

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN PLAN

Revised 2020-21

PATHWAY TO NEW DISCOVERIES



North Lakeland
Discovery Center

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PATHWAY TO NEW DISCOVERIES



THE NEED

Nature nurtures us. A statement both simple and profound, it's the guiding ethic that the North Lakeland Discovery Center has lived by in its nearly twenty-five years as a hands-on outdoor learning center in Manitowish Waters, Wisconsin.

We live in an era where individuals of all ages spend more time interacting with screens and social media, and less time exploring the connections to the natural communities that sustain us. Our natural world faces tremendous challenges, and a society without a strong connection to nature will be ill-equipped to solve them.

The Discovery Center is a remarkable success story. Starting in 1996 with a staff of one teacher on summer vacation and a budget of \$2,500, we have grown to annual revenues of more than \$500,000, a full-time staff of eight, plus five summer interns to lead our myriad programs for children, adults and families. More than 1,000 members support the Center annually; volunteers assisting in our programs and services number in the hundreds.

Never has the need been more urgent to connect people with the natural world. The Discovery Center wants to do more. And yet, we are hampered by aging and inadequate facilities. We have to turn down many requests for winter programming because of our dearth of year-round space, and in our busy summer season our capacity is insufficient. We have nowhere to put additional staff and inadequate all-season classroom and meeting space. We are bursting at the seams.

Today the Discovery Center finds itself at the intersection of a need and opportunity to do more and the inability to do it, primarily because of our physical plant.



Many young people make their first connections to nature at the Discovery Center...and we want to do more.

“Provide a deep-rooted connection to the natural world – this is what the Discovery Center does. With every program, our goal is to make those connections and to continue to provide these life-long learning opportunities for years to come! No place does it like the Discovery Center!”

Licia Johnson,
**Education Director/
Senior Naturalist**

THE PLAN

Fortunately, we recently secured our site as our permanent home. We are no longer leasing from the State of Wisconsin but now have a perpetual easement on the property for our use as a nature center. This will allow us to first invest in the needed infrastructure and then, in the needed staff to meet the increased demands we are seeing for service.

The desire for better year-round facilities has long been a Discovery Center goal. Now, with 20+ successful years under our belt, a superb staff bursting with ideas, a healthy cash reserve, and a cadre of supporters, we are ready to complete a major capital campaign.



Discovery Center programs bring Wisconsin's Northwoods to life for young and old, but we are at capacity now.

Our initial fundraising goal, confirmed by a professionally conducted feasibility study, was \$6 million. In this coronavirus-influenced period, we have reduced the goal to a more viable \$3 million while still achieving our overarching vision of providing robust year-round programming.

PLAN COMPONENTS

| | COST |
|---|--------------------------|
|  A fully renovated and winterized Main Lodge to provide a central focus for year-round programming, group functions and offices. | \$850,000 |
|  A new Welcome and Learning Center attached to the Lodge with expanded Nature Nook to greet, entice and engage visitors. | \$1,200,000 |
|  Fun and creative displays in the expanded Nature Nook, including a spiral-staircased "tree" leading to a rooftop human-scale eagle's nest, as well as office furnishings for our staff. | \$100,000 |
|  Renovation of four existing cabins to winterize and add bathrooms and showers. | \$105,000 |
|  An enhanced maintenance building and a new storage building for boats, vehicles, AIS and other equipment. | \$120,000 |
|  Architectural and engineering design fees. | \$140,000 |
|  Campaign expenses including coordinator, staff time, and a reimbursement to Discovery Center operations for lost revenue. | \$325,000 |
|  Contingency | \$160,000 |
| Cabin renovation is already underway. The Lodge renovation will kick off in early 2021 | \$3,000,000 total |



Our own property features an abundance of natural ecosystems, making it an ideal learning lab.

THE POWER OF NATURE

Recently, a fifth-grade class visited the Discovery Center. Amongst its members was a 10-year old girl living in a foster home because an auto accident had claimed the lives of her parents. On the boardwalk over the bog, a walk that so many classes take, she stumbled and landed in mud up to her waist. Classmates, teachers, and Discovery staff alike held their breath, waiting to see how this would affect a child who had been through so much. As hands rushed to help her to firm ground, she smiled. Then she laughed. It was the first time she'd smiled since the accident six months earlier.

