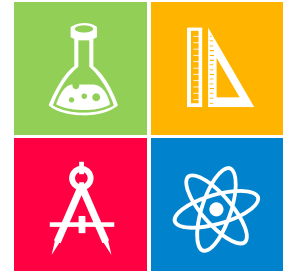


destination exploration



2024-2025
ANNUAL REPORT



University of
Lethbridge

A network
member of

actüa





Mission

To provide youth with positive, interactive, educational, and social learning experiences that promote science, technology, teamwork, and leadership. The ultimate goal of the program is to provide participants with experiences that create self-awareness of their abilities and the enjoyment they find in STEM as a base for life-long learning.

Destination Exploration (DE) is the largest youth STEM outreach program at the University of Lethbridge and operates under the Faculty of Arts & Science. We deliver interactive classroom workshops, exciting summer camps, engaging Friday after-school STEM clubs, birthday parties, and numerous other outreach programs and special events. Our programs have been growing steadily since they originated in 2002 and now reach close to 10,000 youth each year across Lethbridge and its surrounding areas.

Message from the Director

2024 was DE's biggest yet! Thanks to the dedication of the entire team throughout the year we were able to engage over 10,000 youth and teachers throughout the year — an incredible milestone for the program.

Every year the team continues to amaze me through their commitment to showing others what the world of STEM has to offer, most of them picking up something new themselves along the way.

As the 2024 camp season began, the ideas and enthusiasm for learning was bubbling over.

This summer we also grew our outreach team to deliver barrier-free programming off-campus. This team of three ran camps close to home in cities like Stand Off, Coaldale and Fort Macleod but also had the chance to join the Actua Outreach Team in Fort McMurray and Cold Lake! Can you imagine them going through security with a suitcase full of Spheros? Across all our teams we saw over 1,000 youth over the summer.

Throughout the school year, the fun doesn't stop. Our instructors head back to school, but some stay on part-time to run our afterschool clubs like Science Sizzle, Arconic STEM Club and FriYAY clubs. Then the coordinator team and I spend our days delivering our Travelling Lab Coat workshops and hosting field trips to the Outreach Facility. While those quiet days in the office allow us to plan and develop new activities, there is nothing like the sound of Sound Sandwiches screeching from the classroom when grade 2 classes visit. From workshops, clubs, birthday parties and every other opportunity we had with youth and teachers, our team engaged with over 8,500 participants.

The support from the teachers, community organizations, ULethbridge faculty and of course the families who have participated in DE programs are what made this year the success it was. I can't wait to see what 2025 has in store.



About Destination Exploration

Key Features & Strengths

- **Hands-on, experiential science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).** Everything from robotics, chemistry experiments, 3D printing, and design challenges.
- **Curriculum-aligned.** Programs (particularly field trips and classroom workshops) align with the Alberta Learning curriculum.
- **Diverse & inclusive.** Specially designed programs for Indigenous youth (InSTEM), girls/non-binary (InnovateHER), etc.
- **Year-round engagement.** Not just summer camps: after-school clubs, teacher PD, birthday parties, field trips, and more.
- **Part of a national network.** Being an Actua member means DE is part of a broader STEM outreach community.

Key Programs and Activities

Summer STEM Camps

DE runs a wide variety of week-long day camps on campus for kids finishing Kindergarten up to Grade 12. Camp themes vary by age/grade, including:

- **Destination Science & Tech camps** (Grades K-2): Cobalt, Gold, Iron and Zinc with 3D printing, chemistry and robotics for the younger ages.
- **Science & Tech Explorers camps** (Grade 3-6): Medical Science, Computers and Technology and Engineering Science camps to explore further into a specific field of STEM.
- **InnovateHER** (Gr 3-7): focused on diversity in STEM, design challenges, lab visits for campers identifying as female or non-binary.
- **Design Lab** (Grades 4-7): design challenges to explore how engineers use science to solve real world problems.
- **Codemakers** (Grades 3-4): programming with Makey Makey, Sphero, Scratch, Swift Playgrounds.
- **Code +** (Grade 5-7): going further into coding software and game design for the experienced coder.
- **Experience U** (Grade 7-10): For the older camper, a week to explore STEM at ULethbridge and how this community is leading the way in science research.

