

IMPACT REPORT

& 2024 ASPEN INSTITUTE ANNUAL REPORT







CONTENTS

OUR IMPACT

- 04** **Energy and Environment**
We advance solutions through practical, collective action that protects our planet and our future.
- 08** **Economic Opportunity**
We are committed to building an economy that drives greater security, opportunity, and resilience for all.
- 14** **Leadership**
We foster values-driven leadership across generations to tackle the world's toughest issues.
- 26** **Rising Generations**
We empower youth—particularly those furthest from opportunity—to transform lives, families, and our world.
- 34** **Societal Trust**
We strengthen societal trust and democracy by helping to solve problems in partnership with individuals, institutions, and communities.

IN THIS REPORT

- 02** **Letter from Margot Pritzker and Dan Porterfield**
A welcome from the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the President and CEO
- 40** **Local Spotlight**
How one Aspen Challenge winner became an Aspen Challenge mentor—and discovered what she's meant to do.
- 44** **Global Spotlight**
A cohort of Aspen Global Leadership Network Fellows explore Colombia's "peace laboratory."
- 48** **What's New**
Education programs soar at the Resnick Center for Herbert Bayer Studies in 2024, and a new exhibition launches in 2025.
- 50** **Letter From Maria Laura Acebal**
Executive Vice President of Strategy and Corporate Secretary
- 51** **Board of Trustees**
- 54** **Our Programs and Fellowships**
- 55** **Letter from Suzanne Berger**
Executive Vice President for Institutional Advancement
- 56** **Giving Thanks**
- 69** **2024 Annual Report**

LETTER FROM MARGOT PRITZKER AND DAN PORTERFIELD



Dear Friends,

This year is an exciting one for the Aspen Institute as we celebrate our 75th anniversary.

It all began with our mid-century founder, Chicago industrialist Walter Paepcke, who believed that the world urgently needed “humanistic leaders who valued reason, knowledge, dialogue, culture, and moral inquiry.” In 1949, Paepcke and his wife, Elizabeth, brought together 2,000 global leaders for the Goethe Bicentennial in Aspen, Colorado, to explore how humanism could shape leadership and problem-solving in a postwar world. Their vision was clear: Address the uncertainty and challenges of the time through meaningful dialogue and thoughtful engagement.

Over the past 75 years, the Aspen Institute has grown into a global convening and leadership organization with dozens of programs and partners, connecting thousands annually through our programs, seminars, events, and fellowships. Our work emphasizes many important topics, including strengthening societal trust, expanding economic opportunity, engaging and inspiring the young, addressing climate and energy challenges, and fostering cross-generational leadership.

In this report, we take a moment to reflect on our progress and celebrate our impact. Together, we are making a difference for people and communities around the world and bringing to life our purpose to “ignite human potential to build understanding and create new possibilities for a better world.”

This purpose is as relevant today as it was in 1949. And, thanks to your support, we will ensure that it continues to serve as our guiding light for the next 75 years and beyond.

Thank you for all that you do for the Aspen Institute.

With gratitude,

Margot Pritzker
Chair, Board of Trustees

Dan Porterfield
President and CEO





ASPEN ENERGY WEEK 2024

How tech breakthroughs and an evolving regulatory environment are shifting the energy landscape.

Marking its 48th year, Aspen Energy Week 2024 convened a group of energy leaders for five days in August at the Aspen Meadows Resort to engage in critical conversations on the future of the US energy system. An effort of the Energy and Environment Program, led by Greg Gershuny, this invitation-only gathering brought together energy entrepreneurs, industry executives, regulators, policymakers, and thought leaders in a set of moderated discussions that drew on the full range of perspectives in the room in pursuit of breakthrough ideas and action.

THE 2024 FORUM WAS CO-CHAIRLED BY:

RICH POWELL

CEO, Clean Energy Buyers Alliance

ROBIN MILLICAN

Senior Director, US Policy and Advocacy, Breakthrough Energy

MIRANDA BALLENTINE

Former Founding CEO, Clean Energy Buyers Alliance

COLETTE HONORABLE

Executive Vice President, Public Policy, and
Chief External Affairs Officer, Exelon Corporation

DAWN LIPPERT

Founder and CEO, Elemental Excelsior

MICHAEL TERRELL

Senior Director, Energy & Climate, Google

JUSTIN WORLAND

Senior Correspondent, *Time* Magazine

Discussions took place against the backdrop of rapidly shifting energy demands, technological breakthroughs, and evolving public and regulatory landscapes. As the energy terrain continues to evolve, Aspen Energy Week remains a vital forum for fostering collaboration and driving actionable solutions. The 2024 forum reaffirmed the Institute's role as a leader in convening candid, solutions-oriented dialogue on the pressing energy and climate challenges of our time. ●



Aspen Energy Week explores the future of US energy.



CLEAN OCEAN FREIGHT

The Aspen Energy and Environment Program's ZEMBA initiative landed a huge win on its first tender.

In April 2024, the Zero Emission Maritime Buyers Alliance (ZEMBA) successfully completed its inaugural tender for the emissions reduction associated with clean-energy-powered shipping. ZEMBA is a part of the Institute's Energy and Environment Program, and its inaugural tender was the first-ever collective effort by a group of leading freight buyers to go to market in search of clean-energy-powered shipping solutions at commercial scale.

With its groundbreaking first tender, ZEMBA's freight buyer members, who rely on the maritime sector to transport their goods around the world, demonstrated a willingness to pay for scalable, sustainable shipping solutions above and beyond current market offerings and beyond what current regulations require. Additionally, the successful completion of this tender demonstrated the effectiveness of ZEMBA's demand aggregation model as a way for freight buyers to make immediate investments to reduce their ocean freight supply-chain emissions.

Global container shipping company Hapag-Lloyd was the winner of ZEMBA's first tender. Hapag-Lloyd is one of the world's leading container liner shipping companies with a fleet of 266 vessels and a capacity of 2 million 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) that service more than 600 ports on all continents. Through their bid, Hapag-Lloyd was able to meet the full aggregated volume of ZEMBA's original tender as well as ZEMBA's sustainability and emissions-reduction criteria.

Participating ZEMBA members signed bilateral agreements with Hapag-Lloyd to purchase the collective emissions reduction associated with more



Ingrid Irigoyen, an Energy and Environment Program senior director and the president and CEO of ZEMBA, announces ZEMBA's successful inaugural tender at Singapore Maritime Week.

than 1 billion TEU-miles of clean-energy-powered shipping on a route from Rotterdam, Netherlands, to Singapore, avoiding at least 82,000 metric tonnes of CO₂-equivalent through Hapag-Lloyd's certified exclusively waste-based biomethane services in 2025 and 2026.

For the next tender, ZEMBA is focused on aggregating demand for the emissions reduction associated with e-fuel-powered shipping and aims to catalyze the first commercial deployment of e-fuel in the maritime sector. ●



Science & Society Project Manager Hassan Farah presents at the Falling Walls Science Summit.

THE FUTURE IS SCIENCE

The Falling Walls Foundation honors a Science & Society initiative with a global innovator award.

Many of society's most urgent challenges are deeply rooted in science and present a unique opportunity for rising generations to take action. In 2024, the Institute's Our Future Is Science (OFIS) was selected as one of 21 global winners in the annual Falling Walls Foundation's competition to identify scientific breakthroughs of the year.

OFIS is the flagship youth initiative in the Science & Society Program, part of the Institute's Health, Medicine & Society Program led by Ruth Katz. It integrates near-peer mentorship with informal STEM education by engaging youth in science to make locally driven impacts in their communities. The initiative inspires future STEM leaders to become thoughtful, solutions-oriented advocates and innovators as they enter the 21st-century STEM workforce.

Through a competitive process adjudicated by an advisory board, OFIS was selected out of 136 applications from 54 countries in the Science Engagement category. Falling Walls defines the category as "activities, events, or interactions bridging the gap between science and society to generate mutual learning and benefits across the spectrum of public engagement and interactive science communication" and "a two-way process aimed at shaping and co-creating scientific processes, and promoting active community involvement in scientific knowledge production." This year's Science Engagement category had a special focus on climate change and adaptation.

Thanks to OFIS's major international recognition, Science & Community Project Manager Hassan Farah delivered the pitch, "Breaking the Wall to Climate Justice through STEM Mentorship," before a packed audience and esteemed jury on the global stage in Berlin. Through this pitch, Farah showcased the many ways that OFIS empowers young scientists to take action and improve environmental outcomes, starting in their own communities. Through science engagement projects, OFIS mentees work in teams to produce evidence-based solutions to issues they observe in their everyday lives. Past projects have included a tree-planting campaign to improve tree cover in Plano, Texas; a waste-pickup event to raise awareness of microplastics in Jacksonville, Florida; and a Narcan training and workshop for teens living near an epicenter of the opioid epidemic in Blacksburg, Virginia.

Farah was joined in Germany by Science & Society Program Executive Director Aaron F. Mertz, who served on the jury for another one of the Falling Walls Breakthrough competitions, and Associate Director Jylana L. Sheats. ●

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The Aspen Institute worked with US Treasury on the first-ever National Strategy for Financial Inclusion.



Aspen FSP Co-Executive Director Joanna Smith-Ramani (far right) attends a US Department of the Treasury launch event for the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion with other national leaders, including then-Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (center).

In October 2024, the US Department of the Treasury announced a landmark plan that aims to ensure every American household can access, utilize, and benefit from the financial system. The first-ever National Strategy for Financial Inclusion is the culmination of years of work and consultation among industry, government, and nonprofit partners, spearheaded at key moments by the Aspen Institute Financial Security Program (Aspen FSP), led by Ida Rademacher and Joanna Smith-Ramani.

Starting in 2019, Aspen FSP laid the groundwork for the strategy through a series of publications and working groups that culminated in a call to action by Senator Chris Coons at the 2021 Global Inclusive Growth Summit, co-hosted by the Institute and the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth. From there, Aspen FSP organized an open stakeholder letter in 2022 that gathered more than 120 signatories calling on the Biden administration to take a leadership role. The subsequent Working Group on Inclusive Finance, a diverse cross-section of industry experts and nonprofit leaders convened by Aspen FSP, shaped the insights and recommendations that ultimately informed the final strategy.

Spanning objectives, from increasing credit access to fostering trust, the plan offers a vision of a financial system that both leverages innovation and delivers on promises of household stability, resilience, and wealth. Now the Financial Security Program is ready to get to work with public- and private-sector partners in 2025 to make this vision a reality for American households. ●

Courtesy US Department of Treasury

FINANCIAL SECURITY BY DESIGN

THE FACE OF AMERICAN BUSINESS

The Advancing Economic Mobility Summit reinforced Latinos as transformative economic players.

