accountabilitylab

Accountability Lab is a global translocal network that makes governance work for people by supporting active citizens, responsible leaders and accountable institutions. Our goal is a world in which resources are used wisely, decisions benefit everyone fairly, and people lead secure lives.

Annual
Report

2024

GLOBAL

Contents

Global Highlights in 2024

We were fortunate as a translocal network to come together in June 2024 for a retreat in Washington, DC. The trip also coincided with a celebration of our 12th year as a nonprofit! The 'super' election year - where 3,5 billion people went to the polls - also wrapped up with several good learnings from the 79th United Nations General Assembly, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, the 10th Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention Against Corruption (CoSP10), and the International Anti-Corruption Conference in Lithuania. The HLPF focused on digitizing the SDGs, tackling misinformation, and addressing risks posed by algorithmic decision-making. At CoSP10, we were part of advocacy plans pushing for collective action on anti-corruption and climate justice, while the IACC hosted a diverse mix of deep-dive workshops and dialogues tackling transnational corruption and defending democracy. At UNGA79, AL joined the United Nations Global Compact in celebrating 20 years of the Ten Principles, which promote human rights, labor standards, environmental protection, and anti-corruption. We marked the milestone by sharing a playlist of music with a conscience from our Voice2Rep musicians from South Africa, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Mexico.

Across the following pages, we also bring you highlights from our translocal network - from the cross-border network we're building in Nepal and Bangladesh to new anti-corruption tech tools emerging from our HackCorruption program.

2024 By the Numbers

41 Winning Integrity Icons

59 Voice2Rep Musicians

12 Civic Charge Fellows

202 Community Conversations

51 Multistakeholder Townhalls

HackCorruption

ENSURING PROXIMITY & EQUIPPING REFORMERS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

The HackCorruption network creates and leverages civic technology to help citizens fight against corruption in their respective regions and transnationally

In collaboration with our two partner organizations, the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) and Development Gateway: An IREX Venture (DG), we hosted activists, technologists, and anticorruption experts with uncommon tech solutions to combat corruption in their countries and regions. In 2024, we hosted two regional hackathons in Southeast Asia and the Balkans. This follows Hackcorruption events over the past two years in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Africa, and South Asia. Through multistakeholder engagements over this period with CSOs, government, and the private sector in each region, we have found that the largest gaps within the ecosystem are at the meso-level, among smaller and medium-sized businesses, small CSOs and local governments who may not have the resources, in-house skills or pathways to develop technologies that can support them to address anti-corruption issues.

It is with these learnings in mind that hackathon mentors guide teams' processes to ensure that as solutions are being developed, they are tailored with specific end users in mind. The AI Corruption Tracker team from the Balkan hackathon, for example, will be implementing a conflict of interest detection tool directly inside Kosovo's Agency for Prevention of Corruption. This guarantees that the necessary data from governmental sources can be securely gathered and analyzed, especially for procurement contracts. By integrating data from a range of relevant sources, the tool will monitor individuals or organizations required to declare their assets and income.

FOCUSING ON GROWTH

In 2024, we also launched the HackCorruption Alumni Network. By uniting all our past participants passionate about anti-corruption innovation, the network provides a platform for collaboration, resource sharing, and continuous support. The launch included a well-received Speed Networking Sessions event, which allowed alumni from across the five diverse regions to reconnect and explore shared interests.

In the months following the launch, the network organized various activities, including workshops on UX design, a Friendraiser lunch in Kenya, and a panel discussion in Korea, all designed to offer practical skills and foster new connections.

In the last year, we've embraced a shift from project management to program management, focusing on creating long-term value and adapting to the evolving needs of our members. With over 270 alumni, the network has already facilitated collaborative projects, resource sharing, and advocacy efforts to raise awareness of corruption.

BY THE NUMBERS:

5 regions

25 feasible solutions

270+ alumni

Nepal/Bangladesh

DEEPENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Across Nepal and Bangladesh, Accountability Lab has worked closely with local communities to strengthen accountability structures through direct engagement and participatory governance.

AL Nepal and the Manusher Jonno Foundation hosted a Regional Youth Summit aimed at facilitating collaborations between young people in Nepal and Bangladesh. It brought together young leaders and changemakers to share knowledge and cross-border learning. Listen to some of their stories here about how they are engaging with democracy and freedoms in creative ways.