That's the power of nature. That's why the Discovery Center exists, and why we ask for your help to allow it to do so much more. Partnering with you, together we'll discover the way forward.



For 20+ years, we have put smiles on faces. Help us continue our good work.

"The staff shares its expertise and enthusiasm with North Lakeland students and staff, inspiring future generations to discover and appreciate the natural world around them."

**Brent Jelinski,
District Administrator,
North Lakeland School**

OUR MISSION

To enrich lives and inspire an ethic of care for the natural world by connecting people, nature and community.

OUR VISION

The North Lakeland Discovery Center will be recognized as a leading resource for lifelong environmental learning and outdoor recreation. We will be notable for our creative and cutting-edge year-round programming providing people with opportunities to experience the power of nature, for our outreach efforts to nurture and protect nature's ecosystems, and for our ability to connect an increasing number of people to the natural world.

OUR VALUES



Experience the Outdoors: We believe exposure to the outdoors is necessary to the health of people, families and communities.



Broad Definition of Community: We encourage people to see themselves as part of a community that cares for our Northwoods environment and culture.



Commitment to Sustainability: We believe that ecological care and economic viability create the foundations for sound decision-making and promoting environmental health.



Power of Partnership: We engage with profit and non-profit businesses, service organizations, governmental and educational bodies building off each other's strengths to fulfill our mission.



Lifelong Learning: We are committed to the use of active learning techniques with ample opportunities for reflection and interaction with diverse audiences and the natural world.



A passion for our area's woods and waters unites us and moves us forward.

HOW DO WE DO IT

The Discovery Center is located on Statehouse Lake just north of downtown Manitowish Waters.

Our site consists of 63 acres and provides a beautiful lake shore, access to the Manitowish River, hiking, biking and skiing trails throughout the property, as well as a broad array of wildlife and vegetation common to northern Wisconsin.



Whether for adults, children, or families, creativity, learning and fun are the hallmarks of Discovery Center programs.

“I began taking our oldest grandchild, Ava, to the Discovery Center when she was two years old. For the last seven years, Ava and I continue to be regular, year-round visitors.”

Gene Wilberg,
Discovery Center
member

Our current program staff consists of two naturalists, an AIS/water program coordinator, summer interns and many volunteers. Our executive director and administrative and maintenance staff frequently interact with program activities.

From this location and around the nearby area, we have provided a broad range of on-site and off-site programming to achieve our mission.

Programming includes:



FOR ADULTS

“Nibbles N’ Knowledge,” lively lectures on nature, culture and more preceded by appetizers and refreshments

Field trips to waterfalls, birding hotspots, and other gems of the Northwoods...and to howl with wolves

Workshops on wildlife, gardening, snowshoe making and more

Special events that foster community and camaraderie



FOR CHILDREN

Eco-Discoverers (ages 4-7): Buggin’ Out, Hoo Goes there, and more

Eco-Explorers (ages 7-10): Fantastic Furbearers, Explore the Shore, and more

Nature Nook displays, activities and live Northwoods critters

Tadpole classroom, waterfront and bog adventures



FOR FAMILIES

Canoe and kayak trips and nature hikes

Bat talks and walks; monarch butterfly programs

Family fun days, grandparent and grandchild day



Sometimes, quiet speaks loudest.

“I can testify the Discovery Center is a huge asset to the community and our tourist industry. The Discovery Center definitely adds to the essence of Manitowish Waters.”

***Danna Johnson,
manager of
The Lodge at
Manitowish
Waters***



FOR GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Customized nature-related programming for a day or a week, combined with lodging, meals, recreation and fun!

Use of our Lodge, outdoor amphitheater and other facilities for weddings, camps and meetings

Support for affiliated groups like Bird Club and Friends of Van Vliet Hemlocks



FOR COMMUNITIES

School-based environmental education programs

Knowledge at Noon lunches and “Traveling Naturalist”: taking our show on the road

Education and preservation efforts in area lakes, rivers and bogs

Management of aquatic invasive species in the region’s lakes: currently serving more than 30 lakes in the towns of Manitowish Waters, Winchester, Boulder Junction and Presque Isle



FACILITIES OPEN TO OUR DONORS/MEMBERS/USERS AND COMMUNITIES

12 miles of beautiful year-round trails traversing a variety of ecosystems

State-of-the-art interpretive trail and bog boardwalk

Summer lodging and dining for groups of up to 100

Lakeside amphitheater, nature garden and campfire ring to bring visitors closer to nature and one another

“Nature Playscape” natural materials playground with dozens of activities for kids and families

WHAT'S NEXT?