In 2023, Latino-owned enterprises accounted for 36 percent of all new US businesses—nearly double their share of the US population. Strengthening the business support ecosystem for Latino entrepreneurs could unlock trillions more in revenue and create millions of new jobs.

The fourth annual Advancing Economic Mobility Summit, hosted by the Aspen Institute's Latinos & Society Program, led by Domenika Lynch, with Knowledge Partner McKinsey & Company in New York City, explored original data and unique expert insights that underscore the remarkable potential Latinos can bring to the American economy. During the event, McKinsey launched their latest *Economic State of Latinos in America: Building Up Small Businesses* report, which emphasized the vital role of small businesses in driving 44 percent of US GDP.

Organized under the theme Vision, Values, and Venture, the summit convened nearly 200 cross-sector leaders to explore bold, actionable solutions that advance a more competitive and resilient US economy. Expert-led discussions addressed emerging topics, including scaling public-private partnerships, optimizing investment diversification, leveraging digital remittances for financial inclusion, catalyzing economic growth through education, and more.

Isabel Casillas Guzman, the 27th administrator of the Small Business Administration, delivered the keynote address as part of a dynamic lineup of speakers, including New York Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, Clearlake Capital Group's Jose E. Feliciano, the California State University System Chancellor Dr. Mildred Garcia, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's Ana Marshall, Bank of America's Jose Tavarez, President of the Aspen Institute Dan Porterfield, and other distinguished leaders. By bringing these influential voices together, the Latinos & Society Program explored the systemic shifts required to drive cross-sector collaboration. The conversations spotlighted how harnessing the resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of Latinos can benefit the broader American economy. ●

Left to right: Holland & Knight's Francisco Sánchez, the Aspen Institute's Domenika Lynch, New York Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, and US Small Business Administrator Isabel Casillas Guzman



Nearly **1 in 5 Americans** are Latino, and they contribute **\$3.7 trillion** to the nation's GDP.

Latino-owned businesses grew 35% over the last decade, fueling America's economic growth.

MAP A NEW TERRAIN

How the Community Strategies Group prioritized rural development through outdoor recreation.

The Aspen Institute's Community Strategies Group (Aspen CSG), led by Bonita Robertson-Hardy and Chris Estes, played a pivotal role in shaping the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's first National Leadership Forum on Rural Development, reinforcing its national impact in building a more inclusive economy. Grounded in insights from Aspen CSG's *Mapping a New Terrain: Call to Action* report, the event convened leaders committed to advancing equitable rural development through outdoor recreation. At Aspen CSG's recommendation, the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable invited key Aspen CSG partners, ensuring that voices from diverse rural communities—including Indigenous communities and communities of color—were actively involved. "We will be better aligned on needs if we bring together all the players in the region related to recreation and have conversations about opportunities, challenges, equity, and inclusion," said Hetal Patel of MDC Rural Forward at the roundtable. By bridging its research, network, and expertise with this national platform, Aspen CSG helped elevate solutions that expand economic opportunity in rural America while fostering a more just and sustainable future. ●



Chris Estes, co-executive director of the Institute's Community Strategies Group, at the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable

Angelique Herring



Families connect at a ThinkXChange workshop with Roaring Fork artist Reina Katzenberger.

In October 2024, Ascend's fifth biennial ThinkXChange convened more than 220 policy, philanthropy, and parent leaders from 34 states to help expand family well-being across the country. "At the Obodo Collective, we show families how to grow food," said Ascend Parent Advisor Tameka Henry at ThinkXChange. "We also find out what families need, and we build a pathway to prosperity with them."

For more than a decade, Ascend, led by Anne Mosle, has held convenings like ThinkXChange to encourage leaders like Henry (who in 2024 won her race to become a Clark County School Board trustee) to carve these pathways with families. In 2024, ThinkXChange asked the big question: How can we future-proof 2Gen approaches so a family-forward agenda can outlast turbulence in the next decade and beyond?



2.5 MILLION

Ascend provided more than \$2.5 million in catalytic funds to improve outcomes for families in 12 states across the 15 Accelerator Community Partners.

Scale Actionable Solutions: The more than 20 breakout sessions and plenaries and 15 Accelerator Community Partner pitches offered new opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and learning. For example, Yolanda Johnson-Peterkin of the New York City Housing Authority said she hoped to employ strategies from UTEC, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit that created one of the first workforce development units in a state prison for fathers.

Change Capital & Unlock Opportunities: At ThinkXChange, Springboard to Opportunities based in Mississippi demonstrated what that directive looks like in action. By focusing on the human, social, and intellectual—not just financial—aspects of change capital and using insights from their asset-building innovation of giving single Black mothers cash, Springboard is changing how state systems approach benefits access.

Revolutionize Leadership: ThinkXChange offered engagement with nature around the Aspen Meadows campus, insight from artificial intelligence expert Afua Bruce, and re-imagined 2Gen with spoken-word artist Kane Smego. "In addition to new connections," said 2023 Ascend Fellow Dr. Catherine Monk of Columbia University, "I brought back new content knowledge and a much broader lens for approaching problems, generating solutions, and working across sectors." ●

THINKXCHANGE

Ascend future-proofs intergenerational approaches and mobilizes leadership for families.

SHARED SUCCESS

The Economic Opportunities Program is improving the welfare of workers, small businesses, and society.

Good jobs and successful small businesses are vital to the health and well-being of communities across the country. And yet, low wages, limited benefits, unpredictable schedules, limited training and advancement opportunities, unsafe working conditions, and more all contribute to millions of American workers reporting that they don't have a good job.

But poor job quality isn't just bad for workers; it's also a challenge for businesses, particularly small businesses, who struggle to find and retain the employees they need. Improving job quality can be a win-win, both improving workers' livelihoods and strengthening businesses, but most business owners are encouraged to manage labor as a cost rather than as an investment in business success. Worse yet, small business owners, while often eager to be good employers in their communities, often need information, encouragement, and support to identify and implement the job-quality improvements that their employees will value and that will, in turn, strengthen their own business.

To that end, the Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program, led by Maureen Conway, partnered with 11 community lenders to integrate job-quality programming into their small business support services—a project called "Shared Success." With a \$12 million investment from the Gates Foundation, Shared Success builds on the Economic Opportunities Program's foundational work on defining and advancing job quality, as well as a longstanding commitment to small business success by reframing the concept of success to include, and be facilitated by, improved job quality and economic dignity for workers. ●



Shared Success grantees, who serve small businesses from across the United States, meet at the Aspen Institute for their annual convening with Economic Opportunities Program staff in Washington, DC.

HOW TO SPARK CHANGE

Aspen Global Leadership Network Fellows help make economic prosperity accessible to all.

Despite significant global economic growth, systemic barriers continue to exclude millions from participating in and benefiting from the economy. Traditional financing models often overlook innovative solutions that could create more equitable economic opportunities, particularly those led by local leaders who deeply understand their communities' needs.

As a part of the Global Inclusive Growth Partnership, a collaboration between the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth and the Institute's Aspen Global Leadership Network, led by Dar Vanderbeck, Global Inclusive Growth Spark Grants were created to address this gap. Since 2020, Spark Grants have invested \$340,000 in 22 groundbreaking initiatives led by Aspen Global Leadership Network Fellows across seven countries, including the United States, Colombia, India, China, Nigeria, Guatemala, and South Africa.

Spark Grants provide catalytic funding of \$15,000 to \$20,000 per initiative, which is strategically designed to ignite further development and impact. What makes these grants particularly effective is their focus on addressing systemic challenges while placing inclusion at the center of each solution. Fellows' initiatives tackle fundamental barriers to economic prosperity through various approaches: increasing access to capital for traditionally marginalized entrepreneurs, promoting financial literacy for small business owners, building sustainable place-based ecosystems, and dismantling inequities within existing financial systems.

Beyond funding, the program has created a vibrant community of Aspen Global Leadership Network Fellows united in their mission to build more inclusive economies. This peer network provides a unique space for grantees to share insights, provide feedback, and collectively reflect on their approaches to economic inclusion. Through this collaborative ecosystem, Fellows strengthen each other's work while building a global movement for inclusive growth.

As we mark the final year of this impactful partnership, the program's legacy is evident in its broad geographic reach and the diversity of solutions it has supported. Spark Grant recipients are pioneering new models for inclusive economic futures that benefit all. ●



Aspen Global Leadership Network Fellows, including Rocio Pinto (center), a Spark Grant Awardee

“The Spark Grant gave entrepreneurs in Guatemala the opportunity to evaluate growing their businesses locally, which allowed them to stay with their families rather than risk dangerous border-crossings in search of opportunity elsewhere.”

– 2024 Spark Grant Recipient Rocio Pinto, Central America Leadership Initiative Fellow; Founder, Multiverse

SOCRATES IN ARMENIA

One of the program's highlights in 2024 included a three-day seminar in Yerevan.

For almost 30 years, the Socrates Program has welcomed leaders from across backgrounds and sectors at events around the world, serving as a global front line for the Aspen Institute. It was a transformative year for the program, led by Danny Harris, setting new records for global engagement and leadership development. With 680 participants gathering at 25 events in 15 cities, the Socrates Program achieved its highest participation in a single year since its founding. This surge in participation reflects our growing influence on leaders seeking to effectively bridge divides and build trust in an increasingly complex world.

Socrates seminars create spaces for dialogue across ideological and cultural differences. Our programming in 2024 tackled pressing challenges while maintaining the program's core commitment to thoughtful dialogue. Participants engaged in discussions ranging from environmental leadership to economic inequality with a focus on practical solutions and cross-sector collaboration. The diversity of our participant pool—across backgrounds, sectors, ideology, age, and geography—creates rich opportunities for knowledge exchange and partnership building.

One of the clear highlights of 2024, and an exemplar of the power of the Socrates method, was the Socrates Armenia seminar in Yerevan in October. Vahe Melikyan and his collaborators, who organized the Armenia seminar, were inspired by their past participation in Socrates and other Aspen Institute seminars organized with Aspen Kyiv in 2016 and 2017. Galvanized by their experience and the Aspen Idea, Melikyan and his colleagues brought together local leaders, businesspeople, and entrepreneurs to contemplate major trends shaping the future of technology, business, culture, and society. The effort was augmented by the dedication of Treasurer of the Aspen France Board Daniel Kurdjian, as well as another longtime leader of Aspen France, Jean-Christophe Bas.

