



new era creative space



IMPACT REPORT 2024

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A Message from the **Executive Director**

Dear NECS Community,

Looking back on 2024, we are filled with gratitude and pride for a remarkable year of growth, creativity, and community impact. We began the year with transformative staff training and our first annual retreat, bringing teaching artists and staff together to reflect and recharge.

Our theater students showcased courage and artistry in their *Giants in the Sky* production, performing for an audience of over 300. Spring brought deep learning and reflection as five students and three adults embarked on a Civil Rights Journey to Alabama and Atlanta, capturing their experience in a student-produced video. We also hosted our first Girls' Wellness Summit, fostering self-care, empowerment, and connection.

A significant milestone came in May, when we signed a lease for our new creative hub at 203 Esther Street in downtown Peekskill. Over the summer, we welcomed students for a six-week Nature Connection Camp and global learning experiences—including a life-changing trip to The Gambia. In the fall, our new space became home to expanded programs in mixed media, theater, comics, film, and more, while our film students gained recognition at the New Hampshire Film Festival. We were honored with awards for our commitment to equity, inclusion, and creativity, including **Westchester's Small Nonprofit Changemaker Award** and **ArtsWestchester's Advancing Equity Award**.

Now more than ever, spaces like NECS are essential. In times of strife, our community needs places where young people can express themselves and find belonging. Thanks to your continued support, NECS remains a vibrant home for creativity, learning, and empowerment. As we look ahead, we are excited to build on this momentum and deepen our impact in 2025.

With gratitude,
Ridvan Idara
Executive Director

Milestones & Memories

NECS Year in Review— The Transformative Power of the Arts



**TRANSFORMATIVE
POWER OF
THE ARTS
VIDEO**



2024 Highlights

A FOCUS ON CORE VALUES

We *strive* to align with our core values of

creativity

empathy

nobility

joy

justice

service



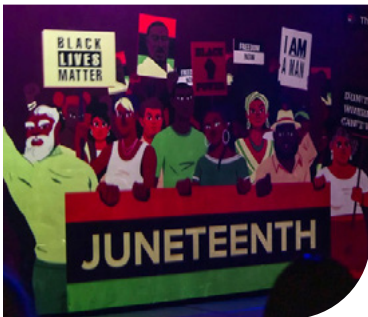
Our programs aim to cultivate the curiosity and ingenuity to imagine a better world.



Our annual benefit on June 6, hosted by the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, saw over **160 people celebrating our achievements and raised over \$40,000**. We honored community members and youth for their service in the Peekskill community and formed new partnerships. Highlights included a talk by Jordan Pierre on investing in youth and a performance by Ariana Okoth. Our hosts, Bria Waterman, our resident artist, and Kyle Council, a local poet, kept the audience engaged, inspired us with poetry, and had us smiling throughout the event. Our guests included Peekskill Mayor McKenzie, who gave a few words, County Legislator Colin Smith, parents, community members, and leaders. It served as an excellent opportunity to strengthen ties with our community.



NECS
ANNUAL
BENEFIT
VIDEO



“The creativity of the kids shined through during this program and in my group the kids created strong bonds, which was amazing. —NECS Parent

Juneteenth Parade

We proudly joined the City of Peekskill in celebrating Juneteenth with a parade, community gathering, and educational booths. To close our spring season, our community came together at the Hudson Valley Museum of Contemporary Art for a vibrant celebration. The event featured performances by our youth choir, a student-written play, and a powerful dance by the Peekskill High School Dance Club. Pastor James Perry delivered an inspiring speech, and our film students presented Untold Stories, a documentary capturing their transformative journey to Alabama and Atlanta.



empathy

We strive to develop an intimate care for other human beings and an appreciation for the natural world.



Our theatre students demonstrated extraordinary resilience, creativity, and heart. In the face of profound loss, we came together as a community to support one another, mourning the passing of a beloved theater parent while honoring his memory. With deep determination and courage, our students pressed forward in their work on *Giants in the Sky*, dedicating this year's performance to the late David Flores.

Their dedication was beautifully realized in February when the production debuted to an enthusiastic audience. Through every challenge, our students, families, and staff lifted one another up, showing that our theatre community is more than a program—it's a family built on compassion, strength, and unwavering support.



nobility

Recognizing the inherent nobility in every individual, including ourselves, we provide opportunities for individuals to shine and embrace their full potential.

