



METC 2025 Annual Report

A Year of Accomplishments and Impact



Museum of Early Trades & Crafts
9 Main Street, Madison, NJ 07940 | metc.org

OVERVIEW



In 2025, the Museum of Early Trades & Crafts continued to build on its mission of connecting people to the history of work and craftsmanship while navigating the challenges facing many small cultural institutions. Rising operational costs, the responsibility of maintaining a historic building, and the ongoing effort to expand audiences required careful planning and resource management. Rising to the task, the museum achieved several important milestones. Strategic planning efforts, begun in 2024, helped guide program growth and strengthen partnerships with schools and community organizations, allowing the museum to expand access to its curriculum-based field trips and public programs. New initiatives in community outreach and educational programming further broadened the museum's impact and continued stewardship of its collections and historic building ensured that the stories of early trades and crafts remain accessible to future generations. For the first time in many years, we could present a robust and long-term exhibit schedule that highlighted our collection as a feature to educate and elucidate the importance of our cultural heritage. This includes our educational programming and the establishment of a comprehensive schedule of exhibitions that reflects the importance of our collection in the broader discussion of our shared cultural heritage.

2025 was a transformative and active year for the museum as we built upon our established strategic framework, creating workable action plans to advance the mission and lead us to embark on a new trajectory of mission driven programs and experiences to engage the larger community. Supported by sound financial management, excellent governance, a deeply committed staff, and generous donors and partners, METC experienced measurable growth in all areas.

We have the added responsibility and honor of residing in a magnificent historic building. The James Library Building, which is listed on both the state and national registers of historic places, is a powerful built-in asset for interpreting New Jersey history. Rather than treating the building as just a backdrop, our educators and curatorial staff actively use it as a primary artifact—one that embodies many of the same stories found in our collections. The building itself can anchor discussions of 19th-century civic life and philanthropy in New Jersey, harkening back to when it was originally constructed in 1899 as a free public library funded by D. Willis James. It reflects a period when industrial wealth was often reinvested into community institutions, opening the door to exploring broader themes like the rise of public education, literacy, and the development of towns like Madison within the state's economic growth.

The building's architecture and craftsmanship align directly with our mission with its Romanesque Revival style, stonework, wood detailing, and decorative elements which can be interpreted as examples of the skilled trades the museum highlights—stonecutting, carpentry, ironwork, and decorative arts. Guided or self-guided tours connect these visible features to the lives and labor of New Jersey craftspeople, making abstract history tangible.

OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

The site also provides an opportunity to examine changing community needs over time. The building's transition from a library to a museum illustrates how institutions evolve while preserving heritage. This can support conversations about preservation, adaptive reuse, and the importance of maintaining historic structures in modern communities—key issues in New Jersey's development. With the 2020 annexing of space in the James Building, directly across the street, METC's campus has additional room to welcome the increasing audiences, school groups and other civic organizations that use our museum as a community hub and a space for learning, exploration, and engagement. As we incorporate all these assets and initiatives, our mission continues to pave the way for us to share the stories that transform abstract history into tangible, relatable experiences and foster civic engagement and preservation of our cultural heritage for diverse audiences

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Increasing our impact and broadening our engagement with the public was a key goal of our Strategic Plan and this mission driven growth aided us in to connecting to audiences through expanded programming, improved collections access, and inclusive storytelling initiatives that focused on New Jersey's history, trades, and crafts.

METC's curriculum-based education programs reached over 5,000 individuals from ten counties throughout New Jersey this past year. We are intentional about how these mission driven programs offer an interpretive framework for the history they present, encouraging audiences to think of that history in new ways. We also are committed to deepening and broadening participation and, in 2025, we created an initiative that used donor support to fund a Scholarship Program for every student in Madison's 3rd grade to participate in educational field trips. At the same time, staff expanded the hands-on and STEM program options for children and families, hosting NJ Makers Day 2025, and engaging families with interactive STEM-based craft activities tied to historical trades. Our educators continued to offer curriculum-aligned school field trips, workshops, and craft-based learning experiences which strengthened our role as a leader in experiential, object-based learning.

Our dynamic exhibition programming was a highlight for 2025, as the museum focused on providing underrepresented perspectives, including the role of women and everyday life in early America. We focused on innovative exhibitions, expanded hands-on educational programming, increased access to our collection via the Viewable Storage Facility (VSF), and deepened community partnerships. These efforts enhanced our visibility as a leading regional cultural institution while advancing METC's mission to connect diverse audiences with New Jersey's history and material culture.