Looking ahead, the Socrates Program remains dedicated to developing leaders who can effectively build trust and address complex global challenges through dialogue and collaboration. As Socrates continues to expand its reach and impact, it remains committed to fostering the kind of leadership that can bridge divides, build trust, and create positive change across communities worldwide. ●

“The Socrates Program brings enormous potential benefit to the countries where it offers seminars. Socrates has a strong history of connecting the Aspen Institute with regions interested in and inspired by the Aspen Idea. I was incredibly impressed by the Armenian participants' commitment to principles of dialogue around fundamental issues and questions about how to build better societies.”

—*Aspen Institute Executive Vice President
Elliot Gerson*

The Socrates Program's
Armenia Seminar Group



INVESTING WITH IMPACT

Aspen's Business & Society Summit brings leaders together to forge a sustainable future.

The Aspen Business & Society Summit convenes business leaders and investors to explore emerging challenges and opportunities within sustainability and social impact. Now in its fourth year, the Summit offers a unique opportunity for business leaders from across fields and sectors to reflect on the ways that corporate strategies influence the well-being of society. The Summit is hallmark of the Business & Society Program, led by Judy Samuelson.

"There is simply no other forum in this space that curates such authentic and high-quality multi-sectoral dialogue that plants the seeds for real and meaningful collective action," says Paula Luff, director of sustainability research and engagement at DSC Meridian Capital.

Participants included business innovators from diverse industries, long-term investors, climate and employee advocates, regulators, and business scholars. Anchored in small group dialogue, the Summit invites discussions and deep thinking on the competing demands at the root of systemic change. It has sparked emergent opportunities for exploration and collaboration on the health of democracy and opportunities for sustainable investment.

In the current climate, where the reconsideration of ESG (environmental, social, and governance) investing and diversity frameworks is increasingly common, we saw our participants highly motivated to articulate the links among sustainability, social innovation, and long-term business value. Though more turbulence surely lies ahead, this timely and unique gathering helped executives respond to the moment with stronger relationships, novel solutions, and clear long-term thinking. The types of honest, off-the-record conversations and new perspectives they shared bolster their courage and conviction to manage long-term environmental and social impact in ways that ensure business serves society. ●



Panelists in a main stage discussion at the Aspen Business & Society Summit discuss how "The Future of Finance Comes Into View."

Using the Aspen method of text-based dialogue, Executive Leadership Seminars create dynamic, brave spaces that engage participants in challenging conversations about enduring questions of ethical leadership. Part of the Institute's Seminars and Office of Curriculum and Moderators, led by Stace Lindsay, the Leadership Seminars department creates immersive, reflective experiences for individual leaders, teams, and organizations. In 2024, the department ran 61 seminars—25 more than in 2023—around the globe, from Aspen to Dallas, from Romania to England, and more. Free Flash Seminars, which allow the public to experience the Aspen method, comprised the largest seminar group, with more than 1,000 registrations.

The flagship Aspen Executive Seminars on Leadership, Values, and the Good Society included participants from Pokemon, ALF Investments, OneTrust, Lime, the NFL, NASA, and the US Patent and Trade Office. “The expertly moderated interpretation of the readings and the discussion with colleagues allows one to reflect in a way that most leadership experiences do not,” said one participant. “Linking the readings to society, to our organizations, and to our own leadership styles was masterful.”



Guide Paul Andersen takes an Aspen Executive Seminar group to Maroon Bells, engaging mind, body, and spirit.

THINKING BRAVELY

In 2024, the Institute's Executive Leadership Seminars ran more programs than ever—online and across the world.

Programs for Organizations piloted several new offerings, including the first large-scale, self-moderated seminar as a capstone for the NextUp 2024 Executive Forum and Symposium with 250 participants. Our custom leadership seminars brought together Fortune 500 executives, medical school residents, scholars, and leaders from Amazon Ads, Vision Council, Samvid Scholars, Stanford School of Medicine, University of Chicago Leadership and Society Initiative, Kraft Heinz Company, and Chanel Culture Fund.

We formed a MarComms partnership with Institute Trustee Perri Peltz on her SiriusXM Business Radio show, *The Perri Peltz Show*. Peltz hosted

special episodes featuring guests from the Aspen Seminars community to discuss leadership philosophies and dialogue across difference. The successful pilot episodes (which provided some of LinkedIn's highest-performing content) have paved the way for more in 2025.

Finally, the Sales and Community Engagement team hosted Prospect Seminars across the country for 90 high-priority leaders, including executives at BlackRock, Bank of America, PWC, Northrup Grumman, Citadel, and Ernst & Young, leading to nearly \$100,000 in revenue. These events included local Executive Seminar alumni, who expressed renewed enthusiasm for their relationship with the Institute. ●

LEADERSHIP

Aspen fellowships are changing the landscape of community college leadership.



LESSONS ON LEADING

The Institute's Presidential Fellowships help community college leaders advance talent and mobility in their communities.

Research shows that college degrees strongly predict who in the United States has a good job and access to the middle class. Unfortunately, low-income Americans are less likely to attend and graduate with a college degree than their higher-income peers. The good news: Community colleges can offer an affordable path for people—including those typically underrepresented in higher education—to earn the credentials that lead to good jobs. Not only that, but community college students are the most likely to stay close to home after they graduate, filling the talent needs of local employers.

But not all community colleges achieve the same results, and the Aspen Institute's research has found that colleges with strong student success outcomes are led by effective presidents and senior teams who know how to achieve those outcomes. For nearly a decade, the Aspen Institute's Presidential Fellowships, part of the College Excellence Program led by Joshua Wyner, have armed committed leaders with the knowledge, research, and tools to not only serve as community college presidents, but to lead institutions to much higher levels of student success. That includes strong access, completion, and post-completion outcomes for students, like earning a high-value workforce credential, completing a bachelor's degree, or getting a good job that benefits them and their communities.

The work done in 2024 by the 58 fellows who participated in the College Excellence Program's fellowships was inspiring. They were boldly willing to examine and identify weaknesses in their data on student success during college and after graduating. And they were committed to developing and refining scaled reform strategies designed to address gaps in student success.

What is even more gratifying—as the fellowships enter their 10th year—is seeing alumni presidents lead their colleges to meaningful gains in student success. Their work has been documented in the Institute's research reports, as well as research by colleagues at the Community College Research Center (CCRC) and the Harvard Project on Workforce. Their efforts have been honored during the Aspen Prize

process by Excelencia in Education and by Achieving the Dream. Through the Presidential Fellowships, the College Excellence team looks forward to continuing to build a reform network of leaders—which includes 20 percent of all sitting community college presidents—who we trust will lead the way to higher levels of student success across the country.

The demand for intensive leadership development continues: Aspen started recruiting for the 10th cohort of its Rising Presidents Fellowship at the end of 2024. ●

In 2024, we saw a significant expansion in the number of Aspen Presidential Fellowships alumni serving as community college presidents.

198
of those who have completed an Aspen Presidential Fellowship program are presidents, leading roughly **20 percent of all community colleges.**

236
fellowship alumni are working to advance community college student success as vice presidents, deans, CFOs, and other senior roles.

63%
of the network's members are women and 50 percent are people of color, far higher than the national average.

LOCAL IMPACT

Aspen Community Programs bring classic Institute seminars to our neighbors in Colorado.



Participants connect in an Aspen Community Programs seminar.

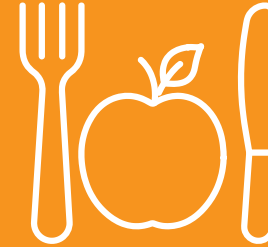
“What I liked best about the seminar was how it related to current-day politics and how persuasion and morals have really been shown in the recent election. This seminar helped me work through my emotions about the election and have a clearer understanding of it.” –*Teen Socrates, Rifle participant*

Aspen Community Programs provide adults and teens the chance to convene in Aspen, Colorado, to discuss timeless and contemporary ideas in a format conducive to thoughtful conversations and civil engagement. We host six youth seminars throughout the year in the Hurst Student Seminars program and Teen Socrates, bringing together students from the Colorado River Valley and the Roaring Fork Valley. These programs are generously funded by the Hurst Family Foundation and the Wall Family Foundation.

In 2022, Aspen Community Programs, led by Cristal Logan, expanded its reach from Aspen to Rifle, Colorado, by hosting an annual youth seminar over Veteran’s Day weekend. In our third year, it was thrilling to have the largest participating class yet meet at the Rifle library and engage with classic texts that have been informing and guiding our Executive Seminars for the past 75 years. The theme of the seminar, curated and moderated by Allyson Breyfogle, was “Stretching our Limits” and the students embarked on a conversation on Plato’s *Gorgias* and the desirable qualities in a leader. This dovetailed nicely with a guest appearance by the mayor of Rifle, Sean Strode. He spoke about his leadership philosophy and community involvement. He had a wonderful call to action, imploring the students to get involved with their local governments. The seminar concluded with stirring conversations about the ethics of artificial intelligence and what it means to create and be a creator. ●



Food & Society Fellows
explore food as medicine.



**1 in 10 adults
meet the US
Dietary Guidelines'
recommendations for
fruits and vegetables.**

Food and nutrition insecurity are far too common in the United States. They are also associated with conditions like diabetes and heart disease, which remain greater among underserved individuals and households. Efforts that involve a healthcare response to the need for better nutrition fall under the term “Food is Medicine.” Such programs provide free, healthy food to individuals with diet-related illnesses to improve patient care and health outcomes. These include produce prescriptions as well as medically tailored meals and groceries.

In 2024, the Aspen Institute's Food & Society, led by Corby Kummer, released the latest edition of its *Food is Medicine Research Action Plan*. This report builds on the previous version and outlines a roadmap for equity-centered research that can revolutionize how diet-related conditions are prevented, treated, and managed in the United States. It is the first report to pull together the latest peer-reviewed Food is Medicine research in a comprehensible and action-oriented format.

Feeding America and the US Department of Health and Human Services are now collaborating with Food & Society to create a best-practices guide for food banks and other community-based organizations entering the Food is Medicine space. Our goal is to accelerate the collective understanding of nutrition interventions and their impacts, as well as to explore strategies to scale successful programs. ●

NUTRITION RX

The Food & Society program makes an action plan for Food is Medicine in healthcare.

LEADERS ON THE RISE

At the Global Changemakers Workshop, young people are the future—and the future of democratic values.

The Aspen Institute International Partners, led by Jonathon Price, has a mission to empower the next generation of leaders. Since 2023, the Global Changemakers Workshop has been a cornerstone of that mission. Designed to foster values-based leadership and tackle global challenges, the workshop serves as a vital platform for young Changemakers committed to shaping a more democratic, secure, and sustainable world.