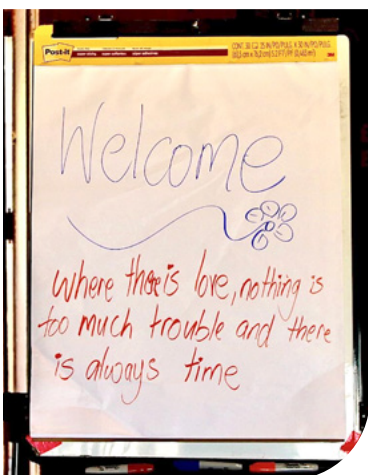


In January, our team gathered for an enriching staff training session focused on culturally responsive teaching. We set the tone for a year of meaningful engagement by delving into the nuances of various cultures, exploring the depths of implicit bias, and equipping ourselves with practical tools to become more conscientious educators.

In the spring, our inaugural annual retreat was a meaningful opportunity for our teaching artists to reconnect, recharge, and reflect on our shared mission and values. Rooted in camaraderie and a sense of purpose, the retreat provided a dedicated space to envision the culture we strive to cultivate—for ourselves, our students, and their families. Through thoughtful discussions and collaboration, we reaffirmed our commitment to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and inspiring environment.



“ It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge. —Albert Einstein



joy

To derive joy from intellectual and creative pursuits is one of the key aims of our programs.



In May, NECS hosted the Just Girls Wellness Summit, a transformative one-day event designed to inspire, educate, and empower young girls. Held at Blue Mountain Reserve, 15 girls formed an overnight community in a cozy lodge, engaging in jewelry-making, a spa night, and meaningful discussions on self-care, healthy relationships, racism, and domestic violence. A local photographer guided them in using self-portraits to build self-esteem. Both participants and facilitators joyfully felt the summit's impact, sparking excitement for next year and drawing new girls to our Girls EmpowerEd program.

Summer was filled with joy as we welcomed over 30 enthusiastic students to our new downtown Peekskill location, the heart of local activities. For six weeks, laughter and adventure filled the air as students roasted s'mores, played games, hiked, swam, gardened, and explored the water through paddleboarding and kayaking.



Divided into Explorers (K-2nd grade), Discoverers (3rd-5th grade), and Pathfinders (6th-8th grade), students embraced new challenges every day. This year's special highlight was our guest nutritionist, who taught the importance of healthy eating and guided students in preparing meals for seniors at the Peekskill Nutrition Center. Another favorite moment was our mini Olympics, led by Coach Ted, where students competed in fun, high-energy challenges. This summer was about growth, connection, and endless summer fun!



“ I highly enjoyed the energy of my group and their age. Since my kids were between the ages of 5-7 they had so much optimism and truly made this experience so fun. I also loved the counselors that were in my group.

—Nature Connection Camp Staff

justice

To be equitable, accessible, and inclusive is a fundamental expression of our commitment to justice.



Over spring break, we embarked on a transformative journey to Alabama and Atlanta, reaffirming the vital role of truth-telling in teaching youth about justice. Five students and three adults traveled to deepen their understanding of history, beginning in Atlanta with visits to the King Center and the Human Rights Museum, where they also engaged in meaningful dialogue with civil rights activist and artist Masud Olufani.

In Alabama, our students spent four immersive days exploring Montgomery, Selma, and Birmingham, walking in the footsteps of history and learning firsthand from historians, artists, and activists. This experience was more than a trip—it was an act of bearing witness, connecting the past to the present, and empowering the next generation to carry forward the work of justice. The journey culminated in a powerful [student-produced video](#) by Alyssa Copeland and Tyler Dehm, capturing their reflections and insights.



“These museums contained information about slavery throughout history that we have never come close to learning in school. By traveling, we learned information that’s “hidden” from the youth, but is necessary to know in order to truly understand what really happened during that time.

—NECS Student

service

NECS expresses its commitment to humanity through community service.



In July, our students embraced the power of service through global cultural immersion. As part of our Girls EmpowerEd partnership with Starfish International, five students traveled to The Gambia to engage with the local community, learn about advocacy, and build meaningful connections with African peers. Their journey aligned with a historic moment as The Gambia upheld its ban on female genital mutilation, deepening its understanding of social justice and the role of activism in creating change.

Executive Director Ridvan Idara led a Healthy Masculinity workshop for Starfish International's young men. The workshop facilitated critical conversations on reducing violence against women and cultivating respect and accountability. Through these experiences, our students and leaders learned from others and contributed to a global movement of empowerment and change.



“ I really enjoyed hearing about the school's values, especially nobility. I regard this experience as an investment in myself that will make me a more well-rounded, understanding, and cultured person.

