



Opening Doors by Opening Books

MASSACHUSETTS



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

Dear Supporters,

In the continuing debate about the solutions for our social challenges there is a common thread, the benefits of early literacy. This is our focus and our mission.

"Three years after Massachusetts shuttered its schools to contain the coronavirus pandemic, state testing data show children have not recovered academically.

Far from it: Most scores on last spring's math, English, and science tests remained well below pre-pandemic levels, and in some cases did not budge at all." (C.Huffaker and M. McLaren, The Great Divide, Boston Globe, 9/21/23).



In Massachusetts, 56% of third graders are not reading proficiently (*MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Spring MCAS, 11/23*). This number is significantly higher in the under-resourced communities we serve and is a challenge that burdens our entire education system and future workforce.

We are grateful for your partnership and with your help, we are stronger than ever. In FY23, we expanded our partners, invested in how we collect and track data, enhanced our programming, centered diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, diversified fundraising, welcomed new team members, and engaged new board members.

With a focus on impact, we added a new layer to our foundational curriculum, beginning with social and emotional learning (SEL) to help families acquire and apply skills to support a more positive learning environment, especially in these challenging times.

Early literacy is a systemic issue. For the success of our Commonwealth and the future of our economy, we must work collaboratively as exposure to SEL competencies support children's preparation for positive interactions in a variety of settings. We continue to find new ways to reach parents and caregivers, while remaining steadfast in our mission to end the literacy opportunity gap. As a collaborative program, we are closely tied to the challenges and successes of our trusted partners, and we continuously seek new ways to respond to their changing needs. **Our program is one of the most effective ways to prepare children for kindergarten and a lifetime of opportunity by building a critical early literacy foundation** (*American Association of Pediatrics/Early Literacy*). Our evidence-based model is based on over 35 years of research and 39 independent evaluations.

The research is clear. Children exposed to **early literacy and high-quality education programs are more likely to have long-term educational success which leads to positive economic and health outcomes. Education begins at birth.**

Our mission is to target under-resourced communities, those with the most diverse populations, highest need, and lowest funding. When you invest earlier in a child's life – you have better outcomes, longer term. Early literacy activities contribute to positive long-term physical, social, and mental health outcomes as family's bond with their child and engage in interactions that support healthy brain development.

It all starts with the simple act of sharing books with a child.

Thank you for your engagement in our work.

With gratitude,

Christine Ward, Executive Director

Mercedes Dahar, Board of Directors Chair

OUR MISSION AND COMMUNITIES



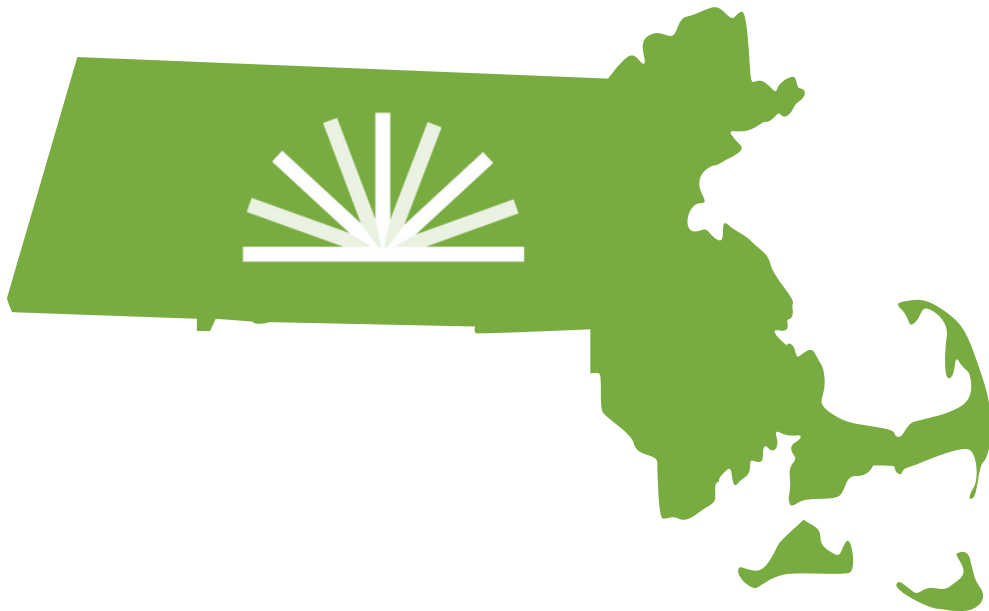
Our mission is to close the literacy opportunity gap among children birth to age six in under-resourced communities by helping families develop and practice shared home reading habits.