"Being an engineer has always been my lifelong dream,
and today I get to be one." - camper

After-school Clubs / Year-Round Programs

- FriYAY clubs: multi-week STEM clubs held in DE's Outreach Facility at ULethbridge.
- Long-standing in-school clubs (both run in partnership with local school districts):
 - Science Sizzle club (Grades 4–6)
 - Arconic STEM club (Grades 7–9)
- TLC / Travelling Lab Coats workshops: curriculum- aligned, hands-on STEM workshops delivered in classrooms across southern Alberta.
- Field Trips: DE's TLC workshops but with the added experience of visiting the ULethbridge Outreach Facility for one or two hours of STEM workshops.
- Educator professional development (PD): Sessions and workshops to help teachers and educators build confidence in STEM and learn ways to bring more hands-on STEM to their lessons and classroom.

Special Events & Other Programs

- Birthday parties: Science and tech-themed birthday parties for kids (6–12 yrs) running from October to April and run by DE's high school instructors.
- Community events: participation in fairs, science fairs, STEM days, and other events in collaboration with community partners to bring an element of STEM to attendees.
- Family nights: evenings for multi-generational STEM learning on campus.
- University partnership events: Play Day, Open House, Iniskim Future Student Day and other university and department events.



"As someone who was not part of the STEM world prior to taking part in DE as a summer instructor and later coordinator I did not see myself as belong in STEM. Especially with my disability I thought that there were far too many barriers to me making an impact through STEM. My time at DE has shown that those barriers are really opportunities to explore and share with the youth we work with while also empowering myself to learn more about a field I didn't feel I belonged in. DE has given me new skills and confidence in my abilities as an educator and professional that I will take with me everywhere I go."

- Alex, 2024 Camp Coordinator

Pictured: Summer 2024
Destination Exploration Team

InSTEM – Indigenous STEM Programs

The InSTEM (Indigenous STEM) program at DE celebrates Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Western science. The program, which is rooted in relationships, continues to grow as trust within Indigenous communities deepens. In 2024-25 the team delivered workshops, camps and teacher professional development for Indigenous youth and teachers. The spring saw the return of two weeks of land-based camps in partnership with Actua and Livingston Range School Division (LRSD).

Land-Based Learning Camps

Week-long STEM learning from the land for Grade 10-11s in partnership with the Livingstone Range School Division and the F.P. Walshe Blackfoot Culture Series.

Summer Programming

Instructor team dedicated to providing barrier-free camps in communities across Alberta including Fort McMurray.



"I always hear Elders talking about how our paint was made and where it came from, but I've never actually done any of that. I didn't know how they made it until now. This camp changed the way I look at science." - camper

Indigenous STEM Activities

Workshops that explore Indigenous science and design knowledge, such as tipi kinetics (balancing poles) or creating GIF animations rooted in ecological themes.

Staffing

DE provided work opportunities for Indigenous youth throughout the year with 3 high school paid internships and 3 undergrad instructor positions. Giving these youth an opportunity to provide mentorship and act as role models to other Indigenous students.



2024/2025 Impact Highlights

Participation and Reach

- Total participants: 9,741
- Visits delivered: 563
- Communities served: 20 (18 rural)
- Programming delivered in rural or Indigenous communities: 98
- While K-6 made up the largest audience, new programs reached 492 high school students and 840 adults and parents.
- The High School Intern Program has grown and become more known to campers and we are seeing many shifts from participant to instructor. 70% of high school interns continued working at DE in the fall as a high school instructor.
- Number of schools engaged: 46
- Number of educators engaged: 479
- Faculty/researcher engagement: 12

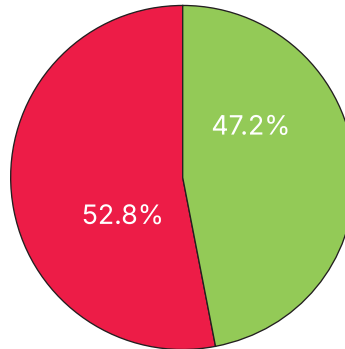
DE Staff Team

- Total number of staff: 36
- Total undergraduate & graduate instructors: 25
- Total paid high school positions: 8
- Total recent grads: 2