—NECS Student



**HEALTHY MANHOOD
WORKSHOP IN
THE GAMBIA**
VIDEO

Year In Review »

2024 by the Numbers



69

Programs offered in 2024

206K

Provided in scholarships, discounts, and subsidies



525

Youth and 36 adults participated in NECS programs



1,403

People engaged with our programs
(audience, community partners)



25

Teaching artists and educators trained



100%

Financial support was provided to students who indicated need



303

Individual, corporate, and foundation donors supported NECS

OVER \$64K

Saved through volunteered time, talent, and treasure

Growth & Expansion

Our New Home

May 1 marked an exciting new chapter: NECS signed the lease for our new location at 203 Esther Street in Peekskill! Our doors are now open, and the space is quickly transforming into a vibrant community home.

While improvements are still underway, the building is already becoming a hub for creativity, empowerment, and connection. With dedicated classrooms and offices, we're expanding our programs to better serve the community.

After-school classes are now in session, and we're thrilled to have the flexibility to host workshops and events. New offerings—including music production and workforce development in media arts—reflect our commitment to innovative, accessible education and deeper community engagement.

We're energized by the possibilities ahead and the impact this move will have on those we serve. Your continued support helps us furnish and equip this new home, ensuring it meets the needs of our students and the broader community.

**We're
expanding our
offerings to
include music
production
and workforce
development
in media arts.**



Financial Report

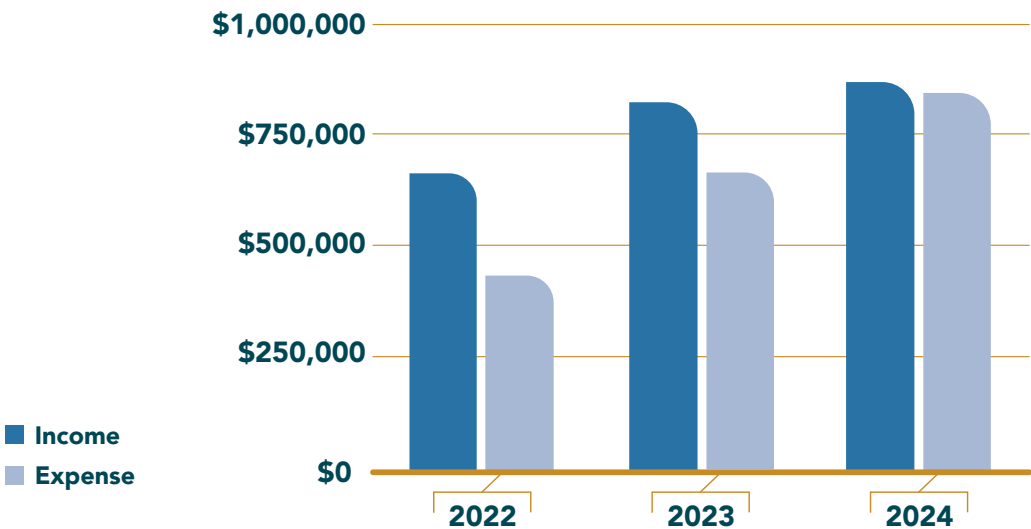
With the generous support of our community and foundation partners, New Era Creative Space has significantly expanded its impact. Strategic collaborations have allowed us to bring programming directly into the community, reaching more individuals than ever before. In addition to the funding highlighted in this report, the dedicated people who work for and with NECS contributed over \$64K in in-kind donations.

We're proud to have extended scholarships to every child who requested support, ensuring that all interested participants had access to our programs.

