



OUTWARD BOUND
CALIFORNIA

2025
IMPACT REPORT



OUR VISION

Generations of youth empowered to realize their potential

—rising with courage, leading with compassion, and building more connected, resilient communities.

TO OUR OUTWARD BOUND CALIFORNIA CREW,

This year, more than 3,500 students climbed granite in Joshua Tree, summited peaks in the High Sierra, and crossed the horizontal log 25 feet up at the San Francisco Challenge Course. They learned what it means to be crew, not passengers.

Crews spend their days navigating trails with heavy packs. When they arrive at camp, tired and dusty, they continue in the shared work to set up tarps and make dinner. When a student isn't sure they can take another step, a word of encouragement or an offer to carry extra gear from a friend keeps them moving. On these trails, they uncover perseverance and belonging.

The physical challenges help students realize they can take on emotional "hard things," too like difficult conversations and the courage to speak up about group dynamics. They practice giving and receiving feedback, all the while learning that being vulnerable is a hard thing worth doing. This is how a group of strangers becomes a tight-knit crew.

"In a chaotic & disconnected world, Outward Bound provided a snapshot of the world as it should be. Community, intention, simplicity, accountability...This experience felt like waking up."

— Sara, High Sierra Student

At Outward Bound, reflection is a critical component of learning by doing. We know this cycle works because our research proves it (see page 6), and students tell us. In their end-of-course letters, they write about how they can do so much more than they ever thought — in their relationships and even in standing up for what's right.

They return home more connected to nature, each other, and themselves. They've seen what they're made of. And they're ready to make a difference in their own communities.

Thank you for believing, as we do, that the hard things are worth doing.

With gratitude,

Stephen Streufert
Executive Director



CORE HIGHLIGHTS

The need has never been greater. Young people today are more anxious, isolated, and screen-dependent than they've ever been. Outward Bound has met society's challenge with the same answer for 60 years: get people outside, in a crew, doing hard things together, and they also will rise to the challenge. (Pages 10 - 13)

The experience follows you home. This year, 92% of students reported gaining confidence to try new things — and across all nine measured outcomes, from perseverance to self-awareness, students showed statistically significant growth. (Pages 6 - 7)

We reached more young people than ever — and made it count. 3,521 students. 106,488 hours off screens. 60% with scholarship. Across Joshua Tree, the High Sierra, and the San Francisco Bay Area, we served more students than any previous year. (Pages 8 - 11)

We planted roots in Southern California. In early 2025, we closed on a property five minutes from Joshua Tree National Park — a long-term investment in making wilderness accessible to Los Angeles youth. The basecamp is fully operational, can serve eight crews simultaneously, and student enrollment grew 20% in one year. (Page 10)

We finished strong and built for what's next. OBCA ended 2025 with year-over-year growth across all core business units, reduced expenses, and a net profit. Heading into 2026, we carry strong reserves and the financial footing to keep growing. (Page 13)

60% of students receive scholarship to attend Outward Bound California

106,488 hours off screens

Student lead climbs on a 30 day Pathfinder Course in Joshua Tree National Park



THE OUTCOMES

The Outward Bound Outcomes Survey (OBOS)

The OBOS is a survey students complete at the end of their Outward Bound program. It includes 9 scales in four domains that measure change. It includes additional questions about students' perception of their growth and the quality of their experience.

Our research method is backed by science and co-created with Partnerships in Education and Resilience (PEAR) and Dr. Gil Noam. The OBOS helps us understand what's working, why it matters, and how we can deliver the highest quality programs to every Outward Bound student.

"This trip also helped me understand that I wasn't afraid of heights, but I was afraid of judgment; this field trip helped me get over that fear."

- Agnes, Student, Aptos Middle School



Student from YES Nature to Neighborhoods
Katie Sugarman Photography

PROVEN RESULTS

95%

are more aware of how to support others

95%

feel more connected to their group

92%

gained confidence

95%

are excited to keep learning about themselves & others

ALL OUTCOMES MEASURED

Based on student reported 2025 survey data, there was statistically significant positive change in all measured outcomes:

Courage, Physical Engagement, Belonging, Reflection

THE FOUR DOMAINS

The OBOS measures these four categories. All of these transfer from the trail to home.

