



Look to the Helpers: Brilliant People Light the Way

2025 Annual Report



Together we are building solid foundations one hub at a time.

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Letter from the CEO

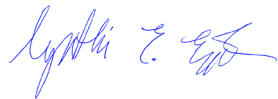
Dear Brilliant Family,

Every day in the local Brilliant Cities of Detroit, Philadelphia, and Chicago, people wake up and think: what can I do for kids and families? These thoughts and acts of love come from volunteers, funders, program providers, and from families and their neighbors. I marvel at this because so often we who seek to build a better world are told that there is not enough; not enough funding, not enough interest, not enough hope. There are real constraints in the world today, but I believe that there is more than enough for everyone. Seeing so many people working together for a common goal – creating a strong foundation in neighborhoods for children and families – that is where I get my optimism.

Brilliant Cities is a model grown out of hope, from the resilient soil of Detroit, MI. Brilliant Detroit was founded with the belief that people have power and light their own way. When I reflect on the changemakers in our midst, I see the martial arts instructor who believes in the potential of all children, who criss-crosses cities creating opportunities for children to master her discipline. I see the grandmother who believes so strongly in the beating heart of her community that she constantly connects those around her, spreading news about myriad projects and ensuring her neighbors are plugged in and hopeful for the future. I see the birth worker who tirelessly creates spaces where parents can safely and comfortably welcome new additions to their families.

This year — the first of our national efforts as Brilliant Cities — we stayed grounded in these stories. As we met new people in new cities, we saw through their eyes what our model means elsewhere. Ultimately, what people see in our model is themselves, because our way is about connecting that which works and lifting up the vision of communities. Driven by the people who invite us into neighborhoods; who provide programs; and who give the gift of their time, talent, and treasure to make this work possible, we carry our hope on our sleeves to many cities to come. We can't wait to see you there.

In partnership,



Cindy Eggleton
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Brilliant Cities

Brilliant People Light the Way

Before systems.
Before scale.
There are people.

People who show up for their block.
People who see possibility where others see barriers.
People who quietly—and powerfully—change what’s possible for children and families every day.

At our Annual Benefit Event, we honored just a few of the many Brilliant People who bring this work to life.

Not because they are the only ones.
But because they reflect what is true across every neighborhood we serve:

When people feel connected, they lead.



“Anytime kids have a fit to come somewhere, that means they get kids really well. That seems to tell us how the kids feel about Brilliant Detroit. I think they’d be mad on Saturdays and Sundays because they can’t come.”

Meet a Few Brilliant People



Candace Cooper

"I am brilliant because I see the potential in every child."
Candace doesn't just see children as they are, she sees who they can become. And she shows up every day in a way that helps them believe it too.



Denise Lyles

"I am brilliant because I bring everybody on board."
Denise understands that real change doesn't happen alone. She builds connection, brings people together, and turns individual effort into collective strength.



Twiana Odom

"I am brilliant because I get the word out and engage my community every single day."
Twiana is a connector. A voice. A bridge. She ensures families don't just hear about opportunities, they feel invited into them.



George Preston

"I am brilliant because of my commitment, persistence, and patience."
George shows up consistently. And in communities, consistency builds trust and trust changes everything.



Leseliey Welch

"I am brilliant because I create spaces where babies are welcomed with love."
Leseliey's work begins at the very start of life, creating environments where families feel safe, supported, and seen from day one.



Tonya Adair

"I am brilliant because I help others find their purpose and stability."
Tonya meets people in moments of uncertainty and helps them move forward with clarity, confidence, and care.



And This is Just the Beginning

The truth is:

There are Brilliant People in every neighborhood.
In every hub.
In every family.

They are the reason this work moves forward.

They are the model.

Because of Brilliant People

This work does not move forward on its own.

It moves because people choose to show up.

- For their neighborhoods.
- For families they may not know.
- For a future they believe is possible.



