

2024 Annual Impact

REPORT



**THEIR STORY
IS OUR STORY**

Letter from the Executive Director

#BetterWithRefugees

At Their Story Is Our Story (TSOS), this phrase is more than a hashtag. It's the way we view and strengthen our communities. Individuals, who have given up everything to start over in a new place to secure safety for themselves and their families, bring resilience, determination, and an unyielding drive to rebuild their lives. And we are the beneficiaries of their journeys to find a better life.

The economic and social contributions of refugees are well-documented. In the United States, these newcomers have become an indispensable part of their local communities, revitalizing cities and towns nationwide. Far from being a drain on the nation's resources, these individuals are drivers of economic growth and social progress. A [recent study](#) by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) examining the fiscal impact of refugees and asylees from 2005 to 2019 shows that these groups have contributed an astounding \$123.8 billion more to federal and state revenues than they cost in governmental expenditures.

Refugees and asylees play a critical role in the workforce, filling essential jobs and driving entrepreneurship. In 2019 alone, these individuals generated over [\\$5.1 billion in business income](#). Their commitment to their new communities is evident, with approximately [90% becoming U.S. citizens](#) when given the opportunity to contribute and put down roots.

The impact of welcoming refugees goes beyond numbers. Stories collected from TSOS' trips to Kansas City, Bowling Green, and Salt Lake City over the past year documented contributions that are harder to quantify but equally important. Long-time residents in these cities shared how their new neighbors have enriched their communities, making them more vibrant, diverse, and connected. Individuals also shared moving examples of how the opportunity to work and serve together broadens perspective, increases understanding, and expands our collective humanity.

TSOS's commitment to change is rooted in action. In April of 2024, TSOS was proud to witness the unanimous passage and signing into law of Virginia House Bill 994, which creates a pathway for foreign-trained doctors to re-enter the medical profession and fill workforce gaps in medically underserved communities. This initiative began as a joint project to highlight the stories of refugee doctors in 2022 and is tangible evidence of the power of storytelling. Today the [Refugee Physicians Advocacy \(RPA\) Coalition](#) is a TSOS project that works with other nonprofits to assist refugee physicians in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia to overcome significant barriers and return to their careers in the healthcare industry through mentorship and streamlined upskilling.

In an era where the dialog about immigration, refugees, and asylum seekers is increasingly fraught with division, TSOS remains committed to getting beyond the soundbites and the headlines to focus on the people at the heart of the issue. After all, these are our friends, our neighbors, our co-workers, our family. This is US.

Kristen Smith Dayley

STORIES

Storytelling is at the heart of our mission because it allows us to navigate the complexities of the world, using personal narrative to inspire, drive meaningful change, and promote advocacy leading to integration. By sharing first-hand stories, we cultivate empathy and build connections that transcend borders, highlighting the resilience, courage, and valuable contributions of displaced individuals as they strive for brighter futures.

In 2024, our volunteers contributed 570+ hours to gather and produce 94 stories from a number of communities. In Kentucky, we shared narratives from individuals such as [Mehria](#) from Afghanistan, who fled her homeland to seek safety and a better future. In Kansas City, we collaborated with local organizations, including Della Lamb Community Services, Jewish Vocational Service (JVS), and New Roots, to document the experiences of newcomers forming bonds within a new community.

These accounts highlight the strength and determination of individuals like [Qadria](#) from Afghanistan, who overcame uncertainty during the Taliban takeover, and [Mediatrice](#) from Burundi, who grew up in a refugee camp in Tanzania before finding a home in Kansas City.



During an interview in Salt Lake City, we were all entertained by the large orange cat that was [Oksana's](#) traveling companion as she escaped the bombing in Ukraine. Whether a story makes you smile or causes you to look at the world a little differently, we hope it introduces you to someone you realize you would be lucky to welcome as a friend and a neighbor.

“Never underestimate the refugee. They have a lot to give. They have dreams. They have goals. They want to reach these goals, but didn't get the opportunity in their country. So they are here now, and they have this energy to give and prove themselves.”

