

## Letter from the Board Chairs



#### Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is with great pleasure and pride that we present the 2023 Acadia Center Annual Report. As we reflect on the incredible journey we've embarked on together, we are reminded of the profound reasons why we chose to be a part of this remarkable organization.

At the core of Acadia Center's mission lies a commitment to driving positive change in our communities and beyond. Over the years, we have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of our collective efforts. From shaping regional policies to spearheading grassroots campaigns, Acadia Center has consistently demonstrated its ability to make a tangible difference in the world. What sets us apart is not just our ambition, but our unwavering resolve to turn that ambition into action.

These accomplishments are due to Acadia Center's passionate team who pour their hearts and souls into this organization every single day. Together, we are not just shaping policies; we are shaping the future—a future where our communities are resilient, our planet thrives, and every voice is heard.

As we embark on another year of impactful work, we are filled with optimism and hope for what lies ahead. We want to take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you—for your unwavering support, your invaluable contributions, and your steadfast belief in the mission of Acadia Center. Together, we are stronger, and together, we will continue to make a difference.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey.

Warm regards,

Daniel Hildreth and Phyllis Theermann Board Co-Chairs

## Letter from the President

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on the past year, I am excited by the many strides Acadia Center has made together with your partnership. With each passing year, our commitment to pioneering climate solutions grows stronger, fueled by our determined ambition to drive meaningful change.

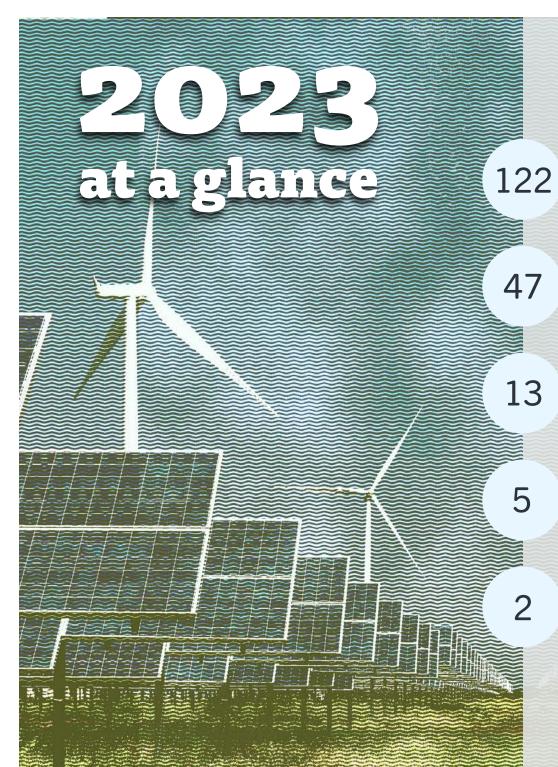
With Acadia Center approaching its 25th anniversary, we remain fueled by the belief that actions designed to improve the lives of all residents are the antidote to the urgent challenges we face. Our journey has been marked by milestones and achievements that attest to an unwavering dedication to building the momentum required to realize ambitious goals.

2023 was a year of particular progress and promise. We initiated three new projects that expand outreach to the public to identify new ways to overcome barriers to progress. Now more than ever, collaboration among the public, elected officials, regulators and businesses is vital to solving the climate challenges impacting us. Acadia Center's approach has always prioritized the power of coalitions, networks, and campaigns that transcend borders and unite stakeholders in a common cause, fueled by sound data and best practices. Whether it's spearheading ground-breaking initiatives around complex issues like power grids, reshaping energy efficiency programs, or championing emission reduction efforts in the most-needed areas, our track record over these 25 years demonstrates success in effecting change on a regional scale.

