Request For Interest- McNamara Youth Center

Announcement- City of Merced Parks & Community Services is calling for interested parties to respond to a request for interest in programming to be offered at McNamara Youth Center. Programming should aim to accomplish the mission of the Parks & Community Services Department:

To plan, facilitate, promote, maintain, and develop activities and facilities that enhance the quality of life in Merced.

Applicants are encouraged to read the Request For Interest before submitting their application to ensure responses are thorough. Applications will be reviewed on four criteria; program structure (10 points), program overview (10 points), program objectives, activities, and link to neighborhood needs (20 points), and the understanding of monitoring and evaluation methods to measure program success and identify barriers (10 points). If more room is needed to answer questions, please attach additional pages with reference to which section the narrative is addressing.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE (10 points)				
Applicant Organization				
Type of Organization (circle one)	501C(3)	Gov't/Public	For Profit	Other
Mission of the Org.				
Primary Contact				
Members of Board or Commission				
Org. Address				
Org. Phone Number				
Org. Email				
Tax I.D. number				

PROGRAM OVERVIEW (10 points)			
Name of Program to be Implemented			
Population(s) to be Served	Preschool Children (0-5) Elementary Children (6-11) Middle School Youth (12-14) High School Youth (14-18)		
Days, Times & Significant Occasions Program will be open to Community (check those that apply)	Weekdays	Weekends	Student Breaks
	Mornings (8am- 2pm)	Afternoons (2pm- 6pm)	Evenings (6pm-8pm)
Anticipated Start Date			
Staffing/ Furnishing/ & Maintenance plan for the Youth Center	How many staff will be on site when open to public? What equipment will be used to furnish the facility? What can the program commit to regarding facility maintenance?		
Staff training requirements for program (required training/ certification)			
Proposed participant fee for program (daily, weekly, monthly, yearly)			

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES AND LINK TO NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS AND INTERESTS (20 points)	
Objective(s) to be met for program participants	What will participants experience because of your program?
Services to be Offered to Achieve Objective(s)	What activities, actions, or services will ensure the program meets the objective(s)?
Meeting Neighborhood Need and Interest	Explain why these services will be of interest to the residents within the area of McNamara Park. How do you plan on recruiting participation for the program?

EVALUATION/ MONITORING METHODS (10 points)	
Output & outcome measures of evaluation to be used	What program efforts will be used to evaluate effort (output)? How will the program track these efforts? What will be used to indicate if the program was a success for participants? Please explain how the program will measure the outcomes (impact on participants).
Reporting Requirements- Monthly meetings with Parks & Community Services and completions of quarterly reports for Recreation and parks Commission	What benefits do you see in attending monthly meetings with Parks & Community Services Department and providing quarterly (once every 3 months) activity reports to the Recreation and Parks Commission?
Financial stability- utility budget & material and supply expenses	The city allocates $7,500 to utility expenses annually for McNamara Youth Center. What steps will the program take to stay within its utility budget? Should the program exceed the annual allocation, how will it cover the overage? Lastly, how will the org. cover the cost of materials and supplies while also keeping services free or low cost for residents?
Additional programs currently or previously offered in Merced that indicate a track record of success	Briefly describe other current or previous programming by your organization that supports this program's likelihood of success at McNamara Youth Center.

McNamara Youth Center Application Staffing/ Furnishing/ & Maintenance plan for the Youth Center: How many staff will be on site when open to public? What equipment will be used to furnish the facility? What can the program commit to regarding facility maintenance?

Staff Count - 10
Equipment needed- chairs for each student, tables for students, Chromebooks and Lego education coding kits, and other stem activities such as drones, and other maker hardware.
Facility maintenance- general maintenance including majority of tasks outside of facility repair.

Staff training requirements for program (required training/ certification):

LEGO Education Academy (LEA) Certification, Mandated Reporter Training, CPR Training

Proposed participant fee for program (daily, weekly, monthly, yearly):

Recent verbal commitment from Community Foundation Merced County will allow families to request scholarships to cover the full cost of the Lego Coding program bringing the cost of the family to $0.
Main objective of offering for free, offsetting cost with grants and other funding. When not able to accomplish free, the goal will be to make the fee as accessible as possible for the students in lower socioeconomic areas.

What will participants experience because of your program?

