



COLORADO  
**OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL**

# *2024 Impact Report*







## A MESSAGE FROM OUR SCHOOL LEADERS

Dear Friends of the Colorado Outward Bound School,

Reflecting on 2024, we are filled with pride and gratitude for the remarkable growth we've achieved over the past year. We've worked tirelessly, with an unwavering commitment to cultivating connection and building community through transformative outdoor experiences for youth.

**We nearly tripled the number of students we served through Partnership Programs in 2024.** We accomplished this by continuing to build relationships with schools and youth-serving organizations. Meanwhile, we facilitated the same number of Classic Expeditions. By investing in both Classic and Partnership Programs, we're reaching more students, building stronger communities, and offering a greater diversity of programs.

**From the ropes course to the Colorado River, our educational approach is making an impact.** Students reported positive outcomes whether they participated in a 1-day or semester-long program. This year, 89% of students on backcountry courses reported that they "gained the courage to face new challenges." And 85% of students on a 1-4 day basecamp courses reported that they "can work more effectively in a group." Outward Bound continues to be relevant - meeting the unique needs of today's youth through connection and discovery in the outdoors.

**We're achieving our mission through innovative partnerships and teamwork.** Just like a crew on course, we know that when we work together, we can reach new horizons. Our close relationship with Outward Bound USA has allowed us to operate more efficiently, building our capacity for growth. Collaboration with local partners has enabled us to pilot new, community-informed curricula that brings Outward Bound learnings into traditional classrooms and beyond.

Thanks to the unwavering dedication and courage of the COBS community, we believe that this crew is geared up and ready for the unique challenges ahead. Together, we are shaping the next generation of compassionate, bold leaders.

With gratitude,



**TARN UDALL**  
BOARD CHAIR



**AMBER BARNETT**  
SCHOOL DIRECTOR

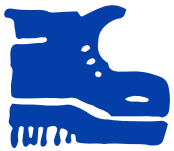




# 2024

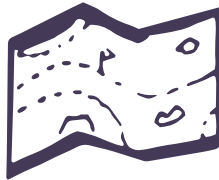
*by the numbers*

1,447



STUDENTS

105



COURSES

262



SCHOLARSHIPS

9,359



STUDENT DAYS

32



PARTNERS

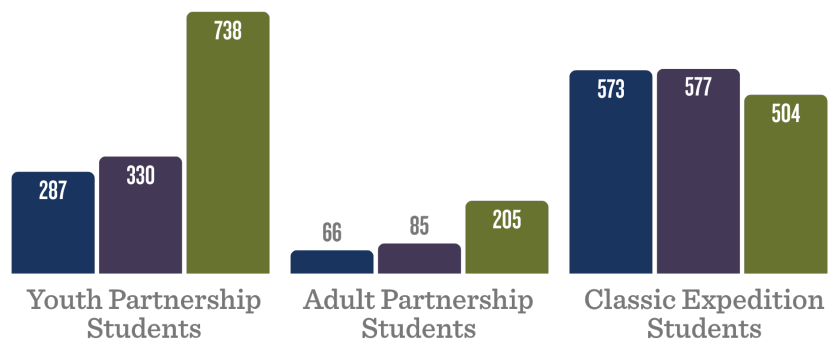


Including:

Bear Creek High School  
ElevateHer  
El Pomar Foundation Fellowship  
Get Outdoors Leadville  
Kent Denver  
Lake County School District  
Mile High 360  
NREL STAR Internship  
Ridgeway High School  
St. Anne's Episcopal School  
Watershed School  
Wild Youth Passages  
Western Slope Schools Career Collaborative

