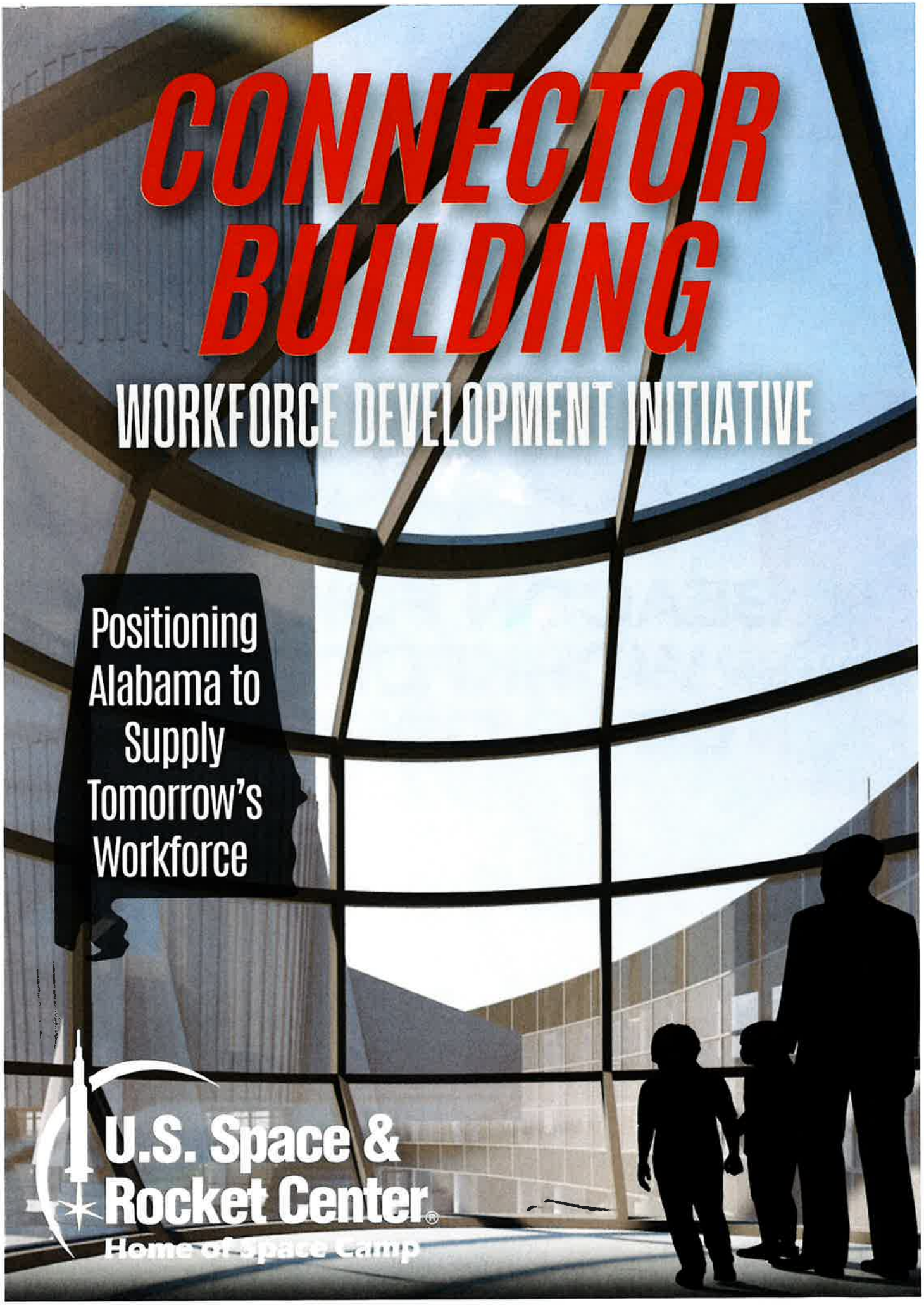

CONNECTOR BUILDING
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE
Positioning Alabama to Supply Tomorrow's Workforce
U.S. Space & Rocket Center®
Home of Space Camp

#1 Paid Tourist Attraction in Alabama with an economic impact of over $135M annually