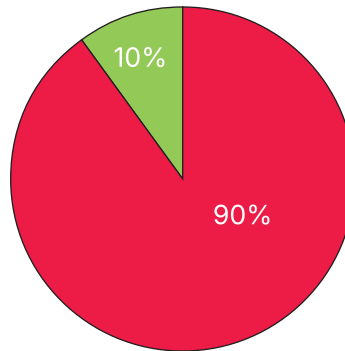
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

- 47% of youth participants identified as female or gender-diverse.
- 1,466 Indigenous youth engaged in STEM.
- Programs offered in 18 rural and Indigenous communities.
- Continued collaboration with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Indigenous staff mentors.



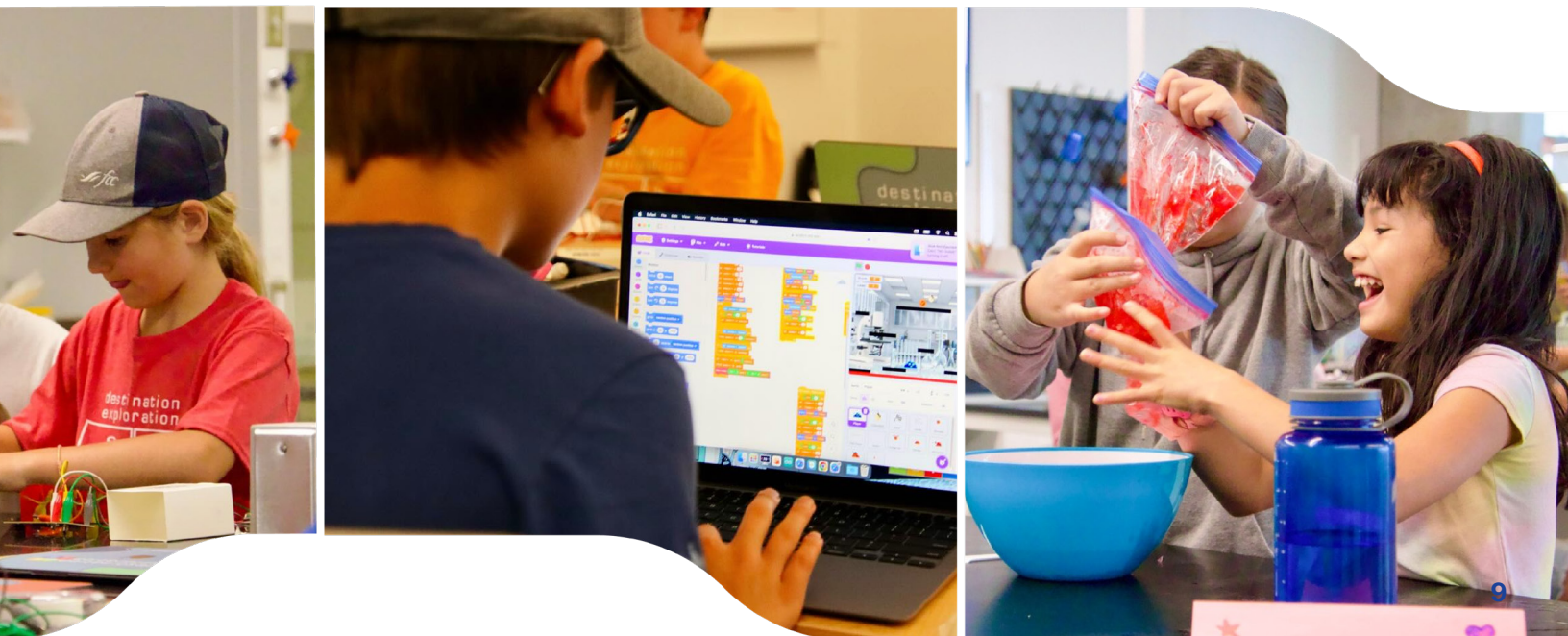
Participants by Gender

- Female or Gender-diverse
- Male

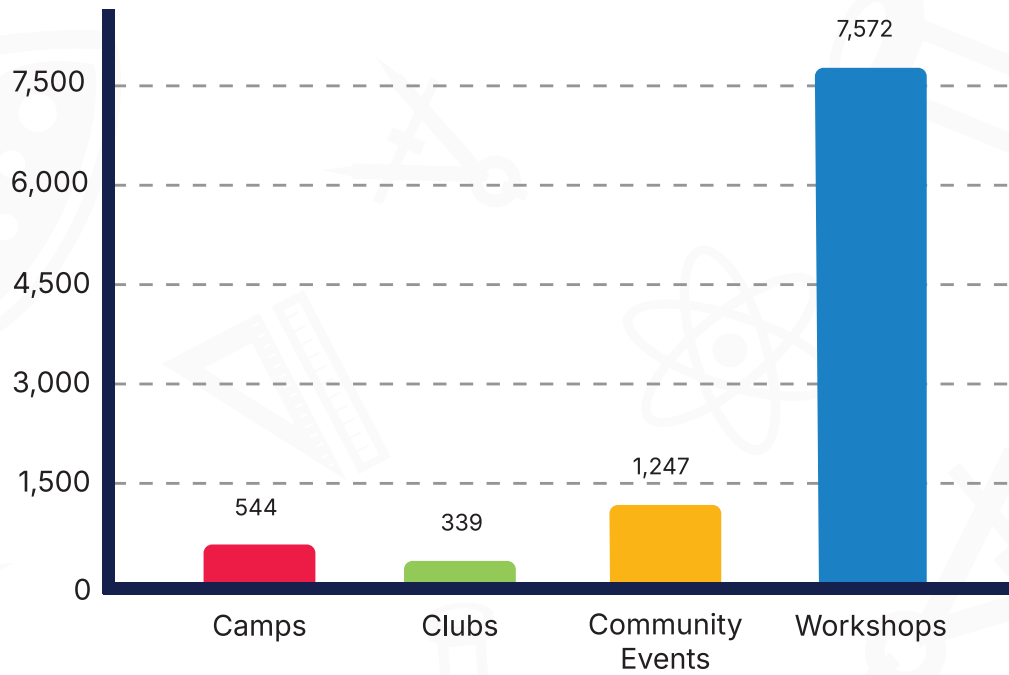


Geographic Region

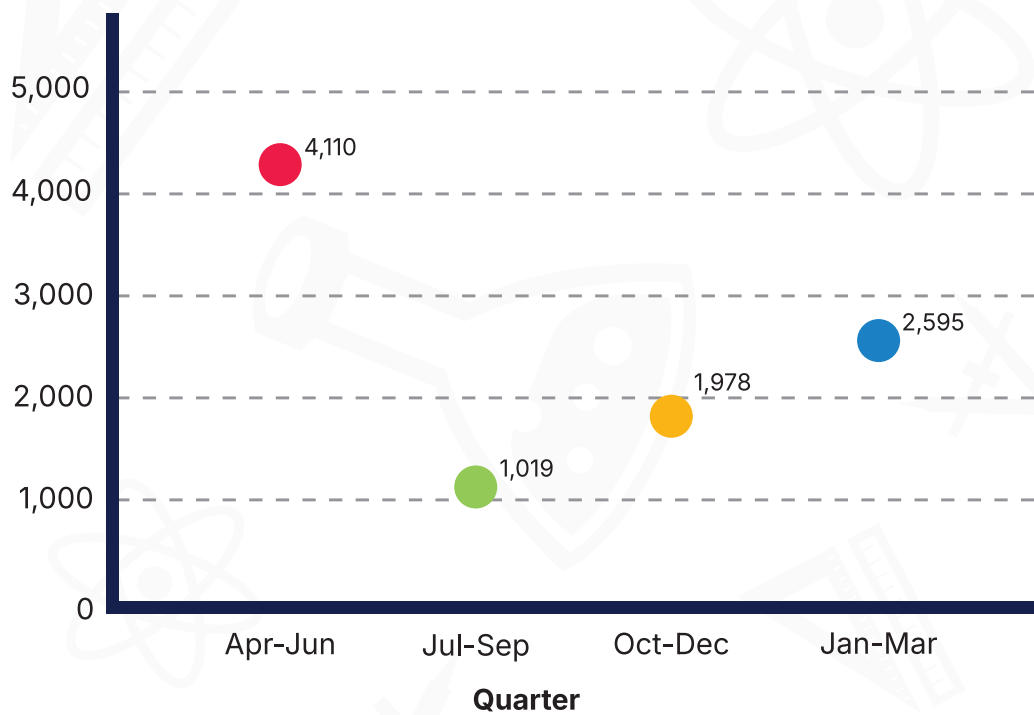
- Rural Communities
- Urban Communities



Total Participants per Program



Quarterly Participants



DE Contribution to Actua's National Programs

Indigenous Youth In STEM Program

- Deepened relationships with Indigenous communities through consistent engagement.
- Over 1,400 Indigenous youth participated in culturally grounded STEM programs.
- Delivered two, week-long land-based learning camps in partnerships with Elders and LRSD.
- Delivered week-long camps in Fort McKay and Cold Lake, AB alongside Actua's Outreach Team.
- Introduced digital art and storytelling programming using Apple devices and software for the InSTEM Hub project.
- Hosted classes from Blackfoot Schools on campus for 11 STEM days.
- Delivered TLC workshops in 53 Blackfoot classrooms throughout the year.



Go Where Kids Are

- DE's Science Sizzle and Arconic STEM Clubs are offered at schools with no cost associated to engage youth in STEM throughout the school year, reaching 193 students in grades 5 to 9 across 12 schools.