We also maintained a strong schedule of biannual Main Gallery exhibitions, reinforcing institutional consistency and audience engagement. We leveraged our VSF to provide greater access to collections for both staff and the public and enhanced preservation and conservation practices, highlighting our collection of over 8,000 artifacts, connecting them to contemporary life and learning.

BY THE NUMBERS

272

Members and Donors

4,063

Social Media Followers

185,853

Post Impressions

24,000

Website Visitors

75,181

Video Views

610

Attendees for Adult Programs

5,248

Students served in Field Trips & School Outreaches

961

Attendees in Children's Programs

135

Attendees for Boy and Girl Scout Programs

2025

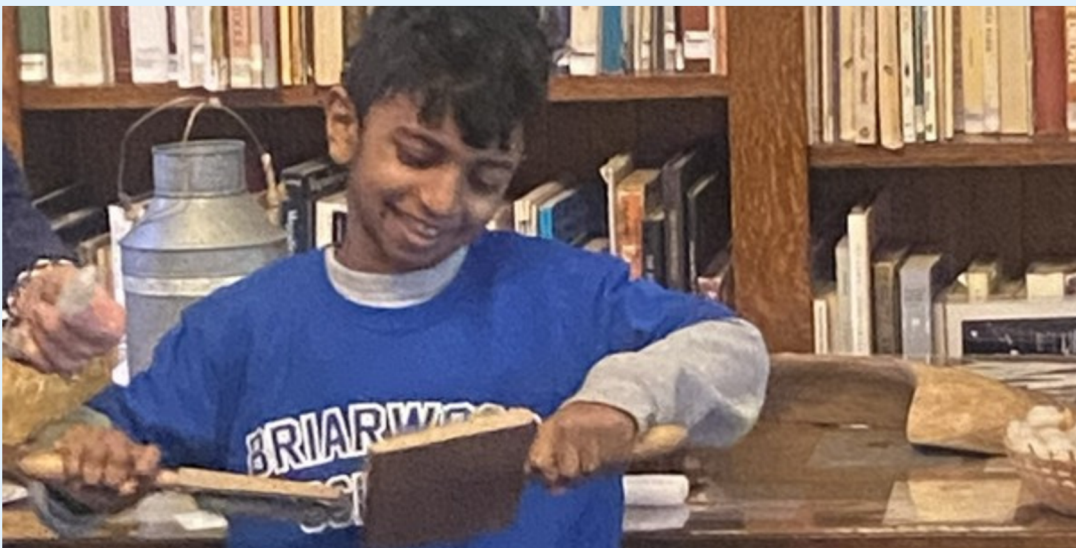
EDUCATION

As a New Jersey history museum, we know that education is seldom limited to the classroom. Numerous studies show that children who visited a museum had higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics, and science than children who did not. Museums such as ours are critical places for people of all ages and backgrounds to explore and learn.

Recognizing the importance of history and civic education for students, our school programs are where we explore strategies to ensure that our educational field trips meet the requirements of the New Jersey state curriculum. We maintain relationships with school administrators and classroom teachers across the state, continually updating our offerings to ensure alignment with the schools and our mission. This also translates to our exhibitions, and thanks to the efforts of our curatorial staff we have developed exhibits that elevate the impact through increased rotation frequency, interactive experiences, digital access, and utilization of other spaces throughout the museum and Education Annex.

In 2025, the Education Department saw a significant increase in the number of adult and school programs compared to 2024 while continuing to focus on refining its educational programs for all ages. We took advantage of new teacher contacts for school programs and offered special financial incentives to increase our audience of older adults. In 2025, our school field trip attendance was 5,248, representing ten counties in New Jersey. Additional educational programming which encompassed adult outreach, scouts, weekend crafts, Workspace Wednesdays, and Makerspace accounted for an additional 1,706 individuals.

A long-term commitment from the OOS enabled METC to continue to provide free field trips and transportation to schools in the Oranges and Maplewood. Over 1,000 students visited METC through access to this grant funded initiative. We created a pilot program with Madison Public Schools using donor funds to sponsor the entire 3rd grade class for an educational field trip to the museum. Based on positive feedback from the schools we are actively pursuing funding to duplicate this program again in 2026. For our efforts to collaborate with Madison Public Schools, METC was honored as a Community Partner.