As we look to the coming years, our staff and board carry forward a spirit of innovation, collaboration, and ambition that defines Acadia Center. Together, we will continue to build momentum, push boundaries, and build a sustainable future for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Daniel Sosland President



times featured in major news outlets

clean energy statements and testimonies

public presentations

new staff members

groundbreaking reports



#### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2023, ACADIA CENTER:

### **Released pioneering reports**

- Analyzing the impact of power plant emissions on vulnerable communities
- Proving that the transition to electric utilities for New Jersey residents will save them vast amounts of money

## Drove change by playing the leading role

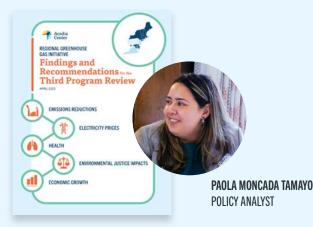
Alongside coalition partners, we demanded action on the Clean Heat Standard in Massachusetts

## Comprehensive Assessment of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Program (RGGI)

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative or RGGI is the nation's first multi-state program to cap climate pollution emissions from power plants. In place since 2005, from Maine to Maryland, RGGI has helped reduce emissions from fossil fuel electric generating plans by 40% while generating more than \$7.5 billion in revenues that are reinvested in clean energy and consumer benefits.

**The Problem:** Power plant emissions fuel climate change and disproportionately impact lower-income communities of color and public health.

In April, Acadia Center released its third comprehensive RGGI Report: Findings and Recommendations for the Third RGGI Program Review, which analyzed the program's impacts to date and offered recommendations for adjusting RGGI in coming years. Acadia Center analysis found that the nine states that have consistently participated in RGGI



have experienced a more rapid increase in GDP per capita and a more rapid decline in power sector CO2 emissions and retail electricity prices than non-participating states. RGGI has significantly contributed to state efforts to reduce climate pollution and benefit consumers. However, the RGGI Report went further by recommending how RGGI can better address the impacts of power plant pollution on local communities that are disproportionately impacted by air pollution, such as NOx emissions, which have detrimental health impacts.

## RGGI REPORT: ORIGINAL RESEARCH ON HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPACTS

While air quality improved across the region, differences exist in localized impacts of power plants covered by the RGGI program. Acadia Center analysis found that between 2008 and 2021:



• Over a third of RGGI plants that emit significant levels of NOx emissions are located near high asthma communities (census tracts above the 90th percentile in CEQ data for adults with asthma).



 NOx emissions from power plants within 3 miles of an EJSI community (above the 90th percentile on at least one of U.S. EPA's EJ Screen socioeconomic indicators) declined by 85%, compared to the rest of the RGGI power plant fleet, where NOx emissions fell by 88%.



• Over two-thirds of RGGI plants do not have an active air quality monitoring site within a 3-mile radius – and over three-quarters of these unmonitored plants are near an EPA EJSI or high asthma community.

## Report: The Future is Electric: Part II

Heating homes and businesses with fossil fuels is a leading cause of climate pollution and contributes to poor indoor air quality. "Decarbonizing" building heating by transitioning to cleaner electric alternatives and better weatherization are leading tools to address the buildings sector.

**The Problem:** Consumers need more accessible information on the benefits of converting to clean, electric heat.

Acadia Center followed up on its Future is Electric Report (2022) by zeroing in on how residents in one state, New Jersey, in an average insulated gas-heated home, can save anywhere from 4% to 41% on their annual energy bills by adopting high-efficiency electric appliances such as heat pumps and up to 69% in a typical drafty home when paired with weatherization. Based on winter 2022-2023 utility rates, Acadia Center analysts found that New Jerseyans who live in poorly insulated gas homes can save \$1,550 to \$3,240 each year, a range of 47% to 69% savings on annual energy bills



depending on service territory, by investing in electrification and weatherization.

## Leading the Coalition on the Clean Heat Standard in Massachusetts

An important emerging approach to transitioning buildings from polluting fossil fuels is a Clean Heat Standard (CHS). A Clean Heat Standard would require suppliers of heating energy, notably gas utilities and providers of heating oil and propane, and possibly electricity suppliers, to obtain a certain number of credits generated by deploying 'clean heat measures' such as building energy efficiency improvements or installation of heat pumps that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

**The Problem:** To work properly, a CHS needs to promote energy alternatives that are truly clean and sustainable. This requires attention to emissions and other data to ensure that CHS achieves decarbonization goals.