This year, in collaboration with Aspen Central Europe, 19 young leaders from 15 countries gathered in Warsaw, Poland, to explore solutions for building a greener, safer, and more just future through collaboration and innovation. During thought-provoking discussions, policy roundtables in collaboration with Aspen's Energy and Environment Program, and cross-cultural exchanges, participants showcased the transformative impact of investing in young leaders to drive global change. The workshop reinforced the importance of uniting diverse voices and perspectives to address pressing challenges and to strengthen democratic values worldwide.

As the 2024 Global Changemakers Workshop concluded, the energy, ideas, and collaborations sparked over these four days underscored the vital role of young leaders in shaping a better future. This experience highlighted the need for innovative platforms that unite and empower rising leaders to create meaningful, global impact. ●



Emerging leaders from 15 countries gather in Warsaw, Poland, for the Global Changemakers Workshop.

“Leadership often demands tough decisions, and the weight of their consequences can feel overwhelming. In those moments, we must return to our core values—our guiding compass. And above all, we must hold onto radical optimism. It’s the belief in a better future that propels us forward, even in the face of uncertainty.”

—Eneida Lila, Italy

Fellows of the Aspen Global Innovators Group know solving the world's problems means new ideas and novel solutions.

Aspen Global Innovators Group cultivates the next generation of locally rooted and globally networked leaders who champion solutions in health and development worldwide. In 2024, Aspen Global Innovators Group, led by Peggy Clark, amplified community voices in critical conversations on global health, food security, economic opportunity, youth mental health, the climate crisis, and more. We equip changemakers—often unsung heroes—with communications and advocacy tools to build healthier and more resilient communities.

The Healthy Communities and Impact West Africa Fellows made significant progress due to their fellowship skills training. Dr. Christopher McNeil, a



Aspen Global Innovators Group Fellow Gloria Agyare (bottom left) spurs environmental action in her community.

IMPACT AT SCALE

2023 Healthy Communities Fellow, and his organization, Youth Medical Mentorship, which increases youth access to medical education, held three summits, impacting 515 students in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The program works. As McNeil put it: “By the time 8th grade rolls around, one in five are already applying for scholarships up to \$26,000 to chase a dream unhindered.”

Mojirayo Oluwatoyin Ogunlana, a 2023 Impact West Africa Fellow and a digital-rights lawyer, advocated for digital rights and civic space in her fellowship. After the misapplication of judicial principles in a case she filed before the Federal High Court in Nigeria following the month-long shutdown of the internet in Sokoto state, she was driven to facilitate training for judges and magistrates on digital rights, data privacy, and protection. The Federal High Court's top judicial authority even joined the

session. Also in 2024, Gloria Agyare, a 2023 Impact Fellow, Ghanaian environmentalist, and agri-food-system advocate, empowered over 3,100 young people with climate education and impacted over 1,300 households through community-based projects.

An idea is only as powerful as the impact it inspires. Moving forward, Aspen Global Innovators Group will continue to champion community-driven solutions by expanding support for leaders tackling critical health and development challenges. We will deepen our investment in Fellows, equip changemakers with the tools to scale impact, and ensure an array of perspectives shape global conversations. We will foster innovation, amplify grassroots solutions, and strengthen communities worldwide. ●

A LEGACY OF SERVICE

Lola Adedokun was a leader on health equity. Now that work will carry on in her name.



In October 2024, the Aspen Institute suffered the sudden passing of Lola Adedokun, the executive director of the Aspen Global Innovators Group and co-chair of the Aspen Institute Forum on Women and Girls.

Adedokun's career with the Aspen Institute emphasized the importance of global health and development through innovative, community-led solutions. In her role directing the Aspen Global Innovators Group, she equipped diverse leaders with the communication skills to drive meaningful change and lasting impact. She also lifted up promising changemakers in the United States and beyond as the co-chair of the Aspen Forum on Women and Girls. She was a committed champion for overlooked communities everywhere, believing that amplifying these voices was not just a priority but a responsibility.

"We need wider and urgent recognition that the key contestations of our day—over democracy, human rights, and social justice—are happening primarily on the symbolic terrain of communication, story, culture, and meaning-making," Adedokun wrote in an article for the Aspen Global Innovators Group. "There needs to be more recognition that communication and storytelling are core leadership competencies." In addition to equipping leaders from developing nations with narrative skills, Adedokun was outspoken that the inclusion of these emerging leaders at the highest levels is paramount to creating real change on the ground.



"We will always remember Lola for her dynamic presence and leadership," says Aspen Institute President and CEO Dan Porterfield. "Her commitment to equitable health and prosperity was both global and domestic, and she was a tireless champion for the needs of all. We will miss her care, her drive to make the world better through her work, and her friendship."

Now, to honor her life and legacy, the Institute's Aspen Global Innovators Group proudly announces the establishment of the Lola Adedokun Aspen-Doris Duke Award. This award will celebrate and support exceptional leaders who embody her values of social justice, collaboration, and bold leadership in advancing community-driven solutions. Each year one to two outstanding leaders will be selected as Lola Adedokun Aspen-Doris Duke Fellows, joining one of the Aspen Global Innovators Group's flagship fellowship programs: Aspen Impact West Africa, Advanced Advocacy, Aspen New Voices, or Healthy Communities.

"Lola was a remarkable force for good, tirelessly championing community-led solutions for meaningful change," says Peggy Clark, the founder and interim executive director of Aspen Global Innovators Group. "Through this fellowship, we seek to honor her memory by uplifting leaders who share her vision and values." ●



RIISING GENERATIONS

The right higher-ed credentials and transfer paths lead to student and societal success.

There's a clear path to regaining trust in higher education: helping people understand the value of college credentials while at the same time improving that value. The moment is ripe for reform. Working-class Americans are navigating an economy that seems stacked against them, while employers are struggling to find skilled workers in critical fields such as teaching, nursing, software development, welding, and advanced manufacturing. How do people connect to the credentials that lead to good jobs? The answer lies in America's community colleges.

That's why the Institute's College Excellence Program, led by Joshua Wyner, partnered with the Community College Research Center to create Unlocking Opportunity, an initiative that puts a bold focus on excellence in post-graduation



A COLLEGE SOLUTION

outcomes. Ten community colleges across seven states joined the network with one goal: to ensure that thousands more students complete programs that lead directly to jobs with family-sustaining wages or to the completion of a bachelor's degree.

The program includes data analysis, coaching, cross-college collaboration, and site visits. The College Excellence Program is also developing tools, curriculums, and case studies to replicate the successes of Unlocking Opportunity at hundreds more schools, and it hosted over 100 people in Chicago for an Unlocking Opportunity convening. Participating colleges shared bold reforms, such as strengthening paths to healthcare, connecting general studies to pre-major programs, and revamping advising systems to ensure every student has an academic plan.

For example, San Antonio College in Texas identified a significant nursing shortage in the region but did not have clinical site capacity to enroll and graduate more

nursing students. The college responded with three strategies: (1) working with nearby hospitals to increase the number of clinical slots; (2) developing a state-of-the-art simulation lab, which will become a clinical site; and (3) partnering with other colleges to use their clinical sites. In 2023, the college also launched an accelerated RN-to-BSN program, which helps registered nurses (RNs) earn a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) without ever leaving community college. That program has graduated 94 students to date and increased its capacity to 155 students for 2025.

Looking ahead, the College Excellence Program will release more tools and research, and share information about joining the Unlocking Opportunity network, which will expand by 50 more community colleges. Unlocking Opportunity can restore the trust of entire communities in higher education. After all, creating more opportunities for students to become nurses, teachers, and manufacturing professionals isn't just good for them; it benefits communities and employers, too. ●

SPOTLIGHT ON DATA

The Center for Native American Youth develops research that emphasizes Indigenous knowledge and cultural identity.

Native youth perspectives are rarely prioritized in data collection and analysis. In November 2024, the Center for Native American Youth (CNAV) released *Center Us: A Native Youth Survey Report*, which attempts to do both. *Center Us* is an important step in preparing the next generation of Indigenous peoples to be data sovereign, prioritize Indigenous-led research, and utilize Indigenous research methodologies to assist in the preservation of culture and identity.

Led by Tracy L. Canard Goodluck, CNAV gathered quantitative and qualitative survey data from approximately 1,000 Native youth across the United States to better understand their needs in areas such as culture, resource access, mental health, and civic engagement. Eight focus groups with 65 participants from different regions helped to center Native youth perspectives and voices in the development of the report, shedding light on cultural strengths, resource access, and community priorities.

These findings emphasize the ongoing need to support Native youth through cultural engagement and improved access to resources in the community, both of which are essential for fostering positive life outcomes. Regional insights highlight the diverse needs of communities across Indian Country—and allows for tailored advocacy. CNAV's hope is that all those whose work directly or indirectly influences Native youth will leverage this data to make informed, impactful decisions. So far, numerous media outlets, community partners, tribal leaders, Native students, and more have done just that: utilized the report and the raw data sets to help inform their work. Download the full *Center Us* report and learn more about the center's efforts at cnay.org/research-data. ●



Key Report Insights:

- Native youth who feel culturally educated are four times more likely to see themselves as capable of making a difference than those who do not.
- Lack of trust and a feeling that “nothing ever changes” leads to apathy toward voting in US elections.
- Native youth in rural communities struggle to receive the funding resources necessary to make higher education seem plausible.
- Healthcare in tribal communities is preferred to healthcare in non-tribal communities.



More than **7 out of 10** Native youth believe civic engagement is embedded in Indigenous history but feel Native people face greater barriers to voting than others.

YOUNG AND THRIVING

The Opportunity Youth Forum demonstrates how connecting youth to jobs and education can reverberate impact across the nation.



Young Leaders from the Opportunity Youth Forum engage in discussion to co-create and co-design solutions at the OYF National Network Convening in Aspen.

The Aspen Forum for Community Solutions (AFCS), led by Steve Patrick, has been a beacon of hope and change for more than a decade. AFCS promotes collaborative, community-based efforts that build the power and influence of those with the least access to opportunity while encouraging communities to expand mobility, eliminate systemic barriers, and determine their own solutions to their most pressing challenges.

The Aspen Forum for Community Solutions's flagship initiative is the Opportunity Youth Forum (OYF). OYF connects more than 40 local collaboratives dedicated to the success of young adults ages 16 to 24 who are not engaged in work or education—that is, "opportunity youth." There are currently about 5 million opportunity youth in the United States and approximately 1 million of them live in OYF's 40-plus urban, rural, and Indigenous communities. OYF's decade-long journey has been marked by successful partnerships with these communities, all with the common goal of expanding paths to reconnect opportunity youth and transform systems to enhance educational and employment outcomes.

