MISSION
To create innovative learning experiences that equip and inspire the next generation of creative problem solvers.

VISION
A creative community with a passion for lifelong learning and discovery.

VALUES
Playfulness, cooperation, inclusiveness, excellence, respect, innovation, creativity.
DEAR FRIENDS,

I can’t say exactly what I expected when I agreed to become Thinkery’s Chief Executive Officer in February 2020—but I can tell you it wasn’t anything like the 18 months we’ve just had.

The COVID-19 crisis changed our lives virtually overnight. I’m proud to say that through it all, Thinkery remained steadfast in its mission and dedicated to serving the children and families of Central Texas in any way we could. When our doors were forced to close, our team immediately pivoted to creating STEAM content families could explore at home. Our camp staff completely reimagined the in-person experience, while our exhibits team updated our facility and processes to prioritize health and safety for all.

We designed at-home activity kits for kids in need of remote hands-on learning opportunities. We created the Essential Memberships for front-line workers as thanks for keeping our community moving. We even took the ambitious step of launching a new preschool to increase Austin’s capacity for high-quality childcare and improve kindergarten readiness throughout our community.

This past year has demonstrated the importance of creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. I’m incredibly proud of our team, who’ve modeled those qualities while working tirelessly to equip and inspire the next generation of creative problem solvers.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to Thinkery.

ANDY BELL, Chief Executive Officer

THANK YOU, TRISH

In February 2020, Thinkery CEO Patricia “Trish” Young Brown announced she would depart the organization in May. Trish served as Thinkery’s CEO since January 2017 and led the creation of the museum’s five-year Strategic Plan. When the COVID-19 crisis hit, Trish worked with incoming CEO Andy Bell to accelerate the transition and ensure the new leadership team was in place to manage the crisis. She stayed on as an advisor through September 2020.

We want to thank Trish for her outstanding leadership and the steady, mission-focused example she set for our organization. We are tremendously grateful for her years of service and dedication to Thinkery!
COVID-19

Thinkery closed the museum doors on Friday, March 13, 2020 following the first two reports of positive COVID-19 tests in Austin/Travis County. The initial closure was expected to last roughly two weeks. It quickly became clear that the crisis would extend well beyond that. As a nonprofit museum dedicated to in-person learning and activity, extended closure represented a particularly serious financial challenge to Thinkery. The initial closure required the cancellation of Thinkery’s 2020 Spring Break camps. The extension led to the full cancellation of birthday parties, field trips, and all General Admission activity.

We were not alone, of course: The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on every person, family, business, and community in Central Texas – and around the world. Even with our museum doors closed, our team was determined to do whatever we could to adapt our efforts to meet the evolving needs of our community. We began to reimagine everything, to serve the needs of parents, caregivers, educators, and families being affected by the crisis.

OPEN DOOR

Heading into March 2020, Thinkery was extending its reach with Austin’s underserved children and families. Admissions through MUSEUMS FOR ALL and OPEN DOOR programs were up 21% over the prior year. Because of the lengthy shutdown (and capacity restrictions upon reopening) Thinkery’s in-person programs served only a fraction of their 2019 totals.

2019 2020

| General Admission/ Path to Play | 442,978 | 28% |
| Thinkery Field Trip attendance | 24,030 | 15% |

Despite the limits to our in-person opportunities, Thinkery worked with our community partners to continue serving our OPEN DOOR families. By taking our monthly COMMUNITY NIGHT SPOTLIGHT events virtual, providing scholarship spaces in our Camp and Preschool classrooms, and distributing at-home STEAM activity kits, we were able to continue our mission and support struggling families.
Our educators began filming activity videos and story times the same day that Thinkery first announced its closure. This effort evolved into Thinkery At-Home, an effort to bring the Thinkery experience to homebound families through original livestreamed and recorded STEAM learning content.

In all, our team created **MORE THAN 100** livesteam activities and new pieces of recorded content, all of which was available **FREE** through Thinkery's social media platforms, YouTube channel, and website. More than 17,000 users combined to watch over 483 hours of Thinkery At-Home videos over the course of the summer.

**ESSENTIAL MEMBERSHIPS**

As quarantine continued, it became evident frontline workers were bearing the worst of the crisis. Our Membership team created a new program to serve as a give-back for our community's essential workers that would allow them (once we could safely reopen) to enjoy time with their families at Thinkery. We launched the Essential Memberships program in April, which awarded **400 FREE** Thinkery Memberships to first responders, grocery workers, delivery drivers, doctors, nurses, and other critical frontline workers throughout our community. We couldn't have done this without the generosity of our Thinkery Members.
Once staff was allowed back inside the museum, we set to work creating STEAM-based activity kits to provide hands-on learning opportunities to explore from the safety of home. We created two runs of DO MAKE CREATE Kits, which were available through Thinkery’s online store. We also donated more than 100 kits to local organizations including El Buen Samaritano, Foundation Communities, SAFE Alliance, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area, and more. Special thanks to Capital One, Netspend, and NXP for their support of our DO MAKE CREATE program.

PATH TO PLAY

Once the state began lifting restrictions on in-person museum activities, our guest services team unveiled a new, totally reimagined museum experience. PATH TO PLAY allowed for small groups (10 or fewer) to move through the galleries in a timed, sequenced manner that allowed for proper social distancing while still giving visitors the opportunity to play, learn, and explore in six of our most popular galleries. Thinkery began offering Path To Play sessions on Labor Day weekend and ran them through December of 2020.

