



2026 ANNUAL REPORT

“For every dollar we invest, how much value is returned to our neighbors experiencing poverty across the Twin Cities?”



A Letter From Our CEO

Dear Friends,

Every year, the Constellation Fund asks a hard question: For every dollar we invest, how much value is returned to our neighbors experiencing poverty across the Twin Cities? This year gave us our best answer yet. Our grantee portfolio reached a long-term return of \$10 for every \$1 invested, a figure earned through years of disciplined analysis and the remarkable organizations you’ve helped us back.

That return is not an abstraction. It is a first job after a career-pathways program, a degree finished against long odds, a family kept in their home, a small business that finally opens its doors. These are the turning points that change the arc of a life, and this year there were more of them than ever. That progress rests on evidence, and we keep pushing its edge: This past year we also committed millions to longitudinal research on economic mobility, taking on unanswered questions about what truly moves families forward, and for how long.

That patient, long-term work is exactly what let us move quickly when everything changed.

When ICE and Border Patrol surged across the Twin Cities, the damage was immediate. Families were afraid to go to work, to school, to the food shelf. Services that thousands depend on were disrupted overnight. And the harm did not end when the headlines faded. When a parent stops showing up to work out of fear, the loss compounds — this month’s rent, next semester’s tuition, next year’s ability to stay housed. Families will carry that trauma, and those setbacks, for years.

We were able to respond in days, not months, for one reason: We already knew which organizations were delivering measurable results on the ground. Our Immediate Response Fund launched, and you answered: \$1.3 million, much of it in the first week, from longtime supporters and from people across the country who had never given before. We moved it out quickly to more than 15 trusted partners, hand-delivering checks when speed mattered most.

This is the power of the work we are building together: an unwavering eye toward long-term solutions, paired with the flexibility to respond with urgency when it’s needed most. One without the other is not enough. And none of it works without you.

With gratitude,
Andrew Dayton



Investing in the Moments That Change a Life



Across the Twin Cities, people are chasing the ordinary dreams of a middle-class life: a safe place to call home, a good school for their kids, a job that adds up to something. What stands between them and that life is rarely effort. It's a system that makes the climb harder than it needs to be.

The Constellation Fund's model may be data-directed and numbers-focused, but at its core is a heart-driven vision for a Twin Cities where more people are thriving.

In 2024, Constellation's research investment arm, CoLab, commissioned a study to survey more than 500 Minnesotans with lived experience of poverty.

"It's more than just a scarcity of material goods," one survey respondent told researchers. "It also encompasses a scarcity of opportunities and empowerment."

Entangled in a System Meant to Help

What was most striking about the results of this study was that almost all respondents spoke of getting entangled in a system meant to help them — a web of social programs riddled with complexity, undignified processes, and a scarcity of resources.

Many described a kind of trap: earn a little more, and a housing voucher disappears; get an incremental pay raise at work, and the food assistance that feeds their family shrinks.

As one survey respondent put it, "It just seems like it's a never-ending circle — like there's no way to get ahead."

This is the texture of poverty in the Twin Cities: exhaustion, overwhelm, a feeling of being trapped. There is a heaviness of never attaining enough to escape survival mode.

A Bright Spot in the Darkness

The promise that research offers is a sense of clarity in the dark. It shows us which programs have the most impact for changing a person's life. Evidence-based strategies give us a model for simplifying complex systems, de-siloing interventions, rewarding human-centered program designs, and creating a full picture of what's possible.

This is where the Constellation Fund's work snaps into focus. We find, fund, and scale the most effective poverty-fighting solutions. At the core of our work is the question: What will have the greatest impact for those experiencing poverty in the Twin Cities?

Finding the Leverage Points
Across a Lifetime

The research tells us there is no silver bullet. No one intervention has the power to fight poverty on its own. Life, of course, is complicated. People often face multiple challenges simultaneously and single-issue solutions rarely produce a lasting impact.

Some interventions provide essential relief in a moment of crisis — a bag of groceries, a rental assistance check, a warm bed. Some interventions help someone cross a threshold that reshapes everything downstream. A high school diploma. A stable job with a career ladder attached. A first year of secure housing after a period of instability.