We work to give families the knowledge and resources to feel empowered as active participants in their child's education, having already succeeded as their child's first teacher.

Our goal is to create a love of reading, change family/caregiver behavior, and strengthen family reading culture to impact kindergarten readiness.

RAISING A READER MASSACHUSETTS (RAR-MA) SERVES:

Boston, 10 Gateway Cities, seven communities with parent organizations in those gateway cities (Middleboro, Norton, Norwood, Stoughton, Wakefield, Whitman, and Winthrop), and three satellite communities (Newton, Plymouth, Worcester). Through our satellite model, RAR-MA offers a tailored train-the-trainer approach for organizations located outside of our core communities.



**Boston - Brockton - Chelsea - Everett - Holyoke - Lawrence - Lowell
Lynn - Malden - Middleboro - Newton - Norton - Norwood - Plymouth - Revere
Springfield - Stoughton - Wakefield - Whitman - Winthrop - Worcester**

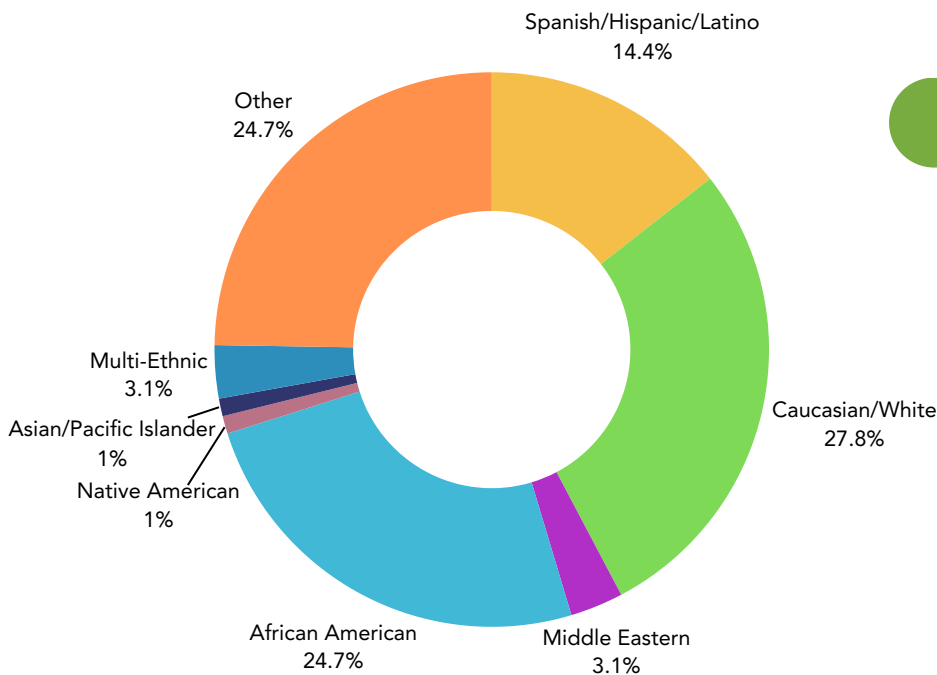
OUR FAMILIES

Our FY2023 Family Survey focused on the Southeast Area and Satellite Regions. This geographic cohort approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the local impact and benefits to families.

WHO DID THIS SURVEY COVER?

221 survey responses of 1280 children served = 17% response rate

PRIMARY ETHNICITIES



49% Boys
51% Girls

Average Age: 4 Years Old

Previous Participation with Raising a Reader Massachusetts:

32% Yes
68% No

PRIMARY LANGUAGE AT HOME

72%

English

7%

Spanish

21%

Other

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Lower Income Bracket (Less than \$30K)
45%

Middle Income Bracket (\$30K - \$50K)
27%

High Income Bracket (Over \$50K)
28%

"This is a truly incredible program and opportunity and I'm grateful I can participate in it with my child!

Thank you."