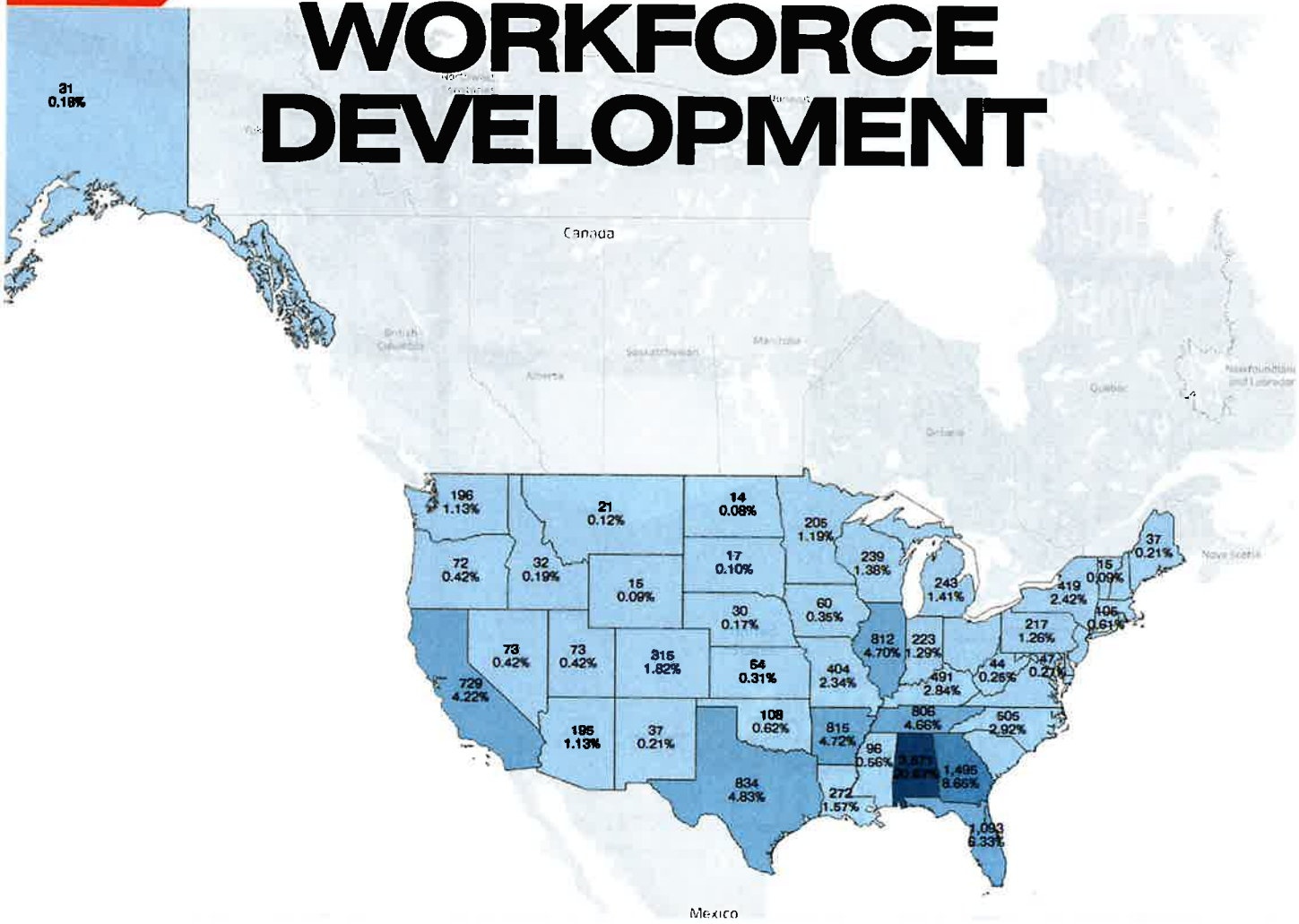
Home of Space Camp®, the largest and longest running STEM Camp in the World, 1M alumni across the globe

Home of the *INTUITIVE®* Planetarium, a global leader in the planetarium community

Home of the Space Camp Institute®, bringing thought leaders together to provide professional development opportunities

A hub for STEM education for people of all ages, serving students and adults across our state, nation and the world

A BEACON FOR STEM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



MESSAGE FROM DR. KIMBERLY ROBINSON:

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center has been pleased to receive support from the State of Alabama since it was established in the 1960s. We value our status as a state entity and your backing is crucial to garnering the support of donors and federal and local government partners. Because of your support, we have completed both the Space Camp Operations Center and Pathfinder Shuttler Orbiter projects. Both are shining examples of how we help young people enter the STEM workforce and showcase our state's contributions to space exploration.