EDUCATION (CONTINUED)

Classroom teachers continue to give us positive feedback about the hands-on learning offered by the museum, encouraging our team to keep this core concept at the center of our programming. Discussions with teachers led us to add “free time” in the museum during field trips, allowing for individual exploration and we have extended programs to two hours to accommodate this request. After the continued success of Workspace Wednesday in 2025, with sessions for older and younger children, we will offer this option again in 2026, once more responding to our community’s needs.

Staff turnover in 2024 and 2025 impacted some of the changes that were planned for Education, but we were able to re-evaluate our Scout programs to align with the mission of the museum while also meeting badge requirements. Additionally, all our adult programs were updated to match the METC branding guidelines. These updates help ensure that the museum continues to deliver high quality programming. Our school programs already meet the current New Jersey curriculum guidelines, and as new guidelines are published, we review all school programs to ensure compliance with any updated standards.

The museum also reaches underserved and diverse audiences through outreach programs, scholarships, and partnerships with schools and community organizations. Many of our programs can be delivered to schools, senior centers, community facilities, or can be accessed virtually, providing access to audiences who may not otherwise be able to visit in person. Our educators emphasize flexible programming that helps make participation possible for people with disabilities and varying mobility needs. As with all facets of the museum, our Strategic Plan guided the staff in developing initiatives to expand educational offerings by connecting more broadly with the education community to best serve students, adults, and families, and to increase impact especially in underserved areas through enhanced stronger partnerships.

Our professional educators provided 212 programs in 2025 reaching students, senior adults, and people living with disabilities throughout New Jersey.



CURATORIAL & EXHIBITIONS

METC holds an extensive collection of material culture that references the long history of craftsmanship and ingenuity of the people of New Jersey. We trace the core of our remarkable collection back to collectors and museum founders, Edgar and Agnes Land. The Lands amassed their collection in the mid-20th century with a focus on tools and their final products representing the historic trades of the 18th and 19th centuries. Acknowledging a void in representation of NJ's history of the everyday person, the founders focused on preserving, researching, and interpreting the lives and livelihoods of people who settled in the area. The collection of approximately 8,000 artifacts reflects the dynamic story of home, shop, and farm trades in New Jersey and the surrounding states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Over the past 56 years, METC has added to its collection through donations or purchases; however, the core of the collection represents a comprehensive and dedicated approach to NJ's development from early settlement to industrialization. Through this extensive collection, we create exhibitions and programs that connect all people to the stories of human movement, ingenuity, and imagination.

Now that our Viewable Storage Facility is complete, it is providing us with new opportunities to take a deeper dive into our own collection. Support from the NJHC, among others, has allowed us to add trained personnel to our curatorial staff as we engage in additional research, assessment, and conservation efforts, leading to better understanding and interpretation of the artifacts for inclusion in exhibits and as a resource for scholarly research. With over 40 trades represented, the collection illustrates the depth and breadth of these historic trades in New Jersey before the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Objects are made from a variety of materials including wood, tin, iron, leather, brass, horn, straw, glass, clay, paper, silk, and cotton. Specific strengths in the collection include tools, final products from woodworking, metalworking, shoemaking, farming, and textile-making trades.

In 2025, METC displayed eight exhibits and held four curatorial exhibit programs. We hosted a lecture on the Public History of Slavery in Morris County during Black History Month. We also coordinated artist tours and two artist workshops featuring artists and teachers – Chris Schorr hosted an After Hours Tour, artist Mickey Waring facilitated a special workshop on Puppet Making, and artist Catherine Oliver led a workshop on Explosion Books to complement our exhibits.



Main Gallery Exhibits

Booked 19: Process

January-May 2025 This exhibit featured METC's artists in residence, The Book Arts Roundtable, with their annual exhibit focusing on artists' processes. Forty-two objects were displayed varying in dimension and composition and included a range of tactile objects for visitors to physically interact. New for 2025, we included images of the artist's work in progress, as well as a video loop of the artist talk, both accessible by tablet in the exhibit.

In the Kitchen

May 2025-January 2026 Using the kitchen as a focal point, this exhibit documented changes in society, particularly as New Jersey became more industrialized. The history of kitchens is also, in part, the history of women. The kitchen has been traditionally the largest and warmest room in the house, and throughout the 18th and 19th centuries it was principally the domain of women who kept the fires burning and the family fed.