Develop creativity and imagination: Encourage participants to unlock their creativity and expand their imagination through hands-on building and coding activities using LEGO Education resources.

Foster computational thinking and problem-solving skills: Provide participants with the opportunity to learn and apply coding concepts to bring their LEGO creations to life, promoting computational thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Enhance critical thinking skills: Engage participants in challenging activities that require them to analyze problems, think critically, and find innovative solutions using LEGO bricks and coding techniques.

Cultivate teamwork and collaboration: Promote collaboration and teamwork among participants, allowing them to work together on projects, exchange ideas, and develop effective communication and collaboration skills.

Develop coding proficiency: Help participants develop a strong foundation in coding, enabling them to understand programming concepts, create algorithms, and implement them in their LEGO models.

Boost confidence and self-expression: Create a supportive and encouraging environment where participants can gain confidence in their abilities, express their ideas, and take pride in their LEGO creations and coding accomplishments.

Enhance spatial reasoning abilities: Engage participants in activities that enhance their spatial reasoning skills, such as visualizing and manipulating objects in three-dimensional space while building and programming LEGO models.

Nurture creativity and innovation: Encourage participants to think outside the box, experiment with different design ideas, and explore innovative solutions to challenges, fostering a culture of creativity and innovation.

Develop STEM skills: Introduce participants to fundamental STEM concepts, such as engineering, physics, and technology, through hands-on building and coding experiences, preparing them for future academic and career pursuits.

Create unforgettable memories and positive experiences: Provide participants with a fun and engaging learning environment where they can create lasting memories, build friendships, and develop a lifelong love for learning, LEGO, and coding.

Lay a solid foundation for future success: Equip participants with essential skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and coding proficiency, to prepare them for future academic and professional endeavors in a technology-driven world. Instill a passion for lifelong learning: Inspire participants to continue exploring and learning beyond the program, fostering a passion for lifelong learning, curiosity, and a growth mindset.

Provide exclusive opportunity and limited enrollment: Offer participants an exclusive opportunity to participate in the LEGO Academy, emphasizing the limited availability of spots and the importance of securing enrollment promptly.

Promote parental investment in child's future: Encourage parents to invest in their child's future by enrolling them in the LEGO Academy, highlighting the long-term benefits of the program in terms of skill development, confidence building, and STEM education.

What activities, actions, or services will ensure the program meets the objective(s)?

To ensure the program meets the objectives outlined above, the following activities, actions, and services can be implemented: Hands-on building sessions: Provide

participants with ample opportunities to engage in hands-on building activities using LEGO bricks, encouraging creativity, problem-solving, and spatial reasoning skills. Coding workshops: Conduct coding workshops where participants can learn and apply coding concepts to program their LEGO models, allowing them to bring their creations to life with lights, sounds, and movement.

Project-based learning: Structure the program around project-based learning, where participants work on collaborative projects that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork, integrating both building and coding components.

Experienced instructors: Ensure the program is led by experienced instructors who can guide and support participants throughout the learning process, providing expertise in LEGO Education and coding instruction.

Small group sizes: Maintain small group sizes to facilitate individualized attention, encourage active participation, and foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Peer collaboration: Promote peer collaboration and teamwork by assigning participants to work in pairs or groups, encouraging them to share ideas, communicate effectively, and collaborate on building and coding projects.

Progress assessments: Conduct regular progress assessments to track participants' growth in creativity, problem-solving, coding proficiency, and critical thinking skills, providing feedback and identifying areas for further improvement.

Showcase events: Organize showcase events or exhibitions where participants can present their completed LEGO models and demonstrate the coding functionalities they have implemented, allowing them to showcase their achievements to peers, parents, and the community.

Parental involvement: Encourage parental involvement by providing opportunities for parents to observe workshops, attend information sessions, and engage in conversations with instructors to better understand their child's progress and support their continued learning at home.

Ongoing support and resources: Offer participants access to additional resources, online tutorials, and coding platforms to continue practicing and exploring coding and LEGO building outside of program hours, fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

Participant recognition: Recognize and celebrate participants' achievements and milestones throughout the program, such as certificates of completion, awards for creativity or problem-solving, or special acknowledgments for exemplary teamwork or coding proficiency.