- Summer drop-in camps were run at both the Fort MacLeod and Coaldale Library over the summer reaching 105 youth.
- Our InSTEM team collaborated with Family & Community Support Services to bring STEM activities to 5 of their summer camps.
- Worked with the Lethbridge School Division Off Campus Alternative High School to bring their students to ULethbridge and experience STEM in an exploratory and hands-on setting.



National Girls Program

- Hosted 6 Embers, Sparks, Girl Guide and Pathfinder evenings on campus to obtain STEM badges.
- Ran 2 weeks of InnovateHER camps for grades 4-7 female and non-binary identifying youth during the summer, engaging 55 youth in lab visits, design projects and mentor visits to celebrate Women in STEM.



Industry Innovation

- Digital Agriculture: Camp and club activities developed to showcase the use of technology within the agriculture industry including projects like Sphero Animal Migration Tracking and micro:bit watering systems.
- Cyber Smart & AI Education: coding and digital literacy activities used throughout the year to showcase and teach not only the technical skills, but also the social impact of the digital world.



National Educator Professional Learning Program

- Presented at two Alberta Teacher Association conferences with other Actua Network Members, Red Hot Science (Red Deer Polytechnique) and Minds in Motion (University of Calgary).
- Partnered with Faculty of Education run two lessons focusing on how to engage younger learners with digital skills and computational thinking.
- Delivered 3 PD sessions at Napi's Playground Elementary School and Saipoyi Community School on coding, digital skills and how to bring Ozobots into their lessons.
- Delivered 3 PD sessions for schools within the Holy Spirit Catholic School Division and Lethbridge School Division 51.
- DE's Educator PD programming reached over 475 educators, teachers and pre-service teachers.



"We love Destination Exploration! My child comes home so happy and excited to share what he's learned. This is a kid that doesn't really like school and struggles. But loves science. The instructors are so great. I feel like they genuinely care about my child and his learning. I recommend Destination Exploration to other parents often." - Parent



Community Engagement & Partnerships

Community engagement and partnerships are at the heart of Destination Exploration. In 2024-25 a total of 36 community partners such as the Coaldale and Fort MacLeod Libraries, Livingston Range and Holy Spirit School Divisions, AMA School Safety Patrollers, and Family & Community Support Services have helped bring DE programming to youth and families across Southern Alberta. By collaborating with schools, libraries, industry partners, and Indigenous and rural communities, DE ensures its programming is responsive, inclusive, and relevant to the diverse needs of Southern Alberta. These relationships extend DE's reach beyond the university campus, allowing youth across the region to access high-quality STEM learning experiences that foster curiosity, creativity, and confidence.