Impact

This year, OYF network sites have reduced the number of opportunity youth in their communities collectively by 100,000—part of the response to the massively increased disconnection rates due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Preceding the pandemic, national youth disconnection rates were on a steady decline due to OYF and other partners. OYF and its partners have now committed to a renewed goal of significantly reducing opportunity youth numbers by 50 percent over the next 10 years.

In 2024, OYF announced a new \$6 million investment in pathways for opportunity youth. As part of a larger three-year investment by the Ballmer Group, this \$6 million will go directly to four leading OYF communities to scale effective place-based strategies to increase the number of young people connected to school and work, contributing to OYF's 10-year goal to connect 500,000 disconnected young people to opportunity.

Learn More

Together, we can make a lasting impact by improving the lives and futures of youth and young adults. Learn more at aspencommunitysolutions.org. ●



A student from Carbondale Middle School performs their original slam poem alongside classmates and teaching artist Logan Phillips.

“ For so many students, who may have not been ‘seen’ or ‘heard,’ language, like representation, is everything.”

–Natasha Carrizosa, Poet and Teaching Artist

In the fall of 2024, Aspen Words, led by Adrienne Brodeur, hosted a Youth Poetry Project in the Roaring Fork Valley of Colorado. The program hosted 123 poetry workshops across three different middle schools, empowering 1,200 students to express themselves through poetry. Four accomplished teaching artists and bilingual professional slam poets—Natasha Carrizosa, Logan Phillips, Joaquín Zihuatanejo, and Jasminne Mendez—guided students in crafting and performing their own poems. A total of 114 students showcased their work in three school-hosted events.

Workshops encouraged students to write and perform in their preferred language, and students were empowered to express themselves in a creative way that felt most authentic to them. At the culmination of the project, families, students ranging from 5th through 8th grades, and community members from each of the three partner schools came together to celebrate with an evening of poetry and connection. Students performed their original work on topics ranging from body image to the role of technology, from the power of nature to the meaning of home. ●

RHYME SCHEME

Aspen Words’ Youth Poetry Project empowers Middle Schoolers to embrace their creative voices.

A PLAN FOR YOUTH

As rates of anxiety and depression among children and adolescents continue to rise, addressing youth mental health has become an urgent priority. The Aspen Health Strategy Group chose this topic for its annual deep dive in 2024, bringing together 24 senior leaders in health, business, media, and technology to identify strategies that increase access to services and improve the quality of care.

Three young people, accompanied by their parents, opened the Aspen Health Strategy Group's June 2024 convening by candidly sharing their own mental health struggles. One eye-opener: They strongly asked that their access to social media not be restricted, emphasizing that it helped them connect with their peers. To inform the two-and-a-half-day meeting, experts presented four commissioned background papers describing the risk and protective factors

associated with adolescent mental health, the disproportionate burdens borne by people of color, the importance of culturally responsive care, the roles for schools and communities, current reimbursement strategies and possible alternatives, and the need to reexamine service delivery in order to reduce inefficiencies and tailor care to the evidence base.

On a hopeful note, members of the Aspen Health Strategy Group agreed that despite knowledge gaps, a great deal has been learned about what works to prevent and treat youth mental health challenges. In a 2024 report, the group proposed five big ideas to tackle the current crisis, like prioritizing prevention, working with schools, and redesigning the youth mental health care delivery system. The report also noted the potential of technology to make a difference for youth mental health, such as by broadening the use of telehealth, streamlining regulations for licensing technology-based interventions, expanding randomized controlled trials of digital therapeutics, and developing strategies to ensure the optimal use of social media.

The report concluded with a call to the health sector to assume a leadership role in addressing the youth mental health crisis and making the commitments necessary to improve policy and practice. Now in its ninth year, the Aspen Health Strategy Group is co-chaired by Kathleen Sebelius, the former governor of Kansas and former US secretary of Health and Human Services, and William Frist, a physician and former US Senate majority leader; the group is part of the Institute's Health, Medicine & Society Program led by Ruth Katz. ●



In 2022, **one in five** adolescents had a major depressive episode, and **one in eight** reported serious thoughts of suicide. Yet more than **40 percent** of adolescents with a major depressive episode in the past year received no mental health treatment at all.

WELLNESS

The Aspen Health Strategy Group spent 2024 taking on youth mental health.



During the the Aspen Health Strategy Group's annual meeting, a panel discussion with young people addressed the challenges of youth mental health.

THE CONNECTED GENERATION

The Stevens Initiative prepares future global leaders through virtual exchange.



Alumni network at the Stevens Initiative Alumni Fellowship in Rabat, Morocco.

The practice of virtual exchange—mobilizing young people from around the world for dialogue and discovery using everyday technology—immerses participants in dialogue and project-based activities, helping them gain practical skills and new perspectives that empower them to lead a more prosperous world.

In 2024, the Stevens Initiative, led by Christine Shiau, steered 49 active grants, reaching 22,000 participants in 38 countries. Each year, the Initiative uses the power of stories to create more opportunities for young people to develop cross-cultural connections through an annual call for testimonials. Recently, participants and alumni were invited to reflect on how they have become active leaders in their communities since their virtual exchanges:

“Virtual exchange was life-changing for me. It transformed me into an active leader and allowed me to step out of my comfort zone. After completing the program in 2021, I implemented my community service project, Impactful Youth, which helps high school students learn essential soft skills like long-term planning, critical thinking, and time management.”

—Enas, Iraq, Alum, *World Learning's The Experiment Digital*

"Virtual exchange helped me to become a global leader by giving me an opportunity to exchange culture and share ideas, thoughts, and experiences. Now I have the ability to connect with anyone globally, learning and effectively communicating virtually."

—Mohamed, Egypt, Alum, *Soliya's Global Circles*

"The most unforgettable part of my virtual exchange was getting the courage to connect with young people from diverse cultures, confidently present impactful ideas to audiences, and learn new skills to be able to tackle global challenges together. The courage I gained through virtual exchange is something I will carry with me throughout my personal and professional life."

—Mahmoud, Libya, Alum, *Culturingua's Global Social Entrepreneurship Journey*

View all the featured testimonials from virtual exchange participants and alumni, published during our 2024 International Education Week celebrations at: stevensinitiative.org/international-education-week-2024. ●

SPORTS SERVICE

Project Play's latest initiative mentors and funds student projects that improve communities through sports.

In 2024, Sports & Society, led by Tom Farrey, launched Service Learning Through Sports under its Project Play initiative, which develops insights, ideas, and opportunities to help stakeholders build healthy communities through sports. For school-age youth, service learning begins with organized acts of service for real-world challenges. The more that act of service can meet a recognized need and improve systems or lives at scale, the better. Leaders are born from such work. In partnership with The Allstate Foundation, Service Learning Through Sports is a microgrant and mentorship program for high school students who are leading, or aim to lead, a project that improves youth sports in their community. The first cohort supported five students from across the United States who are focused on increasing access to activity through unique strategies and a variety of sports.

As a competitive wheelchair basketball player, Josie Portell had primarily spent practices and games with boys—and she noticed a lack of opportunities and inclusivity for girls in the sport. The 11th grader from St. Louis, Missouri, used the microgrant to start the first all-girls wheelchair basketball camp in Missouri, so players have the opportunity to build confidence in themselves and their skills—on and off the court. Josie also was featured on the Project Play Summit 2024 stage in Baltimore, Maryland, where she spoke about her dream of empowering girls with disabilities and her hope to play alongside them as teammates in the future. ●



A session at Project Play Summit 2024

Other student projects include:

Ayanna Shah
San Diego, CA

Second Serve, a nonprofit organization Ayanna co-founded to break down barriers of entry to tennis, oversees youth-led equipment donations for Title I high schools.

Dean Butler
New York, NY

In partnership with Public School 86 and Go! Sports USA, Dean is expanding an inline-skating curriculum in the Bronx by adding floor hockey and including more public-school students.

Brianna Zhang
Portage, MI

Miles 4 Smiles, a charity 5K race that uses proceeds to make youth sports more accessible, was organized through Leaders for Youth Sports, a nonprofit that Brianna co-founded.

Arden Pala
San Diego, CA

Sports4Kids, a nonprofit organization founded by Arden, expands youth-led, after school sports clinics in low-income elementary schools.

THE GIVING SPIRIT

The Generosity Commission issues recommendations on boosting volunteerism and charitable giving.

According to AmeriCorps, the formal volunteering rate in the United States fell from 30 percent in 2019 to 23 percent in 2021. This is the steepest drop since the agency began collecting such data in 2002. Worse yet, according to Indiana University's Philanthropy Panel Study, the share of US households that report donating to charity has fallen steadily, from an initial level of 66.2 percent in 2000 to 49.6 percent in 2018, the last year for which there is data.

To combat this steep decline in individual volunteerism and philanthropy, the Giving Institute and Giving USA Foundation launched a three-year undertaking focused on reversing the decline in the number of "everyday" volunteers and givers who are at the heart of civil-society organizations across the country. In 2024, the Aspen Institute hosted the release of a 119-page report from the Generosity Commission, a national blue-ribbon panel co-chaired by the Aspen Program on Philanthropy and Social Innovation's Jane Wales.

In 2024, the Commission sponsored original research, convened focus groups of everyday givers and volunteers, and took testimony from experts and practitioners. It has now advanced a series of recommendations for policymakers, business leaders, foundation officers, and nonprofit innovators. The Program on Philanthropy and Social Innovation helped socialize the research and stress test the Commission's recommendations to:

- Increase the depth and breadth of data on giving and volunteering;
- Close the generosity evidence-to-practice gap;
- Encourage public figures and leaders in a broad range of fields to speak openly about how they give and volunteer, and how they have benefited from others' giving and volunteering;
- Take youth seriously as givers and volunteers;
- Utilize all of philanthropy's resources, tangible and intangible, in support of everyday giving and volunteering;
- Support community foundations to take a leading role in encouraging giving and volunteering;
- Reinforce the leadership role of businesses to encourage employees' volunteerism and giving;
- Increase the availability of the charitable contribution tax deduction; and
- Sufficiently fund the IRS Exempt Organizations division and state charity regulators, and simplify regulatory compliance. ●

The formal volunteering rate was **down 7%** between 2019 and 2021.

The share of US households that report donating to charity was down more than **16%** from 2000 to 2018.

The Generosity Commission is a nonpartisan group of individuals from across the charitable sector with a mission to celebrate and support Americans' spirit of generosity as expressed through everyday giving, volunteering, and other forms of civic engagement. "Trends in generosity and giving may appear tied to wealth," says Marla Blow, president and COO of the Skoll Foundation and Generosity Commission member, "but instead are reflective of a deeper sense of commitment to civil society and social connection."

