

A photograph of the Fairbanks city skyline at dusk or dawn. The sky is a mix of blue and orange. In the foreground, a river flows through a park area with trees and a walkway. The city buildings are silhouetted against the sky.

Impact Report

LOOKING BACK. MOVING AHEAD.



RICHARD M.
FAIRBANKS
FOUNDATION

Since its inception in 1986, the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation has worked to advance the vitality of Indianapolis and the well-being of its people.

In March 2020, the Fairbanks Foundation's Board of Directors reaffirmed its commitment to **three focus areas: EDUCATION, HEALTH, and the VITALITY OF INDIANAPOLIS**. Over the past five years, we have worked to improve outcomes in these areas by:

- Awarding grants to organizations working within our focus areas.
- Sharing research and data to help stakeholders understand and address critical issues in our city.
- Convening and collaborating with organizations doing similar work.
- Raising awareness of the opportunities and challenges facing Indianapolis.

From 2020 to 2024, the Fairbanks Foundation awarded 160 grants, released 22 reports, and hosted 158 convenings. We launched several multi-year initiatives, co-led a coalition to build a statewide youth apprenticeship system, and built a free community data tool with nearly 300 graphs.

As we reflect on the work we've accomplished these past five years, one key learning becomes clear: The potential for impact is greatest when we leverage the combined expertise of our team alongside our grantees, partners, fellow funders, and other community members. This cross-sector engagement, alongside strategic grantmaking and evidence-based education and advocacy, will continue to be critical to advancing our mission as we move into the future.

Having spent the past year speaking with community leaders and undergoing an extensive visioning process, we are excited to share our newly established goals and strategies for 2025–2029, which you can find on page 12. We look forward to continuing to partner with you as the Foundation works to advance the vitality of Indianapolis and the well-being of its people.

Best regards,

Claire Fiddian-Green
President & CEO
Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation

Daniel Appel
Chair of the Board
Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation

Click [here](#) for a full list of grants awarded by the Fairbanks Foundation.

2020–2024

Our work
in action:

22

REPORTS RELEASED

160 GRANTS
AWARDED TO 130
GRANTEES* TOTALING

\$56M

158

CONVENINGS
HOSTED

**Grantees whose work falls into multiple focus areas are counted once. Because some grantees received funding in more than one focus area, the number of grantees in each focus area will add up to more than this figure.*



OUR MISSION

The mission of the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation is to advance the vitality of Indianapolis and the well-being of its people. We strive to achieve this mission by addressing some of the city's most significant challenges and opportunities.

To advance our work, we implement three approaches:

1

**STRATEGIC
GRANTMAKING**

2

**EVIDENCE-BASED
EDUCATION AND
ADVOCACY**

3

**CROSS-SECTOR
COLLABORATION
AND CONVENING**

Our **CORE VALUES** guide our work:

- We adhere to the core beliefs and intent of our founder, Richard M. Fairbanks, who established the Foundation for the benefit of the people of Indianapolis.
- We conduct our work with a spirit of entrepreneurialism, a willingness to take risks, and a focus on results, while remaining nimble and opportunistic.
- We respect the perspectives and experiences of all with whom we interact.



Looking back
at our impact on:

EDUCATION

EDUCATION IS VITAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING OF INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES, AND ECONOMIES.

Yet, in Indianapolis and across our state, **thousands of students leave high school inadequately prepared** for success in college or careers.

To address these challenges, the Fairbanks Foundation established goals and strategies to **improve education and workforce outcomes** in Indianapolis.

2020–2024

**Our work
in action:**

8

REPORTS
RELEASED

81 GRANTS
AWARDED
TO 50 GRANTEES
TOTALING

\$34M

119

CONVENINGS
HOSTED

BUILDING THE INDIANA CAREER APPRENTICESHIP PATHWAY

The Fairbanks Foundation first learned of the transformational educational and career outcomes associated with youth apprenticeship from a 2016 report from the National Conference of State Legislatures entitled [“No Time to Lose: How to Build a World-Class Education System State by State.”](#) The report highlighted Switzerland as the global “gold standard” for preparing young people for careers while meeting the talent needs of employers.