Because of Brilliant People: Neighbors, partners, staff, volunteers, and families, 2025 became a year of real momentum. Not just growth for the sake of growth, but growth rooted in trust, relationships, and community voice.

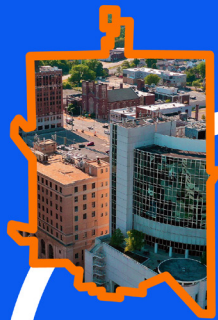
On the next page, you'll find what that looked like across our network.

"I would use that language like 'a sense of community' because when (my daughter) sees the Hub staff and the instructor for Zumbini, she gets to smiling and she knows those are her folks. She knows she's about to have a good time."

Brilliant Detroit



Brilliant Pontiac



In Detroit and Pontiac — Where the Work is Growing Because of Our Brilliant People

We didn't just open new doors, we deepened what it means to belong in a neighborhood.

- A former parish in Southwest Detroit was transformed into the Boynton hub and future headquarters; a place where connection, learning, and opportunity now live under one roof.
- With the leadership and partnership of the O'Hair Park Community Association, a new hub took root in Northwest Detroit, expanding access while staying grounded in neighborhood voice.
- We celebrated the individuals who power this work at our Annual Event, honoring the everyday leaders who strengthen communities from within.
- Our expansion into Pontiac welcomed more than 300 participants in just seven months, an early sign of what's possible when communities invite this work in.
- And across our hubs, 92% of children in summer programming maintained or improved their reading skills because consistent, caring relationships make learning stick.

This is what happens when a community leads.

"(The instructor) cared about what we thought. He asked us our opinion. He wasn't just teaching, he involved us in it. So it made us feel like we were part of it, which we were, but we were feeling like we were part of it. And that's what Brilliant Detroit do[es] - it makes you feel like you're a part of the family, you're a part of the team. You're not just, oh, drop your kid off and keep going. No, we want to stay most of the time."

Brilliant Philadelphia



Opening Fall 2026

In Philadelphia - Building What's Next A new chapter began with relationships.

- We formalized our commitment to the East Oak Lane neighborhood, guided by local voices and priorities.
- We deepened our partnerships and connections both at the neighborhood levels and even citywide, presenting to Philadelphia City Council alongside the Live and Learn initiative.
- We introduced Kellie Brown as Executive Director, bringing leadership rooted in community and ready to build something meaningful from the ground up.

Before the first program begins, trust is already being built.

What Brilliant Detroit Families Say About the model:

"And even the fact that they go from zero to eight years old, my daughter loves, like 'mommy, I have a little baby sister.' She loves coming here and hanging out with the little kids and stuff like that."



Opening Spring 2027

In Chicago - Listening First

We resisted the urge to move fast and chose instead to listen well.

- We mapped the city through the lens of what makes neighborhoods thrive, identifying where this model could take root with integrity.
- We built relationships with partners across the city, including the Obama Foundation, laying the groundwork for long-term collaboration.
- With guidance from local leaders and advisors, we narrowed our focus and prepared for listening sessions, ensuring that when we arrive, it is by invitation, not assumption.

Growth is not about expansion alone. It's about earning trust.

What Brilliant Detroit Families Say About the model:

"A lot of our children benefit, like, for instance, my grandson now is six... and... when I started coming to this Hub, he would come in, lay on the floor, get a book and read. So that was something that he patterned himself after the children he would see here." (translated from Spanish)



And Across It All

- Families showed up, again and again turning hubs into places of belonging
- Volunteers gave their time and energy, strengthening the fabric of community
- Partners aligned their work, creating something bigger than any one organization could do alone

This is how the model grows.
Not from the top down.
But from the inside out.

**And when you step back, you can see the scale of what
Brilliant People make possible.**



"I was surprised. I thought I was going to go to a business location. I wasn't expecting it to be a house right in the middle of a neighborhood. And it was nice. I loved the idea behind it... more like a feeling space, especially for kids that are underprivileged or might not have a quiet, calm, clean home to do their [activities] or a safe space to be."