Program evaluation and improvement: Conduct program evaluations to gather feedback from participants, parents, and instructors, using the insights to continuously improve and enhance the program in subsequent iterations, ensuring its effectiveness and relevance.

Exclusive enrollment period: Implement an exclusive enrollment period with limited spots available, creating a sense of urgency and emphasizing the unique opportunity for participants to secure their spot in the LEGO Academy.

Clear communication and parental updates: Maintain open and clear communication channels with parents, providing regular updates on program activities, learning outcomes, and any additional resources or opportunities available to participants. By implementing these activities, actions, and services, the program can effectively meet the objectives of fostering creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, coding proficiency, spatial reasoning, and overall skill development in participants while creating a memorable and impactful experience.

Explain why these services will be of interest to the residents within the area of McNamara Park. How do you plan on recruiting participation for the program?

The services offered by the LEGO Academy with Steady Studios would be of great interest to the residents within the area of McNamara Park in South Merced, California for several reasons:

Unique educational opportunity: The program provides a unique opportunity for children to engage in hands-on learning, combining LEGO building and coding skills. This innovative approach to education appeals to parents and residents who are seeking engaging and interactive learning experiences for their children.

Skill development for the future: The program focuses on developing essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and coding proficiency. In an increasingly technology-driven world, these skills are highly valued and sought after, making the program attractive to parents who want to prepare their children for future success. Affordable pricing: With a cost of $160 per student, the program offers a competitive and affordable price compared to similar educational programs in the area. This affordability makes it accessible to a wider range of families within the community.

Strong community impact: The program encourages collaboration, peer interaction, and parental involvement. This not only benefits the participants but also fosters a sense of community among residents, as they see their children actively engaged in a program that promotes teamwork and shared learning experiences.

To recruit participation for the program in McNamara Park, the following strategies can be employed:

- Local marketing and outreach: Utilize local channels such as community centers, schools, libraries, and recreational facilities to distribute flyers, posters, and information about the program. This ensures that residents in the McNamara Park area are aware of the opportunity. Digital marketing and social media: Create an online presence through social media platforms and community websites to reach a broader audience. Targeted advertisements can be used to reach parents in the McNamara Park area who may be interested in educational programs for their children. Collaborate with local organizations: Establish partnerships with local organizations, such as schools, PTAs, and community centers, to promote the program through their networks and newsletters. This allows for word-of-mouth recommendations and endorsements from trusted community sources.
- Information sessions and workshops: Organize information sessions and workshops in McNamara Park or nearby locations where parents can learn more about the program, meet the instructors, and see examples of the activities and projects that participants will engage in.
- Parent referrals and incentives: Encourage enrolled parents to refer other parents in the community by offering incentives, such as discounts or additional benefits, for successful referrals. This leverages the power of personal recommendations and increases community participation.
- Limited spots and exclusivity: Highlight the limited availability of spots in the program to create a sense of urgency and exclusivity. Emphasize the need for prompt registration to secure a spot in the LEGO Academy, as this can generate interest and motivate parents to enroll their children early. By implementing these recruitment strategies and effectively communicating the unique benefits of the program to the residents of McNamara Park, participation and interest in the LEGO Academy can be maximized within the local community.

What program efforts will be used to evaluate effort (output)? How will the program track these efforts? What will be used to indicate if the program was a success for participants? Please explain how the program will measure the outcomes (impact on participants).

To evaluate the program efforts and track the output, the LEGO Academy with Steady Studios can utilize the following program evaluation methods:
Attendance and participation records: The program can maintain attendance records to track the level of participation and engagement of each participant. This will provide insights into the overall program reach and the commitment of participants.

Progress assessments and skill development: Regular assessments can be conducted to evaluate participants' progress in areas such as creativity, problem-solving, critical

thinking, teamwork, and coding proficiency. These assessments can be in the form of quizzes, projects, or practical demonstrations of skills learned. The results can be tracked over time to measure individual growth.

Parent and participant feedback: Collect feedback from both parents and participants to gauge their satisfaction with the program and gather insights on areas for improvement. Surveys, questionnaires, or structured interviews can be used to gather feedback regarding the quality of instruction, the effectiveness of activities, and overall program experience.

Observations and reflections: Program instructors can observe and document participants' engagement, collaboration, and problem-solving during activities and projects. Reflection journals or portfolios can also be utilized to encourage participants to reflect on their learning journey, identify challenges, and highlight their achievements.