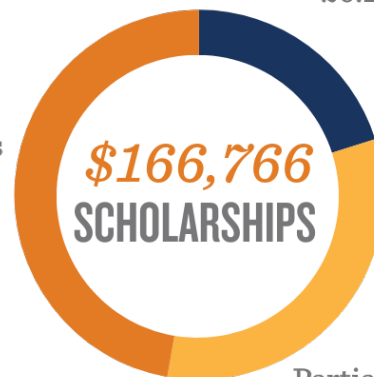
## YEAR OVER YEAR STUDENTS SERVED

2022 2023 2024



Partner Scholarships  
47.2%

Full Scholarships  
20.1%



Partial Scholarships  
32.6%

# EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

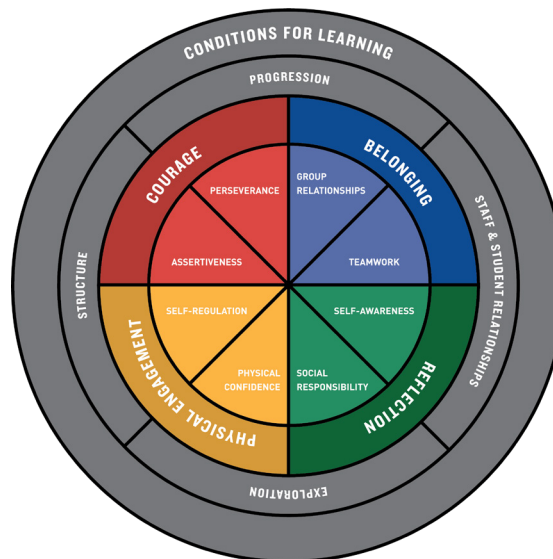
## Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a critical part of education and youth development. That's why it has always been central to the Outward Bound experience. Our outdoor classroom provides a unique environment for students to cultivate positive relationships and practice compassionate leadership. The SEL skills students develop on course empower them to be more successful in the classroom, at home, and beyond.

## Domains of Thriving (DOT)

We use the Domains of Thriving (DOT) as our educational framework for cultivating SEL. The DOT combines Outward Bound's 60+ years of experience with the latest SEL research. It highlights the four areas of human development that are impacted on an Outward Bound course: **Courage, Belonging, Reflection, and Physical Engagement.**

Today, we draw upon the DOT for both curriculum development and measuring student outcomes.



*“I challenged myself physically and mentally more than I thought I could. I saw my group get stronger, braver, happier, faster, and more at peace during this trip. It gave me the opportunity to learn about others and myself. I found peace within and acknowledged my strengths on the outside. I pushed myself past where I thought I could and gave myself motivation from within.” – Braydon, 17*

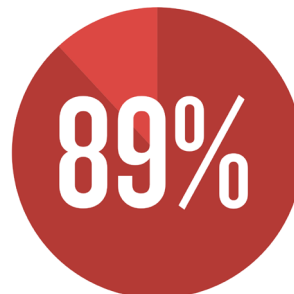


# STUDENT OUTCOMES

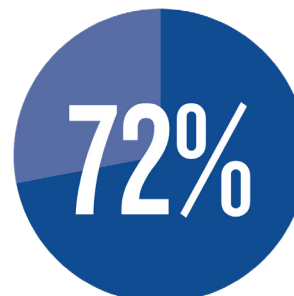
## Positive Student Impact - Anywhere, Anytime

Our programs have transformational impacts – we learn this not only through student stories, but also through outcomes data. At the end of each course, students take the Outward Bound Outcomes Survey (OBOS), an independently created and validated survey that measures student growth in key social and emotional areas.

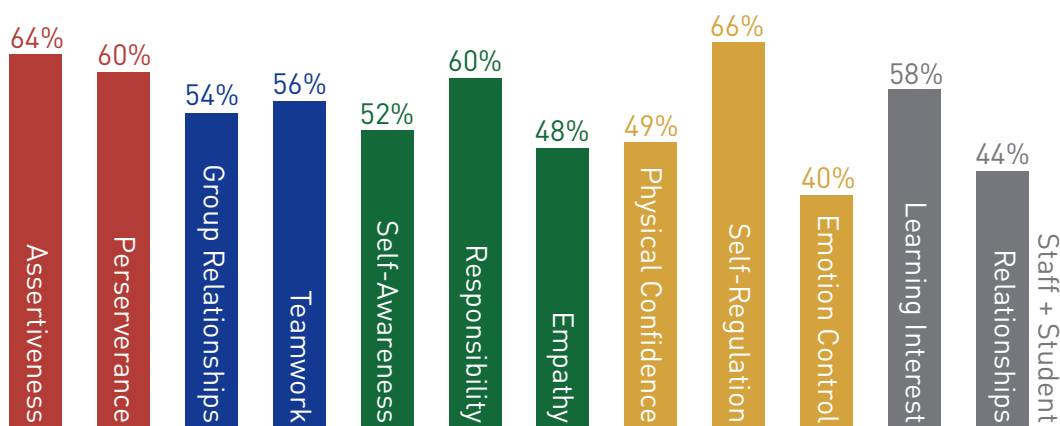
In 2024, students reported the most growth in Group Relationships, Self-Regulation, Perseverance, and Responsibility. Positive learning outcomes were achieved across the board, whether a student participated in a 1-day program at our Leadville Mountain Center or a 22-day expedition with our Southwest Program.