Michael Gianoni, CEO of Blackbaud, and Jane Wales, executive director of the Program on Philanthropy and Social Innovation and vice president at the Aspen Institute, kick off the launch of the Generosity Commission's capstone report.



Aspen Digital's AI Elections Initiative builds trust in elections in the age of artificial intelligence.

Some 4 billion people live in countries that held national elections in 2024—a critical year for democracy. But voters also faced a new reality, where compelling deepfakes and highly tailored false messages can be made at low cost, high speed, and large scale. In the wrong hands, artificial intelligence (AI) can manipulate public opinion and confuse voters.

The AI Elections Initiative from Aspen Digital, led by Vivian Schiller, advances informed civic participation and social trust in the face of fast-evolving AI tools. Over 2024, Aspen Digital hosted a series of in-person and virtual gatherings to educate key stakeholders and mitigate AI-related risks to elections. “In a critical year,” says Schiller, “the AI Elections Initiative worked to ensure that election officials, tech companies, community leaders, and government officials could speak openly and candidly with one another about the most pressing issues they face.”

The Initiative also provided briefings at many events, including the Knight Foundation's Informed Conference, the National Association of Secretaries of State, and convenings with journalists, technologists, and election officials. The Initiative also briefed government agencies like the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Administration, the US Elections Assistance Commission, and the Federal Election Commission.

Finally, the Initiative worked to move the public narrative away from focusing solely on deepfakes to examine a broader set of potential AI impacts. We published articles, newsletters, and risk sheets detailing the key threats AI poses to elections, from hyperlocal voter suppression to language-based influence operations to deepfakes of public figures. We also shared these resources with officials to keep elections free of AI interference. ●



Meta's David Agranovich, Jigsaw's Yasmin Green, Microsoft's Clint Watts, and Aspen Digital's Vivian Schiller speak at the Institute of Global Politics at Columbia University.

Shahar Azran

AI AND DEMOCRACY

TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

The Civil Society Fellowship's town hall takes on America's growing polarization.

Political polarization in the United States is at an all-time high, posing one of the most urgent challenges to the country's future. One week before Election Day in 2024, the Civil Society Fellowship, led by Nike Irvin, along with other partners at the Aspen Global Leadership Network and the McNulty Foundation, hosted *Hopes, Fears, and Dreams in a Divided America*, a town hall conversation in Washington, DC. The event brought together leaders from across the nation—and political spectrum—for a civil dialogue on some of the most pressing issues facing our communities.

Fellows included leaders such as Pennsylvania's secretary for policy and planning, foundation presidents, war veterans, North Carolina's secretary of health, former White House staff, police chiefs, immigration advocates, and social entrepreneurs. This highly curated group represents leadership left and right of center, all committed to fostering relationships across divides and driving positive change.

"As good stewards of a democracy that is fractured or broken, I think we're still asking ourselves that same question," said Isaiah Oliver, president of the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida and a Civil Society Fellow. "Do we need to be right? Or do we need to get it right?"

Through dialogue on critical issues such as the economy, immigration, mental health, and social justice, the town hall demonstrated the skills and mindsets required to build and sustain relationships across differences.

Following the event, Civil Society Fellows are now leading gatherings across the country and hosting local dialogues. Representing diverse perspectives, Fellows are committed to creating spaces that welcome all viewpoints. Subsequently, there have been community conversations in Atlanta, Georgia; Austin, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; Los Angeles, California;



Civil Society Fellows are leading gatherings across the country and hosting local dialogues and town halls.

New York, New York; Wilkesboro, North Carolina; Florida; and the DC, Maryland, and Virginia metro area.

The Civil Society Fellowship engages the next generation of national leaders, across political ideology and other differences, to explore and forge solutions to the biggest issues facing society. It is a program of the Aspen Institute and a Fellowship of the Aspen Global Leadership Network. ●

CYBER SUMMIT MAKES HEADLINES

The Institute's premiere cybersecurity event saw a major announcement from the FBI and the launch of a new campaign.

The Aspen Cyber Summit brings together leading national and international voices from government, industry, and civil society to tackle the most consequential cyber threats facing the world. Since its inception in 2016, this conference from Aspen Digital, which is led by Vivian Schiller, has hosted the biggest names in cyber and national security, including White House leaders, members of Congress, and Fortune 100 executives.

At the 2024 event, we hosted the same searching panels and conversations that the Aspen Cyber Summit is known for, but we also made headlines. Top US government officials shared major news, and the founder of Craigslist premiered a new national awareness campaign.

Then-FBI Director Christopher Wray broke news about the Bureau's takedown of a botnet operated by the Chinese-sponsored hacker group Flax Typhoon, which targeted 260,000 Internet of Things devices. Though this was a clear success for the FBI, Wray warned the assembled audience that, despite law enforcement's best efforts, "the Chinese government is going to continue to target your organizations and our critical infrastructure either by their own hand or concealed through proxies."

In a conversation between the US Department of Homeland Security's Kristie Canegallo and then-US Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco, Monaco shared that Iran and Russia had accelerated their efforts to interfere in the 2024 US elections.

Sobering ideas, most certainly, but the Cyber Summit also hit a more optimistic note when Craig Newmark, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and founder of Craigslist and Craig Newmark Philanthropies, unveiled a new cyber-awareness campaign called Take9, which aims to increase awareness among the general public of cybersecurity risks as well as to activate and empower individuals to take preventive measures to ensure greater cyber resilience. Through its accessible, eye-catching, and colorful graphics and messaging, the campaign's assets are particularly useful as a tool to raise public awareness and enhance existing training and messaging on this topic.

Better still, Newmark committed an additional \$100 million to protecting the United States from cyberattacks from foreign governments, allocating half of the gift to shoring up infrastructure and the other to education. ●

Ryan Rose



The Cyber Summit had:

2,000+ livestream viewers

500+ influential, in-person attendees

40 speakers and moderators

“ The Institute’s flagship technology and cybersecurity conference offered landmark sessions with then-chairs of the Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission, c-suite leaders from the NFL and NHL, among many other leaders.

—Vivian Schiller, Aspen Institute Vice President and Aspen Digital Executive Director



Former US Deputy Attorney General
Lisa Monaco speaks with Aspen Digital
Director Garrett Graff at the 2024 Aspen
Cyber Summit in Washington, DC.

FINDING HER PURPOSE

How one Aspen Challenge winner became an Aspen Challenge mentor—and discovered what she’s meant to do.

For Annyah Cush, the Aspen Challenge, a contest that asks young people to come up with innovative solutions to the problems occurring in their own communities, was more than just a competition. It was a chance to find her purpose and discover a passion for helping others. From her first experience as a high school participant in Brooklyn in 2023 to returning as a mentor in 2024, Cush’s journey shows how the Aspen Challenge can open doors, inspire leadership, and empower young people to use their voices to inspire positive change.

Cush’s introduction to the Aspen Challenge, directed by Katie Fitzgerald, began in an unexpected way. She didn’t sign up for it herself. Instead, it was her educators who picked her for the opportunity. “My teachers just chose me to be a part of it, and I didn’t even know what exactly I was joining,” Cush says. “But I trusted them because I knew they wouldn’t steer me toward something that wasn’t going to benefit me.”

The Brooklyn teen stepped into the Challenge with an open mind, and it didn’t take long for her to see its impact. “I found my purpose, a passion for helping other teens, and that opened my eyes to other opportunities I can have for myself,” she says. The experience didn’t just teach her about leadership; it taught her how to work as part of a team to address real-world issues.

Dan Bayer



Aspen Challenge
at the Brooklyn
Academy of Music



**In 2024,
Aspen Challenge
worked with:**

39 high schools

312 high school students

78 educators

“ I told them to use their hearts and minds instead of going into the Challenge trying to win. Once it’s something that you are actually interested in, and you are willing to make a change in the world whether you receive something or not—without a doubt you’ll have no problem with the solutions.”

—Aspen Challenge Winner
Annyah Cush

When Cush’s 2023 Brooklyn Community Arts & Media High School team decided to tackle a challenge about postsecondary opportunities from community leader Kenya George, they knew they wanted to create something meaningful. “We all wanted to collaborate on our ideas and find something that everyone could contribute to,” she says. Their solution, Project BLACK (Building Legacy and Community Kinship), is designed to help teens navigate their postsecondary futures by providing mentorship and insights into different professions. “We held workshops where we brought in people from all kinds of professions to help guide teens,” Cush explained. “It was about giving the teens insights on how they could improve or reach their goals.”

Of course, there were some bumps in the road along the way as Cush’s team worked on their solution. One of the biggest hurdles her team faced was making sure their solution had lasting impact. “It’s easy to create an idea,” she says, “but it’s hard to make sure it has real longevity and has an impact on every person you’re trying to reach.” Their perseverance paid off: In 2023, Cush’s team won the Brooklyn Aspen Challenge.

In 2024, she returned to the Aspen Challenge, but this time, she wasn’t just a participant. She was a mentor. “I did Zoom calls with a specific San Diego team that ended up winning Aspen Challenge as well, and that showed me that I have the capability to make a difference,” she says. “I told them to use their hearts and minds instead of going into the Challenge trying to win. Once it’s something that you are actually interested in, and you are willing to make a change in the world whether you receive something or not—without a doubt you’ll have no problem with the solutions.”

Since Aspen Challenge, Cush has continued to pursue her passions by starting a nonprofit with her mom. She speaks to teens about their mental health and helps guide them to their own purpose. “I took my experiences and decided to teach them entrepreneurial skills so that they can better themselves,” she says. “I want to expand my nonprofit and get more involved with the community.” Cush has been accepted to Grand Canyon University, where she plans to study behavioral health science with a focus on teens. Cush has also been working with the Aspen Challenge community to collaborate and help other participants. ●



Annyah Cush, bottom right, celebrates with her team, Project BLACK, after winning Aspen Challenge: Brooklyn.

LESSONS FROM COLOMBIA

A cohort of Aspen Global Leadership Network Fellows explore Colombia's "peace laboratory."

“Colombia is a peace laboratory. This is an opportunity to show our experiments.” With these words, Deputy Judge of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and Aspen Institute Colombia Fellow Ana Maria Mondragon welcomed a cohort of Aspen Global Leadership Network Fellows to Calima, Colombia, where the group would go on to immerse themselves in the country's complex narrative of peace, justice, reconciliation, and hope.

Each Fellow in attendance was called into this experience with a commitment to bring insights back to their home countries of South Africa, Rwanda, Palestine, Costa Rica, and the United States. Over three days, the group heard from extraordinary individuals—negotiators, victims, perpetrators, former combatants, and Colombian citizens—from all sides of the conflict who are shaping Colombia's journey toward lasting peace.