This proposal is a request for state funding for a new connector building that will not only link our buildings and provide a new arrival experience for our guests, but also serve as a bridge to Alabama's workforce. It will also house a new data visualization center that will be the home of our *INTUITIVE*® Planetarium.

KEY MESSAGES

Making Connections: The connector building will provide a much-needed link between the Davidson Center for Space Exploration and our historic museum building while expanding exhibit spaces for our story of Alabama's role in the world of space exploration.

Upgrading Infrastructure: This effort is critical for addressing the challenges of our original museum, a concrete structure that was built before internet technology and ADA accessibility requirements.

Creating the Alabama Workforce Welcome Center: This space would provide a first-of-its-kind Alabama Workforce Welcome Center, a place for our guests from near and far to envision their place in Alabama's STEM workforce.

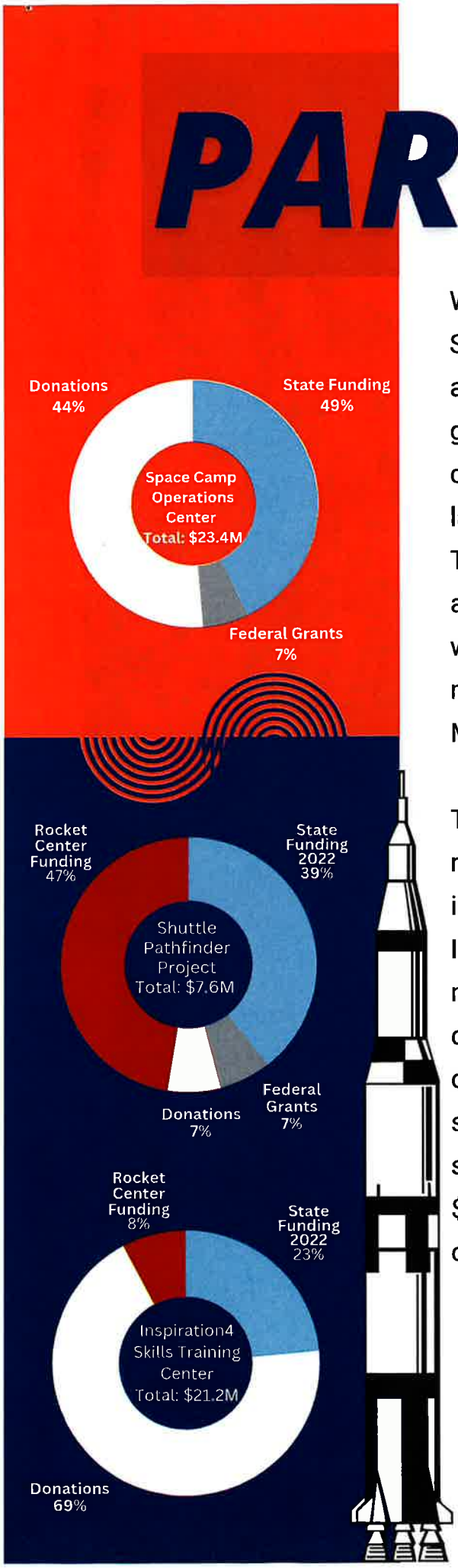
Providing a new home for the *INTUITIVE*® Planetarium: In just 5 years, the *INTUITIVE*® Planetarium has become a world-renowned center of excellence and content producer for live planetarium shows. This is an opportunity to invest in a cutting-edge LED panel dome that would overcome the major limitations of projection-based technology and increase longevity.

Alabama's Front Door : ROCKET City

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center is a center of STEM education and workforce development, and our vision meets Alabama's needs and addresses the Center's infrastructure challenges. Just as we connect the past to the future, we need a building that connects our two main structures and serves as a front door to a world-class facility.