Having entered into a perpetual easement with the WI-DNR, we now have a permanent home.

This key factor lays the foundation to invest in longterm facilities to better serve our community.

Planned enhancements to our current program and services based on research with our donors/members/users

- Our members and donors are asking for more programming aimed at our adult users to expand their year-round opportunities to learn more about Northwoods history, culture and nature.
- A special opportunity exists in the winter months, when retirees have time to themselves for learning in a social environment.
- Through strategic partnerships with organizations such as the Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, Wisconsin's Green Fire, the Wisconsin DNR, Fe University, Friends of Van Vliet Hemlocks, The Discovery Center Bird Club, the Manitowish Waters Historical Society, and many more we will expand educational offerings and natural resource awareness, appreciation, and protection efforts in the Northwoods.
- Members and donors are also requesting that we help educate the leaders of tomorrow on the importance of preserving Northwoods resources and values.

Important new efforts for donors/members/users and new audiences.

- With the cutback in State of Wisconsin funding for Department of Natural Resources services, there is an unmet demand for environmental education, scientific monitoring and related outdoor activities.
- Local towns, lake committees and lake associations with a need for assistance



Our plan for growth creates new opportunities for programs year-round.

in management of aquatic invasive species (AIS), lake-level monitoring and water-quality issues are important Discovery Center constituencies. We have been active in these valuable initiatives and will provide even more focus and support to lake users.

We plan to provide a menu of services including:

- Training to monitor lakes for invasive species, water clarity and changes in lake level
- Aid to landowners in preserving and enhancing natural shorelines
- Assistance in establishing lake plans to maintain the healthiest possible lake environment.
- Increasingly, groups – including at-risk teens, scouting groups, and many more – are requesting multi-day programs at the Discovery Center year-round. Our staff's expertise and flexibility in providing quality hands-on education, combined with a facility infused with Northwoods nature, positions us perfectly to capture this limitless year-round audience.
- Northwoods visitors often seek out spontaneous learning opportunities, winter and summer. Our Discovery Destinations, featuring a tadpole classroom, nature playscape, birding center and more will provide self-guided education and fun.
- Year-round facilities for conferences, symposiums and the like are in short supply in our area. An expanded Discovery Center will fill that need.

OUTCOMES

To achieve our vision, we urgently need to increase our available resources and expand the reach of our programming.

Our plan is to develop both physical and staff resources to fulfill the vision. Twenty-plus years after the Discovery Center's founding, our buildings are aging, environmentally inefficient, and lacking in adequate facilities for staff, programming and cold-weather events.

With the new easement ensuring our continued use of the site as a nature center, we are no longer constrained by our potential lack of permanence. Now is the perfect time to invest in improvements to allow for more program offerings, additional staffing and year-round activities.



As more people gain in knowledge and respect for the bountiful resources we are blessed with, we create a richer future for all.

OUR IMPROVEMENTS FOCUS ON THREE AREAS: 1. PROVIDE EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

FEATURE ———— ∞ ————

DETAILS ———— ∞ ————

EXPANDED NATURE NOOK

Live critters, interactive displays and hands-on experiences steeped in Northwoods nature will allow children and adults to get up close and personal.

EAGLE'S NEST OBSERVATORY TOWER

Get an eagle's-eye view of Statehouse Lake and the Discovery Center campus after ascending a tree's interior.

CLASSROOMS/LABS

Freeing up our former Nature Nook and attached cabin will create a warm year-round classroom for smaller groups. The newly renovated Lodge's central meeting room will host larger groups.

DISCOVERY DESTINATIONS

Playscape, birding center, lakes discovery, native and edible plant garden and more. Kiosks at strategic locations throughout the campus will guide visitors through creative and fun hands-on activities.

2. SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

FEATURE



DETAILS



LARGE MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM FOR DINING AND GATHERING

The Lodge's newly vaulted meeting room will accommodate up to 120 to support gatherings of school and youth groups, community organizations, conferences, etc.

WELCOME AND LEARNING CENTER

Visitors will be led by new site improvements to a two-story entrance, in an inviting, fully accessible building designed in harmony with our rustic campus.

KITCHEN

Our existing fully equipped commercial kitchen will provide the fuel for discovery.

EXISTING CAMPUS

Continued use of our Lodge and former program office, other cabins and amphitheater will provide alternate facilities to accommodate multiple groups during our busy months



We like to think of the Discovery Center as a community-oriented nature center, and a nature-oriented community center.

3. EXEMPLIFY SUSTAINABLE BUILDING PRACTICES AS WE MEET THE NEEDS OF TODAY AND THE FUTURE

FEATURE

DETAILS

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Both the Welcome and Learning Center and the Lodge winterization will use energy-efficient technology to exceed current minimum building standards and to incorporate appropriate renewable energy sources such as passive and active solar, geothermal and solar electric.

STAFF OFFICE CLUSTER

Open-plan offices and workspaces in the Lodge's north wing will house our staff, with available expansion for future needs.

PROGRAM STORAGE

Climate-controlled storage near the classrooms will keep needed supplies on hand and ready.

REDESIGNED ENTRY AND PARKING

Visitors will be directed to the main entrance with a central kiosk, convenient drop off and plentiful parking.

EQUIPMENT/BOAT STORAGE BUILDING

A pole building with cold storage will keep our scientific and facilities equipment in top condition.

The need for connecting young and old alike to the natural world is growing and urgent. An improved all-season Discovery Center with expanded staff, will be perfectly positioned to provide enhanced learning opportunities in the heart of the Northern Highland—American Legion State Forest and beyond:



Snowshoe and summer hikes to old growth forest habitats like the Van Vliet Hemlocks



Fall color hikes to vistas like Lake of the Clouds in the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness Area



Winter wolf tracking to locate and count packs and individuals



Spring birding in the Powell Marsh, Little Turtle Flowage and a variety of other habitats.



*Which is a more precious resource: the great Northwoods or our staff and presenters?
Answer: Both!*

FINANCIAL UNDERPINNINGS AND FORECAST

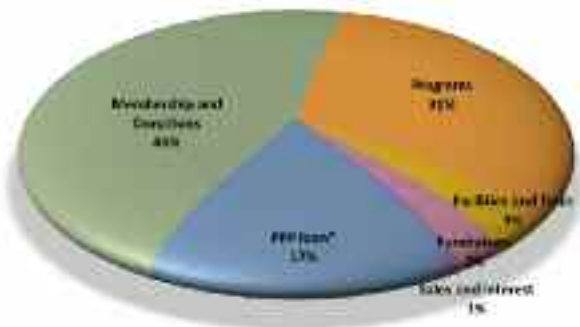
2018-19 OPERATING REVENUE \$558,000



Revenue grew from \$2,500 in 1996 to \$279,000 in 2005-06 to \$558,000 in Fiscal Year 2018-19.

Expenses have kept pace, with staff growing from one North Lakeland School teacher on summer break to a full-time staff of eight, plus four to six summer staff and interns.

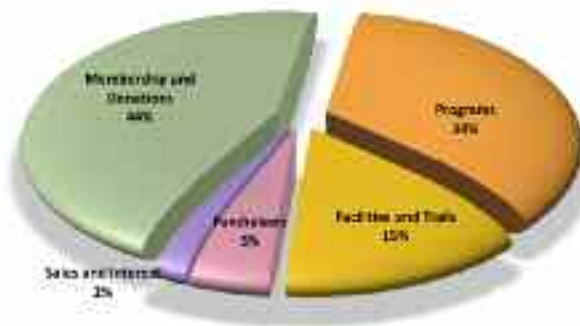
2019-20 OPERATING REVENUE \$541,000



With the help of a Payroll Protection Program loan of \$95,000, we held our own during the pandemic.

*Based on latest information, we believe we meet the standards for this loan being wholly forgiven

POST-CONSTRUCTION FULL UTILIZATION REVENUE \$735,000



Once improvements are completed, we expect a three year ramp-up period to full revenues and full utilization of the new facilities.