Over the past several decades, Colombia has embarked on bold experiments unique to its context, many of which are rooted in the ongoing commitment of opposing actors agreeing to sit at a table in dialogue and see each other's humanity. For the Aspen Global Leadership Network, a program overseen by Institute Vice President Dar Vanderbeck, the opportunity to learn from Colombia's peace process was too powerful to miss. Though the 2016 Peace Agreement between the Colombian state and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) marked a pivotal step, the work of building a just and thriving future remains a living, evolving process.

In fact, before the milestone Peace Agreement with the FARC, Colombia's history had seen many other attempts for peace. The 2016 Peace Agreement is commonly emphasized due to its innovations, including new institutions like the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and principles like centering victims in the agreement.

When speaker and Aspen Colombia Fellow Frank Pearl, one of the lead negotiators for the peace process on behalf of the state, spoke to the Fellows, he highlighted the reality that peace agreements do not instantly dissolve the wounds of war; instead, they mark the starting line of a much longer race toward reconciliation and justice. Sustaining dialogue among diverse actors who represent different perspectives on how the country reached this point—from former combatants to community leaders, businesspeople to policymakers—is vital for positive progress.

For example, former FARC member Tanja Nijmeijer brought her perspective to this complexity. After more than a decade as a guerrilla fighter and a negotiator during the Havana peace talks, Nijmeijer's view on violence and reconciliation evolved. “The land problem is at the root of the conflict in Colombia,” she said, emphasizing the importance of tackling systemic inequities to sustain peace.

One of the most powerful elements of the group's trip to Colombia was a visit to Buenaventura, Colombia's largest port city, which was



once ranked among the world's most violent cities, plagued by gang violence and crime. However, through trust-based, confidential dialogues, the city has achieved a significant reduction in violence, falling out of the top 50 in terms of murder rates. Fellows spent a day in the port city to learn about the transformational work of community groups like Grupo Calima, who have been facilitating confidential dialogues in the Cauca region with community members from all sides of the conflict since the peace agreement was signed. These dialogues have proved effective in building deep relationships between opposing actors, humanizing them to one another—an act that has ultimately saved lives.

Grupo Calima as well as the dialogue groups in Buenaventura are intentionally composed of people beyond just state and military actors, such as businesspeople, victims of violence, Indigenous community leaders, leaders in the Afro-Colombian community, and others with informal but influential leadership within their communities. And in turn, they've seen sustained transformation in their communities, rather than flash-in-the-pan moments of agreement.

Dialogues between rival groups in Buenaventura mediated by Bishop Rubén Darío Jaramillo have led to specific agreements, including an initial truce that has now lasted nearly a year.

"People, all people, strive for peace. Despite long-term conflicts—painful ones, traumatic ones—there

are chances for the individual and collective pain to end," says Lana Abu-Hijleh, the West Bank and Gaza country director for Global Communities and a Middle East Leadership Initiative Fellow. "When masks we put on the opposite are removed, and the real truth is heard and faced, when justice is sought, when root causes are understood and dealt with, hearts can be restored and peace can be achieved and sustained."

Colombia's peace process challenged Fellows to rethink the paradigms of conflict resolution and to push them toward both greater empathy and greater imagination when it comes to finding lasting peace in their own communities. Colombia taught them that peace is not merely the absence of war but a continual effort to build trust, repair harm, and nurture systems that allow communities to thrive. It is a process that recognizes the humanity in everyone, even those who have caused immense pain.

Interactions throughout this experience in Colombia underscored the importance of listening deeply, working across divides, and committing to long-term transformation. This work takes courage. It is no easy task to sit across from your "enemy" and try to understand them. But this act is becoming all the more necessary for a world grappling with division. It also requires us to confront the "other" within and make peace with the darker parts of ourselves, for that will allow peace at the societal level. These principles can be applied on the personal, community, national, and international level. ●

“ Colombia is on the right path, but a lot needs to be done to scale and reach out to all. Still without real social and economic justice and equity, the path could be lost. It is a story to learn from, admire, and pray for its full success.”

—Lana Abu-Hijleh,
Country Director, West
Bank and Gaza, Global
Communities, and
Middle East Leadership
Initiative Fellow



Fellows learn to do the hard work of peace in Colombia.

YOUTH AND THE BAUHAUS

Education programs soar at the Resnick Center for Herbert Bayer Studies in 2024 and a new exhibition launches in 2025.

Now in its fourth year of operation, the Resnick Center for Herbert Bayer Studies (the Bayer Center), led by Executive Director Lissa Ballinger, continues to pursue its mission of preserving the legacy of Bauhaus artist and designer Herbert Bayer (1900–1985) by promoting an understanding of Bayer's interdisciplinary nature through collection, exhibitions, public programming, community engagement, research, and educational initiatives.

During the Center's inaugural 2023–2024 school year of educational programming, the Bayer Center directly connected with more than 1,200 young people from 17 schools between Aspen and Grand Junction, Colorado, including 564 pre-K-through-high-school students in 25 programs hosted on the Aspen Institute campus and 723 students in six in-school programs in Aspen and Basalt.

So far, in the 2024–2025 school year, the Bayer Center's education programs have reached 360 young people—along with more than 450 adults and teachers—through more than three dozen educational events, including a pilot program titled the Bayer Center Youth Fellowship.

Organized and led by Andrew Travers, the Penner Manager of Educational Programming, the Bayer Center hosts field trips for young people to interact with the exhibitions and experience Bayer's earthworks, sculpture, and architecture on the Institute campus; runs

Bayer-inspired workshops for educators and students; partners with regional art education organizations; and produces in-school events, including the springtime Basalt Elementary Art Days series at Basalt Elementary School, which had its second installment in March and April 2025.

Opening June 10, 2025, *Sculpting the Environment: The Three-Dimensional Art of Herbert Bayer* examines Bayer's pioneering artistic production in three dimensions—a distinctive multidisciplinary practice that melds environmental design, landscape architecture, and sculpture. Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Aspen Institute, the exhibition will provide the most comprehensive investigation to date of Bayer's exploration of "the total environment," or, as he put it in 1970, "the extension of my work into many areas of space."

Focusing on his site-specific outdoor sculptures and land art, this exhibition brings together more than 100 works by Bayer, including drawings, paintings, photographs, models, and maquettes—many on view for the first time. His particular fondness for Aspen, where he was given free rein to sculpt the Aspen Meadows into a *gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art, will be highlighted. This exhibition is co-curated by the artist Koko Bayer (Herbert Bayer's granddaughter) and Bayer Center Curator Adam Thomas. Funding for the exhibition is provided by the estate of Ann M. Korologos and The Segal Family Foundation. Additional support provided by Lynda and Stewart Resnick. ●



“ Thank you for everything you do on a day-to-day basis. We live in a wonderful place thanks to people like you who dedicate their time to continue to educate and enrich our culture and people’s lives.”

—Isabel Johnson, Head of Community Outreach for Alpine Bank, on awarding a \$2,000 grant from Alpine Bank for the Bayer Center’s educational efforts

LETTER FROM MARIA LAURA ACEBAL



For 75 years, the Aspen Institute has been able to deliver on our timeless mission due to the leadership, innovation, and active partnership of our Board of Trustees. These individuals who hail from diverse geographies, generations, backgrounds, and viewpoints are one of the Institute's greatest assets. Their steady and dedicated counsel, generous and broad support, and conviction in our purpose form the foundation of all we do. On behalf of all who serve and are served by the Aspen Institute, I express heartfelt gratitude, admiration, and affection to our Board of Trustees.

Maria Laura Acebal

Executive Vice President, Strategy, and Corporate Secretary



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During my first full year as the Aspen Institute's executive vice president for institutional advancement, I have been amazed by the generosity and dedication of our trustees, community, and partners. Thank you for your engagement with our work, as the Institute's efforts to drive change, address complex societal problems, and prioritize mind, body, and spirit are as relevant today as they were when we began 75 years ago.

In order to execute on our key strategic priorities of leadership, rising generations, climate and energy, economic opportunity, and societal trust, I am excited that we formally launched a \$450 million five-year 75th Anniversary Campaign this past summer. Successfully funding these initiatives will create an Aspen Institute that empowers dialogue and diverse points of view and engages a thriving interconnected community of leaders, driving action and impact across geographies, generations, and viewpoints.

We were excited to take time in 2025 to celebrate our milestone 75th anniversary on our beautiful Aspen Meadows campus, including a celebratory dinner and a Community Day that took place over the summer. Our success could not happen without your investment and partnership, and that is as true for the future as it has been for the past 75 years.

Thank you to our trustees, program donors, Aspen Society members, Paepcke and Aspen Legacy Society members, and corporate and foundation partners for another successful year of impact in 2024 and as we look ahead to continuing to build on our legacy in 2025 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Berger

Executive Vice President for Institutional Advancement



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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION December 31, 2024

With Summarized Financial Information as of December 31, 2023 (Dollars in Thousands)

ASSETS	2024	2023	LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	2024	2023
			Liabilities		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$25,674	\$13,383	Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$18,036	\$18,441
Investments	\$497,620	\$285,464	Grants payable	\$3,375	\$2,653
Investments held for deferred compensation	\$9,178	\$8,401	Note payable	\$9,860	\$7,701
Accounts receivable, net	\$3,781	\$4,484	Customer deposits and deferred fees	\$8,329	\$8,756
Grants and contributions receivable, net	\$90,087	\$73,329	Refundable advance	\$9,000	\$9,000
Prepaid expenses	\$7,845	\$5,901	Lease liability - operating	\$51,729	\$55,936
Inventory	\$335	\$332	Deferred compensation	\$9,178	\$8,401
Property and equipment, net	\$75,096	\$77,765			
Security deposits	\$813	\$854	Total Liabilities	\$109,507	\$110,888
Right of use asset - operating	\$39,697	\$43,349			
Investment related receivables	\$6,454	\$5,852	Total Net Assets	\$647,073	\$408,226
Total Assets	\$756,580	\$519,114			
			Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$756,580	\$519,114

NET ASSETS BY RESTRICTION

(Dollars in Thousands)