From 2016 to 2023, the Fairbanks Foundation funded efforts to study the Swiss system, launch an Indianapolis pilot, and establish a statewide Community of Practice. In September 2023, an Indy Chamber Leadership Exchange (LEX) trip took more than 100 Indiana leaders to Switzerland to meet with employers and their apprentices and learn from experts at the Center on the Economics and Management of Education and Training Systems (CEMETS) at the Chair of Education Systems, ETH Zurich.

In December 2023, the Fairbanks Foundation invited LEX trip attendees and other interested stakeholders to form CEMETS iLab Indiana. Co-chaired by Claire Fiddian-Green, the Foundation’s president & CEO, and David Becker, chairman & CEO of First Internet Bank, the iLab is a coalition of over 275 Hoosier leaders from business, education, government, and the non-profit sector, with critical partners including CEMETS, alongside Ascend Indiana and the Indy Chamber.

In 2024, the iLab released a strategic plan for a new, employer-led professional education and training pathway, and the Fairbanks Foundation awarded grants to begin building the Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway. From 2016 to 2024, the Fairbanks Foundation awarded \$11.6 million to fund youth apprenticeship work.

\$11.6M

AWARDED TO FUND
YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP
WORK FROM 2016–2024



[Learn more](#) about
CEMETS iLab Indiana
and the Indiana Career
Apprenticeship Pathway.

NEXT STEPS: CEMETS iLab Indiana set a goal for the Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway to serve 50,000 students by 2034, equating to almost half of expected new job growth in the next decade.



INCREASING COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATES WITH COLLEGE MATTERS

[College Matters](#) is a five-year, \$14 million initiative to increase college enrollment among Marion County students, especially students who are less likely to enroll in college. Marion County college enrollment rates have declined over the past decade, with just 48% of the high school graduating class of 2022 enrolling in college, compared to 66% of the class of 2012.

In 2023, *College Matters: Meeting the Moment* awarded nearly \$5 million to 17 Marion County public school corporations, four community organizations, and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to help students complete the FAFSA and explore college options. In 2024, *College Matters: Reversing the Trend* awarded over \$7.5 million to five public school corporations to enable them to develop and implement four-year plans to increase college enrollment rates.

EARLY RESULTS: While implementation of the initiative is ongoing, *College Matters: Meeting the Moment* was cited as a reason Indiana's FAFSA filing rate remained relatively stable amidst a rocky rollout of the 2024–25 form.

Read [here](#) and [here](#) to learn about how two *College Matters: Meeting the Moment* grantees used their funding to encourage FAFSA filing.