Students Reported:  
**"I have the courage to face new challenges."**



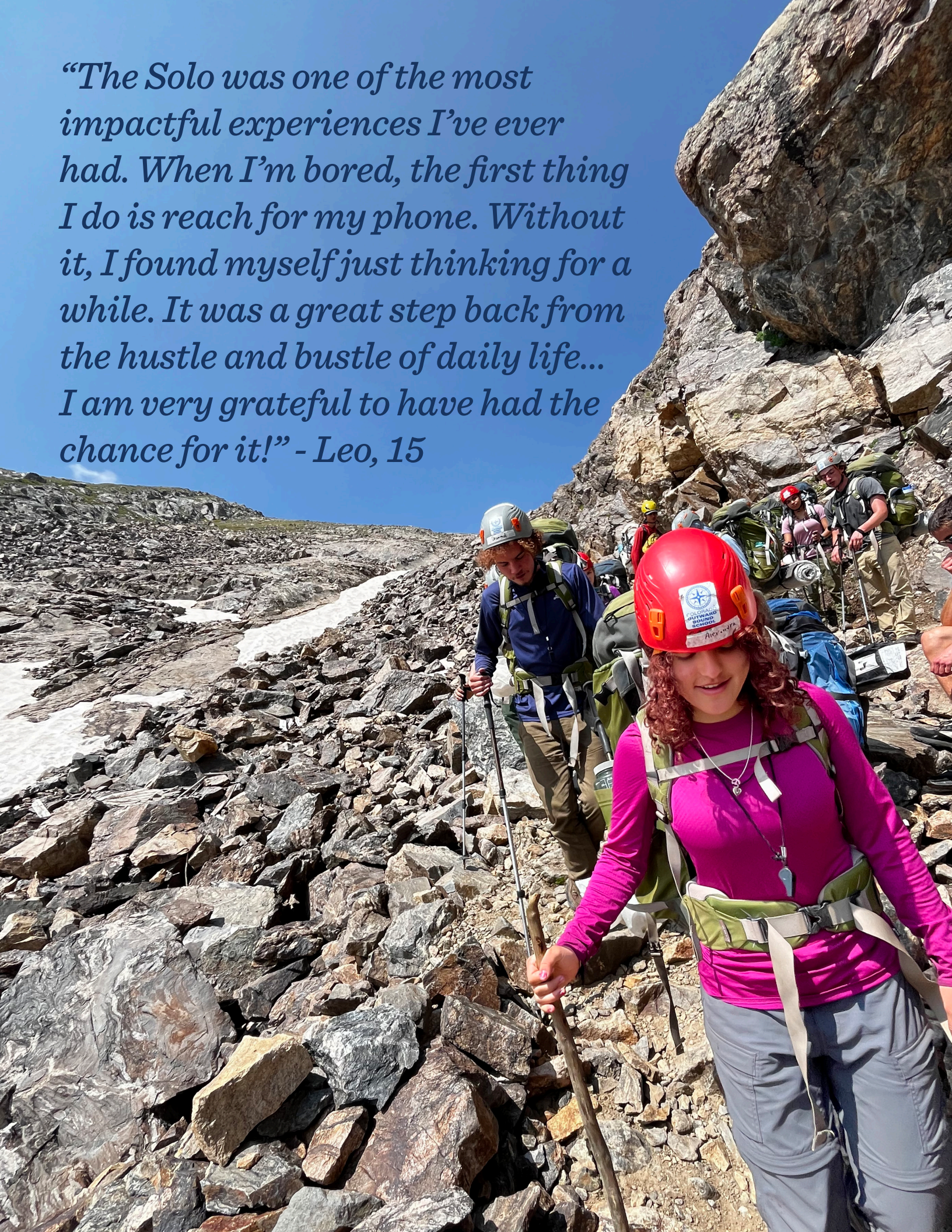
Students Reported:  
**"I can work more effectively in a group"**



Students Reporting Positive Change (2024 OBOS N=942)



*“The Solo was one of the most impactful experiences I’ve ever had. When I’m bored, the first thing I do is reach for my phone. Without it, I found myself just thinking for a while. It was a great step back from the hustle and bustle of daily life... I am very grateful to have had the chance for it!” - Leo, 15*





## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

We know that partnering with fellow youth-serving organizations and schools is a key step in meeting the unique and growing needs of today's youth. That's why we are committed to growing our Partnership Programs, which include expedition and basecamp adventures that bring pre-existing groups of youth and young adults on the Outward Bound journey.

