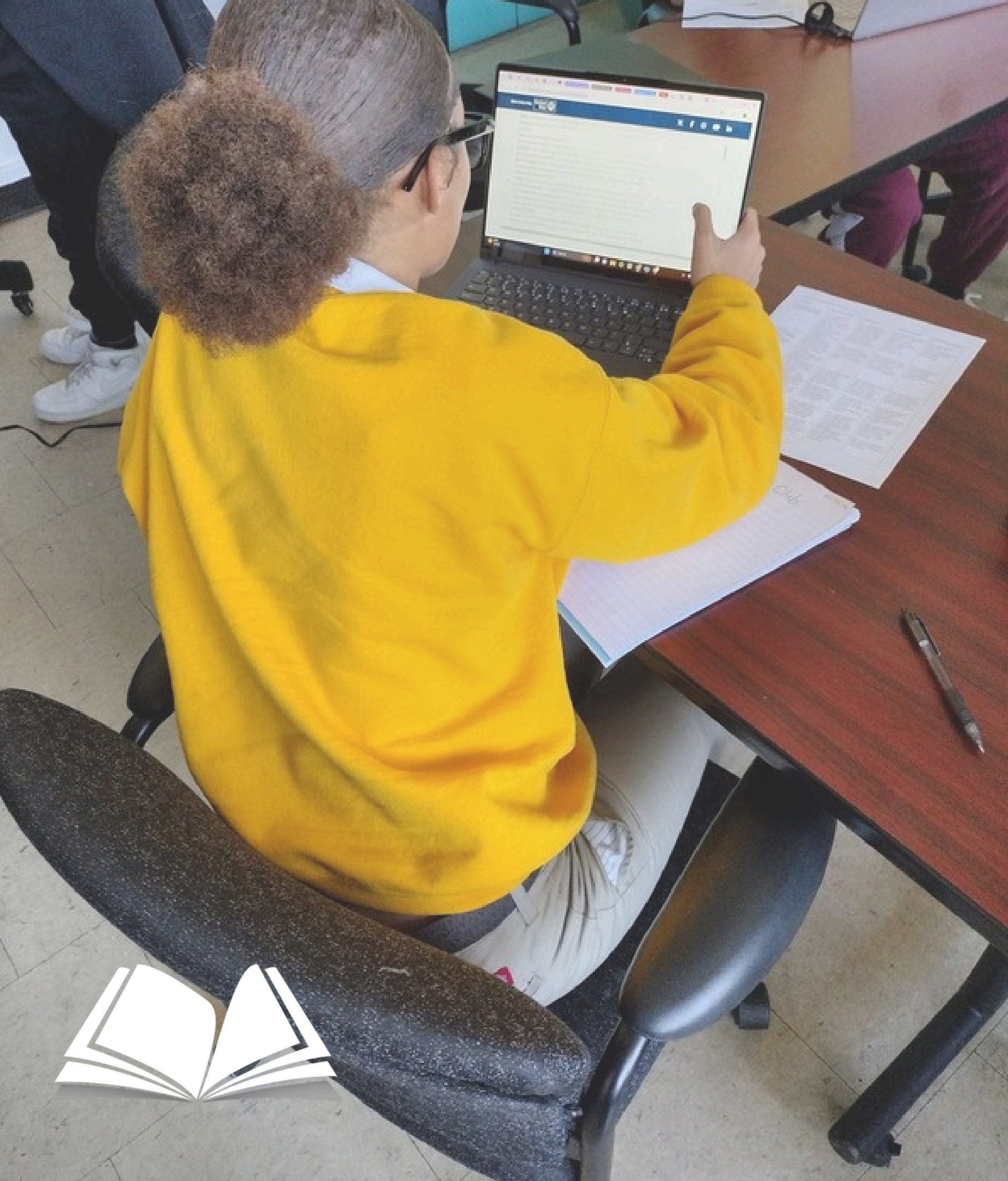


ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Emerging Workforce Initiative, Inc. dba
The Book Works Project was established
as a 502(c)3 organization in 2009.