Vault Exhibits

Ishill Archives

January-May 2025 This was a loan from the Berkeley Heights Public Library. Joseph Ishill was an anarchist who printed limited edition books of controversial authors. Utilizing wood engravings and hand bindings, this exhibit complemented **Booked 19: Process** exhibit.

A Woman's Work is Never Done

May-December 2025 This exhibit featured work from New Jersey artist Pam Cooper. Primarily composed using found objects and handmade paper, these pieces highlight the repetition, skill, and demands of domestic labor, and complemented the **In the Kitchen** exhibit.

METC Education Annex Window Exhibits

Albert Einstein: Champion of Racial Justice

January-March 2025 On loan from the Einstein Museum of Science, this traveling exhibit explored Albert Einstein's advocacy for and friendships with African Americans in Princeton and across the country.

Identity

May-June 2025 We were thrilled to showcase the incredible work of Morris County School of Technology, Design Academy students in this art exhibit. Students demonstrated their passion for beautifying the spaces around them and shared their unique visual stories and artistic journeys with the community.

Shade Trees

June-July 2025 This exhibit was created in collaboration with the Friends of Madison Shade Trees in celebration of Earth Month. Facts about the benefits of shade trees, the study of dendrochronology, and the Tuttle Oak were featured in this exhibit.

Who We Are

August 2025-January 2026 Showcasing ongoing projects as well as photographs of METC, this exhibit encouraged viewers to make their way across the street to learn more about the museum in their hometown.



SOCIAL & COMMUNITY IMPACT



During 2025, we focused on providing added value while further engaging visitors with our exhibits. We launched a mobile tour of our 2024 exhibit **Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge: Fortune and Philanthropy in New Jersey**, as well as "hear from the artists" videos on an iPad during **Booked 19: Process**.

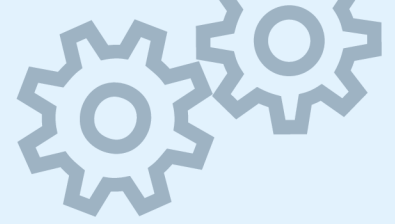
We continuously update our email list with event attendees, where they receive all events and exhibit emails. Our marketing department sends out monthly emails to those indicating membership interest when they purchase tickets. To increase membership this summer, we included family passes to the museum for parents during Workspace Wednesdays in June through August and received eight new family memberships during that time frame. We were also able to strengthen our institutional visibility as we were featured in regional media and tourism coverage as a top New Jersey cultural destination. We continue to expand our digital resources with our self-guided tours via Engage by Cell and include iPads and other digital components in our exhibits.

METC's marketing and communication efforts increased in 2025 which aligned with our strategic initiative to establish METC as a community hub by increasing community connections and partnerships and expanding impact. To help reach new audiences, we continued last year's endeavor of posting YouTube shorts to gain visibility to the channel and to our museum. In 2025, our YouTube followers tripled. We send regular emails to all members, donors, and those who sign up to be on our mailing list. The average open rates range from 35-42%, which is on par or slightly higher than the standard average open rate of 29%-40%. All events are regularly distributed to local newspapers and media outlets. Throughout 2025, we consistently had our own METC spotlight in Vicinity Magazine for upcoming events and exhibits. In July, John Elliott, the local weather reporter from CBS News featured our Family Fun Day with an in-depth segment on the museum, the staff, and our events.

Our social media activity was strong with over 1,000 posts across all channels (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter) and 184,736 impressions. We have over 4,000 followers across our 4 social channels, up 5.2% from last year. Our video views across all channels saw a 13.6% increase from 2024 and our average engagement levels are 4.22%, well above the national levels for nonprofits. In 2025, we had 24,000 active website viewers who spent an average of 1-2 minutes on the website.

METC's community engagement and partnerships played a critical role in local initiatives involving schools, community organizations, and regional cultural groups, reinforcing our commitment to increase community awareness about innovation, making METC a frequent destination for enrichment and education.

OPERATIONS & SPECIAL PROJECTS



As the stewards of this historic building, which is owned by the Borough of Madison, we are the preservers of this piece of history. Our current Preservation Plan has served us well, outlining specific restoration projects that have been completed. We now have a renewed commitment to update our existing preservation plan for the next decade, focusing on restorations and expansion of our historic building.

