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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHICAGO CHILDREN'S MUSEUM AWARDED NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION GRANT

Chicago, IL – Chicago Children's Museum (CCM) has been awarded a \$616,380 three-year grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) through the Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) program. This collaborative project, entitled Making Space for Story-Based Tinkering to Scaffold Early Informal Engineering Learning, will test ways informal STEM educators and caregivers can support early engineering learning opportunities for young children through story-based tinkering.

Through a continued partnership with Loyola University and Northwestern University, CCM will work on this project that will use design-based research methods to engage children and their caregivers in using storytelling as they take part in engineering-rich tinkering activities. The project will result in open-ended, problem-solving activities, exhibit components, and facilitation strategies.

"Stories not only support successful learning but are critical in the learning process of interactive, tinkering experiences," said CCM President and CEO Jennifer Farrington. "We are thrilled to work on this project and look forward to sharing both the research findings and the impact on the visitor experience as the three-year process unfolds."

The research will take place in the museum's *Tinkering Lab*—a space for children and their caregivers to explore authentic tools and materials, take risks, and problem solve. Based on the findings of this design-based research, the *Tinkering Lab* exhibit will be redesigned to flexibly support strategies that inspire children's storytelling during tinkering.

Outcomes of this project include empirically-based, scalable programs, design elements, activity plans for STEM educators, and staff training approaches that other museums and maker spaces can apply or adapt. It will also produce methods for practitioners to encourage reflection during and shortly after in informal STEM learning activities, ultimately resulting in lasting STEM learning for young children.

For more information, please visit:

https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1906839&HistoricalAwards=false

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About Chicago Children's Museum

The mission of Chicago Children's Museum (CCM) is to improve children's lives by creating a community where play and learning connect. For more than 30 years, CCM has been dedicated to young children and the important adults in their lives. The museum's recently renovated play-filled experiences, including more than 15 interactive exhibits and daily programming, tap into how kids learn, and engage from ages 0-10 to develop the foundation for a lifelong love of learning. CCM aims to deliver at least one-third of its total annual attendance to low-income or underserved community members. In its last fiscal year, CCM hosted more than 400,000 visitors. For more information, please visit www.ChicagoChildrensMuseum.org.