Story In Numbers

What Happens When Community Leads — *Impact at a glance:*



5,000 families served this year
report improved well-being, parenting
confidence, and support access



3 Reading levels
are gained on average by
children in tutoring programs



30,000+
children and caregivers served
since our founding



4,000+
volunteers engaged
since our founding



Independent program evaluation
documented significant improvement across literacy,
health, and family support outcomes overall



**In addition to opening
two more Hubs in Detroit,**
we opened our first Hub in Pontiac



55,000+
program hours at our Hubs



92%
of children maintained or improved
their reading skills during the summer



250+
organizations have partnered with us



40 cities and 7 countries
are on our waiting list

A Well-Trodden, Brilliant Path



Brilliant Cities Hubs are a key part of the neighborhoods they are nestled in. Our families come to see them as a second home or a third space where they can connect with neighbors.

Many use the phrase, “my Brilliant family,” affirming that relationships founded at our hubs are genuine and impactful.

But Brilliant Cities Hubs are not just places of connection; they can be places of opportunity, as this story from our Martin Park Hub in Detroit shows:

Karlita Johnson was on a church phone call when she heard a young girl read aloud. The girl was about the same age as Karlita’s son, but her reading was more advanced. Karlita was impressed and asked the girl’s mother, Victoria, what her daughter’s reading secret was. Victoria, who was also on our staff at the time, said: “Brilliant Detroit.”

Karlita connected with our Central Hub in Detroit during

the COVID-19 pandemic, and learned about the various programs available.

She signed her son up for tutoring and virtual science programs with Ms. Diane—one of our Brilliant People honorees. The hands-on science program available, even virtually, through Brilliant Detroit included content that children did not normally see until a few years later. Ms. Diane asked for the opinions of the students and modeled for caregivers how to engage their little ones.

Karlita was sold and told everyone she knew about Brilliant Detroit, even joining the Advisory Team for the Central Hub. When she learned that a hub was opening in the Martin Park neighborhood, near her home, she jumped at the opportunity to serve as the first Community Engagement Coordinator in that community.

Karlita’s path from participant to staff member continued when she was promoted to Community Engagement Manager following the original manager, herself once an Advisory Team member and participant at another hub, moving to the Brilliant Detroit Programming Department.



When Karlita moved into the new role, Jaquitta “Ms. Q” Nelson replaced her as the coordinator. Ms. Q met Karlita at Paul Robeson Malcolm X Academy and became a participant, then a volunteer, then the Martin Park Hub’s housekeeper, and then a childcare specialist before becoming the coordinator.

And the well-trodden, Brilliant path kept on, as Karlita was eventually promoted to Senior Community Engagement Manager—overseeing multiple Hubs—Ms. Q moved to the Community Engagement Manager position, and Stephanie Boyer—the Martin Park Hub’s



housekeeper—became the new Community Engagement Coordinator. This journey illustrates how Brilliant Cities Hubs can act as engines of local economic opportunity and career advancement for participating families, as we all grow on our own paths through programs and community.

“They’ve been a family, not just to my daughter, but to me as far as support and everything. So I love the kids, I love the parents and just coming here (to the Hub)”

LOOK TO THE HELPERS: BRILLIANT PEOPLE LIGHT THE WAY



Funder Acknowledgments

Funders over \$500*

On the following pages, you'll find our friends, supporters, and sponsors whose generosity makes this work possible. Each of us within the Brilliant Cities Network is touched by this incredible community of funders. Your care and commitment fuel our mission and inspire us to continue building strong, vibrant neighborhoods for families with young children across our Local Brilliant Cities. **We are deeply grateful for all that you make possible.**