Over the past fifteen years, METC has managed a multitude of projects to preserve the building, securing over \$2.4 million in grant funding and providing additional funding from its own Building Fund as well as staff resources to manage these extensive and complicated projects. These projects included a new terra cotta roof, re-pointing and cleaning of the exterior stonework, new drainage, gutters, and other stonework as well as building a new collections storage in the VSF. This work continues as we prepare to address conservation plans for the museum's front entryway.

Meanwhile, ongoing building projects were continuations of multi-year activities due to complexity, coordination, and funding. In 2025, METC continued a project with Elderhorst Bells to return the building's c. 1900 Seth Thomas clock to working order. A modern electric motor was attached to the clock mechanism inside the clock tower, and a new bell striker was added to sound the bell. This project was funded by the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust Fund and the Madison Open Space Fund. Beginning in July, the clock once again chimes the hour. This project will continue in 2026 with the refinishing of the exterior clock faces. In September, METC was awarded a grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust with matching funding from the Madison Open Space to create planning documents for the repair of the James Library Building's front entrance. The project, led by METC's architects, Historic Building Architects, will investigate the many components of the entrance, including the pink granite stone steps, decorative entrance doors, carved stonework, and the vaulted mosaic ceiling and floor tiles. This investigation will assist in designing the restoration of the front entrance with solutions that will last for the next 100 years. METC is also continuing to work on the process of designing upgraded heating and cooling systems for the building, both to replace aging equipment, as well as to provide a comfortable environment for its collections, visitors, and staff.





2025 INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT AND FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

METC continued a year of disciplined financial management while growing program engagement during 2025. Through careful stewardship of resources and continued expansion of mission-driven programs, the museum strengthened both its financial stability and its impact within the community.

Several program areas experienced notable growth during the year, demonstrating increased engagement with the museum's mission and offerings. Education program income increased 29%, rising from approximately \$70.3k in 2024 to \$90.5k in 2025 as demand for school and community programming continued to expand. Membership income increased 31%, and revenue from admissions, museum store sales, and rentals grew by 24%. Endowment distributions and investment income also increased by 16%, totaling approximately \$500k for the year. Despite income finishing approximately \$34k below the \$825k budget, careful expense management resulted in roughly \$30.2k in positive operating income, marking positive cash flow in three of the last four years.

The museum maintained a strong balance sheet throughout 2025. Operating cash at year end totaled approximately \$223k, sufficient to support current operational needs, while an additional \$92.6k was designated for special projects planned for 2025–2026. The museum's endowment assets continued to grow during the year, reaching approximately \$10.5 million at year end, compared with \$9.9 million in 2024. Overall endowment performance tracked appropriately against benchmarks and continues to support METC's long term sustainability. The Bruehne Trust & Endowment remains a vital resource for METC, supporting operations, mission driven initiatives, capital improvements, and the long-term preservation of the historic site. Managed by two investment firms and overseen by the Finance Committee, these funds benefit from disciplined stewardship and strategic investment practices designed to preserve and grow resources for future generations.

METC's financial statements again underwent an independent audit by Nisivoccia LLP, reinforcing the museum's commitment to transparency, accountability, and strong financial governance. The audit process confirms that the museum continues to follow professional accounting standards and financial best practices.

Throughout 2025, METC also continued implementing the strategic priorities identified through its Strategic Plan. Efforts focused on strengthening educational programming, expanding partnerships, and deepening engagement with the communities we serve. These initiatives further advanced METC's role as a community hub while supporting long term preservation planning and thoughtful development of the historic campus.