\$14M

INITIATIVE TO INCREASE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT



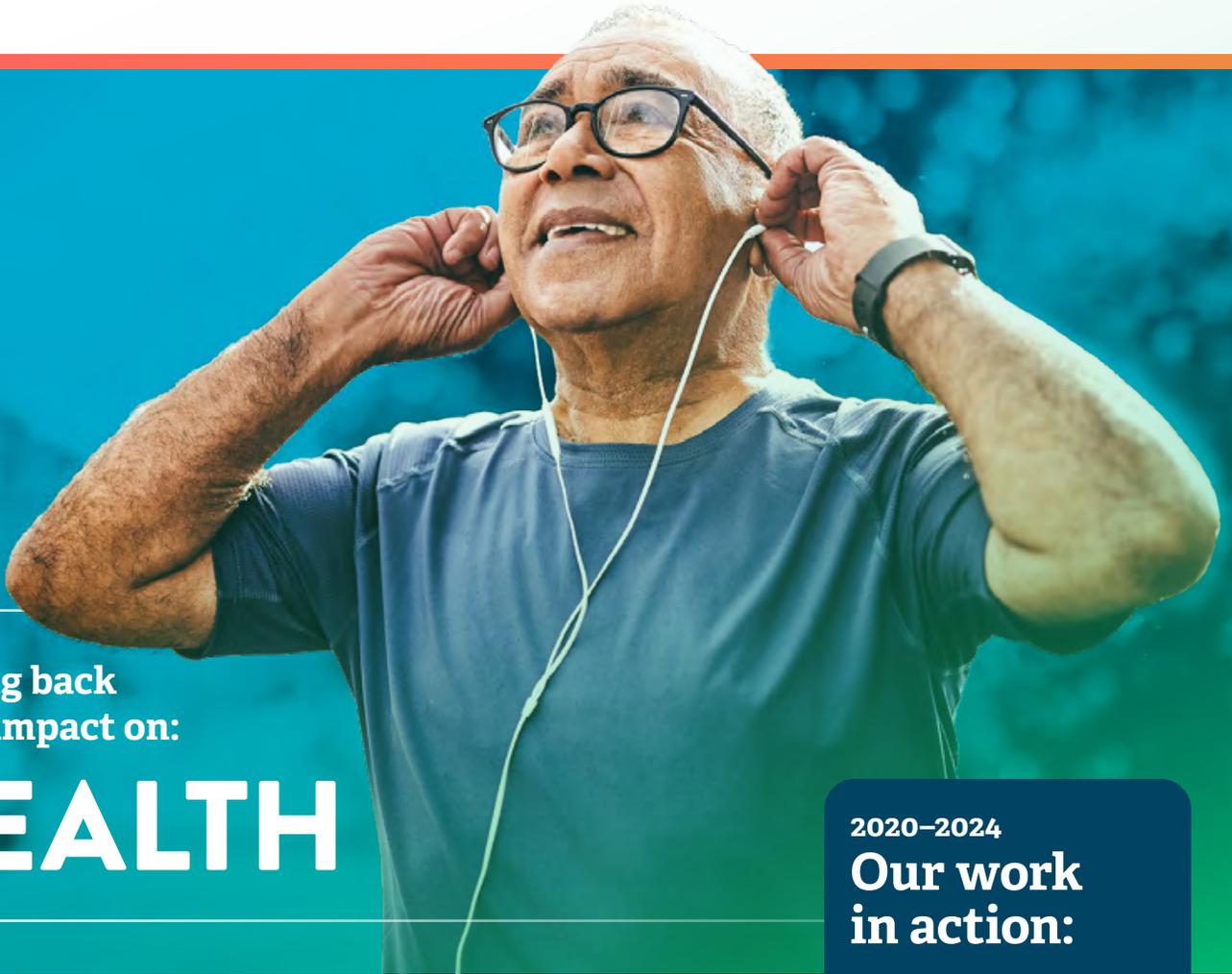
ADDRESSING THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON STUDENTS

In March 2020, the pandemic prompted K–12 schools to quickly switch to e-learning. While students, their families, and schools were scrambling to understand and access virtual learning, roughly 38,000 Indianapolis students were left without sufficient high-speed internet in their homes. In April 2020, several Indianapolis organizations, co-led by the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation and the Fairbanks Foundation, formed the Indianapolis eLearning Fund to address some of the challenges faced by educators and families.

Between 2020 and 2021, the Fairbanks Foundation contributed to the Indianapolis eLearning Fund through \$1.3 million in grants to the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership Foundation, Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, College Football Playoff Indy Champions Legacy initiative, and United Way of Central Indiana. The Fund supported two major efforts: the [Indynet](#) pilot program and distribution of hot spots to increase internet connectivity for Central Indiana families; and the creation of the [Indiana Learning Lab](#) to help educators and families navigate online learning.

IMPACT: In 2020, the Indianapolis eLearning Fund helped secure [\\$11.5 million](#) from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief fund to equip Marion County students and educators with devices and internet access for online learning. Additionally, the Indiana Department of Education continues to operate the Indiana Learning Lab for Hoosier educators and families. **In 2024, it reached 60,000 users.**





Looking back
at our impact on:

HEALTH

GOOD HEALTH IS NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE, AND IT IS INTEGRALLY LINKED TO THE ABILITY OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS TO THRIVE.