Courage

leaning into strengths to take on challenges and risks

Physical Engagement

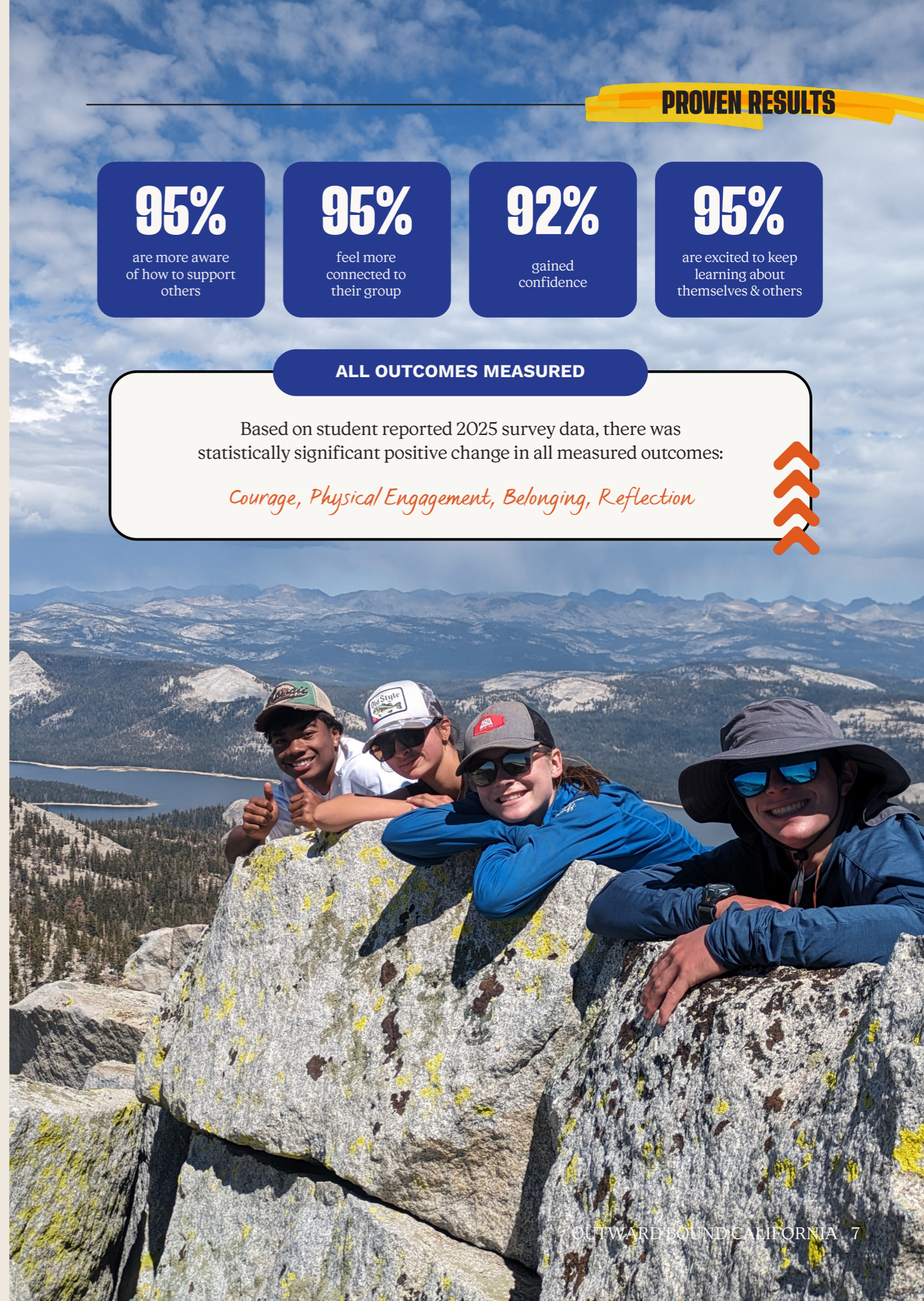
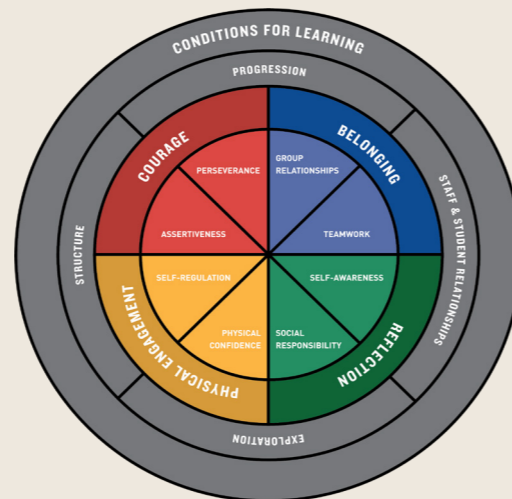
experiencing and expressing oneself through the body and its senses

