us to open, but with half capacity and no contact. We overhauled the curriculum to integrate Tinkering Tool Kits and emphasize independent tinkering rather than the physically close groupwork of past Tinkering Camps. We converted our existing tables into individual workstations and built five additional single-person worktables, complete with appropriately-sized benches, clear dividers and organization for a full set of personal tools for each tinkerer. We created foot-operated water, soap, and hand sanitizer dispensers, conducted regular cleanings, and equipped each staff member with their own tool belt and personal set of tools and disinfectant. Through the fall, we were able to continue operations, following the day camp protocol, for limited after school classes and winter camps.

Starting in May, we offered materials sales with curbside pickup and accepted donations on a case-by-case basis, which were quarantined for 72 hours before processing.



# COVID RELIEF GRANTS KEEP THINGS AFLOAT

Despite all of our challenges this year, reDiscover was able to maintain a stable revenue stream to retain core capacities and provide services. We were very fortunate to receive COVID-19 relief funding and loans through the federal CARES Act. As a result, we were able to retain all permanent full-time staff, as well as offer a shift schedule, though reduced, to hourly Facilitators and support staff. We received COVID-19 Relief funding from the Getty Foundation and the California Community Foundation's LA Arts COVID-19 Relief Fund, as well as from the Los Angeles Department of Arts & Culture and the Herb Alpert Foundation. These one time special gifts closed the gap caused when our primary earned income and contract service revenue dropped 55%.

## SPOTLIGHT ON: TINKERING TOOL KITS

When it became clear that most children would need to work from home, and without in-person adult supervision, we identified a set of the tools from among the tools and specific models that we have selected over the years that would be safe and effective in home-based tinkering. The Tinkering Tool Kit is a set of versatile tools to cut, fasten, manipulate, and transform household recyclables into endless tinkering projects, complete with safety gear that actually fits children, and instructional materials about projects and safety. The Tinkering Tool Kit is a natural extension of reDiscover's long history of creative reuse, our understanding of developmental stages, and our trust in children's ability to safely use authentic tools. Through the spring and summer, we iterated on what a child would need to set up a home makerspace, balancing versatility, safety, quality, and costs. We are currently exploring options for making these kits on a larger scale to lower the per-unit cost and serve even more families.

These kits of essential crafting/making/tinkering tools have been deployed in online camps and classes, parent and child programs, school programs, teacher training, in-person camps and classes, for ages 5-14 as well as for adults. Tinkering Tool Kits provide Tinkerers with the ability to continue their projects in a concrete way after a program ends.





# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ANTI-RACISM

This year, reDiscover took a strong step forward toward fulfilling our mission to serve the diverse youth of Los Angeles County. Spurred by the George Floyd tragedy and national response to end systemic racism, a group of Facilitators created the Inclusion Action Committee to examine every aspect of reDiscover's operations, curriculum, staffing, and audiences in the frame of anti-racism. Facilitated by Dr. Stephen McCray, the IAC and reDiscover held a Listening Tour that surfaced long standing areas of inequity in the structures, policies, and practices of reDiscover. Talking about this was difficult, but necessary to create a foundation for board, staff directors, and frontline staff to implement important changes and illuminate the opportunities for reDiscover to become a more inclusive and impactful organization. These changes, to our curriculum, marketing practices, partnership coalitions, and organizational structure, are ongoing.

The first action recommendation implemented by the board was to set up an inclusive DEIA Committee (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism), including board members and staff. The DEIA Committee is charged with implementing immediate changes to reDiscover's operations and contributing to long term strategic planning. DEIA has already started in on translating reDiscover's promotional and educational materials into Spanish, examining and updating curriculum resources, and incorporating anti-bias training in staff's professional development. The committee is currently reviewing and updating reDiscover's 2018 Cultural, Equity, and Inclusion Statement.



# PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT IN TIMES OF RAPID CHANGE

With the COVID lockdowns, reDiscover found its existing programs were unable to run as usual. Programs Director Barb Noren quickly pivoted to apply our core concepts – reach children where they are, encourage making, resourcefulness, and environmental awareness, engage and nourish creativity – in new ways to fit the changing circumstances. Within two months, we had an astounding five new or modified hands-on, live programs that used a combination of interactive virtual meetings, curated hand tools and materials, in-person social distancing, and online media resources. In the fall, we developed two additional direct instruction programs: after school in-person classes, and 3-hour virtual workshops for gifted, underserved middle school youth.



Through these new programs, we gained valuable information about where our students are coming from, the variation in their access to maker resources in the home, and what projects and support would be most meaningful for them personally. Different formats gave us new ways to serve the needs of our community of creative youth, from helping them set up a makerspace in their own home, to educating parents about how to support their children's tinkering. Multiple programs allowed us to expand greatly on our techniques to encourage independence in making. The modifications we have made give us a greater depth of understanding of the children we work with and the many ways that we can communicate with each other, which will serve us well moving forward for in-person, virtual, and professional development programs.

Additionally, we have been able to support schools with our expertise as they adjust to dramatic changes in course delivery and curriculum. Existing and new school clients have looked to reDiscover for guidance as they engage students with hands-on project based learning, creative reuse, and tool safety.

**"I always say that tinkering isn't an activity, it's a way of life. Our lives have flipped upside down this year, but reinvention, resourcefulness, and creativity are still central, which is part of why it still works." -Barb Noren**





# CARING FOR OURSELVES, CARING FOR EACH OTHER

2020 has been a year of enormous challenges for all employers as employment law and worker safety guidelines changed at a rapid pace. It was also a time of great stress on individuals and families, including our staff. reDiscover rose to these challenges, adjusting our systems and policies to reflect Federal, State, and County Public Health orders. We stayed on top of new labor laws like FFCRA, harassment training, managing a remote workforce, and criteria for returning to work. We supported staff as they managed uncertainty, burnout, public health crises, and an organizational reckoning with race and privilege.

Our HR team, led by Operations Director Amy Bauer, provided exemplary support to the staff, giving space for our people to voice their feelings and give witness. We built a shift schedule combining in-person and remote work that accommodated safety and health concerns, placing the highest value on the wellbeing of our team. We supported one another with weekly check-ins, group meetings, mental health questionnaires, and open discussions of what it would take to make each of us feel safe.



This internal care and compassion was matched by our work with teachers and parents. Many parents had concerns that went beyond keeping their kids active and not on the computer all day. In the depths of the Stay at Home order in the spring, sometimes the best service we could provide our community was simply being an ear for the parents. Being a fellow human to talk to on the phone. Connecting over our shared care for children and the promise that we will be here when they need us.

“One day at an HR check-in webinar, they said, ‘Oh, we thought we were going to just say “it’s Friday and nothing new,” but the Governor signed 3 bills into law yesterday.’ In addition to the 3 Federal laws this month. Let’s just say my head exploded several times this year.” -Amy Bauer

# PROGRAMS REPORT

From January through early March, reDiscover held its annual Winter Camps and one-day holiday camps. We conducted after school classes at nine schools, and served students through embedded school makerspaces at Palisades Charter Elementary School, Mirman School, and Los Feliz Charter School for the Arts. We provided daily drop-in activities, two tool training workshops per week, birthday parties, community events, pop-up Cardboard Playgrounds and school makerspaces, field trips, and farmers markets. Total attendance at these programs was 4,100 youth.

When the pandemic hit Los Angeles in March, we closed reDiscover Center to the public, ceased in-person operations at schools and community events, and shifted to serve our communities with safe, distanced programs. The following months saw an enormous explosion of new program development.

We prototyped multiple versions of the Tinkering Tool Kit, starting from our existing tool set that we know well, and adjusted our safety protocols for students working without an adult immediately at hand. The TTK evolved to focus on providing children ages 8-12 with the tools to expertly manipulate cardboard, plastic, wire, and other household recyclables which could be cheaply sourced for each project. The accompanying printed materials has grown from printouts of our pre-existing tool safety onesheets into a comprehensive booklet that guides

tinkerers through setting up their home makerspace and starting their first projects.