*As of September 12, 2025



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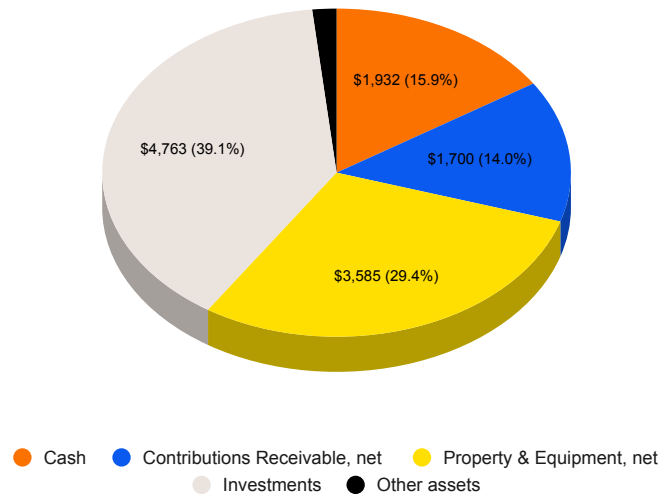
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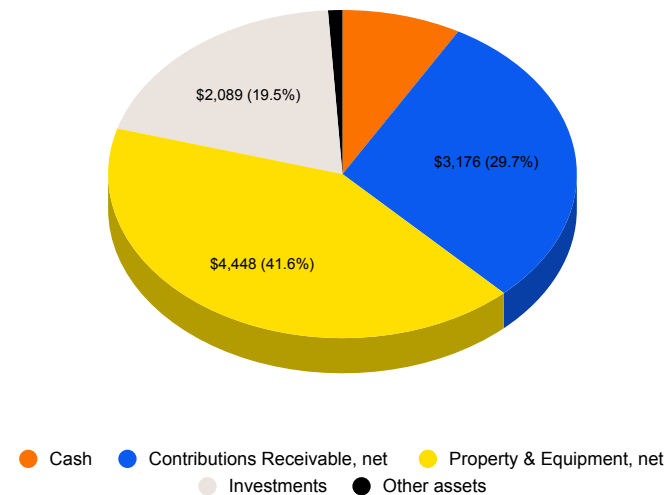
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2024



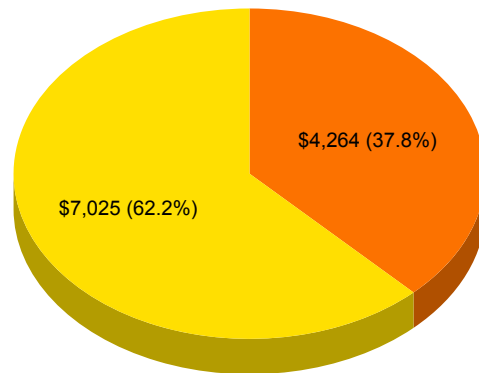
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Assets

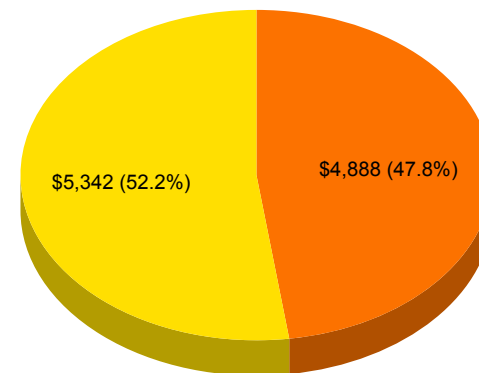
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● Net assets with donor restrictions ● Net assets without donor restrictions

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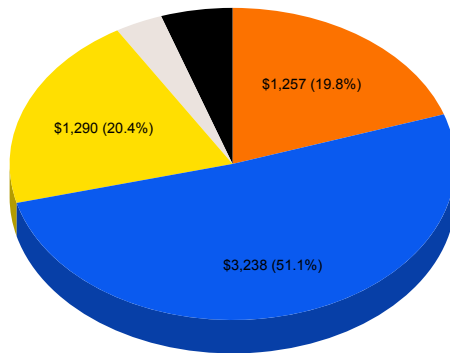