Belonging

experiencing inclusion and connection in relationships

Reflection

examining and questioning one's actions, roles, relationships, and assumptions





ADVENTURE IS FOR EVERYONE

3,521

OBCA students:
adults, veterans,
and young people

\$378K

Scholarship
dollars
awarded

8,332

Days spent
learning and
growing outside

84

Partner
Organizations

BAY AREA · 2,864 STUDENTS

SAN FRANCISCO

Meeting Groups Where They Are

Our San Francisco Challenge Course brings outdoor programming to high school students, nonprofits, and corporate teams across the Bay Area. In 2025, we were more flexible: going onsite to locations chosen by our partners to accommodate time constraints and by offering split-day scheduling, so more groups could participate.

The program adjusts depending on the group's desired outcomes. With youth, we build trust through initiatives like ground-based games before moving to the elements in the trees. With corporate teams, facilitation, debrief style, and language are more focused on leadership and collaboration. Even with custom programming, each group has an experience unlike anything they'd do on their own.

Partner Spotlight

June Jordan School for Equity — Leadership in Action

When teacher Sara Brandt (pictured right) first brought her leadership class to the Challenge Course, she saw an opportunity beyond participation: what if students learned how to lead the program themselves?

That fall, the June Jordan leadership cohort came to the ropes course as participants and mentors. They learned how to guide activities, like icebreakers, in order to build trust within a group and how to support someone belaying. When they left that day, they received a packet of activities to lead with their younger peers back on campus.

In spring 2026, the students returned, alongside a group of 9th graders. After a refresher with OBCA staff, the leadership students helped facilitate by guiding climbs and leading the end-of-day debrief.



"For many of my students, the very idea of a ropes course is not something they imagine for themselves. This past year, they didn't just take that leap. They came back to lead it. It was transformative to see young people shine in their authority."