Massachusetts is a leading state developing a CHS. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) initiated a stakeholder process in 2023 regarding the development of a CHS for Massachusetts. The DEP requested information on program design input, recommendations for further input, and suggested topics, locations, and formats for stakeholder meetings and hearings. Acadia Center devoted significant analytic and staff resources to delve into this complex rule to make recommendations on the CHS. Acadia Center worked with many stakeholders, including Green Energy Consumers Alliance, Home Energy Efficiency Team, Conservation Law

#### THERMAL EMISSIONS BY SOURCE IN MILLION METRIC TONS OF CO2 EQUIVALENT (MA 2018)



HEATING BUILDINGS IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON FOSSIL FUELS. Source: Massachusetts dep

Foundation and Pipe Line Awareness for the Northeast, to draft detailed recommendations in a 22-page document signed by over 35 organizations that outlined our vision for a successful CHS for Massachusetts. These top priorities include a CHS that ensures adequate equity protections and an electrification-only compliance program, particularly for gas utilities.

The detailed comments further recommended that the program should be designed to address equity goals by providing direct and indirect benefits to customers with the highest energy burdens. Acadia Center further requested DEP to coordinate closely with other key agencies, including the Department of Energy Resources and the Department of Public Utilities, on complementary strategies, including utility rate design, the Alternative Portfolio Standard, and a managed transition off gas.

Acadia Center and its colleagues further asked DEP to design the CHS in a manner that best supports the most cost-effective long-term emissions reduction pathway. This concept centered around focusing compliance pathways on non-combustion technologies rather than biofuels or hydrogen blending, particularly when transitioning from fossil gas. The document asked DEP to utilize the state's most aggressive High Electrification Scenario for the building sector from the state's Clean Energy and Climate Plan because if forecasted more rapid phase down of gas heating systems, better positioning the state to achieve 2050 climate goals at similar costs. All these efforts by Acadia Center are directed at making the Massachusetts CHS not only a powerful climate and consumer tool, but one that can set a model for states across the country.



"Acadia Center's expertise and ability to leverage data and analytics has been instrumental in advancing our climate and equity goals in the clean energy space."

> - ANNIE CARFORO, Climate Justice Campaign Manager, We act for Environmental Justice

# Advocate

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2023, ACADIA CENTER:

#### **Cleared the path for electrification**

Diligently worked to bring about the conditions that led to the issuing of the Future of Gas Decision, with national implications for fossil fuel phase-out, and building electrification

#### Translated expertise into understanding

Created a series of explainer documents that break down complicated clean energy issues into engaging and accessible language for non-experts interested in clean energy

#### Led coalitions of advocates

Together we pushed for affordable, low- or no-emission public transportation and to ensure state DOTs comply with federal regulations

## A Groundbreaking Future of Gas Decision

**The Problem:** States need to undertake a massive transition from fossil (natural) gas to achieve climate and consumer goals

Many states are highly dependent on fossil (natural) gas for building heating, appliances like cookstoves, and power generation. States need to address how to transition the multi-billion natural gas system. Massachusetts is taking a leadership role. After a multi-year process, the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU) issued a groundbreaking Order in its Future of Gas (DPU 20-80-B) proceeding. The Order sets a clear path forward for building electrification, more coordinated planning across gas and electric utilities, and more comprehensive

"

...this is potentially the most transformative climate decision in Massachusetts history,

> - KYLE MURRAY QUOTED IN THE BOSTON GLOBE

consideration of solutions that avoid the need for fossil gas pipeline infrastructure. The Order also set the stage for a recently opened proceeding on energy burden and affordability (DPU 24-15). Acadia Center expects this decision to serve as a model for other states as they consider the future of the gas utility.

The Order represents not a conclusion of work but rather an initiation of multiple significant new work streams in which utilities, stakeholders, and the Department will now engage. The Order, therefore, serves as an essential midpoint and mile-marker in a broader transition that will span many years, if not decades, with the decision now setting off other key dominos, such as the following steps:

- Evaluation of the magnitude of gas utility stranded asset risks.
- Revisions to gas utility revenue decoupling mechanisms.
- Systematic consideration and adoption of non-gas pipeline alternatives (NPAs).
- A new DPU proceeding dedicated to innovative solutions to address energy burdens and affordability.
- Reassessment of gas utility tariffs, policies, and practices on new and existing customer connections.
- Individual gas utility Climate Compliance Plans every five years; and
- Coordinated planning between gas utilities and electric distribution companies.