IN-PERSON OR AT-HOME, THINKERY’S EDUCATORS, STAFF, AND LEADERSHIP REMAINED COMMITTED TO OUR MISSION OF INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVERS AND BRINGING STEAM-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TO LOCAL FAMILIES HOWEVER WE COULD.
In September 2020, we welcomed our first group of students to the brand-new Little Thinkers Preschool at the Meredith Learning Lab. Kindergarten readiness is an ongoing challenge in Central Texas, particularly among low-income families. The challenges of the pandemic and stresses inherent in remote learning made the need for expanded school readiness opportunities even more acute. As Thinkery looked for new, impactful ways to address this vital community need, creating additional high-quality preschool capacity quickly rose to the top of the list.

Little Thinkers Preschool is a RESEARCH-FOCUSED LAB SCHOOL serving ages 3 and 4. It’s a full-day preschool program that Thinkery’s hands-on, play-based educational approach and regular access to our exhibits to support the development of students’ school readiness skills. The lab school model, with curricula and assessment designed in collaboration with Thinkery Connect, means THINKERY CAN SHARE OUR LEARNINGS with other schools and childcare providers to promote STEAM interest and school readiness throughout Central Texas.

Our thanks to Capital One and STG Design for their support of Little Thinkers Preschool.
Because the COVID-19 pandemic prevented large, in-person, we were not able to host our annual IMAGINARIUM fundraising gala. Instead, our team pivoted to create a NEW VIRTUAL FUNDRAISER that spoke to Thinkery’s core mission of STEAM education and Austin’s reputation as one of America’s great food cities. The result was Thinkery’s Food For Thought, an engaging and informative 60-minute online program on Saturday, August 8. The show was divided into four “courses:” cocktails, appetizers, entrées and dessert. Thinkery enlisted several of Austin’s best known and MOST BELOVED FOOD AND BEVERAGE CELEBRITIES to participate, including hosts John and Kendall Antonelli.

The program also included a silent auction, a grand prize raffle, and a live “raise the paddle” fundraiser. Thinkery’s Food For Thought raised over $215,000 to aid in reopening the museum and providing enriching STEAM experiences to support our community.

Special thanks to our event Co-Chairs Max Zieky and Bryan St. George for making our fundraising event a success!
Thinkery Connect is a museum-university-community research partnership between Thinkery and Dr. Cristine Legare of The Center for Applied Cognitive Science at The University of Texas at Austin Department of Psychology. The objective of this partnership is to translate best practices from learning sciences into museum operations.

In 2019, Thinkery received a generous grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). This grant allowed us to formalize this longtime partnership and begin construction of a permanent Thinkery Connect Headquarters inside the Museum. Thinkery Connect HQ allows us to 1) conduct research on caregiver and child interaction and learning, 2) evaluate visitor experience, 3) prototype exhibit design features and modifications, and 4) collaborate with community partners throughout the city and the state to support early childhood education and development.

Our research will support school readiness skills by focusing on STEAM “Habits of Mind” that can help communities better prepare children for school and set the foundation for lifelong learning.
Thanks to the efforts of RecognizeGood, Thinkery was selected for a pro bono website redesign as part of WP Engine’s corporate responsibility plan, Engine for Good. A team including Thinkery staff and WP Engine specialists came together for a top-down redesign that gave Thinkery more back-end control, largely removed the need for outside development assistance, and greatly improved the UX for visitors. A key focus was improving accessibility for all visitors, such as including an option for ESL visitors to translate the site’s page text into dozens of languages automatically using Google Translate and updating the color palette to improve readability for the visually impaired. The new site launched in late January of 2020 and was an essential part of our real-time communications efforts throughout the COVID-19 closure and subsequent reopening efforts.

Thinkery was honored and excited to receive the 2020 Recognize Good Ethics in Business Award. The Ethics in Business program seeks to “illuminate those businesses, individuals and nonprofits who believe that DOING GOOD is good business.” Thinkery CEO Andy Bell accepted award during a virtual ceremony in June 2020. In his acceptance speech, Bell said, “We strive to be an inclusive, friendly, inspiring space to learn for our entire community, regardless of income, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, or gender identity.” He further noted that, more than ever, it is important for businesses, nonprofits and community service organizations to be ethical, equitable, and strive for justice for all communities throughout Central Texas.
A VISION FOR OUR FUTURE

Our vision is for Thinkery to be a trusted community hub, inspiring lifelong learning for ALL children through hands-on, play-based STEAM educational experiences.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We’ve identified four strategic priorities to guide our decision-making across the organization:

CREATE INSPIRING EXPERIENCES FOR ALL CHILDREN
Focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and access.

LEAD THE FUTURE OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING IN CENTRAL TEXAS
Focus on innovation & research partnerships (Thinkery Connect and upgrades to Meredith Learning Lab).

GROW IMPACT IN EARLY LEARNER AND ELEMENTARY AGE STEAM EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Emphasis on professional development, preschool, and afterschool programs to boost STEAM engagement.

EXPAND THINKERY PROGRAMS INTO THE COMMUNITY
Deepen existing community collaborations and create new ones to reach diverse local audiences.

Learn how you can play a role in advancing Thinkery’s mission! Visit thinkeryaustin.org/support today.
COVID-19 posed a near-existential financial challenge to Thinkery. It reduced our year-over-year ticketing and program revenue by more than half, and required us to reimagine several mission-critical programs in mid-stream.

Ultimately, it was the generosity and support of our donors and key program funders that saw us through. It is only thanks to the contributions of the individuals, companies, and foundations listed on the following pages that Thinkery is able to continue equipping and inspiring young learners throughout Central Texas.

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