

# Annual Report 2023



# Organization Summary

**Emerging Workforce Initiative, Inc. dba The Book Works Project** is a nonprofit corporation, established as a 501(c)3 organization in 2009.

**Mission:** Creating programs, partnerships, information, and support that prepare vulnerable youth and young adults for career pathways.

**Description:** The Book Works advocates for equitable access to education and employment for youth and young adults who are or at-risk of becoming disconnected because of educational disruptions, childhood trauma, social or racial discrimination, or economic hardship.

The Book Works achieves our mission through three primary strategies:

1. Research that identifies and amplifies the reasons young people experience disconnection in our community;
2. Programs that assist young people to succeed in school and work;
3. Partnerships that create new opportunities for high school-age learners.

## Program Address

The Book Works  
205 West Wellington Avenue  
Louisville, Kentucky 40214  
502-354-3667

## Mailing Address

The Book Works  
PO Box 6162  
Louisville, Kentucky 40206

## Our Leadership

John Langford, USI Insurance (Board Chair)  
Anastasia Chapman, Business Consultant (Board Vice-Chair)  
Melissa “Mel” Banks, State Capacity Building Center (Board Secretary)  
Dan Heekin, KPMG LLP (Board Treasurer)  
Heather Dearing, Kentucky Lt. Governor Office  
Roan Head, Opportunity Youth Congressional Liaison  
Judi Vanderhaar, PhD., Kentucky Department of Education  
Kahlia Evans, MSD  
Michael Russman, U.S. Bank  
Stacy Deck, PhD, Spalding University  
Elizabeth Senn-Alvey, Executive Director



# Who We Serve

**Nearly one in eight high school-age youth and young adults in Louisville are disconnected from school and without a diploma.**

At The Book Works, we serve young people who are experiencing disruptions to their education for many different reasons. Some young people are struggling to attend school due to early or consistent exposure to violence or serious trauma, involvement in the child welfare or justice systems, or recent immigration to the community. Other young people, as many as one in four, grew up in families experiencing economic hardship or homelessness and must prioritize working or caring for younger siblings over their education. Additionally, too many disconnected youth have become marginalized by policies and practices that discriminate against them because of their race, disability, language or citizen status, gender or gender identity, or orientation. The economic, public health, and social justice crises experienced in our community since 2020 have only increased the number of young people who are at risk of becoming disconnected from school and work.

We focus our efforts on serving young people who are:

1. Age: Under 18 (75%), 18 to 21 (20%), 22-26 (5%)
2. School Status: In school (50%), out of school (50%)
3. Highest Level of Education: Grade 6 to 8 (20%), Grade 9 to 12 (80%)
4. Experiencing education disruption due to foster care, juvenile system involvement, discrimination or harassment, chronic absences, suspensions, economic disadvantage, and recent immigration. (100%)



While our data indicate we serve high-need students, profiles (modified for confidentiality) tell a more complete story of the young people we help to re-engage with their school and career goals.



Vanesa, 15, had fallen behind on credits due to her struggle to read and understand English. She attends school regularly but does not participate or speak up in class. Vanessa's parents work long hours and can't afford after-school tutoring. She wants to drop out when she turns 18 to work with her mother.

*Our Education Advocates assisted Vanesa and her parents in requesting a special education assessment, attended the planning meeting for services, arranged for the translation of essential education documents, assisted with access to mental health counseling, and located afterschool programs for Vanesa to attend. We will continue to support Vanesa until she graduates.*



Jamie, 17, was in foster care for 6 years until moving in with her aunt. During her time in care, Jamie had eight different school placements including in-patient treatment for an emotional behavior disorder. Jamie has an Individual Education Program (IEP) outlining the special education services she needs at school. Jamie has 6 total credits on her transcript but believes she has finished more coursework. She would like to graduate and attend college but doesn't see how that will be possible.