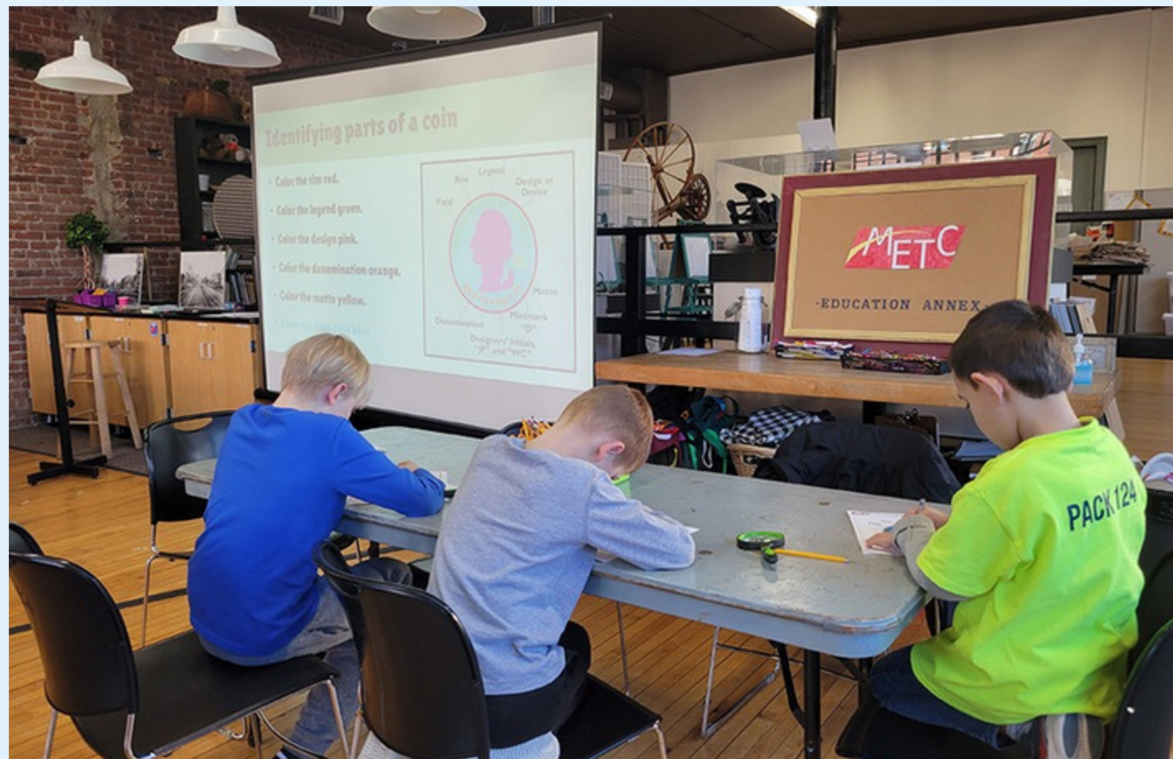
With a solid financial foundation, growing community engagement, and disciplined stewardship of its endowment resources, METC remains well positioned to continue expanding its programs, preserving its historic site, and increasing its impact in the years ahead.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Like all museums today, METC faces both overt and subtle challenges from a variety of external sources and without compromising our institutional mission, we must negotiate with shifting demographics, evolving visitor expectations, funding realignment, and ever-escalating technologies. Ideally, this leads to a richer and more memorable visitor experience and encourages visitors to become museum advocates. But often, conflicting goals and strategies can make this a challenge to achieve—from how much to embrace new technology to how to adapt educational offerings to reflect school curriculum, or how to share new information while still engaging our audiences.

We are meeting these challenges in a myriad of ways, including rethinking and reworking our limited spaces to accommodate growing audiences, using new research to promote deeper understanding of our collection and mission, providing greater interactivity, a fuller range of activities, adding to our professional staff, and increasing revenue stability. As we meet these challenges, we are looking forward to new possibilities. Knowing that our financial future is secure, that we possess the knowledge through our professional staff and our engaged board leadership to develop initiatives for continued growth and adaptability, we remain positive about the future of the Museum of Early Trades & Crafts.

We are encouraged as we move forward to recognize that 21st century museums are among the few institutions that can still serve as spaces for dialogue, reflection, and imagination—places where we can come together to ask, “What if?” And as we continue to envision museums as community spaces where radical futures are not only imagined but actively built, we can remain confident in a secure future that we can help shape through our ability to envision new possibilities.



TRUSTEES & STAFF

Good governance is essential to the work of museum with trustees and directors, providing the very foundation for the museum's success. Together the board and the executive director set the direction of the museum, obtain and manage the resources needed for it to fulfill its mission, and ensure that the museum is effectively serving its community. Museum boards and trustees are the connective tissue that link the museum and its mission to the community it serves.