-Abeer, a Refugee from Iraq

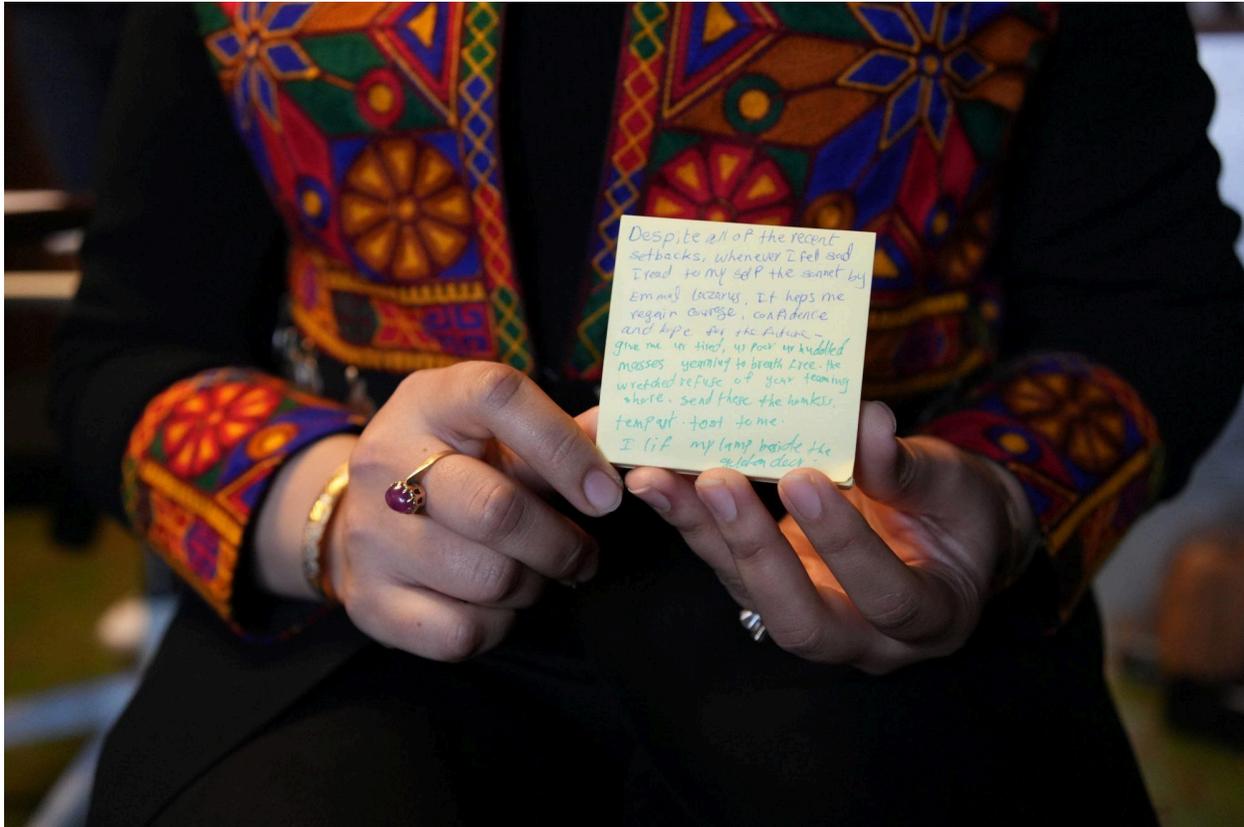
EDUCATION

Education is a pillar of our organization and sets the foundation for storytelling, advocacy, and integration. TSOS offers internships for students who are 18 or older and currently working toward an education goal or enrolled in a higher education program. Our internship provides technical and professional development skills while offering participants an opportunity to make an impact on our mission. Interns work in diverse teams, receiving mentorship in project management, writing, editing, and story production, and meet regularly to explore and discuss issues around forced displacement and migration. This experience fosters new ideas, friendships, and networking opportunities. The TSOS internship is more than just an internship – it is an opportunity to help deepen understanding of the refugee experience and influence action.

The Spring 2024 internship was successfully completed by 19 interns who brought diverse academic, professional, and cultural perspectives to the program. Representing fields such as Public Policy, International Relations, Human Rights, and Global Health, the interns showcased a high level of dedication and skill. Many were graduate students or recent graduates, fluent in multiple languages including Spanish, Telugu, Turkish, Russian, and Lithuanian, and from multiple countries including Hungary, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Kenya, and the United States, reflecting the program's global reach and emphasis on inclusivity. Weekly activities, such as reflective summaries and cohort meetings, provided opportunities for collaboration and skill development, while the final projects allowed interns to apply their expertise in research, storytelling, and advocacy to directly support TSOS's mission.

During our Fall 2024 internships, we introduced a new internship category - Visual Storytelling, which attracted candidates with specialized expertise in digital media. This addition complemented our existing categories—Advocacy, Archive, Internship Planning & Delivery, Story Production, and Thought Leadership, all of which experienced record-breaking interest. In total, TSOS received 155 applications, reflecting diverse skills and passions from across the

world. From this highly competitive pool, 20 exceptional interns were selected, and 16 successfully completed the program. The selected cohort represented a truly global presence, including participants from Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp, Germany, Ireland, and Pakistan, alongside others. These interns brought a wealth of professional and academic experience, fostering a rich and dynamic learning environment.