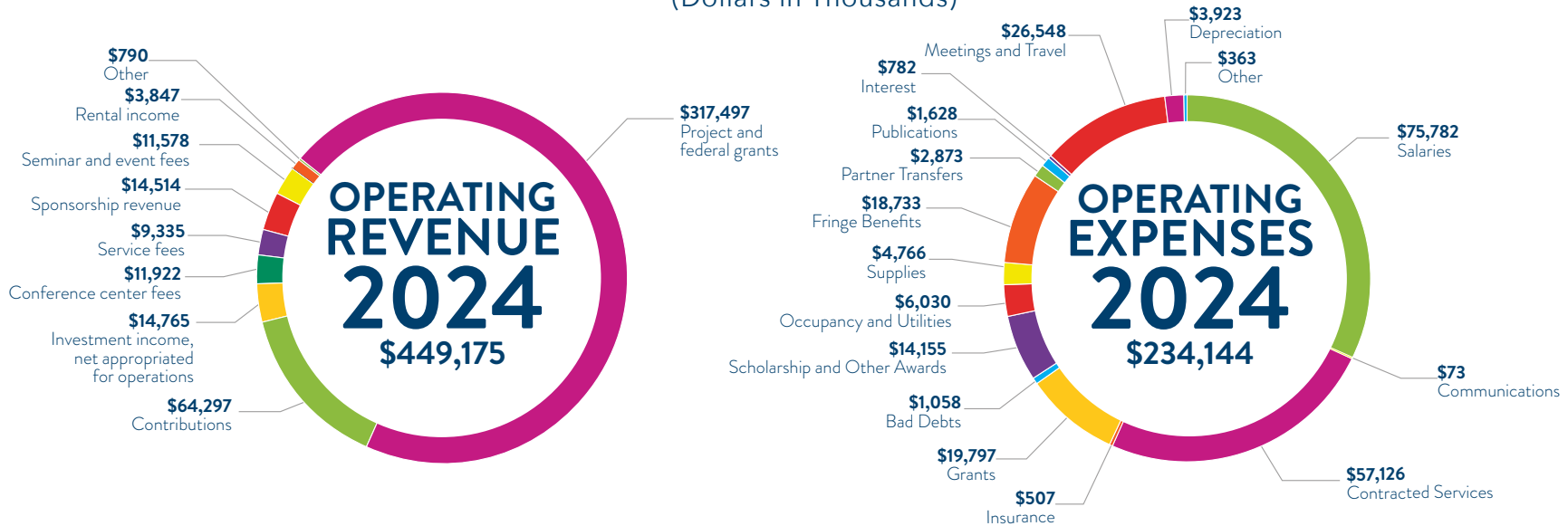
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES December 31, 2024

With Summarized Financial Information for the Year Ended December 31, 2023 (Dollars in Thousands)

OPERATING REVENUE & SUPPORT	2024	2023	EXPENSES	2024	2023
Project and federal grants	\$317,497	\$137,260	Program Services		
Contributions	\$64,927	\$44,233	Policy Programs	\$128,808	\$117,103
Investment income appropriated for operations	\$14,765	\$23,679	Campus Activities	\$18,385	\$17,447
Conference center fees	\$11,922	\$ 9,309	Public Programs	\$11,487	\$16,714
Service fees	\$9,335	\$12,670	Leadership	\$13,867	\$12,870
Sponsorship revenue	\$14,514	\$14,841	Youth & Engagement	\$5,173	\$4,608
Seminar and event fees	\$11,578	\$10,364	Seminars	\$3,515	\$6,145
Other	\$790	\$903	Other restricted programs	\$4,202	\$5,649
Rental income	\$3,847	\$777	Total Program Services	\$185,437	\$180,536
Total Operating Revenue and Support	\$449,175	\$254,036	Supporting Services		
NON-OPERATING ITEMS			General and administrative	\$42,925	\$39,805
Investment income in excess of earnings	\$23,816	\$8,400	Fundraising and development	\$5,782	\$5,995
Change in assets	\$238,847	\$36,100	Total Supporting Services	\$48,707	\$45,800
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$408,226	\$372,126	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$234,144	\$226,336
Net Assets, End of Year	\$647,073	\$408,226	Change in net assets from operations	\$ 215,031	\$27,700

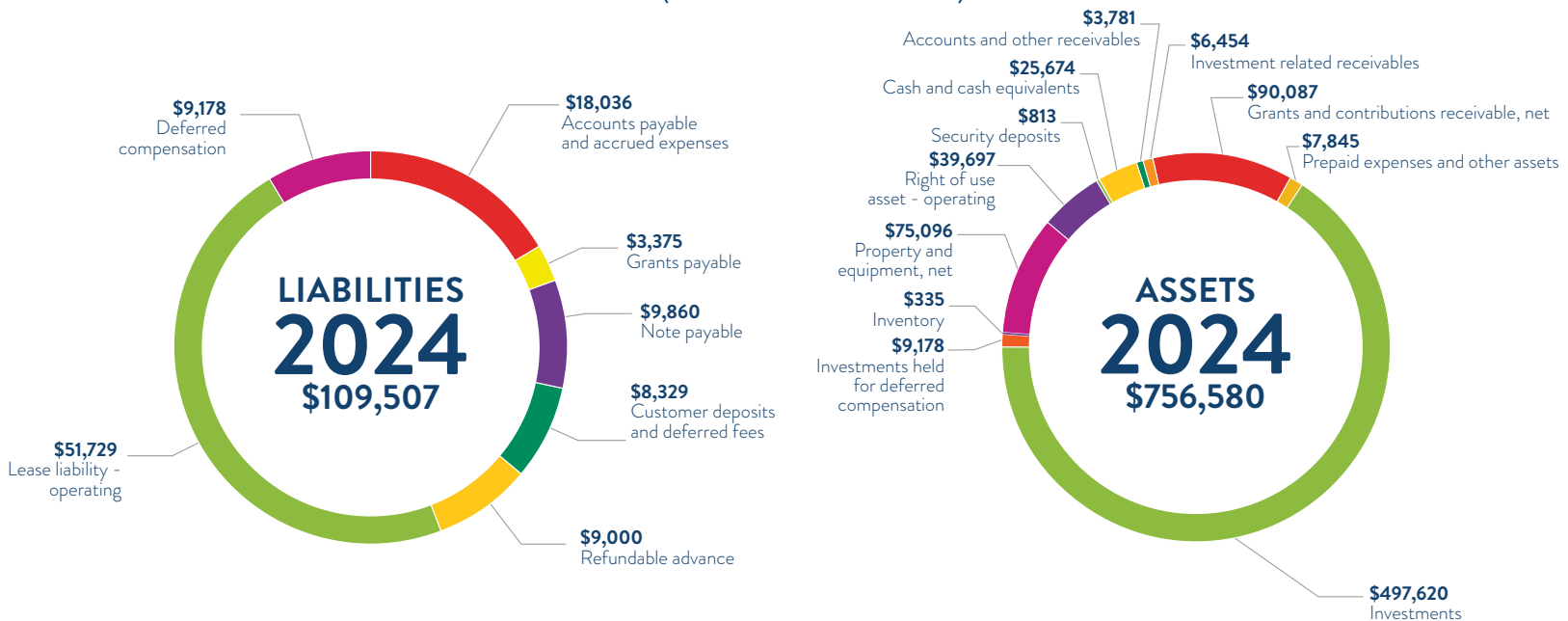
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

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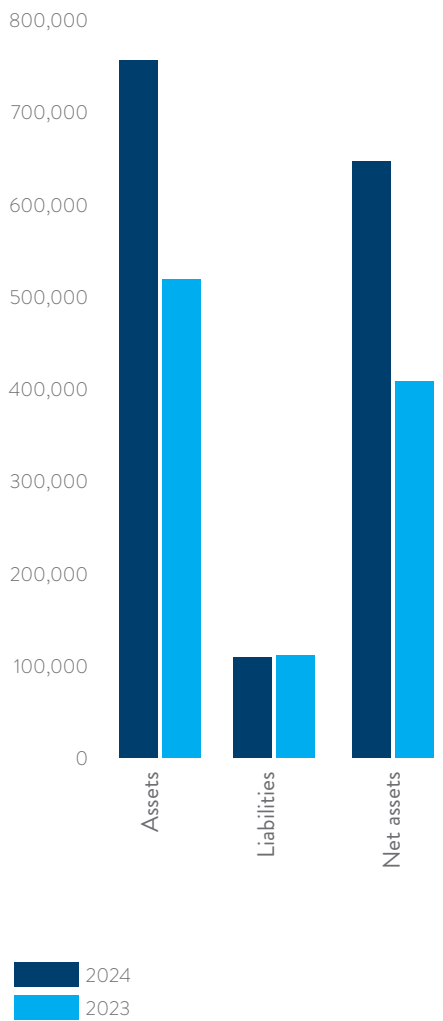


STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

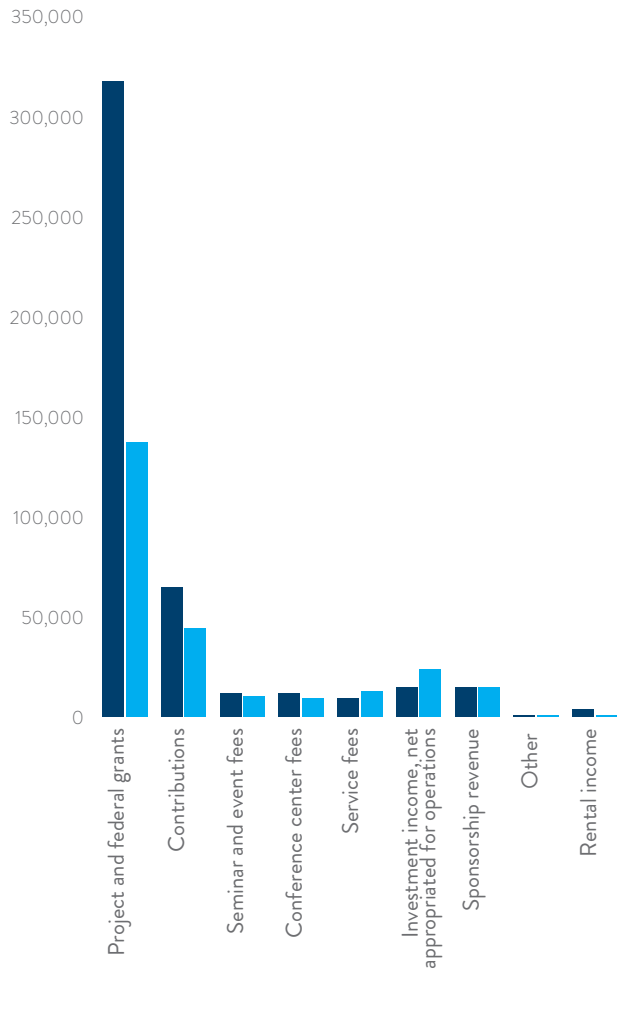
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2024 v. 2023
ASSET, LIABILITY AND
NET ASSET IN TOTALITY
(Dollars in Thousands)



2024 v. 2023
REVENUE BY
CATEGORY
(Dollars in Thousands)



2024 v. 2023
EXPENSES BY
CATEGORY
(Dollars in Thousands)

