

Equitable access to youth-driven empowerment opportunities, career connected learning experiences and connection to critical resources are essential to youth building competency and confidence to thrive, now and in the future. Working with community partners, ACF's Youth Empowerment efforts build resiliency, improve educational outcomes, and strengthen physical, emotional and mental health of youth throughout the Aspen to Parachute region.

## 🎯 OUR ACTIONS

This focus area builds upon a solid foundation of community relationships and knowledge to develop resilience, improve educational outcomes, and strengthen the physical, emotional, and mental health of youth.

- **These goals are realized through:**
  - Investing in meaningful experiential and enrichment activities that spark curiosity and help youth discover and explore their interests in supportive environments.
  - Ensuring equitable access to programs and resources that nurture the social-emotional, mental, and physical health of young people in culturally responsive and youth-centered ways.
  - Supporting career-connected learning and postsecondary planning.

## ★ OUR IMPACT IN 2024

### COMMUNITY GRANTMAKING

**\$430,000** was awarded to **thirty-seven** youth-serving nonprofits through a competitive grantmaking process.

**Strategic investments directly impacted 50,141\* youth** (6 to 24 years).

*\*represents the total number of youth interactions with grantee programs.*



### FUNDING BY FOCUS AREA

- **\$198,000 (46%)** - experiential and enrichment activities
- **\$122,000 (28%)** - social-emotional, mental, and physical health opportunities
- **\$110,000 (26%)** - career-connected learning and postsecondary planning

### FUNDING BY GEOGRAPHY

- **30%** - Aspen to Old Snowmass
- **58%** - Basalt to Glenwood Springs
- **12%** - New Castle to Parachute

### FUNDING SUPPORTING DIVERSE

#### + LOW INCOME YOUTH

- **21%** - Hispanic/Latino
- **20%** - Low Income

## ★ OUR IMPACT IN 2024 CONT'D

### CONVENING

ACF convenes nonprofit leaders to advance community-led change. Since 2022, ACF has supported three strategic youth empowerment initiatives in its role as a connector and facilitator.

### CAREER EXPLORATION NETWORK (CEN)

This regional network, made up of partners such as Colorado Mountain College, Youthentity, CareerWise, and Colorado River BOCES, aims to expand student access to career and technical education programs and resources.

#### CEN OUTCOMES

- The development of a shared action plan and the creation of a centralized work-based learning database to connect students with internships, apprenticeships, certifications, and jobs.
- In alignment with this plan, Colorado River BOCES is piloting the "Career Confluence" digital platform to streamline access to career-connected opportunities across the region.

### YOUTH IN NATURE (YIN)

Launched in 2022, Youth in Nature (YIN) is a free, year long empowerment program that connects high school students from Aspen to Parachute with outdoor professionals, peers, and local landscapes. Co-created by six nonprofit and industry partners and managed by ACF during its three-year pilot phase (funded by the Jonathan D + Mark C. Lewis Foundation), the program fosters confidence, community, and career exposure.

#### YIN OUTCOMES

- 12 to 14 youth participate annually from high schools across the region.
- 47 youth (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades) have been impacted by this program between 2022-2025.
- 100 hours of immersive, hands-on learning each year. Students receive training, mentorship, gear, transportation, and access to paid internships.

In May 2025, YIN transitioned to Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers for long-term leadership and oversight.

### YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE (YEA)

This is a regional initiative facilitated by Aspen Community Foundation (ACF) to strengthen the youth empowerment ecosystem through dialogue with 21 nonprofit partners and 80 young people. Launched in 2024, the first half of the year was spent identifying shared needs, opportunities, and strategies to enhance youth engagement and leadership.

#### YEA OUTCOMES

- \$1.2 million investment from the Jonathan D + Mark C. Lewis Foundation to fund the learning process and provide unrestricted operating grants to participating nonprofits.
- A commitment in 2025 to youth and partners in co-creating a regional engagement strategy and continued investment in youth-driven empowerment opportunities.