We launched an online library of projects and videos. This included a weekly Dueling Makers web series, pitting two reDiscover Facilitators against the clock in a friendly competition that modeled home-based making techniques and projects youth could use. We produced activity guides, safety guides, project prompts, and Tiny Technique videos to supplement Tinkering Tool Kits. We curated a collection of recommended books and materials, emphasizing independent tinkering and featuring BIPOC makers and inventors.

In the spring, we developed weekly online Tinkering classes, at first providing ad hoc tools and materials kits as we prototyped the Tinkering Tool Kit. These classes built projects from a combination of items from our Creative Reuse Warehouse and recycled materials sourced in home.

We ran a set of one-day online camps during spring break, providing support to families struggling with screen-based distance learning, and began creating a home camp curriculum for younger tinkerers for whom extended time in front of a computer was not possible.

We provided MakerChats, one-on-one consultations between children/parents and one of our experienced Facilitators. MakerChats were offered independently to families and through school partners.

Weeklong Summer Tinkering Camp had three distinct formats to accommodate the needs of our community:

Modified in-person Camps were provided in a socially-distanced, limited capacity format with our new independent workstations, Tinkering Tool Kits, and COVID protocols for our customary woodworking activities. These camps allowed for a safe number of children to benefit from our power tool scale building programs, while also educating them on how to continue their open-ended creative endeavors after their week of camp. Additionally, they were able to engage in safe social interactions to spur their imaginations, something that has been difficult in the current distanced environment.

Tinkering Camp also included week-long online sessions built around the Tinkering Tool Kit and home-sourced recyclables. For ages 8-12, these focused on facilitating independent hands-on making, combining live instruction, independent building time, and digital interaction when advice was needed. Online camp aimed to minimize screen time and maximize independent tinkering.

For ages 5-8, a demographic for whom our modifications were unsuited, we offered At Home Tinkering Together, an online camp designed to pair a child with an adult in the home and give them guides for building on their own, using the Tinkering Tool Kit. This program is intended especially for younger children for whom sitting in front of a screen for an extended time was difficult, but also included families with children of any age who wanted live support on home-based tinkering with limited screen time. Our detailed daily guides included fun skill-building activities and specific advice for

the adults in how to support their child's activity. AHTT also included opportunities for on-screen advice and skills learning with an experienced Facilitator.

Responding to our clients, we expanded the curriculum from one to two weeks of activity arcs, and provided greater amount of detail and instruction than our usual activity guides to support greater independence.

reDiscover's existing school programs, particularly our school makerspace curriculum, provided a solid groundwork for new functional resources to assist school teachers in effectiveness and engagement in their distance learning classrooms. We created units of 5-6 classes, including overviews for students and teachers, detailed and gradable worksheets with all instructions for the students, links to curriculum standards, lesson plans, and guidelines for documenting student achievement. These units remain in development, and will undergo adjustment as we receive feedback from client schools.

In the fall, we built on our successful summer camp safety protocols to provide in-person socially-distanced classes for homeschool and after school communities. We offered online after school classes but found much more community interest in in-person programming.

Our professional development and public communications programs moved online, with staff attending or speaking at four online conferences and providing dozens of schools and teachers with individual support on engaging students at home with hands-on activities. Our expanded virtual services for schools include online field trips, tool and materials collections, and educator training and consultation.







# Staff and Board

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Barb Noren, Programs Director  
Francesca McCaffery, Development Director  
Jenna Ervin, Pali Lead Facilitator

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3-way "distanced High Five" at Santa Monica Boys and Girls Club