The most effective programs, together, have the ability to produce moments of durable, compounding change — for the participant, and often for their children.

Constellation uses an evidence-based model that maps the most effective poverty-fighting interventions over the course of a person’s life. This framework helps Constellation apply a systems-level, holistic approach to our grantmaking. We fund both the emergency relief and the exit ramps, with the goal of disrupting the circle that traps people in poverty.

Creating Smart Solutions for a
Complex Problem

Supporters of the Constellation Fund often describe feeling a sense of relief when they learn about our work. It’s a feeling that comes from knowing that people are dedicating their expertise and time to figuring out this complex problem at a level of rigor that doesn’t exist often in philanthropy.

Some feel a heart-pull toward building better systems that help people thrive. Others simply believe our community is stronger when more people have financial stability. Many see something even bigger: the chance to bend a trajectory not just for one person, but for the generations that follow them.

That’s the vision Constellation is built to realize: a robust, efficient system with clear paths to opportunity. Together, we can build it, one evidence-backed grant at a time.



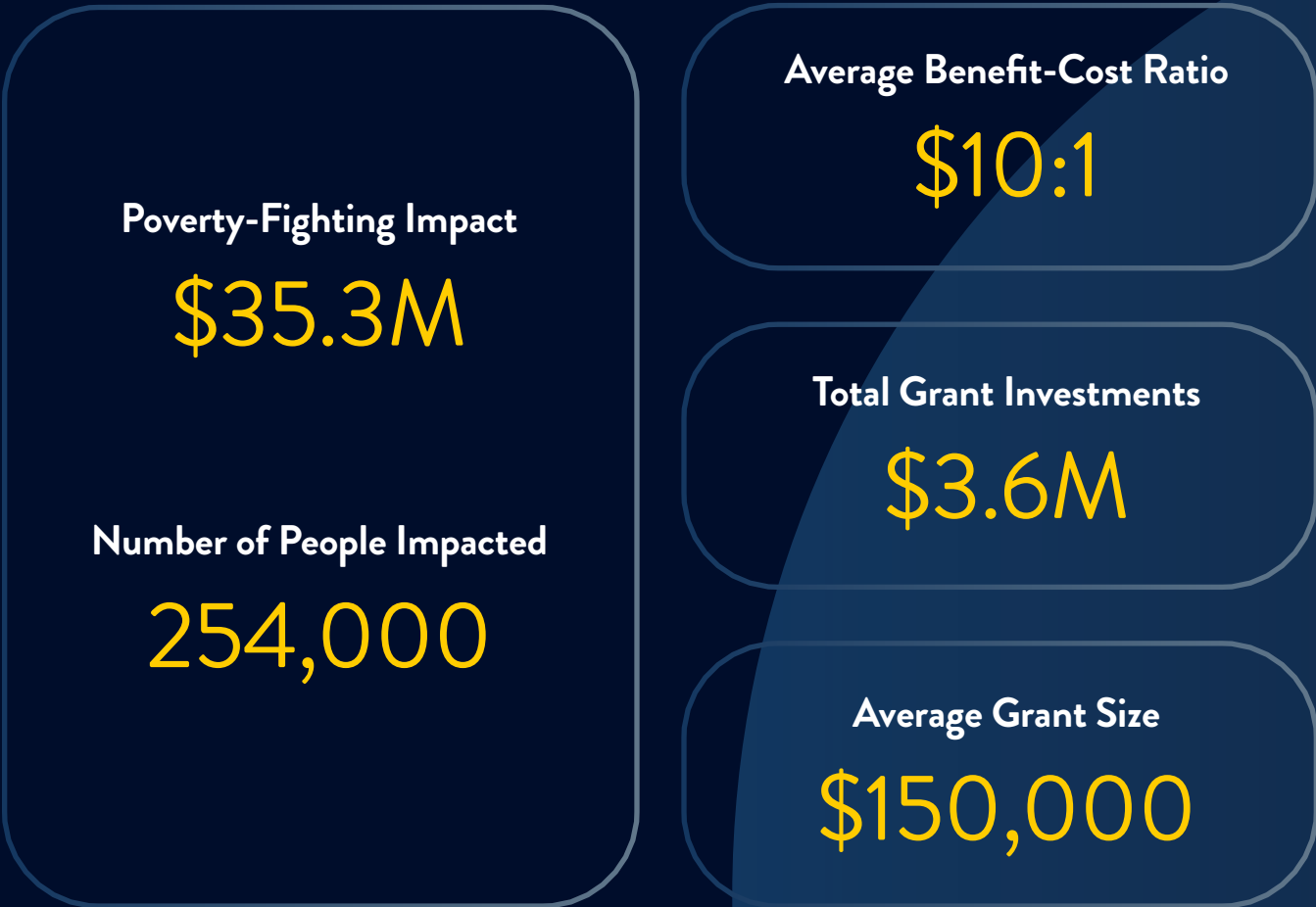
2026 IMPACT

Together, we made meaningful change for 1 in 3 people experiencing poverty in the Twin Cities.*

We distributed more grant dollars in a single year than ever before, and our portfolio produced its highest benefits yet.

Our portfolio of grantees has more than three times the poverty-fighting impact of the average nonprofit.**

PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE: FISCAL YEAR 2026



OUR PORTFOLIO OF GRANTEES

- AccessAbility, Inc
- Al-Maa'uun
- American Indian OIC
- Annex Teen Clinic
- Augsburg Family Scholars
- Black Men Teach
- Centro Tyrone Guzman
- Children's Dental Services
- CommonBond Communities
- Communities in Schools
- Dougherty Family College
- Emerge Community Development
- Great Minnesota Schools
- Hennepin Healthcare Addiction Medicine
- Improve Your Tomorrow
- Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minnesota
- Keystone Community Services
- Mental Health Resources
- Neighborhood Development Center
- Oasis for Youth
- Open Cupboard
- Project for Pride in Living
- Ready, Set, Smile
- Southside Harm Reduction Services
- Summit Academy OIC
- The Karen Organization of Minnesota
- Volunteer Lawyers Network
- Wallin Family Scholars
- Way to Grow