Organization Leadership

John Langford - Board Chair

Heather Dearing - Board Vice-Chair

Melissa "Mel" Banks - Board Secretary

Dan Heekin - Board Treasurer

Judi Vanderhaar, PhD

Anastasia Chapman

Roan Head

Zion Smith

Kahlia Evans

Stacy Deck, PhD

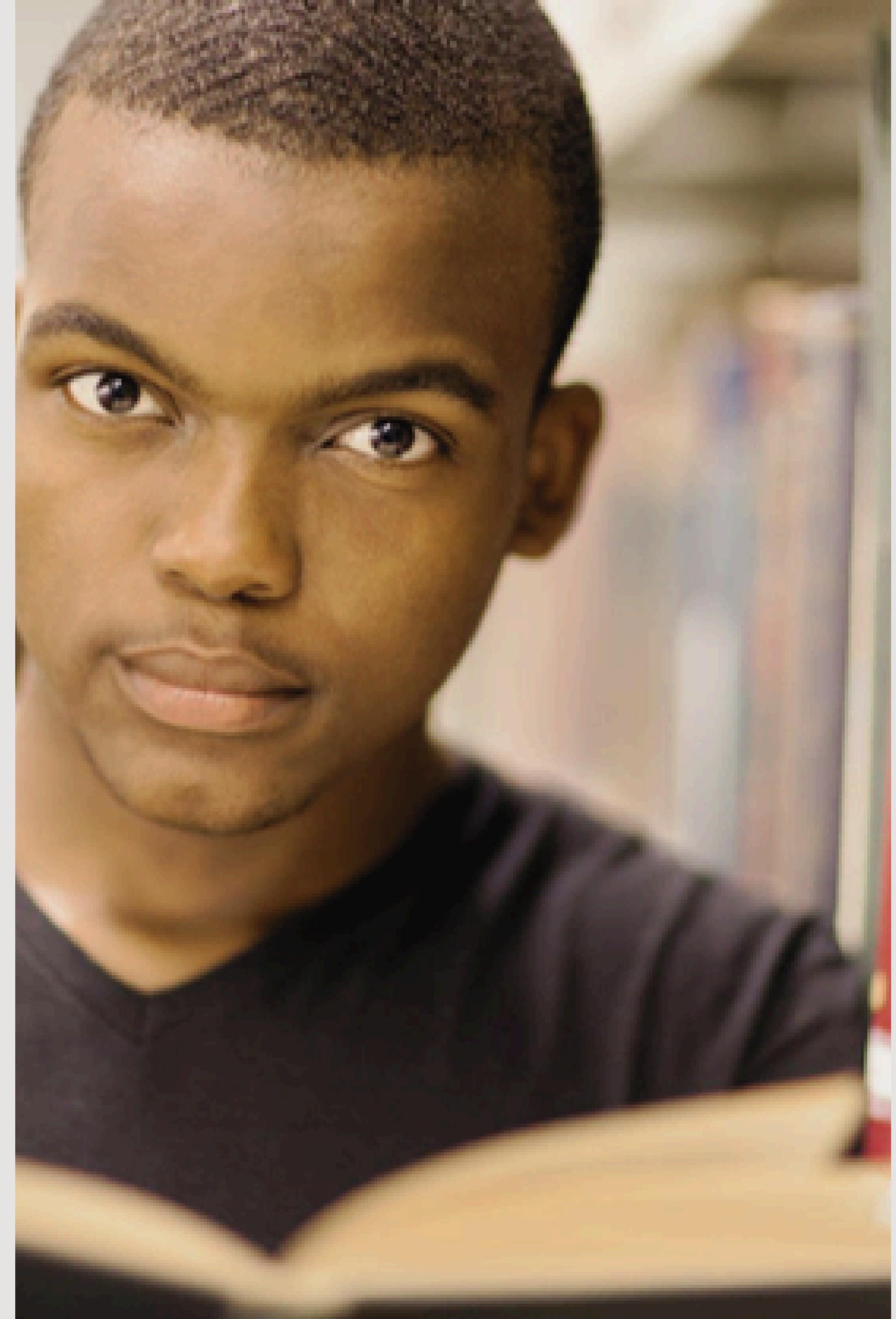
Sara Butryn

Elizabeth Senn-Alvey, Executive Director

600 East Oak Street
Louisville, KY 40203
502-354-3667

About Us

The Book Works Project, founded in 2009 as Emerging Workforce Initiative, is a nonprofit organization in Louisville, KY advocating for and with youth and young adults experiencing educational disruptions due to academic skills gaps, childhood trauma, racial or social discrimination, economic hardship and related challenges. The Book Works offers a variety of services for young people (age 12 to 21 years) and families working toward education and life goals.