Acadia Center looks ahead with excitement to the opportunity to carry this important work forward and implement the directives of this landmark Order in line with the imperatives of climate, affordability, equity, safety and reliability, and beyond.

## Launching the "Acadia Center Explains" Series

**The Problem:** Information on clean energy topics often remains inaccessible and unengaging to non-experts, leading to misinformation and misunderstanding.

Acadia Center began publishing a monthly series of Clean Energy Explainers breaking down topics ranging from emerging clean energy policies and new technologies to energy infrastructure and how it works. These Explainers allow those less familiar with the complex work we do at Acadia Center to step into this clean energy space in an accessible and engaging way. In two pages, the Explainers series aims to define and address the most pressing topics Acadia Center works on.



### Advancing Affordable, Clean Public Transportation Across the Region

**The Problem:** Transportation systems continue to rely on fossil fuels and need comprehensive planning to adopt low- and no-emissions alternatives.

Acadia Center is a leading voice for equitable transportation policy and reforms in the Northeast. Through continued policy advocacy, community engagement, and coalition building, Acadia Center believes residents deserve more transportation options, supporting transit agency funding stability and sustainability, equitable fare policies, heavyduty emissions reductions, and vehicle electrification.

Transportation is Connecticut's largest single contributor to emissions, accounting for 40% of total emissions. Acadia Center advocates for transportation policy and reforms that lower emissions through electrification, emissions standards and support for alternatives to vehicle dependency. Acadia Center collaborates with advocates and community-based organizations to support efforts addressing public transportation gaps within environmental justice communities. Transportation corridors bisect Connecticut's environmental justice communities. Acadia Center provides a critical perspective of electrification, transit equity, and emissions reductions through active participation in Connecticut's Transportation Climate Coalition, Advanced Clean Cars II and Advanced Clean Trucks Working Group, and Regional Transportation Equity Advocates.

In 2023, Acadia Center took the lead in reconvening a coalition in Rhode Island around transportation decarbonization, motivated by the limited information provided by RI DOT's Carbon Reduction Strategy (CRS). Acadia Center convened monthly meetings of advocates and conveyed the group's concerns during public comment at multiple Transportation Advisory Committee, State Planning Council, and Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council meetings. Our coalition pushed RIDOT to open a public comment period and invest more funds in mode shift, which is the shifting from car transportation to options such as buses, walking, and biking, and our staff mobilized a broad range of members of the public to comment on the CRS. Although Acadia Center still has serious concerns regarding RIDOT's approach to engagement, mode shift, and carbon reduction, RIDOT revised its Carbon Reduction Strategy (CRS), noting the value of public input and shifted the allocation of remaining funds to place a much greater emphasis on mode shift, to the tune of a 170% increase.



JAYSON VELAZQUEZ Climate and energy justice Policy associate

EMILY KOO Senior Policy Advocate and Rhode Island Program Director Overall, I'm glad to see that RIDOT responded to the public's demand for more investment in non-car infrastructure, but the core issues of not meeting the Act on Climate targets, nor measuring project level emissions reductions, remain.

> - EMILY KOO Quoted in the Brown Daily Herald

# Implement

#### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2023, ACADIA CENTER:

#### **Turned the tables**

Made progress in multiple states with integrated grid planning, changing the way utilities are regulated so they better advance benefits for consumers and the climate

## Garnered positions of influence

Getting a seat at the table on many of the most important stakeholder and advisory councils across the region, influencing the direction of clean energy, and staying at the table to ensure proper results

#### **Collaborated across boundaries**

Initiated a model approach to improving the power grids, a backbone of the clean energy future, by kicking off an international grid coordination forum and launched initiatives that will ensure that underserved communities play a vital role in shaping the future of the grid to benefit those systemically ignored

## Prioritizing Integrated Grid Planning to Benefit Consumers

**The Problem:** The energy grid is the backbone of the clean energy transition, requiring strategic investment and updated planning by states and utilities.