*U.S. Census data estimates 620,000 Twin Cities residents living under 200% of the poverty line.

**Our portfolio has an average \$10:1 return compared to an average \$3:1 return of all the nonprofits we evaluated.

Bright Spots of Impact

Each year, our work creates meaningful change for thousands of people in the Twin Cities. The poverty-fighting programs we fund reach people at all stages of life — each one adding up to measurable, lifelong income gains. Follow along to see four examples of what our impact looked like last year.



1,472 children participated in home-based early childhood education

Leads to reduced childhood stress, increased maternal health, and earlier diagnoses of developmental delays

Leads to \$6.9M in increased income over their lifetimes*



42,039 children received dental services

Leads to higher test scores

Leads to \$10.3M in increased income over their lifetimes*



5,535 young people participated in afterschool programs and received academic support

Leads to increased likelihood of high school graduation

Leads to \$59.9M in increased income and improved health over their lifetimes*



1,075 adults participated in career training

Leads to increased employment

Leads to \$60M in increased income over the first three years*

*These are estimates of the overall benefits from these programs. A total estimate of \$35.3M is attributable to Constellation's share of funding.

Relieving Toothaches, Raising Graduation Rates

Sometimes data leads to surprising places — like the connection between better dental care and the likelihood of graduating high school.

The evidence tells a clear story: A child free of chronic dental pain reads better. Better reading proficiency by third grade predicts a higher chance of graduating high school. High school graduation predicts higher lifetime income and better lifelong health. It's a chain of impact Constellation traces carefully, using peer-reviewed research.

A child cannot focus on a spelling test with a toothache. That simple truth sits at the center of why Children's Dental Services is one of the Constellation Fund's high-performing investments.

School-Based Dental Care to Treat the Most Painful Cases

Children's Dental Services is one of Minnesota's largest providers of emergency dental care and a nonprofit dedicated exclusively to the oral health of low-income children. They bring full dental setups directly into schools.

Mobile vans and portable equipment turn a gymnasium or a classroom into an exam room, removing the barriers that keep so many families from care: time and transportation. Parents don't have to miss work. Children don't have to miss a day of learning.