Partnerships also strengthen community capacity through training local educators and facilitators, sharing resources, and building long-term connections that support continued growth in science and technology education. Through strong community collaboration, Destination Exploration not only delivers impactful programs but also helps cultivate a culture of innovation and lifelong learning across the region.

Highlights

- Collaborative events: Open House, Play Day, Shad ULethbridge, Summer Camps, Family Nights
- Participants in barrier-free programming: 3,963

Destination Exploration Key Funders

A network
member of

actua



**ARCONIC
FOUNDATION**



GO BEYOND

Actua National Funders

Canada

SUNCOR ENERGY
FOUNDATION



**TD READY
COMMITMENT**

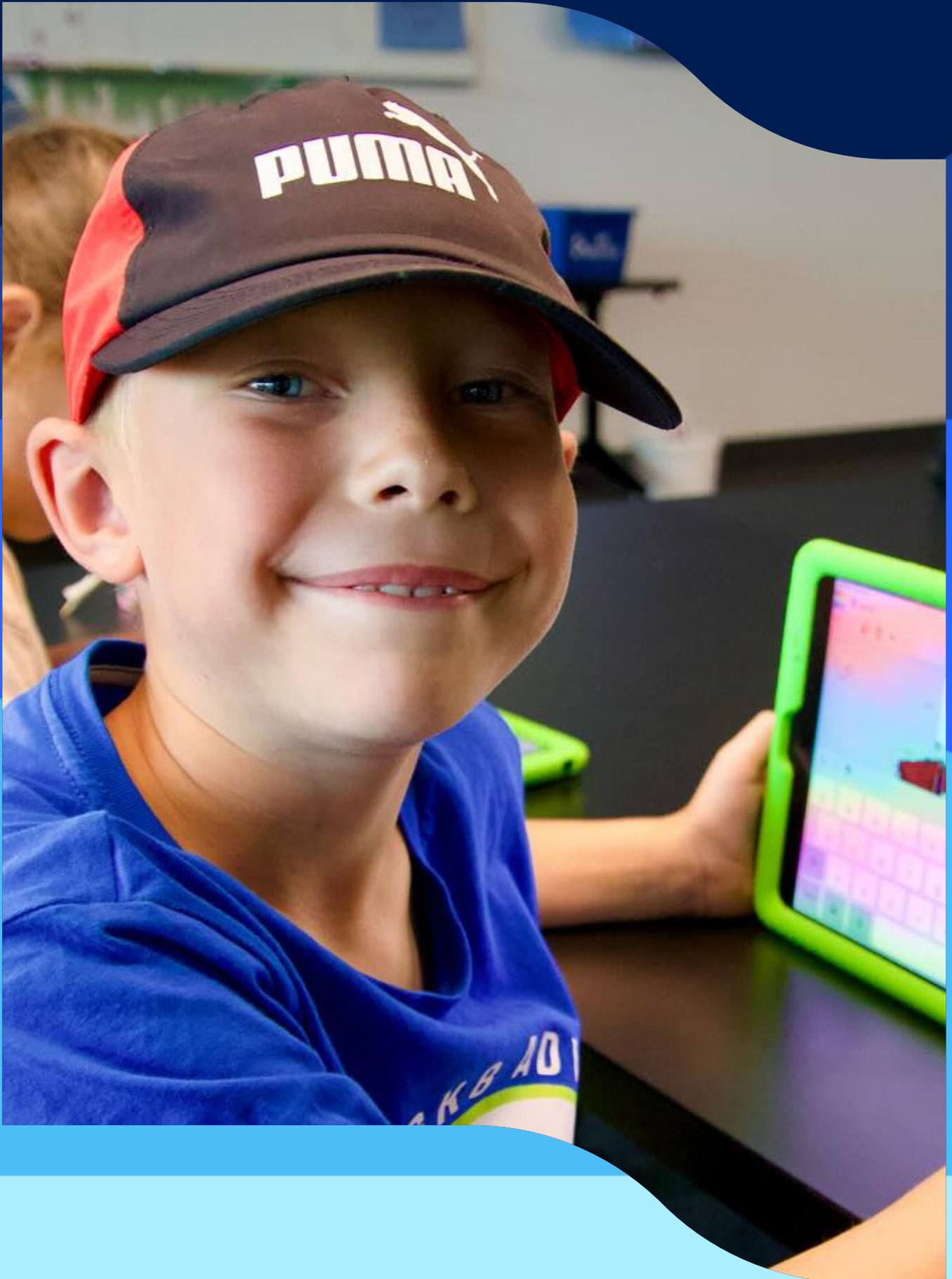


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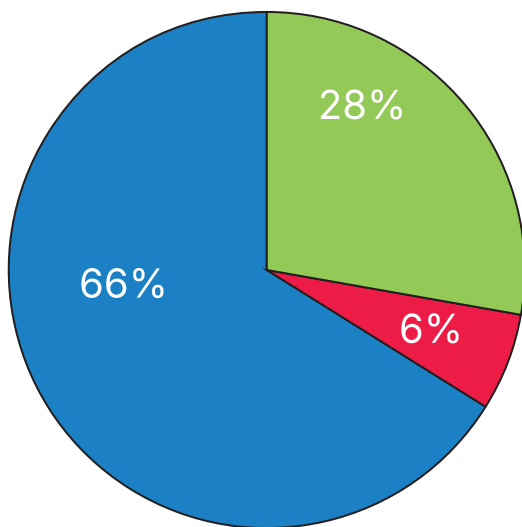
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ENERGY





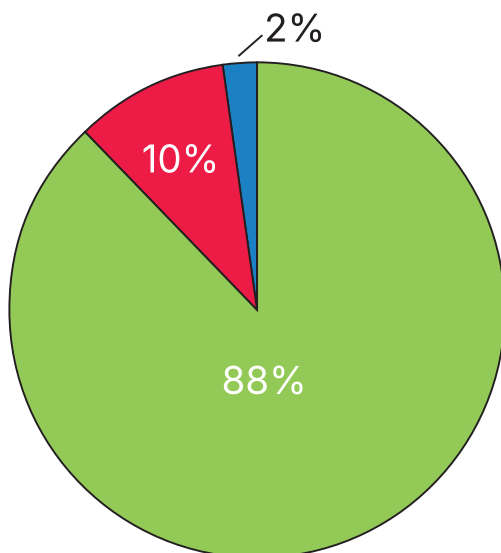


Operating Revenue and Expenses



Revenue Sources

- Program Fees
- Government Funding
- Grants & Sponsorships



Expenses


- Wages & Benefits
- Materials & Equipment
- Admin

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead to 2025–26, Destination Exploration is poised for another year of growth, innovation, and community impact. DE will continue to strengthen its partnerships with rural and Indigenous communities, advance teacher professional learning in STEM and AI literacy, and introduce new programming for high school students that bridges classroom learning with real-world applications. With a continuing focus on accessibility, sustainability, and collaboration, DE aims to reach even more youth, educators, and communities to empower the next generation of problem solvers, innovators, and lifelong learners.

In 2025–26, Destination Exploration aims to:

- Reach over 10,000 participants across all programs.
- Grow faculty and institutional collaborations to highlight ULeithbridge innovations.
- Expand high school STEM engagement through AI, digital agriculture, and robotics.
- Deepen collaborations with Indigenous educators and communities across the region.



“Both of my girls absolutely loved the Destination Exploration camp! Every single day they walked out with huge smiles, full of excitement, and so much to share about the activities they had done. The program was engaging, creative, and so well organized, and it was clear the staff put a lot of thought and energy into making it a fun and enriching experience. They couldn’t wait to go back each morning, and it was wonderful to see them enjoying themselves and learning at the same time. We couldn’t be happier with the camp and would highly recommend it to anyone!” - Parent





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