● Net assets with donor restrictions ● Net assets without donor restrictions

Net Assets

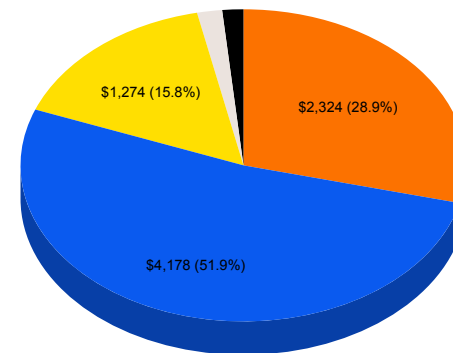
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Contributions Foundation & Government Grants Special Events, net
Other Income In-Kind Contributions

2025

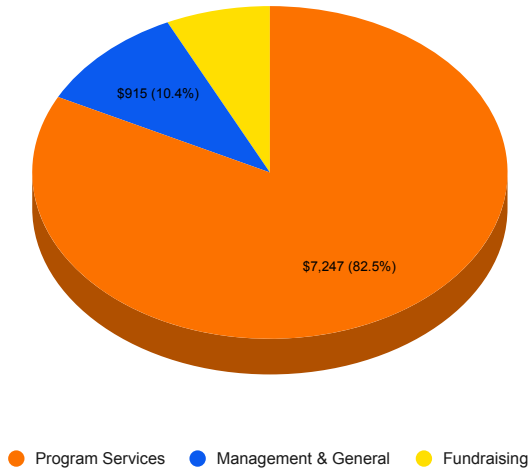


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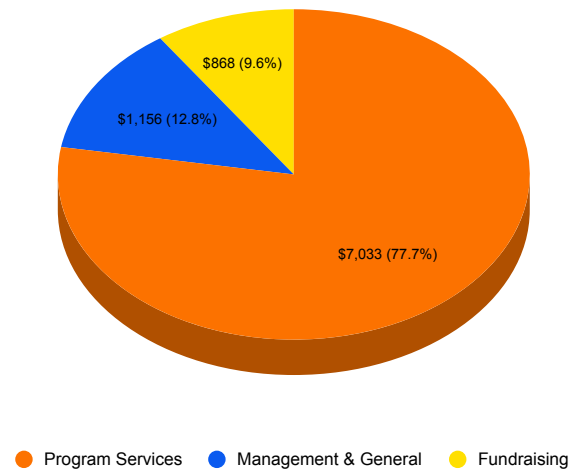
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2024



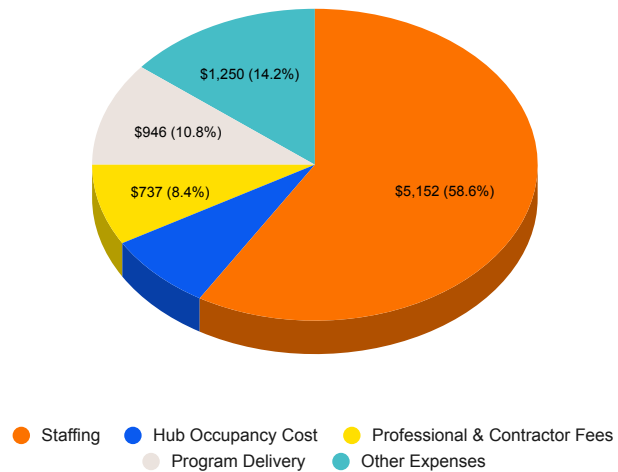
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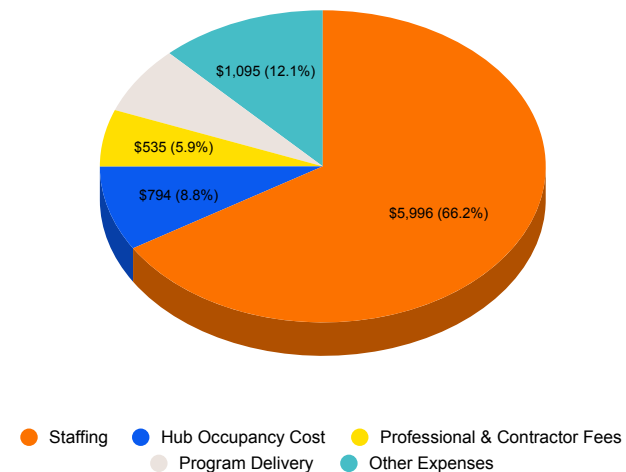
Expenses by Function