Sedation, root canals, silver diamine fluoride for arrested decay — Children's Dental Services takes on the complex, painful cases that come with serving children who have little access to dental care. A staff of more than 100, including providers who speak Hmong, Somali, and Spanish, serves roughly 35,000 children a year.

For these children, the return on investment starts with something simple: a school day without pain, and the chance to just be a kid learning to read.

DID YOU KNOW?
DENTAL DISEASE IS THE MOST COMMON CHRONIC DISEASE IN CHILDHOOD.

Children's Dental Services received an Immediate Response Fund grant to expand its services in the aftermath of Operation Metro Surge. With this grant, they aimed to treat more than 1,000 children who went for weeks without essential dental care because of missed school.



Becoming Fluent in Opportunity

The Constellation Fund’s research points to a consistent finding: a good job is one of the most powerful levers for lasting economic mobility.

For many immigrants and refugees to Minnesota, securing a job requires navigating a new language, an unfamiliar system, new credentials, and sometimes, cultural differences.

The job interview, for example, is a practice built on confidently naming your own strengths. This can become an unexpected obstacle for members of the Karen community, whose cultural values often emphasize humility. It’s an admirable strength in many other contexts, but can be a disadvantage in settings where there’s an expectation of self-promotion.

Meeting Job Seekers Where They Are

This is exactly the kind of barrier that the Karen Organization of Minnesota was built to address. With over 20,000 Karen residents, Minnesota is home to the largest Karen community in the country. The Karen Organization of Minnesota’s Employment Services combines Adult Basic Education, English language instruction, high school diploma completion, financial literacy, and career certification with hands-on support — including coaching participants through the unwritten rules of American job interviews.

What sets the Karen Organization of Minnesota apart is how they meet people where they are, serving Karen neighbors, and refugees and immigrants from many different backgrounds. Many Adult Basic Education

programs require English proficiency scores just to enroll. The Karen Organization of Minnesota takes a different approach: recognizing international education credentials and looking past standardized test scores to track what participants actually know.

Their interpreter and translator training program shows their innovation in action. Few people in Minnesota can accurately translate languages spoken by the people of Burma, like Karen, Karenni, and Mon. Karen Organization of Minnesota saw an opportunity for training community members who speak these languages to become certified interpreters. Organizations across Minnesota and beyond now turn to the Karen Organization of Minnesota for this essential service.

THE KAREN ORGANIZATION OF MINNESOTA’S JOB PLACEMENT RATE IS CLOSE TO 70%

Economic mobility isn’t a single road with the same on-ramp for everyone. Effective solutions have to be built around the real lives, histories, and values of the people they serve. The highest-impact nonprofits are often led by people with deep roots and hard-won trust in their communities.



A Constellation of Neighbors Respond

When Operation Metro Surge brought thousands of federal agents into the Twin Cities in December 2025, the impact was immediate.

People were detained on their way to work. Parents stopped dropping their kids off at school. Families stayed inside, afraid to buy groceries or show up for work. By the time it ended, more than 3,700 arrests had been made and roughly 1,700 people had been deported.

At the Constellation Fund, we saw the crisis unfolding in real time — not just through news reports, but through direct calls with our grantee partners. Our program officers listened first: *What are your participants facing? What would actually help right now?*

The answers came back fast. Food. Rent assistance. Rides to medical appointments. The organizations closest to the families being hurt most were already stretched past their limits.

Launching the Immediate Response Fund

On January 27, we launched the Immediate Response Fund. Then something remarkable happened. Donations arrived from longtime supporters, from people brand new to Constellation, from donors as far away as California and New York who simply wanted Minnesota families to know they weren't alone.

WITHIN A WEEK, WE'D RAISED OVER \$500,000. WITHIN A MONTH, OVER \$1 MILLION.

By the time the fund closed, 282 donations totaling nearly \$1.3 million had come in from 26 states. Sixty-eight percent of those donors were brand new to the Constellation Fund.