Unfortunately, **Indianapolis ranks at or near the bottom** of many measures of public health and healthy living, including tobacco use and substance use disorder.

To address these challenges, the Fairbanks Foundation established goals and strategies to **reduce tobacco use, eliminate youth nicotine use, and prevent and address substance use disorder** in Indianapolis.

2020–2024

**Our work
in action:**

14

REPORTS
RELEASED

35 GRANTS
AWARDED
TO 35 GRANTEES
TOTALING

\$9.9M

24

CONVENINGS
HOSTED

HELPING SCHOOLS PREVENT SUBSTANCE USE WITH PREVENTION MATTERS

Launched in 2018, *Prevention Matters* was a four-year, \$13.5 million* initiative to fund the implementation of substance use prevention programming in Marion County schools. At the time, fatal drug poisonings were increasing in Marion County, from 192 in 2012 to 365 in 2017 – a 90% increase.

At scale, *Prevention Matters* served 27 Marion County school districts, charter schools, and accredited private schools in the delivery of proven prevention programs in 159 schools, reaching nearly 84,000 students annually.

Read about the [lessons learned](#) from *Prevention Matters*.

IMPACT: When the program ended, 96% of grantees reported positive program impacts. An outside evaluation demonstrated that participants developed skills and competencies shown to help students resist substance use in the future.



84k

STUDENTS REACHED ANNUALLY

*While the majority of *Prevention Matters* funding was awarded prior to 2020, \$1.2 million in *Prevention Matters* funding was awarded as grant extensions in 2021.

FAIRBANKS FOUNDATION CO-HOSTS SUMMIT ON STUDENT WELL-BEING AND SUCCESS

In June 2023, the Fairbanks Foundation partnered with the Indiana Department of Education, the Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction, the Healthcare Foundation of La Porte, and North Central Health Services to host the Youth Emerging Strong (YES!) Summit. More than 325 Indiana school leaders, educators, and philanthropic partners learned best practices for improving student well-being and success.

yes!
Summit

IMPROVING INDIANA'S PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM TO STRENGTHEN OUTCOMES

In 2020, the Fairbanks Foundation commissioned researchers at the Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health to conduct a study on Indiana's public health system. The report contained recommendations for addressing Indiana's poor public health outcomes, including building a statewide committee of experts to recommend improvements as well as increasing funding.

Following the study's release, the Fairbanks Foundation awarded a \$250,000 grant to the Indiana Department of Health to help support the Indiana Governor's Public Health Commission, a 13-member body tasked with making recommendations for improving Indiana's public health system. The Commission released its [report](#) in August 2022, with several recommendations – including an increase in funding.



Read the [full report](#).

RESULTS: In 2023, \$225 million in new public health funding was allocated to be spent over the 2024 and 2025 fiscal years.



Looking back
at our impact on:

VITALITY OF INDIANAPOLIS

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENT, FOSTERING INNOVATION, AND OFFERING A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE IS KEY TO THE VITALITY OF INDIANAPOLIS.

However, **too few Hoosiers are prepared** for “good and promising” jobs,* while employers struggle to find the talent they need to fill open roles.

To address these challenges, the Fairbanks Foundation set a goal to identify and **support key economic drivers** to help create a more vibrant Indianapolis.

*Definition from [Advancing Opportunity in Central Indiana](#) by The Brookings Institution.

2020–2024
**Our work
in action:**

44 GRANTS
AWARDED
TO 45 GRANTEES
TOTALING

\$12.1M

15
CONVENINGS
HOSTED

\$600k
AWARDED IN
CHARITABLE GRANTS
TO 24 GRANTEES

E.S. WITCHGER SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING: GROWING INDIANA'S ENGINEERING TALENT PIPELINE

In 2022, the Fairbanks Foundation awarded \$5 million to Marian University to help fund a new facility for the [E.S. Witchger School of Engineering](#). Designed to attract a diverse group of future engineers to fill high-demand positions in Indianapolis, the new 70,000-square-foot building, which opened in August 2023, features state-of-the-art classrooms, laboratories, and equipment.