- RAR-MA Caregiver

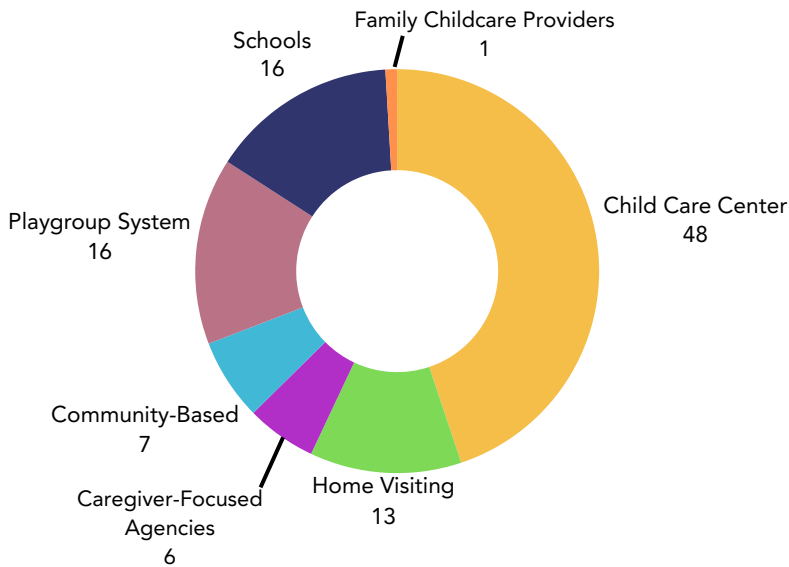
"I have learned new and different ways to share books with my daughter including asking questions about the story. I have also learned how to encourage my child's enjoyment of reading by using different voices for different characters and relating the story to events in real life." - RAR-MA Caregiver



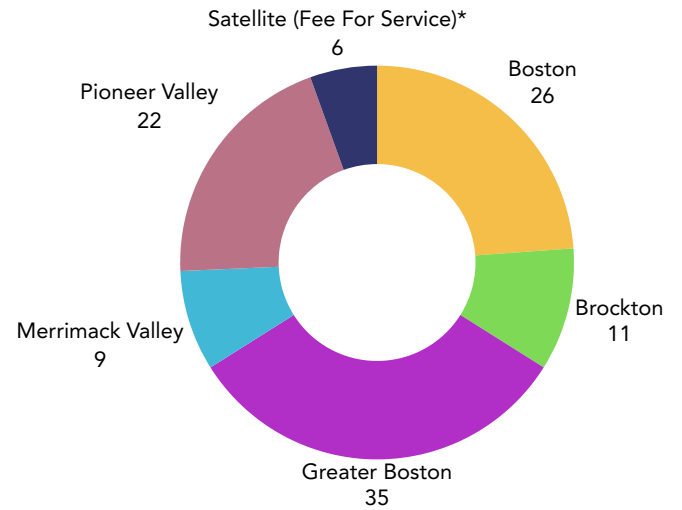
OUR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

We reach families including parents, caregivers, and their children through trusted community partners. In total, we work with over 100 partners in under-resourced communities across Massachusetts.

Number of Partners by Type



Number of Partners by Region



**Through our satellite model, RAR-MA offers a tailored train-the-trainer approach for organizations located outside of our core communities.*



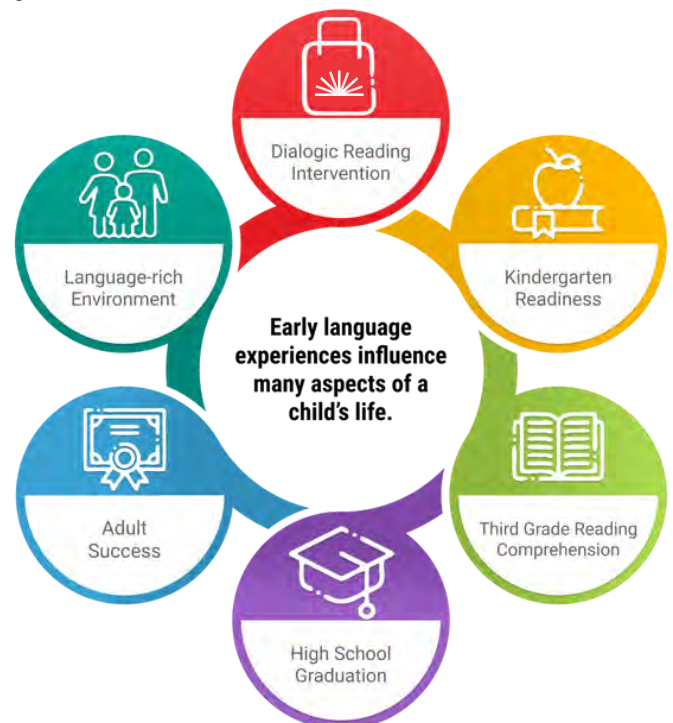
"My Master's is in literacy. [The program] just echoes my full belief in the importance of reading. With families and children and teachers, I feel it just makes a person's life so much richer."