This year, Connecticut, Maine, and New York all made progress with Integrated Distribution System Planning processes. The proliferation of distributed energy resources, the increasingly dynamic nature of the grid and energy production, and the implementation of essential laws and policies related to emissions, equity, and resiliency all mean that utilities can no longer plan for future grid investments in a siloed and uncoordinated manner. Acadia Center is pressing states to adopt integrated planning efforts that cut across silos and require utilities to consider grid needs and solutions in a much more holistic way. Acadia Center engaged in Maine's Integrated Grid Planning proceeding - a direct result of legislation that Acadia Center helped draft and build support for. Its staff played a leading role in Connecticut's proceedings on Performance-Based Regulation, which has explored an Integrated Distribution System Planning process, and set an important precedent for the region.

Acadia Center provided expert commentary and testimony in regulatory proceedings and legislation covering a wide range of issues—from grid modernization and rate design, to Performance-Based Regulation and utility business model reform. By offering clear recommendations based on robust data analysis and research, Acadia Center directly informs regulatory decisions and legislation and helps to deliver better outcomes for ratepayers and communities throughout the Northeast.

## A Seat at the Table for Clean Energy, Climate and Equity

**The Problem:** Consumers and public interest voices are too often not in the rooms where vital decisions are shaped and implemented by industry voices.

Acadia Center believes that to ensure that the needle continues to move in the clean energy space, advocates must be in the rooms where major decisions are being deliberated on and made. Not only do these forums drive forward climate progress, but they are responsible for ensuring the transition to the clean energy future is equitable, inclusive, and effective. Acadia Center has long advocated for effective, stakeholder engagement in processes determining energy efficiency and clean energy plans. We continue to advocate for the creation of transparent stakeholder engagement in all key areas of energy and climate decision-making. Over the past year, several staff members have been appointed to these boards, many of which Acadia Center worked to create, and their work will be felt for decades to come.

- **Kyle Murray** was sworn in as a member of the Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC) in Massachusetts and was appointed to the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council, also serving on the Equity Working Groups of these councils.
- Jayson Velazquez was appointed to the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Board as its Environmental Representative and obtained a seat on the Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council Energy Subcommittee.
- Joe LaRusso was appointed to the Clean Energy Transmission Working Group in Massachusetts.

## Enhancing Cooperation Among Electric Power Grids in Northeast North America

Numerous studies show that there are enormous clean energy, power reliability, cost saving and energy system operation benefits if the electric grids are coordinated more closely.

**The Problem:** States and provinces in this region – New England, New York, Quebec and other states and provinces, have common climate, energy system and consumer goals. Greater cooperation can accelerate progress in meeting these goals at a lower cost.

In 2023, Acadia Center and the Quebec-based clean energy organization Nergica, with experts from both sides of the border, began convening an ambitious project called the Northeast Grid Planning Forum to create a focused dialogue for enhanced cross-border energy collaboration. The Northeast Grid Planning Forum will spur conversations to imagine a power grid that conducts itself according to the following public interest values:

- Reliable, efficient service.
- Attaining climate decarbonization and clean energy goals.
- Providing a respectful process for community and indigenous concerns.
- Prioritizing consumer and justice needs.

The benefits of a better-coordinated grid include cost savings, reduced emissions, improved reliability, lower

compliance costs for climate goals, expanded energy efficiency, and reduced environmental justice impacts. Greater coordination in grid planning can take advantage of complementary energy resources. Coordinated grid integration would also facilitate the expansion of locally distributed clean energy, streamline opportunities presented by federal action, and provide a process for communities to be engaged in project development and siting.



In 2023, Acadia Center initiated two new projects intended to address community engagement in energy decision-making.



#### Communities and Clean Grid Project

Power grids in the United States are supported by billions of consumer dollars and make critical decisions on where energy infrastructure is built, who pays, and who benefits. Too often, grid operations have favored fossil fuel resources over clean energy, and transmission owners have failed to optimize their investments around public policy interests. Acadia Center initiated a Communities and Clean Grid project in late 2023 with the goal of conducting outreach to municipalities throughout the region to provide information and resources about how power grid decisions directly impact them. We launched a newsletter called Crosscurrents and are engaging with communities in oneon-one dialogue to seek to enhance their voices in grid decision-making.