*When our Education Advocates started working with Jamie, we assisted her in accessing her education records so she could get credit for all of her coursework and connected her with a case manager to ensure she had all the services needed as a former foster youth. We will continue to support her while she finishes high school and prepares for college.*



Levi, 14, lost his dad to cancer when he was 11 and is living with his grandmother. Levi has been a target of bullying, which causes Levi to get into fights at school and on the bus. After repeated incidents, Levi was sent to a behavior support alternative school. Levi told his grandmother that he felt hopeless and didn't want to finish school.

*Our Education Advocates are working to connect Levi with mental health services and after-school and summer activities that interest him. We are working with his grandmother to find a school after he "serves his time" in the alternative program. The options are limited currently but our advocates will continue to work with Levi until he finds an educational setting in which he feels safe and able to focus on learning.*



# Programs & Impact

In Louisville, nearly 10,000 young adults (18 to 24 years) are not in school and without a diploma, many because of the types of challenges faced by Vanesa, Jamie and Levi. Structural inequities and service inadequacies contribute to these numbers that disproportionately impact young people of color and children growing up in poverty. At The Book Works, we are committed to finding a path to graduation for every young person. We use five strategies as we work toward this goal.

**Education Advocates** assist youth and young adults experiencing educational disruption to reconnect with the school and academic support. Our model has been recognized by the National League of Cities as an effective strategy for re-engaging high school-age youth.

**Impact:** In 2023, The Book Works Education Advocates assisted 57 middle and high school-age youth to access an education pathway or support. Half of these young people remain actively engaged with our advocates. Of the young people who have exited, 55% were re-engaged with school and/or work.

**Education Advocacy Training** is offered to educators, community program staff, and other adults working with high school-age youth who experience education disruption. The training includes a comprehensive set of up-to-date online resources for advocates and a directory of options for completing high school in Louisville.

**Impact:** In 2023, 123 participants took part in 12 training sessions in a variety of topics in education advocacy. Eight college students completed (or are completing) a minimum of 80 hours of training as Education Advocacy Fellows. More than 25 high school students are learning self-advocacy skills in their role as peer navigators.

**Work + Learn Programs:** The Book Works uses a project-based learning model to provide opportunities for marginalized youth and young adults to develop new skills, solve problems as a team, and set individual and collective goals. Young people earn a wage or stipend to develop and implement innovative and impactful projects that align with their goals and interests:

- **Books for Foster Families and Foster Care Facilities:** A team of six youth managed a project to purchase and ship books to families and organizations serving children and youth in foster care.
- **Film Series and "Taking Action with Courage" Programs:** A team of four youth coordinated a summer film and discussion series for teens on topics important to the team including mental health and economic inequities.
- **Neighborhood Youth Board:** Starting in late 2023, a team of 15 youth and young adults are learning how to lead social justice projects positively impacting their community.

**Impact:** Twenty-five youth participants facilitated or will lead programs involving more than 150 peers.



# Programs & Impact

**System Collaboration:** The Book Works convenes Community program providers, elected officials, system administrators, and other stakeholders to take part in workgroups and community events on the causes, impacts, and responses to educational disruptions in our community.

**Impact:** In 2023, The Book Works identified policies and practices that disrupt or delay education access for students who are multilingual learners, in the juvenile justice or foster care systems, or learning online only and convened partners to find ways to address issues. Representatives of 37 agencies and organizations attend at least one of twenty workgroups or other convenings.

**High School Engagement Pilot:** With partners in education, community-based programs, and workforce development, The Book Works is leading a pilot project to support high school-age youth who are “off track” to graduation. Collaboratively, we are creating a neighborhood site that offers academic, employment, mental health, and other support for high school-age youth and young adults who are not attending school due to suspensions or chronic absences or who need assistance with online courses.

**Impact:** The Book Works has convened community partners and funders to launch placed-based high school engagement services in three neighborhoods in 2024.





# Strategic Goals

**Goal 1:** Increase the number of high school age learners experiencing educational disruptions who are supported or reconnected with a path to graduation.