- Amy Peltz,

Early Head Start in Brockton

DUAL INTERVENTION MODEL

With our partners, we teach families dialogic reading strategies to effectively engage children in interactive reading that supports healthy brain development. We also provide age-appropriate and culturally relevant books through our rotating library.

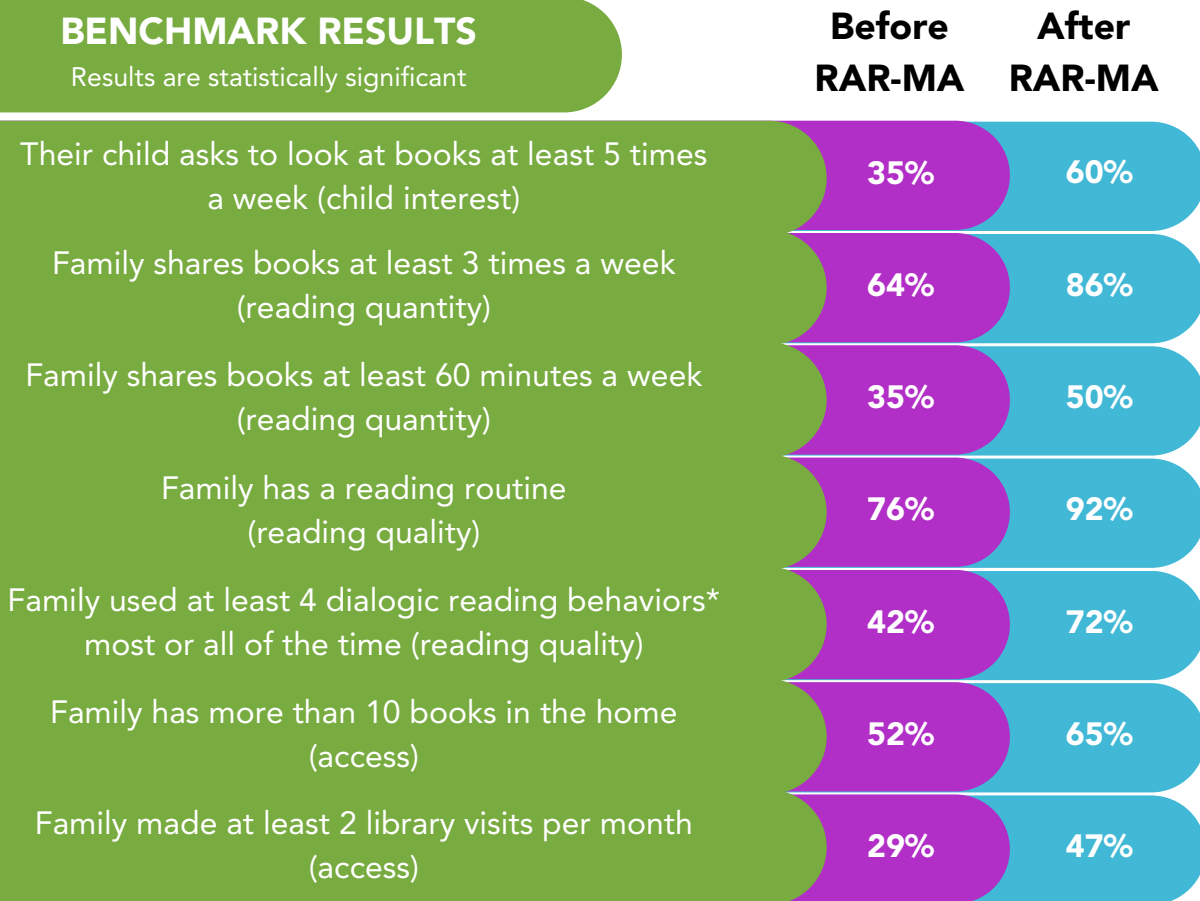


MAKING AN IMPACT

Since our FY2023 Family Survey focused on the Southeast Area and Satellite Regions, our impact data also focused on those regions. This regional focus provides valuable, family-focused insights that will allow us to serve our communities in even more impactful ways as we move forward.

BENCHMARK RESULTS

Results are statistically significant



*Dialogic Reading Strategies:

- Caregiver asks child questions about story
- Caregiver lets child choose what to read
 - Caregiver uses different voices for different characters in the story
- Caregiver talks with child about new words and what they mean

Data is based on completed FY23 Family Survey responses and demonstrate statistically significant results.