Completion and presentation of projects: Assess the completion and quality of the participants' projects as a measure of their application of skills and creativity. Participants can showcase their projects during a culminating event or exhibition, allowing for peer and community evaluation of their work.

To measure the impact on participants and determine the success of the program, the following outcome indicators can be used:
- Skill development: Evaluate the growth of participants' skills in areas such as critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and coding proficiency. This can be assessed through comparative analyses of pre- and post-program skill assessments.
- Self-confidence and self-expression: Measure the participants' self-confidence and ability to express their ideas and creativity through their LEGO models and coding projects. This can be done through self-assessments, peer evaluations, and instructor observations.
- Parent and participant satisfaction: Assess the satisfaction levels of both parents and participants through feedback surveys or interviews. Measure their perceived value of the program, the extent to which their expectations were met, and their willingness to recommend the program to others.
- Long-term interest and engagement: Monitor the participants' continued interest and engagement in STEM-related activities, LEGO building, and coding beyond the program duration. This can be assessed through follow-up surveys or interviews conducted several months after program completion.

By utilizing a combination of these evaluation methods, the program can track the efforts, measure the outcomes, and determine the impact on participants. This data can be used to assess the effectiveness of the program, make necessary improvements, and demonstrate the success of the LEGO Academy in achieving its objectives of skill development, confidence building, and fostering a passion for learning.

What benefits do you see in attending monthly meetings with Parks & Community Services Department and providing quarterly (once every 3 months) activity reports to the Recreation and Parks Commission?

Attending monthly meetings with the Parks & Community Services Department and providing quarterly activity reports to the Recreation and Parks Commission offer several benefits for the LEGO Academy program:

Collaboration and Communication: Regular meetings with the Parks & Community Services Department provide an opportunity to collaborate and align program activities with the department's goals and initiatives. It allows for effective communication of program updates, challenges, and successes, fostering a strong working relationship between the LEGO Academy and the department.

Resource Allocation and Support: Monthly meetings offer a platform to discuss resource needs, facility requirements, and any logistical or operational support required for the program. This ensures that the LEGO Academy has access to necessary resources, such as space, equipment, or additional staffing, to deliver high-quality programming. Program Evaluation and Improvement: By providing quarterly activity reports to the Recreation and Parks Commission, the LEGO Academy program can showcase its progress, achievements, and outcomes. These reports can include participant enrollment numbers, attendance records, skill development data, feedback summaries, and project highlights. The commission can review these reports to evaluate the program's effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and provide guidance or support as needed.

Community Engagement and Visibility: The LEGO Academy program can gain visibility within the community through regular interaction with the Parks & Community Services Department and the Recreation and Parks Commission. This increased visibility can attract potential participants, sponsors, or community partnerships, thereby expanding the reach and impact of the program.

Program Sustainability and Funding Opportunities: By maintaining a close relationship with the Parks & Community Services Department, the LEGO Academy program can stay informed about funding opportunities, grants, or other financial resources that may be available. Attending monthly meetings and providing regular reports allows the program to demonstrate its value and impact, increasing the likelihood of securing continued funding or support.

Alignment with Community Priorities: Regular engagement with the Parks & Community Services Department and the Recreation and Parks Commission ensures that the LEGO Academy program remains aligned with the community's priorities and needs. It allows for feedback, input, and guidance from community stakeholders, ensuring that the program continues to address the educational, recreational, and developmental needs of the community.

Overall, attending monthly meetings and providing quarterly activity reports strengthens the program's relationship with the Parks & Community Services Department, enhances program evaluation and improvement efforts, increases community visibility, and facilitates resource allocation and support. These benefits contribute to the long-term sustainability and success of the LEGO Academy program within the McNamara Park community.

The city allocates $7,500 to utility expenses annually for McNamara Youth Center. What steps will the program take to stay within its utility budget? Should the program exceed the annual allocation, how will it cover the overage? Lastly, how will the org. cover the cost of materials and supplies while also keeping services free or low cost for residents?

To stay within the utility budget of $7,500 allocated for McNamara Youth Center, the LEGO Academy program can take the following steps:
Energy-efficient practices: Implement energy-saving measures such as using energy-efficient lighting, turning off lights and equipment when not in use, and optimizing heating and cooling systems. These practices can help reduce utility consumption and lower costs.