FINANCIAL INFORMATION – In Thousands of Dollars

2024



2025



Expenses by Natural Classification

Locations

Brilliant Detroit

- Belmont: Location to be determined, Detroit, MI 48227
- Boynton: 2400 South Beatrice Street, Detroit, MI 48217
- Brightmoor: 15509 Heyden Street, Detroit, MI 48223 • (313) 483-8896
- Central: 803 Hazelwood Street, Detroit, MI 48202 • (313) 483-8986
- Chandler Park: 5312 Newport Street, Detroit, MI 48213 • (313) 528-7762
- Cody Rouge: 7425 Fielding Street, Detroit, MI 48228 • (313) 483-8991
- Dexter-Linwood: 2634 Webb Street, Detroit, MI 48206 • (313) 466-6269
- Fitzgerald: 16919 Prairie Street, Detroit, MI 48221 • (313) 447-0165
- Five Points: Location to be determined, Detroit, MI 48219 • (313) 483-8992
- Grixdale Farms: Location to be determined, Detroit, MI 48203 • (313) 447-0506
- Hope Village: Location to be determined, Detroit, MI 48238
- Islandview: Location to be determined, Detroit, MI 48214
- Littlefield: 12789 Indiana Avenue, Detroit, MI 48238 • (313) 528-7299
- Martin Park: 16922 Lawton Street, Detroit, MI 48221 • (313) 528-7221
- McDougall-Hunt: 2706 Charlevoix Street, Detroit, MI 48207 • (313) 483-8992
- Morningside: 5048 Balfour Road, Detroit, MI 48224 • (313) 528-7217
- Nolan: Location to be determined, Detroit, MI 48203
- O'Hair Park: 19792 Annchester Rd, Detroit, MI 48219 • (313) 447-0506
- Osborn: 13800 Eastburn Street, Detroit, MI 48205 • (313) 332-1069
- Outer Drive-Hayes: 14460 Wade Street, Detroit, MI 48213 • (313) 447-1175
- Russell Woods: 4203 Sturtevant Street, Detroit, MI 48204 • (313) 509-3567
- Southwest: 5675 Larkins Street, Detroit, MI 48210 • (313) 763-8623
- Springwells: 9104 Rathbone Street, Detroit, MI 48209 • (313) 483-8668
- Virginia Park: 1438 Virginia Park St., Detroit, MI 48206

Brilliant Pontiac

- Unity Park: 135 Perkins Street, Pontiac, MI 48342
- Note: Brilliant Pontiac is operated under the umbrella of Brilliant Detroit.*

Brilliant Philadelphia

- East Oak Lane: 6830 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19126

Join Us

Get Involved

We believe that everyone has a place in building Kid Success Neighborhoods. There are many ways that you can get involved and support this work, from joining us at a hub for programming to volunteering to donating in-kind or monetarily. We encourage you to explore the links below and contribute in the ways that make the most sense for you. **Below are some ways to help.**

[VOLUNTEER](#)

[DONATE](#)

Want to learn more or become a partner?

Contact us at: info@brilliantcities.org
or (313) 483-8992.