Principles

The Book Works applies five core principles in our programs, policies, and procedures. We use internal assessment processes to ensure we consistently operate by these principles and to find ways to more fully implement them.

Best Practices: Are programs and practices evidence-based? Does our team model and reinforce respect, safety, and positive communication in every interaction? Are Youth Thrive design principles applied in all program elements?

Equity: Does our programming promote access to education and related opportunities equitably for every young person in the community? Is our team committed to anti-discrimination practices? Do families and youth have a way to report inequitable practices and does the organization address these concerns?

Youth Voice and Choice: Are young people given the opportunity to learn about their rights in our programs, to education, and within schools and the community? Do our programs allow for youth choice in activities? Are they leading activities when possible? Are young people empowered to make decisions on their education and life goals through the skills they develop or services they receive from our programs?

Accountability: Does the organization seek and act on feedback from learners and parents? Do donors, funders, and supporters have reliable and accurate information on how their contributions are used? Does the organization objectively evaluate the impact of its programs and processes and use the information to improve?

Collaboration: Does the organization focus on unmet community needs and seek out partners with expertise to build a network of support for learners? Do all team members work with families, schools, and others professionally, seeking mutually beneficial and innovative solutions?

For information on our commitment to accountability, check the Better Business Bureau Charity Listing and our evaluation tools and reports on our website.

The Young People We Serve



Graduating from high school is an important milestone. It signals a young person is ready for college or family-sustaining employment and the inevitable challenges of adulthood.

However, for too many young people in Louisville, the goal of graduating high school is difficult, delayed, or diverted altogether. Every school day, in every part of our community, young people struggle to attend school. In the 2024-25 school year, more than 11,000 middle and high school students missed at least 15 days of school unexcused and approximately 2,000 were not attending school on any given school day.

While the reasons vary, many young people who avoided or acted out in school are often facing steep, complex, and unrecognized academic and life challenges. Consider the childhood challenges faced by Shae, now 15 years old. Shae was diagnosed with ADHD in the 2nd grade. Throughout school, she struggled to stay focused, turn in homework on time, and often distracted others in the classroom. She was labeled as the “troublemaker” and started missing instruction and academic opportunities due to her behaviors. Shae’s grandmother worked long hours to support the family and didn’t know how to ask for special education services. By the time she was in 9th grade, Shae was significantly behind her peers in reading and math and didn’t want to attend school. Most days, she left home for school but walked back home after his grandmother went to work.

Students like Shae may believe they can’t learn or that acting out or not showing up is better than admitting they need help with classwork. Isolation from caring adults at home and school compound the challenges for students who need resources but don’t know where to turn.