With new efforts, expanded facilities and additional staffing, we expect program revenue to increase substantially. Time-consuming large fundraising events will be de-emphasized.

The Discovery Center has substantial existing reserves totaling \$361,000 as of September 30, 2020, the end of our fiscal year. A portion of the reserves will be used, if necessary, during the ramp-up period.

Innovative opportunities for planned giving, endowments and donor advised funds will help provide a bedrock of fiscal stability towards programming and operations in future years.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q: What are your fundraising goals? Why have they changed?

A: Our total campaign goal has been pared from \$6 million to \$3 million. In this coronavirus era, we do not see ourselves expanding as fast as we once did. The current goal is very achievable and will allow us to move ahead quickly.

Q: What is the \$600,000 challenge you mentioned and how does it work?

A: Peter O. Johnson, a longtime Discovery Center supporter, has challenged us to reach our fundraising goal of \$3 million. Our staff and board have unanimously accepted the challenge. To secure Mr. Johnson's generous gift, we must raise another \$800,000 (thus reaching our \$3 million goal) and commence construction by July 2021.

Q: The Discovery Center's original plan called for a large new Welcome Center but did not include renovation of the existing Lodge. Why has the plan changed?

A: Three reasons: First, many of our supporters love the "old" Lodge and the history it represents and have encouraged us to keep it central to the Discovery Center's future. Second, with the help of our architect and construction experts, we have determined that winterization of the Lodge is quite feasible and economic. And third, because we have scaled back the total size of our campaign, we must also reduce the scope of construction.



Please join us. The greater our numbers, the clearer our vision becomes.

Q: Will your scaled back plans still meet the Discovery Center's needs?

A: They will! The new addition retains the expanded Nature Nook, with an entrance that draws visitors to our doors. The renovated Lodge will operate through all seasons. Supplemented by existing winterized offices, we'll have plenty of space for current staff and expansion. The large meeting/dining area will get a major facelift (and space: it's vaulted!), making it far more attractive.

Q: Surely, some of your wants must have been abandoned?

A: Yes, the current plan does not include the large classrooms we hoped to build. However, the new addition has been planned so that they can easily be added. If we exceed our fundraising goal, we'll build them right away. If we don't, we

already have the existing Nature Nook and other winterized buildings that serve perfectly well as classrooms.

Q: Who owns the Discovery Center property? Can it be sold or used for another purpose?

A: The Discovery Center has a permanent easement from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources that allows its continued use as a non-profit environmental center in perpetuity. It cannot be sold or used for any other purpose as long as it provides nature-based outdoor-oriented programming for the benefit of the public.

Q: Should I make a one-time gift or a multi-year pledge?

A: We are encouraging lump sum donations or three-year gifts, but we will gratefully accept any donation schedule that works best for the donor.

Q: Is my capital campaign gift in lieu of my usual annual giving to the Discovery Center?

A: We hope not! The Discovery Center will continue to rely on memberships and donations as a significant part of its operating budget. Those donations allow us to put on many of our programs at low or no cost.

Q: Can I make a gift other than cash?

A: Yes! A range of possibilities exist, including appreciated stock, real estate and legacy gifts such as memorial bequests or perpetual endowments. Please contact your financial advisor or the Discovery Center to discuss which options are best for you.

Q: Why should I give to the Discovery Center campaign, in addition to the other worthy causes I already support?

A: The Discovery Center has become an integral part of the Northwoods community during the last nearly 25 years. It has become one of the area's most important tourist draws, attracting visitors from Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota and beyond to learn about the importance of this region's natural world while experiencing its beauty.

The Discovery Center is a perfect example of how "nature nurtures" by feeding the mind, body and soul, as members of the community have expressed in quotes throughout this document. The Center offers an invaluable experience for every age group, including the mental and physical health benefits that come from being in nature.

There is no other nature center in Vilas, Oneida or Iron counties with the current and planned future programs, facilities and grounds that the Discovery Center offers. It is a tremendously worthwhile cause to support for those who value environmental, humanitarian, scientific and cultural causes—and the Northwoods we all love and want to preserve for future generations.