Neighbor Is a Verb Here

During this time, we saw a constellation of neighbors showing up: volunteering to pack groceries, giving rides, whistling in the streets, and donating to relief funds across the state. The Minnesota Council on Foundations tracked more than \$70.5 million mobilized across the state's philanthropic sector in the first five months of 2026.

Together, we were part of a response that reverberated a strong message across the Twin Cities and beyond: "Neighbor is a verb here."

Within weeks, Constellation granted funds in \$50,000 increments to more than a dozen trusted nonprofit partners, sometimes hand-delivering checks to make sure help arrived on time.

"We never would have been able to rise to the challenge the way that we did without this quick support."

— Jessica Francis, Executive Director of Open Cupboard

THE IMPACT OF THIS GENEROSITY

Centro Tyrone Guzman

Delivered food to families sheltering at home • Arranged rides to legal appointments
Helped families complete guardianship paperwork in case a parent was detained

Open Cupboard

Expanded home grocery deliveries • Brought on extra staff support
Served 7,600+ households in a single week

Improve Your Tomorrow

Provided virtual learning supplies for students afraid to go to school
Hired a mentor available by phone in the evenings for students who needed to talk



Beyond Dollars: Capacity Is a Poverty- Fighting Investment

The Constellation Fund pairs financial support with expert talent, helping high-impact nonprofits build the systems, strategies, and leadership strength to extend their reach.

A check alone can't fix a capacity gap. Nonprofits are stretched thin on the very expertise – strategy, technology, leadership coaching – that would let them run more smoothly, serve more people, and scale what works. Beyond Dollars closes that gap.

Through Beyond Dollars, talented professionals contribute the specialized expertise that many nonprofits need but cannot afford, turning capacity-building into another engine for lasting, measurable impact. And 2026 showed what makes the program work.

Mapping the Path to Growth

Ready, Set, Smile had a vision: take its school-based preventive dental care beyond the Twin Cities. What it needed was a map and **McKinsey & Company** helped create one. The work paired market and organizational analysis with financial, workforce, and infrastructure planning, producing a phased growth strategy and cost model. The estimated value: \$550,000.

Building AI Fluency

Great MN Schools used a different kind of capacity boost. Through an introduction from Constellation, **Anthropic** provided six months of Claude Enterprise access, personalized implementation support, and one-on-one sessions with a Customer Success Manager. Instead of staff experimenting with AI separately, the organization built shared expertise and tools that can improve efficiency and broaden families' access to its resources. As Jennifer Stern, Great MN Schools CEO shared, "These supports have fundamentally shifted how we use technology platforms to find efficiencies in our work and further our mission."

The result is a new kind of ROI. Return On Involvement. Nonprofits gain tools and capabilities that last, volunteers see their expertise create community value, and every grant has more potential to go further.

Last Year's Impact

25
Pro Bono Projects

\$1M
Estimated Total Grantee Value

\$40,906
Average Value Per Project



Closing the Evidence Gap

CoLab funds rigorous, long-term research that tests which poverty-fighting solutions create lasting upward mobility, helping translate evidence into funding, programs, and policy.

The fight against poverty is full of promising ideas. The harder part is knowing which ones can truly change lives, and keep changing them years later. Doing that well requires evidence. Not just a snapshot of whether a program works today, but a clear view of whether its effects endure. That’s the work CoLab takes on.

As the Constellation Fund’s research investment arm, CoLab funds actionable, longitudinal research on programs and practices designed to reduce intergenerational poverty. CoLab builds the next generation of evidence that can sharpen grantmaking and guide broader public and philanthropic investment.

By following participants over multiple years, CoLab-supported studies can reveal what shorter evaluations miss and give decision-makers better information about where limited resources can do the most good.

A Head Start on Housing Stability

A Connecticut program connects Housing Choice Vouchers directly to families enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start. CoLab is funding a study of 149 participating families, tracking housing stability, economic security, early learning outcomes, and more. The research could show whether this is a practical, scalable way to prevent homelessness before instability disrupts a child’s development.

Universal Public Pre-K

CoLab is supporting a study evaluating the effects of universal public pre-K for three-year-olds in Washington D.C. Researchers will follow approximately 6,000 children through middle and high school, tracking their progress toward graduation. Additional family economic outcomes will be explored where data allow, and a cost-benefit analysis will help policymakers assess the long-term return on an earlier public investment in pre-K.