#### Clean Energy Infrastructure and Community Engagement

Leading studies about decarbonization pathways for the northeast have found that to meet climate goals, a substantial increase in clean energy resources like offshore wind and solar is needed – corresponding with an approximate doubling of annual load and peak demand. This will require a grid and transmission system to connect new clean energy to the grid and bring power to consumers. This reflects a historic increase in the power grid, and the voices of communities and stakeholders will be essential to the success of this buildout. Acadia Center started a project in 2023 to understand the true magnitude of the expected buildout, and to identify what steps could be taken to improve public engagement in the siting and permitting energy infrastructure so communities feel the system is responsive to their needs and input.

A common goal in all these new initiatives is understanding that energy and climate issues increasingly affect everyone, and the involvement of communities is essential, particularly communities – whether urban or rural – that have faced undue environmental burdens historically. The two new initiatives – along with the Northeast Grid Planning Forum mentioned above – are actively seeking advice and input from communities and stakeholders, from First Nations and indigenous communities with sovereign authority to low-income communities of color in Connecticut, and historically burdened communities throughout the RGGI states who have been unduly affected by power plant pollution.

## **Our Team**

#### **2023 STAFF**

SAM BEAIRSTO Deputy Director, Communications and Development **BEN BUTTERWORTH** Director: Climate, Energy & Equity Analysis (CLEAN-E) JAMIE DICKERSON Senior Director, Clean Energy and Climate Programs **CAROLYN DYKEMA** Senior Project Manager: Strategic Engagement **AUTUMN GORDON-CHOW** Communications Project Manager **KRISTEN KANEB** Grants and Relationships Associate **EMILY KOO** Senior Policy Advocate and Rhode Island Program Director **PETER LAFOND** Senior Policy Advocate and Maine Program Director JOE LARUSSO Senior Advocate and Manager of the Clean Grid Initiative PAOLA MONCADA TAMAYO Policy Analyst **KYLE MURRAY** Director, State Program Implementation **JILL PETERSON** Creative Director **SARAH SALKOWSKI** Staff Writer & Communications Associate **DANIEL L. SOSLAND** President **CHELSEA SPRAGUE** Deputy Director, Finance and Operations **OLIVER TULLY** Director, Utility Innovation & Reform **JAYSON VELAZQUEZ** Climate and Energy Justice Policy Associate **JOY YAKIE** Environmental Justice & Outreach Manager

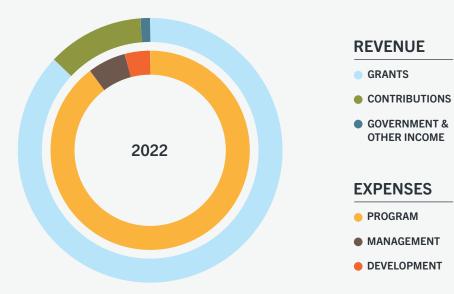
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#### ACADIA CENTER STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS AT THE ANNUAL RETREA



## 2022 and 2023 Financials



2023	

	<b>REVENUE SOURCE</b>	<b>2022</b> AUDI	TED
	GRANTS	\$1,373,7	62
	CONTRIBUTIONS	\$191,056	6
	<b>INVESTMENTS &amp; OTHER</b>	<b>NCOME</b> \$8,942	
	TOTAL REVENUES	\$1,573,7	60
NET ASSETS	2022 AUDITED	EXPENSES	2022 AUDITED
TOTAL ASSETS	\$3,778,311	PROGRAM	\$1,771,561
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$142,136	MANAGEMENT	\$115,488
FUND BALANCE	\$3,636,175	DEVELOPMENT	\$84,484
INCREASE TO FUND BALANCE From Previous Year	\$(397,773)	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,971,533

	REVENUE SOURCE		2023 NOT AUDITED	
	GRANTS		\$2,910,862	
	CONTRIBUTIONS		\$159,641	
	GOVERNMENT & OTHER II	NCOME	\$351,208	
	TOTAL REVENUES		\$3,421,711	
NET ASSETS	2023 NOT AUDITED	EXPEN	ISES	2023 NOT AUDITED
TOTAL ASSETS	\$5,211,484	PROG	RAM	\$1,755,794
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$179,934	MANA	GEMENT	\$156,939
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$5,031,550	DEVEL	.OPMENT	\$113,603
INCREASE TO FUND BALANCE From Previous year	\$1,395,375	TOTAL	EXPENSES	\$2,026,336

## **Thanks to you!**

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