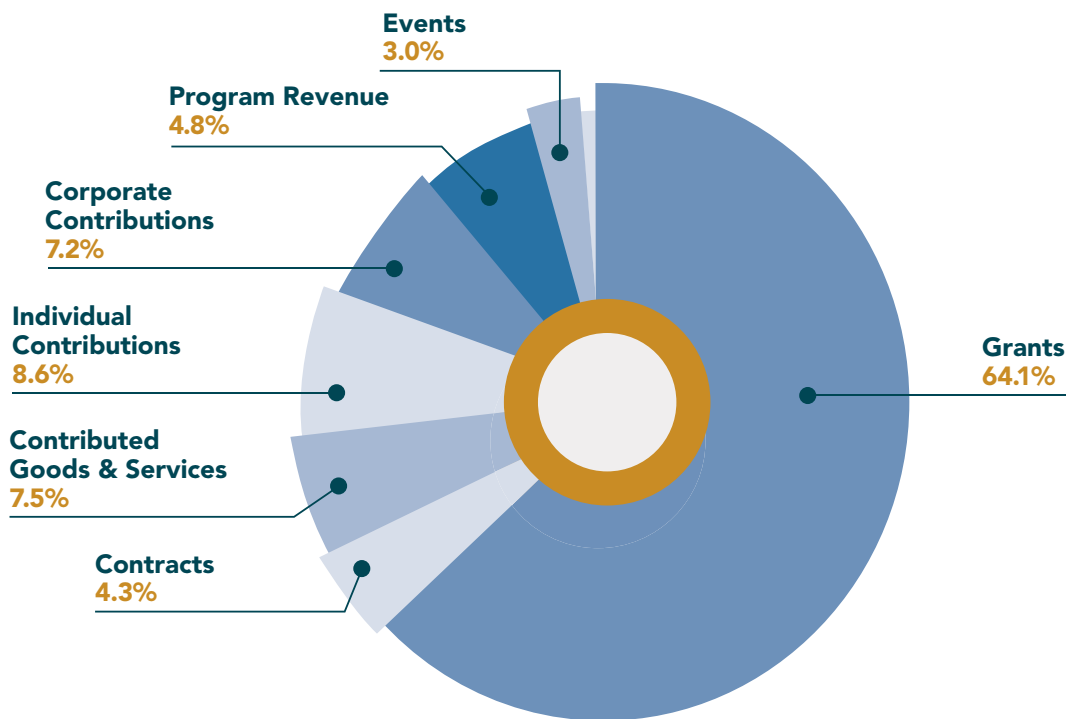
Economic Impact

In addition to our impact on children and families, NECS contributes to the local economy by creating meaningful job opportunities within our community. In 2024, we proudly employed five full-time staff members, one part-time staff member, two contract workers, three youth summer counselors, and 15 teaching artists. By providing artists and educators with fair, living wages, we not only support their livelihoods but also foster long-term commitment and reduce turnover—allowing us to build a more stable, consistent, and high-quality experience for our students. Investing in local talent strengthens the creative economy and ensures that our programs are led by passionate, experienced professionals rooted in the community.

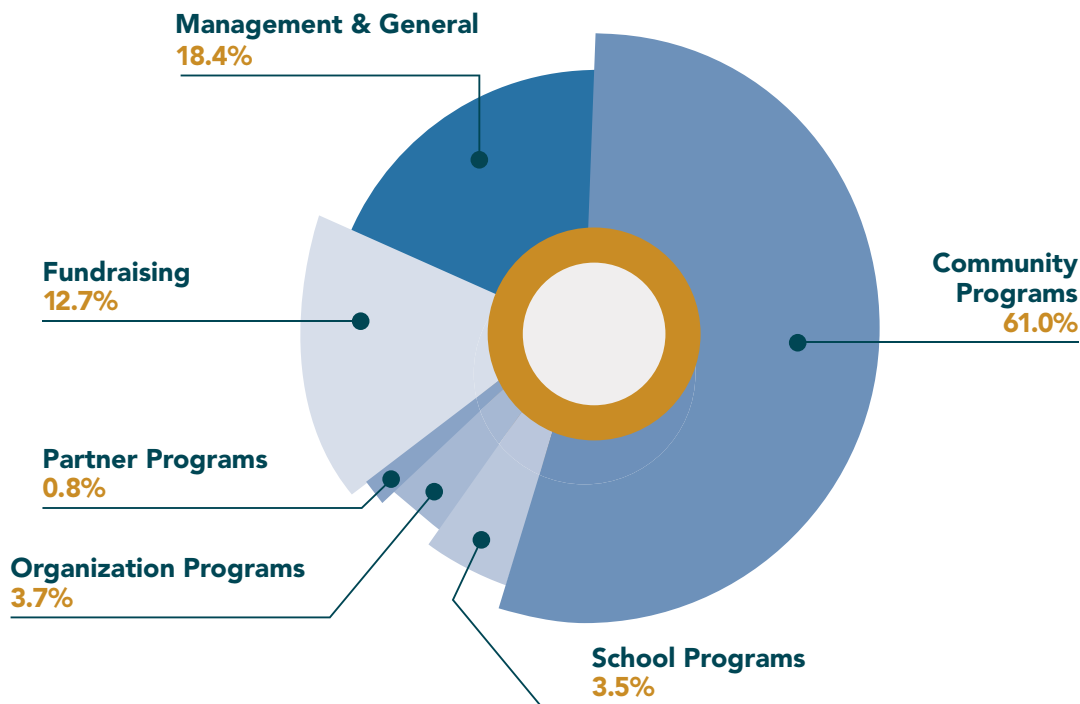
Growth: Income & Expense



Income Total: \$848,927



Expense Total: \$821,235



Recognition

We are deeply honored to have received several prestigious recognitions in 2024, each highlighting our commitment to equity, community enrichment, and the transformative power of the arts.