One-Time Cash Assistance

Can timely, flexible cash prevent deeper housing instability and improve children’s long-term prospects? Recent research tested the effects of one-time cash assistance for families with school-aged children experiencing homelessness. CoLab is funding a follow-up study to understand the long-term impacts of the Illinois Stability Investment for Family Housing Program, tracking housing, education, financial well-being, and other outcomes for families.



CONVENING EXPERTS IN THE FIELD

Last year, CoLab hosted the second annual Evidence-to-Action Forum and continued its leadership in the 2-Gen Home Visiting Task Force, which emerged from the 2024 Forum focused on early childhood solutions. This work ignites conversations across researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and community partners to help turn knowledge into action.

Last Year’s Impact

Nearly \$11M
Committed to Research

12
New Evidence-Expanding Projects

EVIDENCE IS BUILT FROM DATA, BUT THE IMPACT IS PROFOUNDLY HUMAN.

Behind every finding is a child growing up, a family searching for stability, or a young person trying to build a future. CoLab takes the long view so the choices we make today have a better chance of changing tomorrow.

The Wisdom to Make a Difference

A Conversation with the Wisdom Family Foundation

Twenty years ago, the Wisdom Family Foundation set out to give back to their community. Today, that instinct has grown into something more deliberate: an intentional, multi-generational approach to giving that asks “How much are we actually moving the dial?”

IN YOUR EYES, WHAT MAKES THE WISDOM FAMILY FOUNDATION SPECIAL?

We’ve been fortunate in our lives, and we believe that comes with a responsibility to help others. That has always been at the heart of the Wisdom Family Foundation.

Over time, we’ve become especially passionate about helping children build the inner foundation they need to thrive. What has changed over our 20 years of giving is how intentional we’ve become about pursuing that mission. We used to think that supporting a good cause was enough. We’ve learned to look deeper. Who is willing to learn, adapt, and show that their approach is actually working?

I think what makes the Foundation special is that we try to hold both sides of that at once. There is a lot of heart behind why we give, but there is also a responsibility to make sure that generosity translates into something meaningful for the people we hope to serve.

WHAT DREW YOU TO SUPPORTING THE CONSTELLATION FUND?

Constellation recognizes that funding the work matters, but strengthening the organization doing the work can be just as important.

That really resonates with us. Through efforts like Beyond Dollars, they give organizations access to expertise and tools that help them operate more effectively and build for the future. We also appreciate how rigorous they are about understanding and measuring impact. That aligns closely with the direction our own Foundation has taken.

Constellation’s focus on poverty is also deeply connected to our work with children and families. A child’s ability to thrive doesn’t exist in a vacuum. Stability at home, access to opportunity, health, education, and the resources available to a family all shape what is possible for that child.

For us, supporting Constellation is a way to address some of those conditions while also investing in a model that can make many strong organizations even stronger. That multiplier effect is what made the partnership especially compelling to us.



Champions for Evidence-Based Philanthropy

“Constellation is uniquely focused on data and analysis to scale the most effective efforts to end poverty. I am humbled to support that effort in any way I can as a new board member.”

**RON FELDMAN,
FEDERAL RESERVE
BANK OF
MINNEAPOLIS**



“From its inception, I have been drawn to Constellation’s innovative model and its audacious ambition to alleviate poverty in our community.”

**MARY DEE HICKS,
COMMUNITY LEADER**



**Notes of Support from
our Newest Board
Members**

**KATHY
SCHMIDLKOFE,
COMMUNITY LEADER**



“I am proud to be a part of an organization creating lasting pathways out of poverty. Through analytics and research, we fund the most effective organizations and turn compassion into meaningful change for Minnesota.”

**ROB NELSON,
NORTHROCK
PARTNERS**



“I am excited to be part of an organization focused on identifying some of the best work happening in our community and then helping those organizations expand that impact.”

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Our Board of Directors and Leadership Funders cover all our operating costs so that 100% of donor gifts go directly to grantees.



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