In 2024, we grew the number of students served through Partnership Programs by 162%, working with 943 students on 56 adventures across Colorado and Utah. We achieved this growth by building community relationships. We collaborated with 32 unique partners, including local public schools, national youth-serving non-profits, and local organizations.



## Partnership Program Highlight: Alpine Backpacking with SEO-USA

*"For the first time in my life, I finally got an adventure."*

*- Anik, 16*

Anik, alongside 18 of his peers, joined COBS in 2024 through a collaboration with SEO-USA, a non-profit that works to close the educational and career opportunity gap for ambitious young people. The SEO Scholars embarked on a 7-day alpine backpacking expedition where they developed skills in leadership, communication, and teamwork.

By the end of the week, the Scholars built confidence and meaningful connections that they brought back to their relationships and community at home. After course, Juan Osario, chaperone for the course and 10th Grade Program Manager for SEO Scholars,

reflected on the growth he witnessed in his students both during and after the expedition stating,

*"Returning home, I see the way my Scholars have grown..."*

Read the full story: <https://outwardbound.org/blog/outward-bound-usa-teams-up-with-seo-usa-inspiring-youth-to-explore-new-horizons/>





## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

# LAUNCHING THE SKILLS FOR THRIVING SERIES

Social and emotional development is key to success in the classroom. That's why we are bringing Outward Bound to the entire school, extending learning opportunities to both students and teachers through our Skills for Thriving Series.

We work collaboratively with schools to craft multi-course journeys that teach Belonging, Courage, Physical Engagement, and Reflection. Students are empowered to progressively take on more responsibility, leadership, and challenge as they return to our outdoor classroom over time. Meanwhile, we work with teachers hands-on to provide them with the tools they need to transfer learning outcomes from course into the classroom.

*“My experience was outstanding. The facilitators really created a space that continuously challenged me to rethink and adapt to ways in which I communicate.”*

- St. Anne's Educator Day Participant

In 2024, we piloted the Skills for Thriving Series with St. Anne's Episcopal School. We facilitated several unique courses throughout the year, serving nearly every student, teacher and administrator in the school. Students reported significant growth in their ability to support each other, work together, and have the courage to try new things. Educators reported feeling more prepared to support each other and their student's SEL growth. In the coming years, we are eager to bring the Thriving Series to more schools across Colorado and Utah.





## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

# INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S LEADERS IN EDUCATION

We know that investing in staff is a critical part of cultivating long-term institutional sustainability. After completing a three-year plan to increase staff wages by 43%, we are seeing the positive results. At the end of the year, 78% of our Instructor staff shared that they plan to return to work for COBS in 2025.

We're also continuing to invest in staff through the Staff Professional Development Fund and the Fellowship for Emerging Leaders, both of which seek to reduce financial barriers to pursuing a career with Outward Bound.

## Staff Impact: A Student's Perspective

This year we partnered with The Fellowship Initiative to lead a crew of 30 teen boys from Dallas on a week-long rafting trip. There were countless ah-ha moments on the river made possible by the crew's Instructors. After course, one Fellow reflected:



*“Throughout the long days, we came across a lot of challenges where most of us felt like giving up. Although our instructors brought us together every time and told us that we would survive by sticking together. As [our instructor] said ‘you are the engine of the raft, if one part is not working, it gets harder on everybody. But if everyone is working together it’s smooth sailing.’ Not only did we learn how to guide through rapids and read waters, I also learned to love nature... Now as we depart from the river and say our goodbyes, we’re not leaving empty handed. We are leaving with a new perspective on nature, memories, and most importantly an unbreakable brotherhood.” - Esam, 15*



# STAFF STORY

## A Letter from Edmond, 2024 Emerging Leadership Fellow

[This fall,] I heard from a former student who was awarded an Army ROTC scholarship at her top three college choices. It's rewarding to know that my letter of recommendation helped her achieve this major milestone.

This student reached out to me [after course], specifically because of the lessons in leadership and resilience she had taken from our time



together at COBS. She highlighted that her experiences on the course taught her the kind of grit, perseverance, and teamwork that she now wants to bring to her future in ROTC.

*“She highlighted that her experiences on the course taught her the kind of grit, perseverance, and teamwork that she now wants to bring to her future in ROTC.”*

I was honored to share her story, her strengths, and her determination in my letter, and seeing her achieve this goal has been a proud moment for me as a mentor and as an instructor. This story reflects a larger theme I've witnessed



with students as a BIPOC Fellow. For many, their time with COBS is more than just a course; it's a transformative experience that fuels their goals and ambitions in ways that resonate well beyond the outdoors. As we work to build the BIPOC community at COBS, stories like this one show how BIPOC instructors empower students from diverse backgrounds to see themselves as leaders, whether they're navigating a rugged trail or planning their academic and professional futures.

*“The Fellowship program opens doors and inspires Instructors who inspire students to pursue dreams they might not have considered before.”*

This type of positive feedback underscores the impact COBS has on young people. From developing self-confidence to finding a path they're passionate about, the Fellowship program opens doors and inspires Instructors who inspire students to pursue dreams they might not have considered before.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute to these life-changing moments and proud of the impact COBS has in preparing the next generation of BIPOC leaders.





## FUNDRAISING

### Contribute to Your Crew Campaign

During COBS's annual Contribute To Your Crew campaign our incredible donors, students, families, staff, and many others showed up in a big way. Together, the COBS crew raised over \$85,000. Thank you, COBS crew!

### Rockies to Rivers Annual Gala

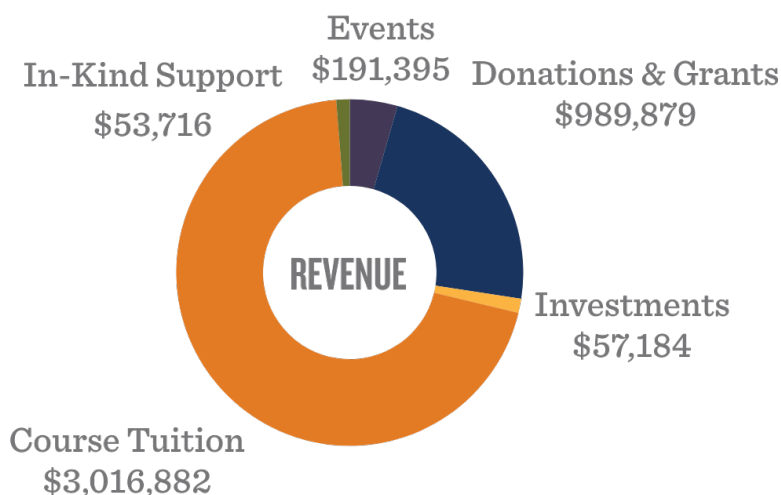
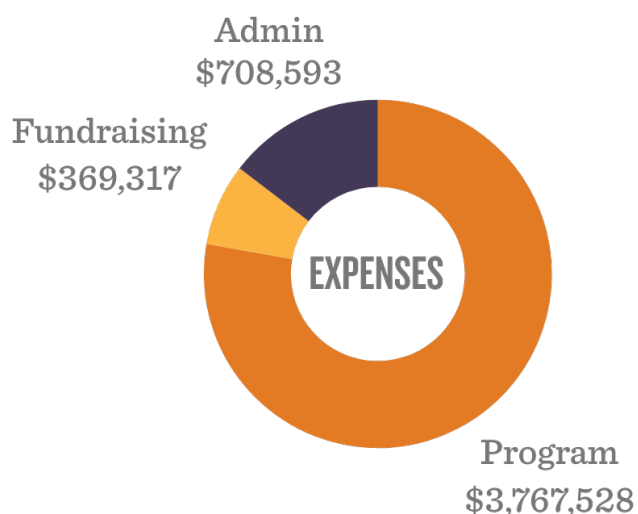
At our annual Rockies to Rivers Gala, the COBS community came together to enjoy a beautiful night of celebration, connection, and reflection at the Denver Botanic Gardens. Thanks to the generous contributions of sponsors, donors, and auction-goers, we can continue to change student lives for years to come.

### Leadville 100 Athlete Fundraiser

In 2024, we were thrilled to launch the inaugural COBS Charity Athlete Team with Leadville Race Series. A total of 11 runners and bikers rallied to raise over \$33,000 for COBS while racing 100 miles in the mountains around Leadville!

# Contribute to Your Crew

## ANNUAL FINANCIALS\*



*\*Please note these are unaudited 2024 financials for the Colorado Outward Bound School (EIN 84-0512779); audited financials will be available upon completion by our auditors in 2025. 990 forms and other financial statements are available publicly via Guidestar.*



# SNAPSHOTS FROM THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM IN 2024





*“I learned about myself, how to be a better leader, how to live in the wilderness, and how to live and work in a group. But maybe most importantly, I learned to feel gratitude. Gratitude is something hard to find in our normal lives but the outdoors makes it easy.” - William, 25*





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