ArtsWestchester Advancing Equity Award

Recognizing our dedication to fostering inclusivity and access to the arts



Women's History Month Award (City of Peekskill)

Celebrating the leadership and impact of our Executive Director, Ridvan Idara



Hudson Gateway Chamber of Commerce Quality of Life Award

Affirming our mission to uplift and strengthen our community through the arts



Small Non-Profit Changemaker Award (Non Profit Westchester)

Honoring our collective dedication to transformation

Candid.

Gold Standard for Transparency (Candid, formerly GuideStar)

Recognizing our commitment to organizational transparency and accountability



Partnerships & Alliances

In 2024, NECS saw growth and diversification within our network of supporters. We are deeply grateful to our invaluable partners, whose steadfast support has helped us enter an exciting new growth phase. Your generosity and commitment have played a crucial role in our progress, and we genuinely appreciate your essential contribution to our journey.

A CALL TO MEN
The Next Generation of Manhood

ARTSW
ARTSWESTCHESTER

M
mona Educate.
Empower.
Transform.

S&R
STERNBACH & ROSE
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

Wayfarer
FOUNDATION
STRIVING FOR UNITY

Rotary
Club of Peekskill

SONY



CREATE **ACTION**

Jim Witt's
HOPE for Youth Foundation, Inc.



* clement **Y**ne

 **NoVo**
Foundation

 **NewYork-Presbyterian**
Hudson Valley Hospital

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

**Anonymous through the
Jewish Communal Fund**

ABC World Citizens

B, D & J Fund of NY Community Trust

CarVal Investors Foundation

JFM Foundation

Joseph Robert Foundation

Keep Insurance Agency

Lanza Family Foundation

Orange Bank & Trust Company

The New York Community Trust

The Patrina Foundation

**Westchester Women's Bar Association
Foundation, Inc.**

Who's On First Fund

Community Partnerships

In 2024, our growth was aided by the local institutions and organizations that stood by us. Their support has been a cornerstone of our journey, from offering spaces for our events to inviting us to lead impactful programs. We are deeply thankful for their partnership and excited to continue nurturing these relationships in the year ahead.



Arts10566

Bean Runner

Be First Boxing Gym

Bethany Arts Community

Church Of The Assumption

Gleasons

Hudson Valley H2O

Inner Being Yoga

Longhaul Farm

Peekskill Coffee House

Peekskill Hispanic Community Corp

Peekskill Methodist Church

Peekskill NAACP

Peekskill Police Department

Peekskill Presbyterian Church

Peekskill Regeneration Farm

Studio Theater In Exile

The Center at Mariandale

Westchester Youth Alliance

Individual Supporters

The Heart of NECS: Individual Supporters and Volunteers

In 2024, approximately 303 individual, corporate, and foundation donors chose to generously support NECS, contributing their time, skills, and resources to the young people we serve. Their invaluable assistance allowed us to achieve our mission and significantly impact our community.

Additionally, the collective effort of our dedicated volunteers, who helped us save over \$64K in goods, services, and volunteer time, is of immense importance to NECS. They are at the heart of our organization, and we are incredibly thankful for their continued partnership.

Looking to the Future »

As we reflect on a transformative year, we are energized by the road ahead. With our move into a dedicated creative hub at 203 Esther Street, NECS is poised to deepen our impact and expand opportunities for young people. This new space allows us to strengthen our existing programs while introducing innovative initiatives that meet the evolving needs of our community. It is more than just a location—it is a home for creativity, empowerment, and connection, where students can explore their potential and develop skills that will shape their futures.

One of our most exciting expansions is the launch of our Workforce Development Program, which will provide hands-on training in media arts. Through mentorship, real-world projects, and paid learning experiences, young people will gain industry skills in filmmaking, digital content creation, and storytelling. This program is designed to open doors to creative careers, equipping students—especially those from underrepresented communities—with the tools and confidence to thrive in digital media.

Now more than ever, spaces like NECS are crucial. In times of uncertainty and division, we remain steadfast in our mission to be a hub where young people can come together, find their voices, and build a future rooted in creativity, justice, and service. With the support of our community, we look forward to continuing this journey—expanding our reach, uplifting more youth, and fostering a generation of changemakers ready to transform the world.



THANK YOU

Executive Director

Ridvan Idara

Board of Directors

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Leslie Fields-Cruz

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Glenn Smith

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Grant & Development Manager

Karen D. Faulkner
People & Culture Manager

Jennifer Turner
Program Director

Bria Waterman
Artist in Residence

Stella Filocco
Administrative Assistant

Dawn Norris
Digital Designer



The mission of New Era Creative Space
is to inspire stronger communities
through creative programs.

necspace.org