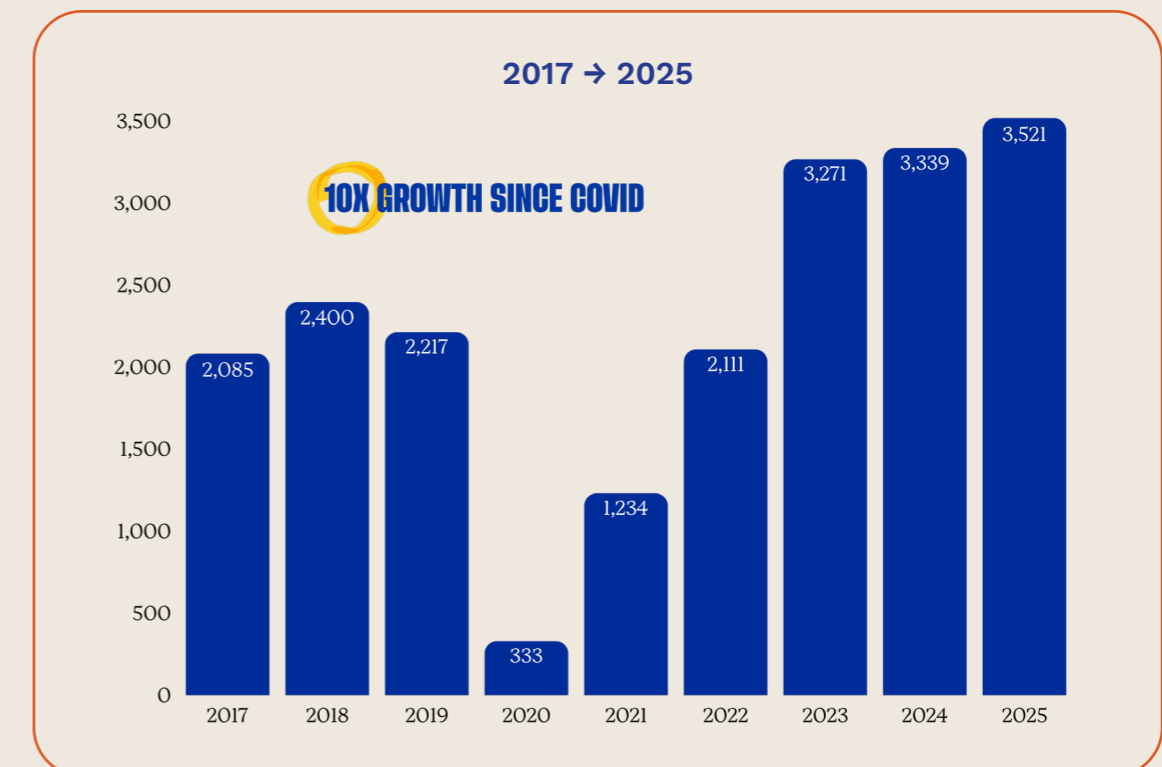
— Sara Brandt, Teacher, June Jordan School for Equity



"This was the first field trip where students overcame fears, genuinely supported each other, and for once race was not an issue or barrier. I saw leaders emerge from students who are not leaders at school."

Tamar, Peer Resources Coordinator
SFUSD Martin Luther King Middle School

WE'RE GROWING!





Archer crew in Joshua Tree National Park

380 STUDENTS

HIGH SIERRA

Transference in the Sierra

Among sequoias, glacial lakes, and trails above treeline

The OBCA Sierra season runs just three months, but a Sierra student on average spends more nights on expedition than at any other program area. Longer expeditions mean students have more time to practice what they learn, and more time for it to stick. 82% of Sierra students report greater environmental responsibility than when they started.

When a crew learns campcraft (like setting up a tarp) or navigates a conflict in week one, they are still on the trail in week two and week three, giving them more opportunities to practice, build on what they've learned, and retain more of it.

This is what our Training, Main, and Final progression is designed for: a deliberate transfer of responsibility from instructors to students. In the beginning, instructors guide the students, but by the end, participants are sustaining themselves and each other outdoors.

That transference continues after students return home. They are more willing to push through when things get difficult at school and take on leadership roles because they know what they are capable of.

"My son had a wilderness experience that challenged him to be self-reliant, resilient, and aware. Nick is now a 'doer.' He's using less electronics and has more outdoor time with others or solo. It was Nick's 'coming of age' event."

— John, parent of a High Sierra alum



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA - 277 STUDENTS

JOSHUA TREE

Growing Our Roots

+20% students in one year

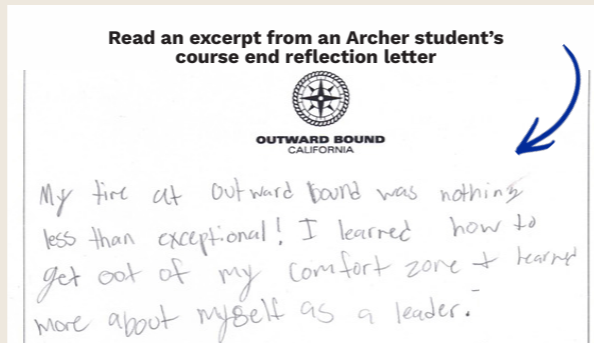
Late in 2024, OBCA solidified the purchase of a three-building and 4.8 acre property just 5 minutes from Joshua Tree National Park. Now with a "forever home," OBCA could build the infrastructure we needed: a dedicated space for gear storage, meeting space for curriculum development, and more housing for staff.