BY THE NUMBERS...

The impact of our work can be seen in each child, caregiver, and partner who takes part in the RAR-MA program in communities throughout Massachusetts. Each year, we reach over 6,500 children and families, helping to eliminate the cycle of low literacy as we work to build a lifelong love of literacy through family engagement.

3,000



Titles in Rotation

6,680



Children Served

107



Partners

HIGHLIGHTS OF AN AMAZING YEAR

DINNER WITH AN AUTHOR

Our signature Dinner with an Author fundraising gala returned on May 11, 2023. The event provided opportunities for attendees to interact with 26 esteemed authors, while learning more about Raising a Reader MA's impact through our Program Manager, Tatiana Keane Forero, and closing with a lively auction.

Thanks to our supporters, we were able to exceed our fundraising goal by raising more than \$375,000 in unrestricted funds to support our work. We are grateful for the 250 guests, 26 authors, 28 sponsors, 26 hosts, volunteers, and Raising a Reader MA Staff who came together to celebrate a love of books and made this wonderful event possible.



Dinner with an Author Featured Authors & Guest Speakers

Julie Brown
Christy Cashman
Laura DeSisto
Tatiana Keane Forero
Emily Franklin
Allegra Goodman
Beth C. Greenberg
Lynne Reeves Griffin

Desmond Hall
Diane Hessian
Virginia Hume
Rachel Kadish
Henriette Lazaridis
William Landay
Helen Elaine Lee
William Martin

Claire Messud
Ben Mezrich
Tonya Mezrich
Candy O'Terry
Michael Ponsor
Edward Lee Rocha
Hank Phillippi Ryan
Dan Shaughnessy

Katherine Sherbrooke
Nadia Liu Spellman
Ilyon Woo
James Wood

THANK YOU!

THE KELLY CLARKSON SHOW

We were excited to have our program featured on The Kelly Clarkson Show in April 2023. It provided a national platform for Executive Director Christine Ward, Senior Program Manager Guadalupe Panameño, and Alexandra Panameño to spread the message about our life-changing early literacy program. During the show, Scholastic made a generous gift of \$10,000 toward our work, and author Judy Blume donated an autographed 50th edition of *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.* to our Dinner with an Author auction. We also had the opportunity to meet the stars of *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.* - Rachel McAdams and Abby Ryder Fortson.



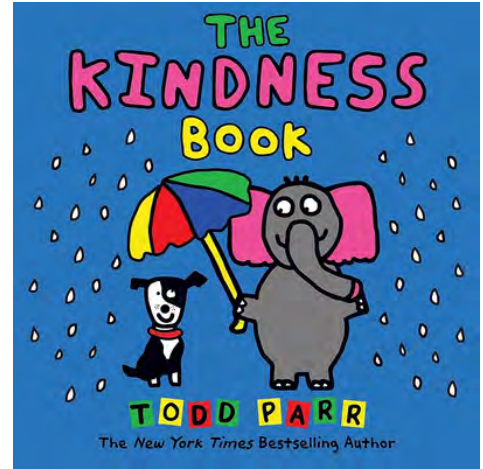
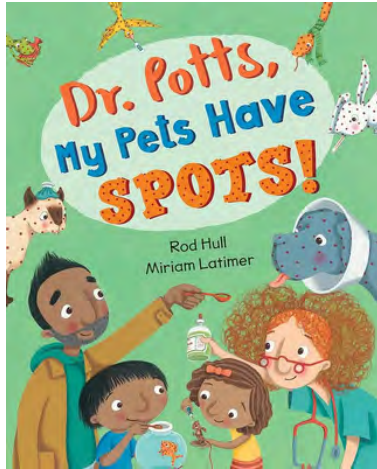
KISS 108'S LISA'S BOOK CLUB

Since November 2022, our connection with Kiss 108's Lisa's Book Club - hosted by radio personality Lisa Donovan - has enabled us to reach new audiences throughout the Boston region while also opening a door for raising additional funds from participants. Additionally, it has introduced us to talented authors who have connected with our mission and work. This has been a great collaboration, and we are excited to see it continuing into the future.