NORTHROP GRUMMAN
AEROJET ROCKETDYNE
CLUB FOR THE FUTURE
INTUITIVE Research and Technology
TVA TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY
BLUE ORIGIN
BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama
TOYOTA
BOEING
SAIC
S3
Meta
JACOBS
POARCH CREEK INDIANS

PARTNERS



With support from the State of Alabama, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center has been successful in attracting funding from donors and federal and local government entities. The Rocket Center updated our campus master plan in 2022, leading to the soft launch of the Make Space for Tomorrow campaign. These efforts have raised over $47 million to date to address major capital needs across our campus. We work hard to secure local funding and have received major support from the City of Huntsville and Madison County over the last few years.

The City of Huntsville has provided over $2 million for recovery from the COVID pandemic as well as to invest in programs and projects across the campus. In addition, the city is leading completion of a $2.3 million extension to the road system around our campus. This will enable further development of the campus and increase safety by providing a crucial secondary access point. Madison County has directly supported the U.S. Space & Rocket Center with over $1.5 million in funding in relief and project funding over the last three years.

WORKFORCE NEEDS

Our country is at a critical crossroads as we face a shortage of skilled workers to maintain American competitiveness and Alabama's position in the global economy. In the aerospace and defense sector alone, the U.S. faces a shortage of 800,000 skilled workers. Additionally, nearly 40 percent of the nation's aerospace workforce is nearing retirement. This allows Alabama to be the center for qualified and committed talent and a lure for businesses to our state. However, we have work to do. According to Alabama's 2023 State of the Workforce, worker shortfalls are projected to be 111,500 and 139,600 for 2030 and 2035, respectively, and rise to 181,400 in 2040 and reach 231,600 by 2045. While our unemployment rate is hovering near historic lows, Alabama's labor force participation rate was just 57 percent, well below the national 62.2 percent. More than 22 percent of the state's workforce is underemployed.

Alabamians need to inspire young people to enter the STEM workforce, to seek new opportunities and strive to put their talents to work.

To achieve the Catalyst Strategic Plan's goal of unlocking Alabama's growth potential, Alabamians need to inspire young people to enter the STEM workforce, to seek new opportunities and strive to put their talents to work. While building our state's base of skilled workers, Alabama must also continue to look beyond our borders to recruit talent.

ROCKET CENTER NEEDS

Since opening in 1970, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center's has welcomed visitors through our original bunker-like main museum. While the cement construction was considered modern at the time and reminiscent of a fortified launch complex, the structure is challenging to upgrade for modern technology and ADA accessibility. As the Center has grown over the years, we have built additions and made a great effort to improve this space, but we are limited by mechanical and electrical challenges of a 54-year-old property. We are also limited in exhibit areas and currently can display less than half our collection that highlights Alabama's contributions to space exploration. With the addition of the Davidson Center for Space Exploration in 2008, we added a stunning space to display Alabama's Apollo-era history; however, we have no space to display the Alabama-built space shuttle artifacts in our collection.

While we embrace our history, we need to dazzle young people with current technology and show them how to be part of what's next. The Rocket Center is also home to the *INTUITIVE*® Planetarium, a partnership with *INTUTIVE* Research and Technology Corporation. Unfortunately, the projectors could go dark in under two years. To ensure the *INTUITIVE*® Planetarium continues to engage students across our state and around the world, we need to make a significant investment in technology and infrastructure.

We see evidence daily of one of our largest challenges - a disjointed campus. A our visitors exit our original museum, they must traverse more than 200 yards to get to the Davidson Center. On a beautiful day, they can enjoy our newly renovated Rocket Park and our space shuttle display, but Alabama's weather brings days that are cold and rainy or hot and stormy. Far too often, our visitors are confused by the large expanse between the buildings, a literal gap that also figuratively fragments our story.

THE CONNECTOR BUILDING

As the U.S. Space & Rocket Center considers it's role as a leader in STEM education and workforce development, our vision meets Alabama's needs and addresses the Center's infrastructure challenges. Just as we connect the past to the future, we need a building that connects our two main structures and serves as a front door to a world-class facility. This space will be dedicated to inspiring the next generation of astronauts, engineers, and technology workers. It will be a space where the community connects to our history and creates a launching point for Alabama's workforce while inviting international guests to learn about our state's contributions to space exploration.