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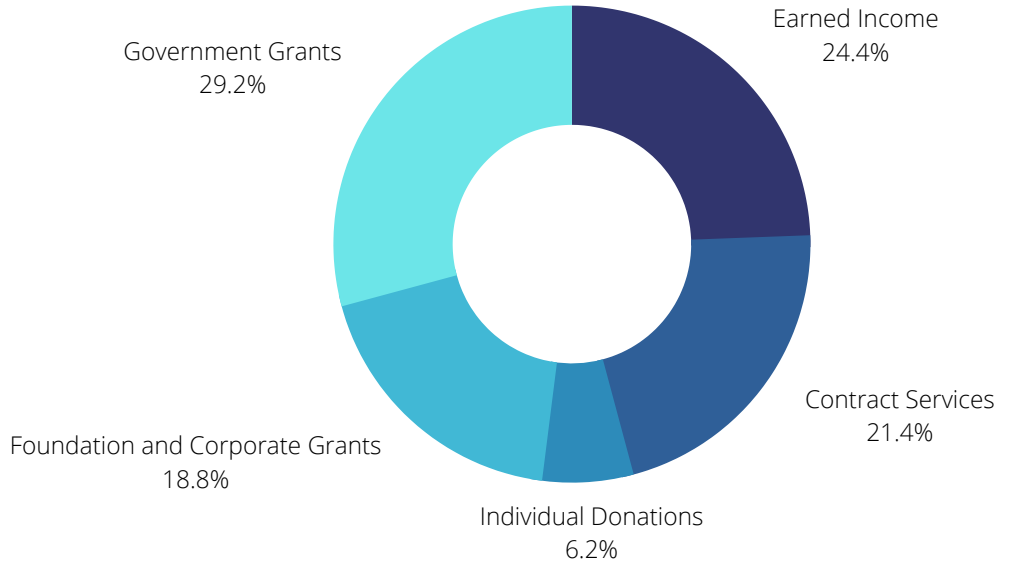
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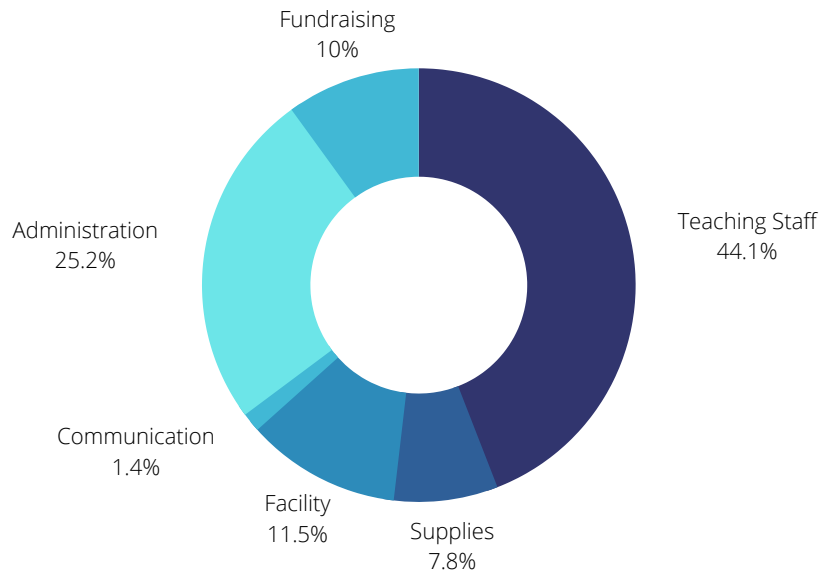


# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Income  
\$517,957

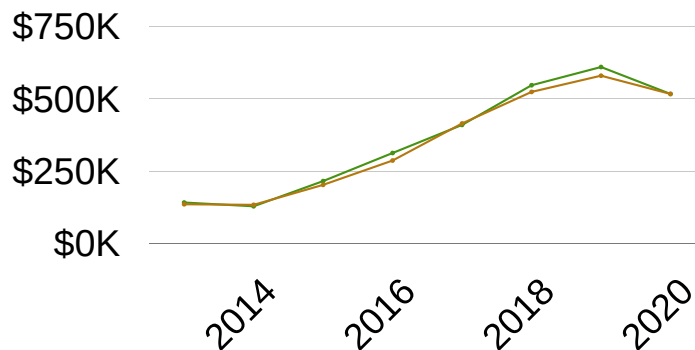


Expenses  
\$517,906



Budget Trend

income expense



**reDiscover Center  
develops children's  
creativity through  
hands on making  
with sustainable  
materials.**

**ESTABLISHED 2004.**



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