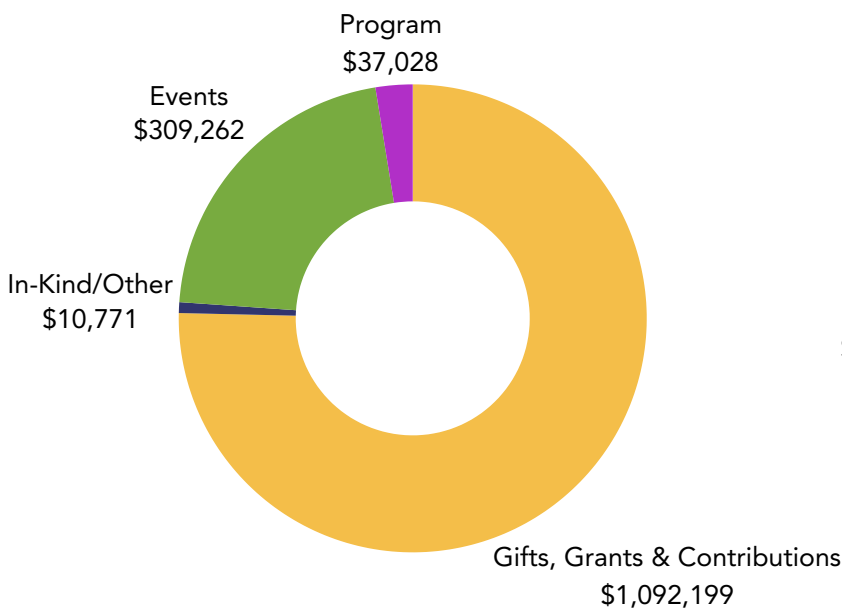
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

We added a new layer to our foundational curriculum this year with Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Books are wonderful tools to engage families in meaningful discussions about social emotional topics. "SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions." (Source: Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL))

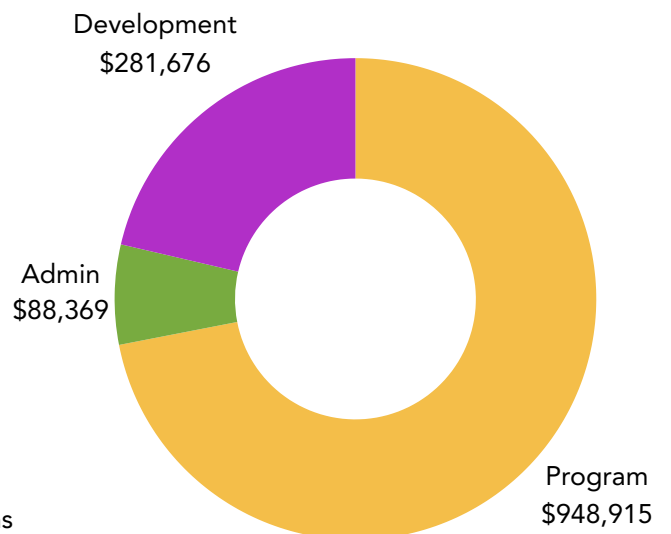


FY 2023 FINANCIALS

Revenue \$1,449,260



Expenses \$1,318,960



OUR LEADERSHIP

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Lilliana Tirado Arteaga - Boston Community Hub School Coordinator,
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EMERGING LEADERS BOARD

The Emerging Leaders are an associate board of young professionals who regularly take action to raise awareness and funds for our core mission and develop into future leaders.

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Brandon Sievers - BNY Mellon Wealth Management

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Rowan Steere - KPMG US

Ian White - LumenRadio

Dana Williams - Vynamic

George Xu - The RMR Group

"Literacy is foundational to a student's ability to succeed in school and beyond..."
- Governor Maura Healey
(Boston Globe, January 4, 2024)

OUR DONORS

\$50,000 and More

Bancel Philanthropies
Boston Children's Hospital Office of Community Health
Essex County Community Foundation
Liberty Mutual Foundation

\$20,000 - \$49,999

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\$5,000 - \$9,999

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Winning Home Inc.
Yellow Wood Partners, LLC



Includes funding pledged in FY 2023 and received in FY 2024.

OUR DONORS

\$2,500 - \$4,999

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Elika Portnoy
Heather Murray and Rob Pawliuk
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Thomas Shapiro and Nadine Bonda
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\$1,000 - \$2,499

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Love Tito's
Mercedes Dahar
Patriots Foundation
The Newbury Boston
Trish Schiapelli

"We love that fact that when we support you, our funds are leveraged across your partners, maximizing the impact for families and children."

**- Judy Bigelow, Director
Fordman Street Foundation**

Includes funding pledged in FY 2023 and received in FY 2024.



MASSACHUSETTS

Raising a Reader Massachusetts

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Visit our website to learn more!



www.raisingareaderma.org

Raising a Reader Massachusetts is a 501(c)(3) organization with EIN #80-0297898.



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