Through implementing transformative learning and collaboration throughout the eight-week program, interns engaged in weekly large-group sessions that tackled critical topics such as:

- Trauma-informed interview techniques
- Insights into critical refugee studies and vocabularies
- Exploration of narratives authored by and for displaced persons

These sessions were complemented by exclusive presentations from senior TSOS leaders, which inspired interns to align their career goals with opportunities for impactful work through volunteerism.

The program concluded with interns presenting final projects, which allowed them to synthesize their learning into creative formats like blogs, videos, and guides for future participants. These projects not only reflected the impact of their experiences but also provided actionable feedback for enhancing future internships.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is central to the mission of TSOS, as we seek and encourage solutions that encourage more welcoming communities that foster integration. Through storytelling, we work to humanize the refugee crisis, fostering empathy and understanding among diverse audiences. This work is critical to breaking down stereotypes, influencing public opinion, and shaping policies that result in stronger communities. By collaborating with other nonprofits, educational institutions, and civic organizations, TSOS ensures that refugee narratives reach decision-makers and inspire meaningful change. Advocacy is not just a tool for awareness - it is a pathway to systemic improvements that uphold human dignity and promote inclusion.



Over the past year, the Refugee Physicians Advocacy (RPA) Coalition, formed in 2023, made significant strides in supporting international physicians, driving policy change, and building partnerships to enhance the integration of skilled professionals into the U.S. healthcare system. Significantly, the RPA played a key role in seeing Virginia's New Pathway for International Physicians become law. Through compelling testimonies by RPA Co-Founder Brandi Kilmer and the mobilization of refugee physicians, the RPA's presentations to both House and Senate subcommittees, together with public comments and endorsements from RPA members, were so compelling that the bill had unanimous support through both chambers of the state's legislature and was signed by the governor of Virginia in April 2024.

Since passage of this significant legislation, which allows for provisional licensure of foreign-trained medical professionals, RPA's database of international physicians expanded dramatically, growing from 35 in January

to 180 by December. This increase reflects the growing trust and recognition of the Coalition's work in the global medical community and the desire of individuals to re-enter their professions here in the United States.

Since the bill's enactment, the RPA has engaged in ongoing advocacy through the submission of public comments to the Virginia Board of Medicine and the Federation of State Medical Boards,

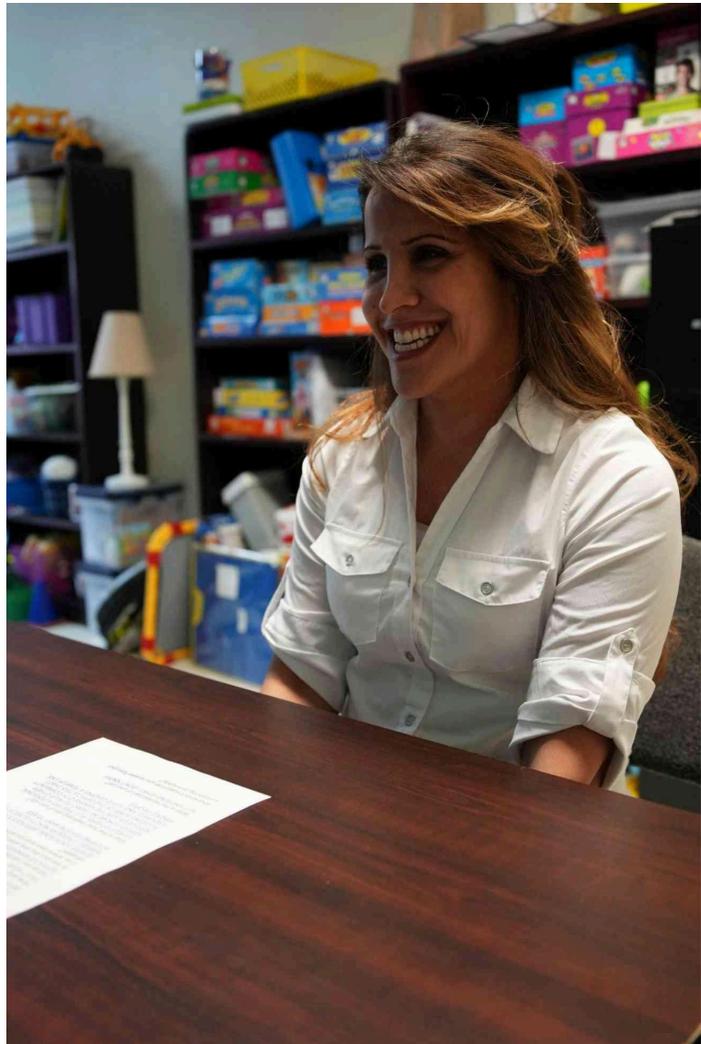
ensuring a continued focus on integrating international physicians into the U.S. healthcare workforce as the state makes critical determinations on how the legislations should be implemented.