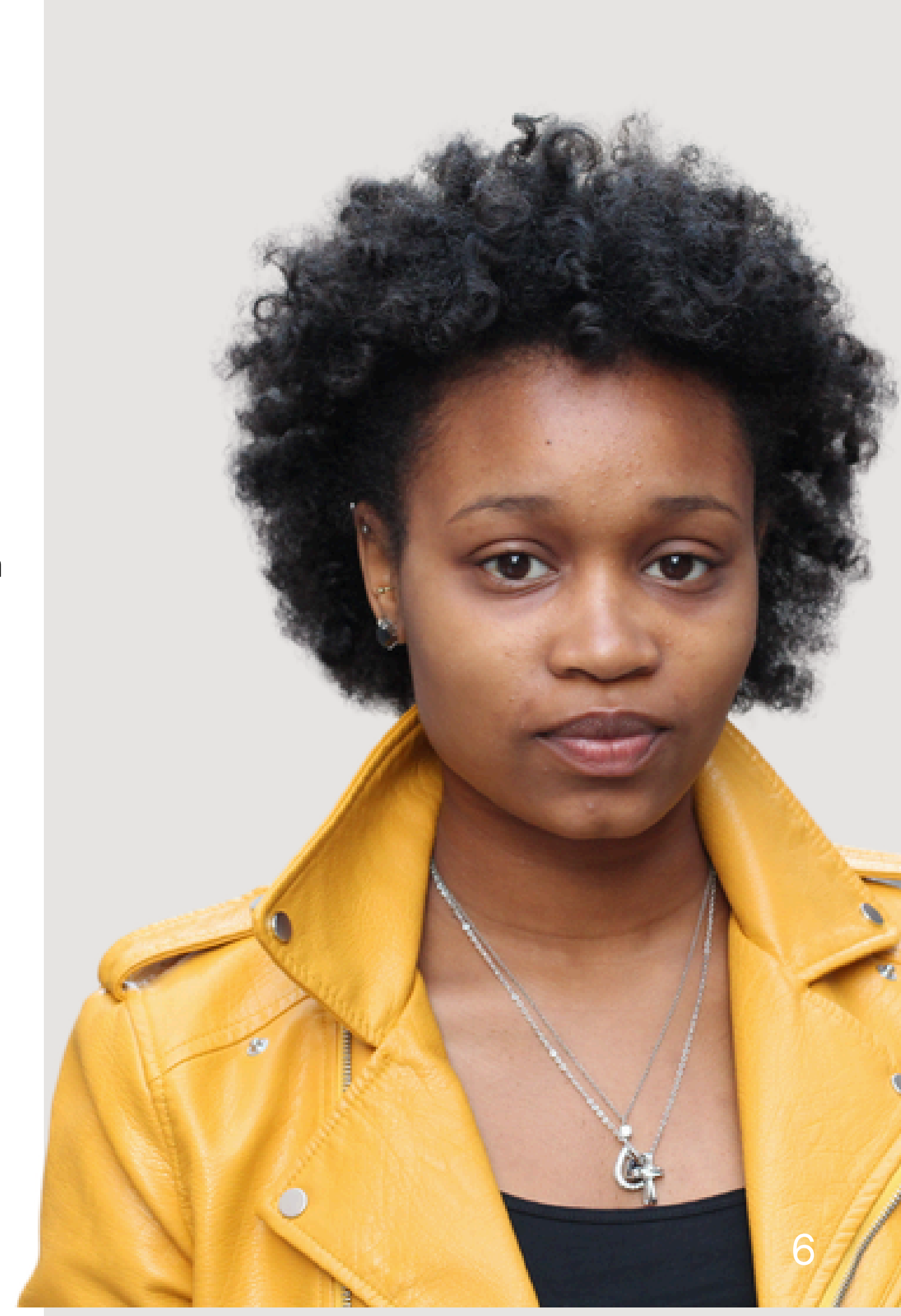
During 2025, The Book Works served 373 young people and 63 adult caregivers who are managing chronic and complex challenges impacting regular school attendance and academic success.

Services and Scope

Since 2019, The Book Works has been developing innovative ways for nonprofits, child-serving entities, schools and families to work together to prevent middle and high school-age youth from dropping out of school and to re-engage struggling students on a path to graduation. Through collaboration, we have developed an Education Advocacy and Re-Engagement Model that focuses on four core activities:

- Education Advocacy - assistance finding and accessing the education path and support learners need to graduate;
- Education Engagement Hubs - neighborhood-based sites assisting middle and high school students to address the root causes of school avoidance and behavior challenges;
- Family Services - assistance for the adult caregivers of youth experiencing school disruptions including referrals for mental health, intensive case management, and family team meetings help youth return to school with the support they need;
- Youth Development - out-of-school time programs that help middle and high school students to develop leadership, social-emotional, and life skills.

In 2025, 373 youth and 63 adult caregivers received services from The Book Works. 86.8% of individuals who are no longer working with The Book Works, on average, made progress toward their goals to re-engage with school or support their child on a path to graduation. Progress is measured by the development of social competencies (communication, problem solving) and the level of school engagement (attendance and grades) compared to enrollment.



Reaching Goals

Education re-engagement looks different for each young person and family assisted by The Book Works. This chart illustrates some examples of the education status of the young people served by The Book Works, before and after Education Advocacy and Re-engagement Services.

Example of Education Status Prior to Education Advocacy and Re-Engagement Services	Example of Education Status Following to Education Advocacy and Re-Engagement Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not enrolled in school for 3 years;• Enrolled in online school but not attending;• Avoiding school due to safety issues on the way to school;• Sent home from school for behavior problems about 5 days per month;• Chronically absent due to physical or mental health concerns;• In court for truancy and uncertain how to get back on track;• Behind academically and in foster care;• In the 9th grade and 16 years of age.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Returned to school with a safety plan;• Accessed special education services and now attending school regularly;• Enrolled into a second change program that fit their educational needs;• Connected with a tutor for homework help;• Enrolled in supplemental academic program over the summer;• Transferred to an alternative program to make up credits.• Enrolled into the Goodwill Opportunity Center or JCPS Adult Ed.