The school offers degrees in biomedical, chemical, civil, computer, and mechanical engineering, as well as engineering physics, with built-in curriculum to prepare students to solve real-world engineering problems.

ENROLLMENT OUTCOMES: In 2024, the Witchger School of Engineering enrolled 77 new students. Of those students, 57 hail from Indiana and 28 self-identify as first-generation college students.

View [student testimonials](#) about the E.S. Witchger School of Engineering.



\$5M

AWARDED TO MARIAN
UNIVERSITY TO HELP
FUND NEW LEARNING
SPACE FOR FUTURE
ENGINEERS

CONTINUING DICK FAIRBANKS' LEGACY THROUGH THE CHARITABLE GRANTS PROGRAM

In 2020, the Fairbanks Foundation's Board of Directors established the Charitable Grants program – one-time, \$25,000 grants to Indianapolis nonprofits doing work that aligns with a funding theme selected annually that reflects the city's most pressing needs. The Charitable Grants program honors the legacy of Dick Fairbanks' interest in making small, unrestricted grants to organizations where this funding could make a significant impact.

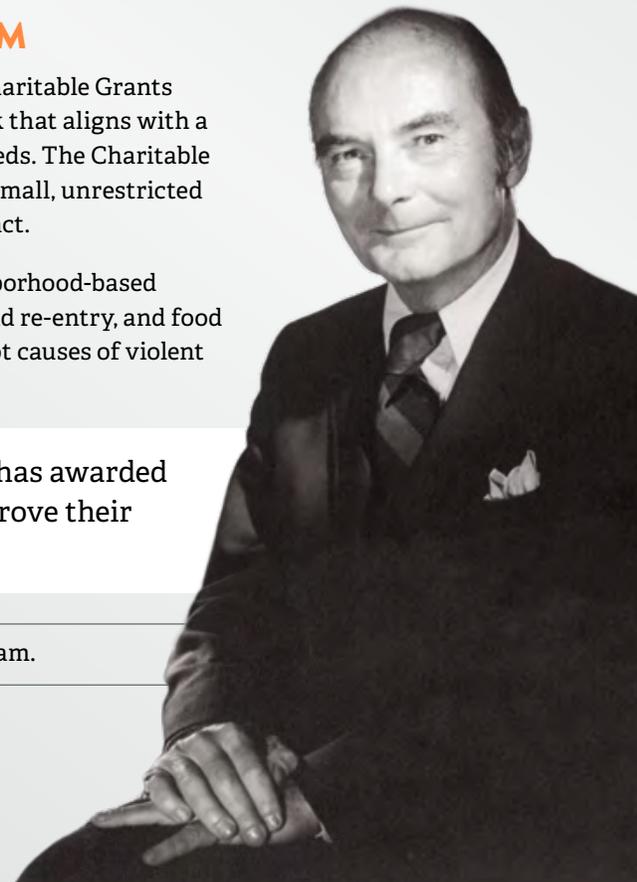
In 2021, the first year the grants were awarded, the program took a neighborhood-based approach to address issues such as housing insecurity, criminal justice and re-entry, and food insecurity. In the years that followed, themes included addressing the root causes of violent crimes, homelessness, and recidivism.

IMPACT: Since its inception, the Charitable Grants program has awarded \$600,000 to small non-profits in Indianapolis working to improve their communities.

Find out more about [the recipients](#) of the Charitable Grants program.

\$600K

IN GRANTS
FOR COMMUNITY
IMPROVEMENT



COMMUNITY DATA SNAPSHOT

Connecting organizations to the data they need

In 2020, the Fairbanks Foundation's Board of Directors recommended the creation of a publicly available data dashboard. The purpose of this dashboard was twofold. First, it would compile a wide range of data in one location, making it easier for community members to find key information. Second, it would help the Foundation and other organizations make more data-driven decisions.