- Smart scheduling: Carefully plan and schedule program activities to optimize the use of facilities and utilities. This includes avoiding unnecessary use of energy-consuming equipment during low-attendance periods and consolidating activities to maximize efficiency.
- Monitoring and tracking: Regularly monitor utility usage and costs to identify any potential areas of excess consumption or inefficiencies. By tracking utility data, the program can identify patterns, set benchmarks, and implement strategies to optimize resource usage.
- Community engagement and education: Educate program participants, staff, and community members about the importance of energy conservation and responsible resource use. Promote a culture of sustainability within the program and encourage participants to adopt energy-saving practices at home.

If the program exceeds the annual utility allocation of $7,500, the following steps can be taken to cover the overage:

Seek additional funding: Explore opportunities for securing additional funding from grants, sponsorships, or partnerships. This could involve reaching out to local businesses, foundations, or community organizations that have an interest in supporting educational programs or sustainability initiatives.

Cost-saving measures: Implement cost-saving measures within the program's operations without compromising the quality of services. This could include negotiating better utility rates, exploring alternative energy sources, or adjusting program schedules to optimize resource usage.

Reallocation of budget: Assess the program's overall budget and identify areas where funds can be reallocated to cover the overage in utility expenses. This might involve prioritizing certain program elements or activities and making adjustments accordingly.

To cover the cost of materials and supplies while keeping services free or low cost for residents, the organization can consider the following strategies:
- Donations and sponsorships: Seek donations of materials, supplies, or financial contributions from local businesses, individuals, or community organizations that are supportive of the program's goals and mission. Establish partnerships and sponsorship agreements to secure necessary resources without burdening program participants with additional costs.
- Grants and funding opportunities: Research and apply for grants or funding opportunities that specifically support educational programs, STEM initiatives, or youth development. Many organizations offer grants to support materials and supplies for such programs.
- Cost-sharing and partnerships: Explore partnerships with other educational programs or organizations that share similar objectives. By sharing resources, facilities, or materials, the program can reduce costs and provide a wider range of services without significantly impacting participants' fees.
- Volunteer involvement: Engage volunteers from the community who can contribute their time, skills, or resources to assist with sourcing or providing materials and supplies. This can help offset costs and create a sense of community involvement and ownership.

By implementing these strategies, the program can effectively manage utility expenses, seek additional funding if needed, and cover the cost of materials and supplies while keeping services either free or low cost for residents. These steps promote sustainability, fiscal responsibility, and the accessibility of the LEGO Academy program to the McNamara Park community.

Briefly describe other current or previous programming by your organization that supports this program's likelihood of success at McNamara Youth Center.

At Steady Studios, we have a track record of successful programming that supports the likelihood of success for the LEGO Academy at McNamara Youth Center. Some of our relevant current and previous programming includes:

XR Education: Our XR Education program integrates Extended Reality (XR) technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), into the classroom to create immersive and engaging learning experiences. This expertise in immersive technologies can be leveraged to enhance the hands-on learning and coding experiences offered by the LEGO Academy.

Digital Media Hub: We operate a digital media hub that provides individuals and organizations with the resources and spaces to explore, develop, and share their ideas

through streaming media and podcasts. This expertise in digital media production can be utilized to document and showcase the participants' LEGO creations and coding projects, amplifying their achievements and fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Mental Health Counseling Groups: As a non-profit organization, we prioritize mental health and well-being. We offer counseling groups led by licensed professionals, creating a safe and supportive environment where individuals can address their mental health needs. This emphasis on mental health can contribute to the overall well-being and success of participants in the LEGO Academy program.

Mentoring: Steady Studios is committed to mentoring the next generation of tech enthusiasts. Through our mentoring programs, we provide guidance, support, and opportunities for skill development to help individuals explore and pursue careers in technology. This mentoring aspect can extend to the LEGO Academy program, where participants can benefit from the expertise and guidance of experienced mentors.

By drawing on our expertise in XR education, digital media, mental health support, and mentoring, Steady Studios can leverage its existing programming to enhance the success of the LEGO Academy at McNamara Youth Center. This multi-faceted approach ensures a comprehensive and enriching experience for program participants, supporting their skill development, well-being, and future aspirations.