PLANETARIUM

The Rocket Center team works continually to improve the visitor experience, and thanks to investment from *INTUITIVE* Research and Technology Corporation, we added the *INTUITIVE*® Planetarium in 2019. This conversion of the former Spacedome IMAX™ theater has been a tremendous asset, and our brilliant planetarium team has built it into a global brand in just five short years. The dome theater, however, is limited in seating and the pitch of the theater makes a challenging space for anyone with mobility issues.

As with all technology, we now need to invest in the planetarium. Our team presents up to 170 shows a month to our museum visitors, Space Camp® students, and for special events, creating a significant strain on our projection system.

The connector building presents an opportunity to invest in a cutting-edge LED panel dome that would overcome the major limitations of projection-based technology, including durability. This new space would also expand our capacity and capabilities in an accessible space specifically designed for our programs.

ALABAMA WORKFORCE WELCOME CENTER

TThe U.S. Space & Rocket Center hosts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. For many from outside our state, their visit here will be their first brush with Alabama. We envision a building that will ignite their imaginations, inform their aspirations, and ensure they know our great state as a place where those dreams can become a reality.

The Alabama Workforce Welcome Center will be a first-of-its-kind experience designed to capture the fascination of our visitors and be key to our arrival experience. The CATALYST Strategic Plan outlines eight sectors in the STEM fields, and there is no better place to highlight opportunities in these sectors than a strategically designed entrance to the world's largest space museum.

The space will include digital kiosks and VR interactive experiences keying off the Alabama Experience (ALEX) and build on the success of this mobile asset with a permanent location purpose-built to showcase Alabama for our guests.

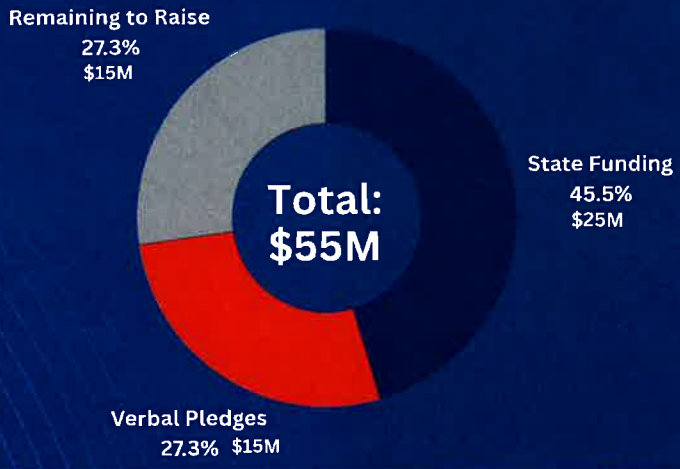
In addition to job opportunities, the Alabama Workforce Welcome Center will spotlight our two- and four-year institutions of higher learning as educational pathways to well-paying jobs in crucial sectors.

Our visitors are ignited by the breathtaking displays of space hardware and immersive programming. The Alabama Workforce Welcome Center will transform that energy into fuel for finding their dream job right here in Alabama.

Our visitors' imaginations and aspirations are ignited by the breathtaking displays of space hardware and immersive programming. The Alabama Workforce Welcome Center will transform that energy into fuel for finding their dream job right here in Alabama.

We want to create a breath-taking entry that leaves no doubt of the State of Alabama's profound contributions to our nation. This space would include dedicated classroom space for school field trips, an efficient ticketing area, and a space that connects Alabama's long legacy to its ongoing prowess in space exploration.

FUNDING

We are building off our success to bring generational improvements for the U.S. Space & Rocket Center with a connector building. While exact numbers are yet to be determined, we expect that the overall cost of completing the connector complex will be $50 to 55 million. This major enhancement would include the Alabama Workforce Welcome Center, a new arrival experience for our guests, and a state-of-the-art data visualization center that will power our *INTUITIVE®* Planetarium.

We are requesting a $25 million investment from the State of Alabama to begin work on this crucial addition to our campus. We have verbal commitments of up to $15 million for the project to date from donors. With the state's support, our experience shows that we can garner the support needed to complete this critical addition.