The RPA is working to develop mentorship opportunities and pathways for physicians to work toward licensure in their new homes. The RPA also launched a webinar series to assist and guide healthcare institutions in how to leverage international physicians.

INTEGRATION

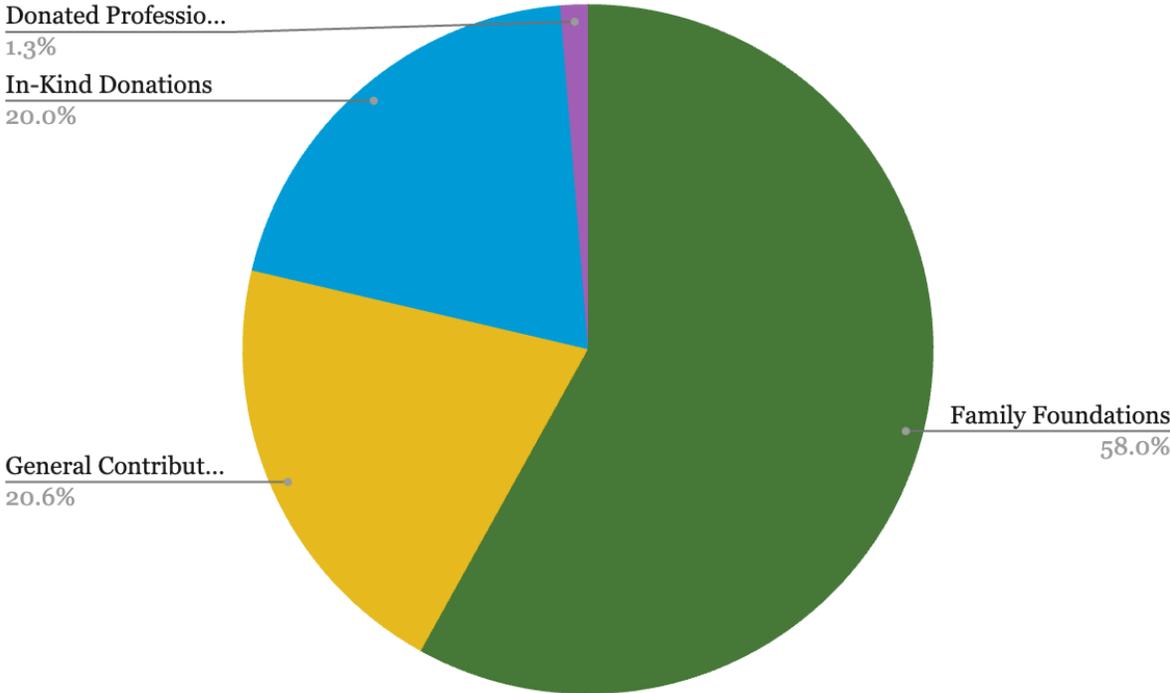
Integration fosters social cohesion, allowing individuals to contribute meaningfully to their new communities while rebuilding their lives with dignity. Successful integration results in social and economic benefits by building resilient and harmonious societies. TSOS' integration work in 2024 took place through its Community Programs and the RPA.

TSOS Community Programs offers meaningful opportunities for individuals to engage in and support local refugee integration efforts through partnerships and collaborations with local refugee-oriented organizations. In 2024, we had nine active community programs located in Arizona, Idaho, Kansas City, Montana, Texas, Utah, Washington State, Washington D.C., and London. Volunteers in these areas provide perspective on projects and efforts going on within their communities and allow us opportunities to amplify the voices from diverse areas and situations.