The new basecamp allowed us to flex our program capacity in ways previously inconceivable, stretching to run up to 8 crews in the field at once. With new and returning partnerships, we reached 20% more students.

Partner Spotlight

Archer School for Girls

In Spring 2025, Archer's 10th grade came out to the desert to hike, scramble, and rock climb with a mini solo under an open sky. Those 66 students stepped out of their comfort zones and became more courageous in the process.



"My time at Outward Bound was nothing less than exceptional! I learned how to get out of my comfort zone & learned more about myself as a leader."

— Christina, Archer Joshua Tree alum



We're building out our Joshua Tree basecamp! Our vision is to make a home for our instructors that is sustainable, and improve the infrastructure to let us serve more California students. More than \$1 million raised toward our \$2.25 million goal.



\$1M+ raised

Goal: \$2.25M



Scan to learn more!



THE FINANCIALS

OBCA experienced a strong financial year, with year-over-year program revenue growth of \$499K (35%) across all core business units, including: Open Enrollment (25%), Group Expeditions (50%), Ropes Course Programs (44%).

At the same time, the organization reduced overall expenses by 8%, reflecting continued operational discipline. We closed the year in a strong cash position \$2.87M, surpassing our goal of maintaining a minimum of three months of operating reserves.

Strategic financial analysis during the year led the organization to release previously restricted funds to support a projected operating deficit. Those actions, combined with a successful Q4 fundraising effort, positioned OBCA to finish the year with a net profit of \$192K. While challenges remain, the year's results point to growing momentum.

Total Revenue

\$4,519,758

Earned Revenue:

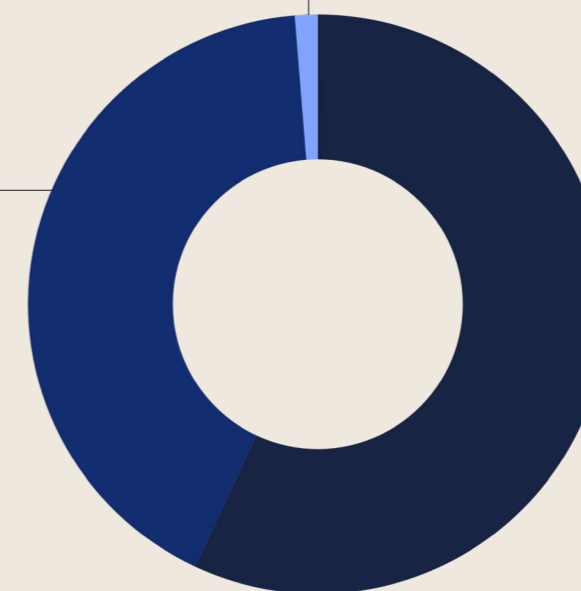
\$1,907,612 (42%)

Other Income:

\$58,156 (1%)

Contributed Revenue:

\$2,553,990 (57%)



Total Expenses

\$4,327,597

Fundraising:

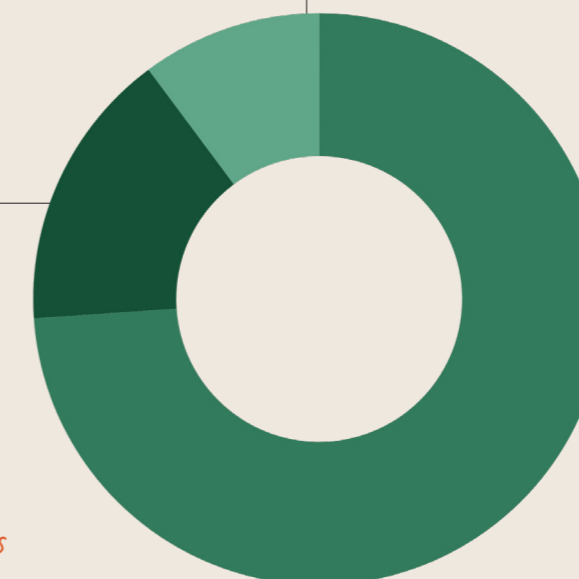
\$688,144 (16%)

Administration:

\$440,481 (10%)

Program:

\$3,198,971 (74%)



74% of every dollar spent goes directly to program delivery.