Highlights and Next Steps

In 2025, The Book Works served 81% more young people than in 2024 and, for all services, 86.8% of young people and families made progress toward their goals. Additional highlights from 2025:

The Education Engagement Hubs expanded from two to three locations serving the Portland, South Louisville, and Smoketown neighborhoods. In total, 93 youth participated and 96.5% either returned to school following participation. Most students continued working with an Education Advocate to address root causes of school disruptions. In 2026, we plan to expand the number of locations serving young people during school time.

With support from private foundations including Jewish Heritage Fund, Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, and C.E.&S. Foundation, The Book Works began offering services for adult caregivers of middle and high school students. 63 parents, grandparents, foster parents and other adults caring for learners participated in intensive case management, family team meetings, and virtual or in-person workgroups to build new skills to navigate school challenges. In 2026, we plan to increase the number of families participating in School Success Team Meetings, a unique model in our community.

The Book Works implemented new mental health programming for middle school students through summer camp and school-year “wellness councils”. In each session, participants learn specific ways to build their “mental wellness” and practice sharing these skills with their peers in youth-led talk circles. In 2026, we plan to expand the Youth Wellness Councils to serve high school students as well.



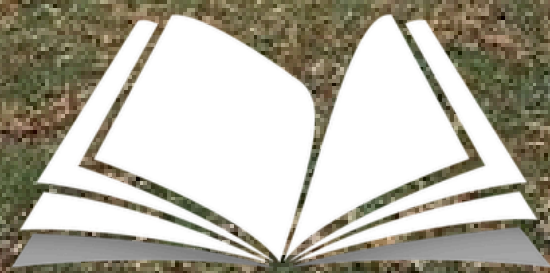
Highlights and Next Steps

- Five AmeriCorps members joined The Book Works to support learners in the Education Engagement Hubs with literacy and life skills development. Serving more than 1,400 hours total in 2025, the AmeriCorps members also assisted with outreach and communications and researched the implications of policies considered by local and state decision makers. In 2026, our goal is to expand the Education Engagement Hubs to five and engage 10 AmeriCorps members.
- The Department of Juvenile Justice approved a competitive grant for The Book Works to serve youth who are court-involved. New school attendance requirements in 2024 have significantly increased the number of young people referred to The Book Works and expanded our capacity to serve youth who are school avoidant and experiencing other challenges. In 2026, we plan to offer virtual support for court/child welfare case workers on ways to support the education engagement of court involved youth.
- A partnership with the University of Louisville College of Education and Human Development resulted in the creation of an adolescent literacy program for The Book Works to implement in the Engagement Hubs. In 2026, the curriculum for the program will be offered during a week-long summer program.
- A new youth-led program started in 2025 with 8 high school students who are interested in disrupting the school to prison pipeline. The team meets with community leaders to learn about the disproportionate impact of exclusionary discipline on students of color and lower income students and creates policy recommendations for consideration. In 2026, this program is expected to expand.

The Next Chapter

In November 2025, The Book Works moved to a historic building in Louisville's Shelby Park neighborhood, expanding the total locations in which we regularly offer programs to four. In just a short time, we have expanded afterschool programming to include a book club, a digital literacy lab, and a spring break program for teens.