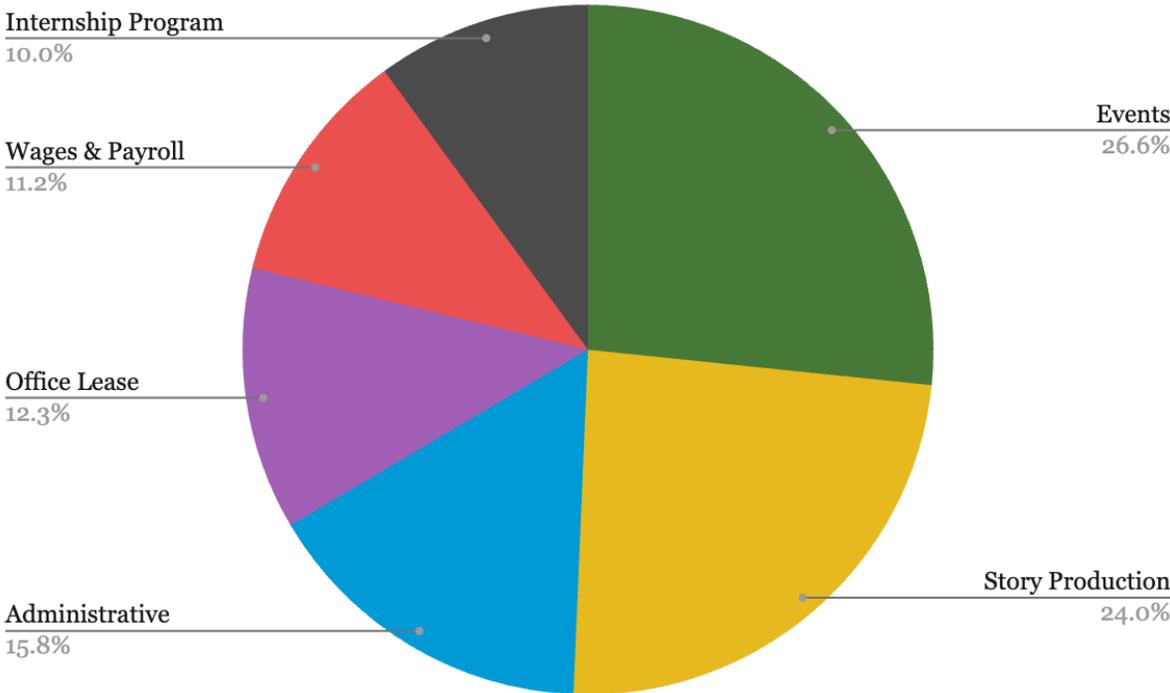
FINANCIALS

2024 REVENUE



| TOTAL | \$155,056 | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|--------|
| Family Foundations | \$90,000 | 58.04% |
| General Contributed Support | \$31,981 | 20.63% |
| In-Kind Donations | \$31,075 | 20.04% |
| Donated Professional Services | \$2,000 | 1.29% |

2024 EXPENSES



| TOTAL | \$86,075 | |
|--------------------|----------|--------|
| Events | \$22,928 | 26.64% |
| Story Production | \$20,686 | 24.03% |
| Administrative | \$13,623 | 15.83% |
| Office Lease | \$10,600 | 12.31% |
| Wages & Payroll | \$9,605 | 11.16% |
| Internship Program | \$8,633 | 10.03% |

The Annual Report and Form 990 for this year and previous years can be found on our [website](#).

Looking Forward

As we step into 2025, our commitment to sharing refugee stories is more critical than ever. The challenges facing refugees and displaced people globally are amplified by shifting political dynamics and the anticipated policies of the new administration. These changes underline the urgency of our mission: to humanize refugee experiences, dispel misconceptions, and advocate for dignity and inclusion through powerful storytelling.

The year ahead calls for a sharper focus on driving meaningful impact and fostering lasting change. In 2025, one of our top priorities will be to highlight the enduring positive contributions of immigrants to communities across the United States. From social enrichment to economic growth, their influence is undeniable, and we are dedicated to showcasing these transformative stories that inspire pride, understanding, and unity. We also want to be a safe-space for individuals to share their stories during this time.

We are excited to deepen our existing partnerships, building on the incredible work we've accomplished together. These collaborations remain a cornerstone of our efforts, and we are eager to continue fostering meaningful connections with our current partners. At the same time, we are excited to explore new opportunities, forging alliances with like-minded organizations and individuals who share our commitment to amplifying refugee and immigrant stories. By expanding our network of partnerships, we can create an even greater impact, working together to inspire change and champion the voices of those we serve.

Lastly, we are excited to announce that 2025 marks a significant milestone for our organization: the launch of our very first Board of Directors. This is a pivotal step in strengthening our leadership and strategic vision, as we bring together a diverse group of passionate and experienced individuals dedicated to our mission. These meetings will provide invaluable opportunities to align on priorities, refine our goals, and explore innovative ways to amplify refugee and immigrant voices. We look forward to the insight, guidance, and energy our Board of Directors will bring as we embark on this next chapter of growth and impact.



**THEIR STORY
IS OUR STORY**