Unaudited financials

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Co-Chair

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Co-Chair

Winn Ellis

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Emily Ketchen

Treasurer

Greg Yap

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Abraham Simmons

Alan Nguyen

Claudia Lewis

Fernando Sucre

Glen Tripp

Jonathan Schmidt

Katie Fast

Kendra Frisbie

Maggie Bove-LaMonica

Paul Danielsen

Ron Will

Steve Hagler

Topher Solmssen

Tristam Brown

Board Spotlight: Katie Fast

Katie (pictured below) joined the board in 2025. But her relationship with OBCA started a year earlier, on a Yosemite Adults Backpacking expedition with OBCA. It was her first time ever backpacking. She joined because she wanted to unplug and challenge herself. She returned home with something far greater than she expected.

"The experience reframed how I think about hard things. In the mountains, when you encounter a challenge, you adapt, you rely on your own inner grit and also the people around you, and you keep moving. I've found myself drawing on that mindset in professional settings when a situation feels uncertain. Outward Bound reminded me that courage isn't the absence of doubt — it's deciding to move forward anyway."

Katie joined the board wanting to make sure other busy and disconnected people could find their way to the same experience. She serves on the OB Professional Committee, the Development Committee, and the Marketing Task Force, and has recruited other board members.

Her story shows what happens when an Outward Bound experience doesn't end on the trail, but becomes something people carry back to their communities.

Katie has been with Dodge & Cox for more than 20 years, where she serves as Fixed Income General Manager, and holds the CFA designation.



Partner Organizations

826 Valencia
Abraham Lincoln High School (ALHS)
Acton Academy - Placer Sacramento
After School Enrichment Program San Francisco
AIM High
Alliance Collins - College-Ready Public Schools
Alliance Gertz-Ressler High School
Anawakalmekak
Archer School for Girls
Athenian School
Balboa High School
Bancroft Middle School
Berkeley High School
Boys & Girls Club of San Francisco
Brandeis School of San Francisco
Breakthrough San Francisco at SF Day School
Breakthrough Silicon Valley
Burton High School

California Academy of Sciences
Canal Alliance
Carlmont High School
Chinatown Community Development Center
Chinatown YMCA
City of Richmond- Youth Outdoors Richmond
Coliseum College Prep Academy
Community Action Marin
Community Ropes Course Day
Community Youth Center of San Francisco
Convent of the Sacred Heart
Corte Madera School
Creative Arts Charter School
Escalemos
Father Sauer Academy
FilipinUp
Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF)
Gateway Middle School
Get Out And Learn/Downtown High School

Golden Gate Nat'l Parks Conservancy
Hayward High School
HealthPATH
June Jordan School for Equity
Kingmakers of Oakland
Kipp Esperanza High School
Lick-Wilmerding High School
Lipman Middle School
Lowell High School
Melrose Leadership Academy
Mentoring for Success
Milpitas High School
Mission Bay Hub
Mission High School
Morehead Cain Foundation
Mountain House High School
Nature Nexus Institute
Our Common Ground
Peninsula Bridge
Pittsburg High School
Presidio Hill School
San Carlos Charter School

THANK YOU 2025 DONORS

Thank you to the 84 partner organizations, from Bay Area public schools to corporate teams to community nonprofits, who brought their people to us in 2025. And for the institutional funders and individual supporters who made scholarship access possible for 60% of our students. We are especially grateful to recognize the following donors who contributed \$1,000 or more to OBCA in 2025:

San Francisco Fire Youth Academy
San Francisco State University
San Francisco Waldorf School
Schools of the Sacred Heart - San Francisco
SEO Scholars SF
Sequoia High School
Skyline College
South San Francisco High School
Stuart Hall for Boys of the Sacred Heart
Sunrise Middle School
Tennyson High School
The Branson School
Thomas Edison Charter Academy (TECA)
TRIO
Vallejo High School
Visitacion Valley Middle School (VVMS)
William C. Overfelt High School
YES Nature to Neighborhoods
YMCA of San Francisco

Professional Groups

Atlassian
DLA Piper
Dodge & Cox
Gateway Middle School
indiGO Auto Group
IVP
Splash Financial

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Apple Matching Gifts Program
Ares Industrial Management
Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
Carlyse and Arthur Ciocca Foundation
Charles Schwab
Climate Ride
Crescent Porter Hale Foundation
Dodge & Cox
Dwight Stuart Youth Fund
Ford Motor Company Bronco Wild Fund
Gap Inc.
Hellman Foundation Fund
Lenovo USA
Lisa Stone Pritzker Family Foundation
March Conservation Fund
RBC Capital Markets, LLC
Ronus Foundation
Sedgwick
Shauna M. and Kevin B. Flanigan Family Foundation

Sky's the Limit Fund
The Bothin Foundation
The Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation
The Henry Mayo Newhall Foundation
The Lilly Endowment
The Susan Byrd Fund
UnitedHealth Group
Vital Projects Fund
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William K. Bowes, Jr. Foundation

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Maureen and Tris Brown
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Meg Garlinghouse
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Paul Danielsen
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Ron and Tina Will
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Stephanie Brower
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Susan and David Tunnell
Susan Auerbach and Bryan Langholz
Tom Rapp
Victoria and Ilan Ben-Yaacov
Vivien Tartter
Winn Ellis and David Mahoney
Wynn and William Burkett

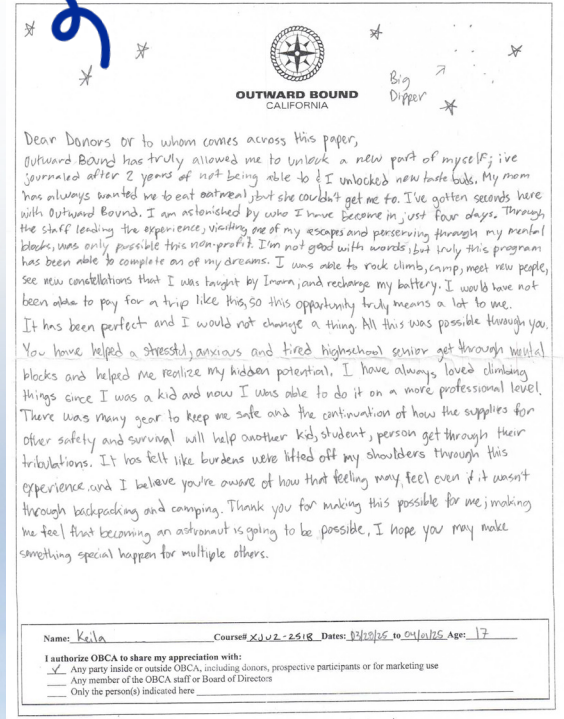
Outward Bound & Mom's Oatmeal

Outward Bound has truly allowed me to unlock a new part of myself. I've journaled after 2 years of not being able to & I've unlocked new taste buds. My mom has always wanted me to eat oatmeal but she couldn't get me to. I've gotten seconds here with Outward Bound.

I am astonished by who I've become in just four days ... persevering through my mental blocks.

I was able to rock climb, camp, meet new people, see new constellations. I would have not been able to pay for a trip like this, so this opportunity truly means a lot to me. It has been perfect and I would not change a thing. All this was possible through you.

Thank you for making this possible for me, making me feel that becoming an astronaut is going to be possible. I hope you may make something special happen for multiple others.



Name: Keila | Joshua Tree | Age: 17



MAKE A DONATION

Every gift made to OBCA has a lasting impact, on students like Keila. You can give online at outwardbound.org/obca/donate-today/ or with the QR code.

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here