CURRENT METC STAFF

Deborah Farrar Starker, Executive Director
Elizabeth Quay, Deputy Director
Claudette Stecher-Lopez, Curator of Collections
Robyn Ives, Finance Manager
Amy Reed, Communications Manager
Isabella Sangaline, Museum Educator
Brooke Figueiredo, Museum Educator
Stanley Ramirez, Museum Assistant
Katie Riso, Curatorial Assistant
Priscilla Perlatti, Curatorial Assistant
Josh Sloan, Patron Services
Emma Young, Patron Services
Kathleen Brennan Barrett, Part-Time Educator
River Alleyne, Part-Time Educator
Margaux Braun, Part-Time Educator

2025 METC TRUSTEES

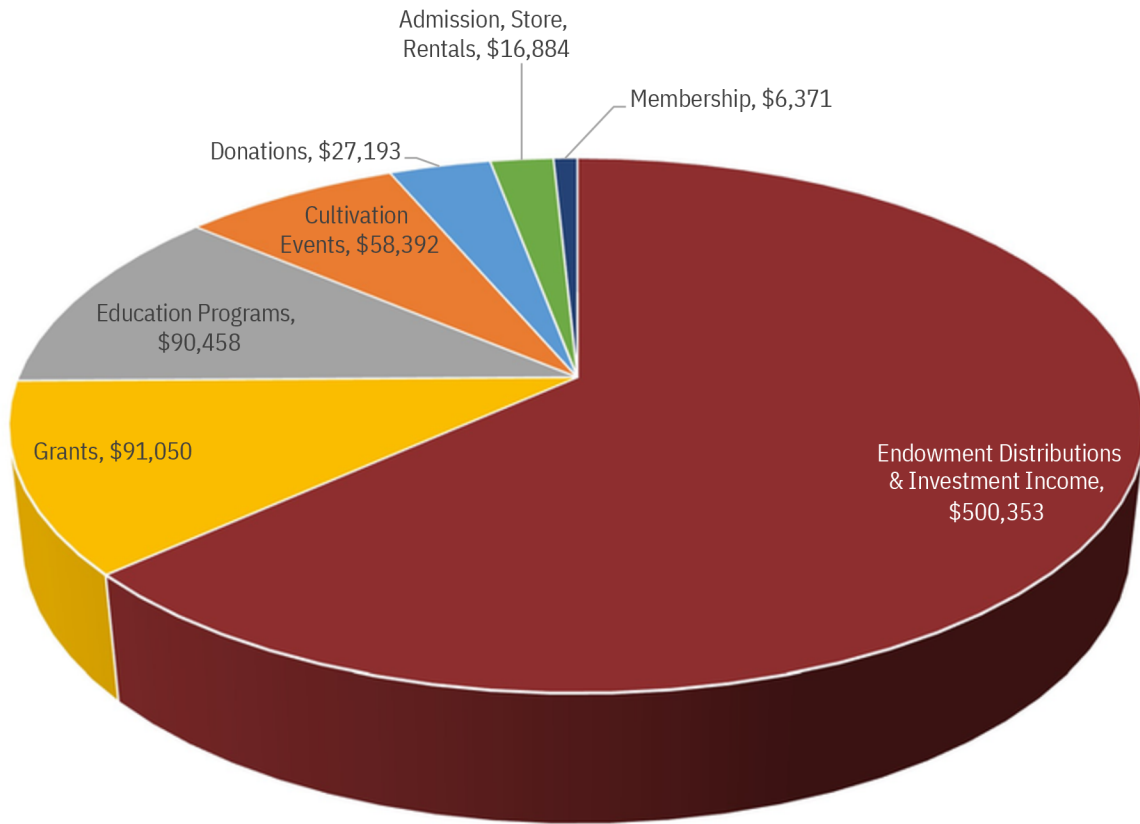
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Tyler Merson, Secretary
Irene Maroney, Treasurer
Andrew B. Boles
Jeff Gertler
Valerie Librizzi
Patricia Morgan
Shea Richardson
Gary Ruckelshaus
Michael Schloff
Silvina Traba
Virginia Wilson
Bob Conley, Mayor of Madison, Ex-Officio



APPENDIX A

2025 Total operating budget - -Income -Expense	\$790,700 \$760,460
Full-time staff	5
Part-time staff	6
Volunteers	15
Days open annually	307
Visitors to METC (Admission, Events)	4935
Education Participants	6800
Number of Members	67
Number of Donors	179
Social Media Engagement (website, FB, Instagram)	184,736
Total Numbers Reached (Est)	196,471

METC 2025 Income



- Endowment Distributions & Investment Income
- Grants
- Education Programs
- Cultivation Events
- Donations
- Admission, Store, Rentals
- Membership