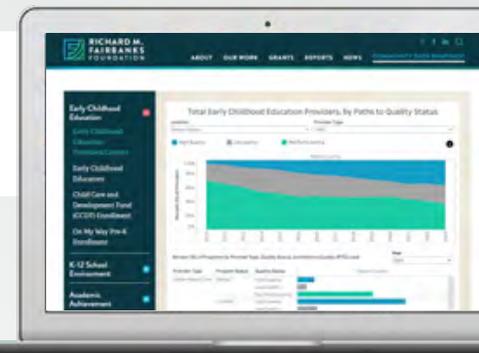
In February 2021, the Fairbanks Foundation launched the Community Data Snapshot, a collection of data about pressing community issues. At launch, the Community Data Snapshot contained nearly 200 graphs, with data spanning 2010 to 2019.

RESULTS: By the end of 2024, the Community Data Snapshot contained 289 graphs, making it a one-stop shop for our grantees and community partners to access data about Indianapolis and our state.

Click [here](#) to access the Community Data Snapshot.

289

GRAPHS WITH
COMMUNITY DATA



THE COMMUNITY DATA SNAPSHOT DRIVES LOCAL NEWS

Indianapolis-area media use the Community Data Snapshot to bring attention to pressing issues.

New Indiana education dashboard data sheds light on student performance, teacher retention,

INDIANA CAPITAL CHRONICLE, JUNE 23, 2023.

Meet the Pike teacher who makes school feel like home,

MIRROR INDY, OCT. 11, 2024.

Lawrence schools want to find out why educators love their jobs, but why they are leaving,

CHALKBEAT, FEB. 20, 2024.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Our goals and strategies: 2025–2029

As we look to the future, the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation remains dedicated to our three focus areas: Education, Health, and the Vitality of Indianapolis. In February 2025, the Fairbanks Foundation's Board of Directors approved new goals to guide our work through 2029.

EDUCATION

A good education can open doors to new opportunities. Yet in Indianapolis and across the state, many K–12 students do not earn passing scores in subjects such as math and English. As a result, far too few students graduate high school prepared for college or in-demand careers. At the same time, employers struggle to find skilled talent to fill available jobs.

GOAL: *Improve student academic outcomes and address the workforce skills gap.*

STRATEGIES:

Implement evidence-based and promising approaches that enable students to successfully prepare for and enroll in college.

Support the successful design and implementation of the Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway, Indiana's new professional education and training pathway.

HEALTH

For both children and adults, good health is essential for success in life. Unfortunately, Indianapolis ranks at or near the bottom of almost every measure of public health and healthy living. Poor health outcomes reduce quality of life, increase healthcare costs, and lower productivity.

GOAL: *Improve the health of people in Indianapolis.*

STRATEGY: *Identify transformational approaches that will improve health outcomes.*

Note: *The Foundation is not inviting proposals or accepting inquiries in the Health focus area at this time.*

VITALITY OF INDIANAPOLIS

As one of the largest cities in the country, Indianapolis is home to a vibrant community and a wide array of industries, from sports and entertainment to life sciences and the arts. Attracting and retaining talent, fostering innovation, and offering a high quality of life for the people of our city is essential to ensuring the vitality of Indianapolis.

GOAL: *Create a more vibrant Indianapolis.*

STRATEGY: *Identify potentially high-impact grant opportunities consistent with the Foundation's core values.*

Additionally, this focus area also includes two categories of grants, which align with Dick Fairbanks' wishes when he presided over the Foundation:

- **Family Legacy grants**, which are select organizations designated by Dick Fairbanks during his lifetime or that support the Fairbanks family's legacy in Indianapolis.
- **The Charitable Grants program**, one-time \$25,000 grants to tax-exempt Indianapolis organizations based on an annual funding theme that reflects pressing needs in our city. Organizations cannot apply for this funding.

Note: *The Foundation does not accept inquiries within the Vitality of Indianapolis focus area.*



**RICHARD M.
FAIRBANKS
FOUNDATION**