Playing At Learning, an independent,  501(c)(3) nonprofit is the partner for FIRST in Northern California for 3 of the FIRST programs. We provide all of the operational support and management for these programs (FIRST LEGO League, Junior FIRST LEGO League and FIRST Tech Challenge).  Our region covers the entire Northern California area which is basically the top half of the state.   We are dedicated to increasing the number of young people pursuing STEM careers - particularly for those in underserved or underrepresented groups and currently have active partnerships with Boys&Girls Clubs and Girl Scouts councils. We are looking to leverage these engagements and grow as we add the capacity to do so.

Playing At Learning is one of the largest of the FIRST partners and for the 2013 season in Northern California, we will serve more than 6,500 young people AND engage approximately 2,500 as event/tournament volunteers (most are single, full day events) as well as more than 2,000 team coach/mentors (most that volunteer for more than 50 hours in a season). Since 2004, we have served more than 25,000 young people between K-12 grades.

Our overhead rate is 3%  and we are very fiscally responsible and currently have 3 (unpaid) staff people. In addition, we have an AmeriCorps FIRST VISTA person placed with us who is focused on under-served initiatives for Northern California specifically for the FIRST Tech Challenge program.

We are currently raising funds to be used for these 3 high level purposes:

1)  Maintain The Play Space and keep it accessible for FIRST teams and the broader FIRST community to use as workspace, practice space, meeting, formal training/workshops, informal mentoring and community building

2)  Add dedicated program support for FLL and FTC programs, particularly towards improving experience and outcomes of  teams and coaches (primarily public school teachers or youth organization staff, not parents)  in low socio-economic areas

3)  Expand existing under-served and under-represented group initiatives including  tracking and gathering analytics as well as improve strategies for sustainability  (cited as one of the more pressing issues in working with the under-served).

We are looking to raise a total of $535k with $38k currently committed in funds as follows:

 $ 80k cost to keep The Play Space free and accessible through May 2014 lease
 $  40k classroom / training resources  (start up / one time funding only)
 $  40k   staff supporting under-represented / under-served initiatives
 $  50k team support specifically for under-served teams
 $  35k Encore business manager / executive director
 **Note**: Encore is a program that places retired executives to nonprofits for reduced salary
 $  40k   staff specifically focused on volunteer engagement
 $  40k robot building resources  (start up / one time funding only)
 $  40k camp staff director
 $120k lease cost for The Play Space. May 2014 to June 2015 remainder of lease for The Play Space
 $  50k public school teacher coach stipend (equivalent to sports team coaching)