Strategies:

- Deliver high school re-engagement services.
- Implement a comprehensive outreach and communications plan.
- Track organizational impact and continually improve.

**Goal 2:** Reduce educational disruptions in child serving systems.

Strategies:

- Establish and expand partnerships.
- Identify and analyze data and research to understand the scale and root cause of the issues and highlight the urgency for change.
- Expand community capacity to assist high school learners to graduate and advocate for changes to make education more equitably accessible.

**Goal 3:** Increase and strengthen organizational sustainability.

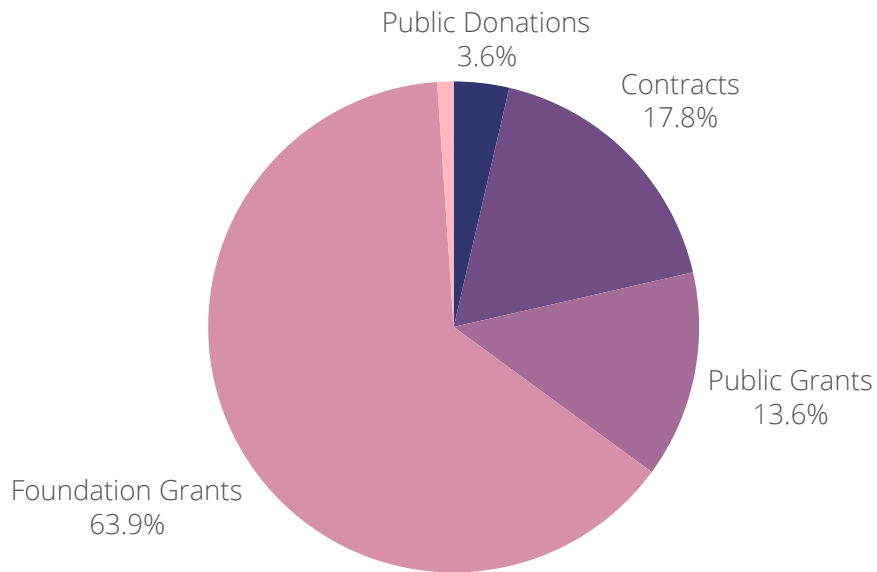
Strategies:

- Grow fiscal oversight and control.
- Grow revenue.

# 2023 Revenue

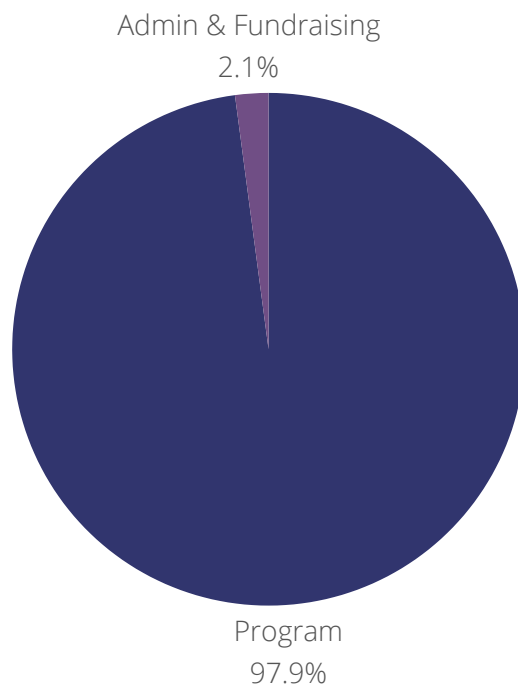
Total Revenue: \$ 110,027.63

Total Net Assets: \$71,805.24



# 2023 Expenses

Total Expenses: \$135,865.32



Total net assets: \$65,145





# Our Supporters

The Book Works is supported by individual donors, grants, and contracts. Our largest funding partners in 2023 include:

**We thank the many donors and sponsors who support The Book Works:**

- Jewish Heritage Fund
- Metro United Way
- Aetna SKY
- Louisville Metro Government
- C.E.&S. Foundation
- Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels