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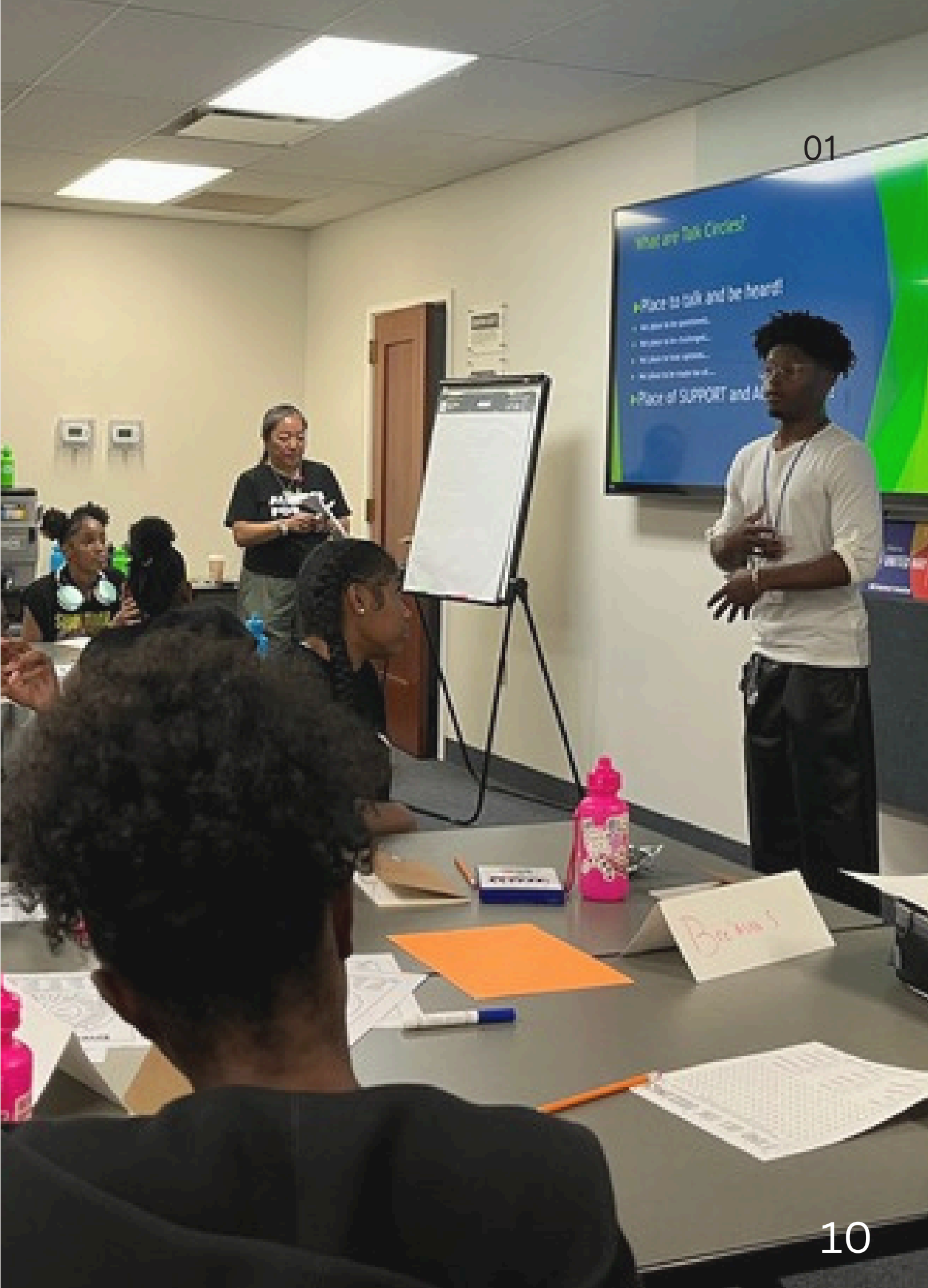


Financials

2025 Revenue Sources	Amount
Individual and Business Donors	3,289.85
Public Grants	389,711.82
Private Foundations	215,854.75
Other Revenue	4,746.95
Total Revenue	613,603.37

2025 Expenses Type	Amount
Program	574,386.81
Admin and Fundraising	13,405.04
Total Expenses	587,791.85

Total Assets: 25,811.52



Funders and Program Partners

All services provided to youth and families at no cost because of the support of funders including individual donors, public grants, and private foundation grants.

Aetna SKY - CVS Foundation
C.E.& S. Foundation
Gheens Foundation
Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels
Jewish Heritage Fund
Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice
KPMG Foundation
Louisville Metro Government
Louisville Metro Office of Violence Prevention
Metro United Way
Serve Kentucky - AmeriCorps
USDA Children, Youth and Families At-risk Grant

The Book Works coordinates closely with community partners and organizations in all of our programs and services.

Americana World Community Center
Neighborhood House
Blueprint 502
Goodwill The Spot
University of Louisville College of Education and Human Development
YMCA Safe Place
Departments of Juvenile Justice and Public Advocacy
Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
JCPS District and School Personnel