In Nepal, Community Frontline Activists (CFAs) held town hall meetings in Jaleshwor, Banepa, Pokhara, Butwal, and Dhangadi, bringing together 433 participants, including youth, elected representatives, and information officers, to discuss challenges in accessing local government information. A survey of 1,500+ youth revealed that 70% felt government communication was inadequate, leading to commitments from municipal offices to improve information dissemination. In Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City, sustained engagement resulted in a policy amendment mandating 30% youth participation (ages 16-40) in Tole Bikash Working Committees, ensuring young voices are included in local governance.

In Bangladesh, community-led advocacy has led to tangible policy changes. Nondita Surokkha's research revealed that 84% of adolescent girls surveyed had experienced sexual harassment, yet only 16% of families took action. Their sustained engagement with local authorities led to the Faridpur district administration requiring all schools to activate Anti-Sexual Harassment Committees, with seven schools implementing these policies so far. Additionally, the Visually Impaired People's Society (VIPS) successfully advocated for improved digital accessibility, securing commitments from the University Grants Commission and public universities to provide laptops and ensure educational websites are accessible for students with visual impairments.

These community-driven efforts highlight the importance of proximity in building accountability —ensuring that local concerns shape governance decisions that directly impact people's lives.
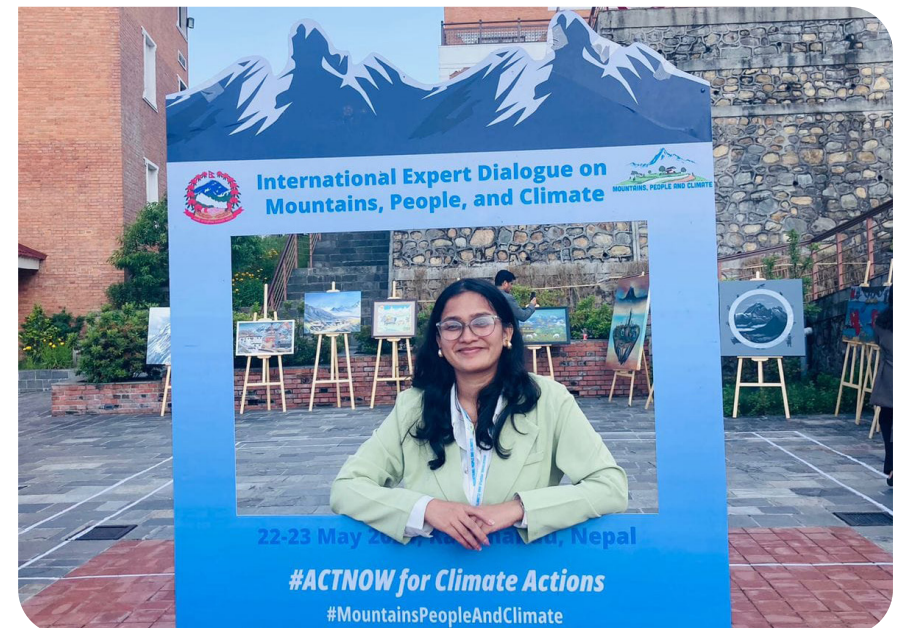
SHIFTING NORMS AND STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability Lab Nepal and Bangladesh have leveraged storytelling, art, and media to challenge entrenched behaviors and promote transparency and integrity.

In Nepal, the Accountability Incubator program nurtured young changemakers who used digital platforms to amplify accountability issues. SpeakUp Nepal, a youth-led initiative, successfully mobilized national attention around a gender-based violence case, pressuring authorities to act. Climate activist Aakriti Dotel led youth discussions on climate accountability and represented Nepalese youth at the International Dialogue on Mountain, People, and Climate.

In Bangladesh, Voice2Rep-inspired initiatives fostered artistic activism to advocate for democracy and climate justice. The Cooling Earth Campaign and Concert, organized by Travelettes of Bangladesh in partnership with Culture Monks and Masterpeace Global, brought together 70 youth leaders to explore climate change through music, art, and performance. Similarly, Volunteer Opportunities produced 'An Oath to Remember,' a docudrama highlighting young government serviceholders' commitment to democratic governance. The film is being used to spark conversations on transparency and ethics in public service.

Through these creative campaigns, young people are reshaping public expectations—making integrity and civic participation the norm rather than the exception.

EQUIPPING REFORMERS WITH TOOLS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

Building knowledge and leadership capacity remains central to ensuring sustainable accountability reforms.

Through the Youth Engagement in Democracy (YED) Project, Accountability Lab Nepal and Bangladesh worked to deepen youth knowledge of governance, civic rights, and democratic participation. The project supported policy boot camps, community dialogues, and leadership development sessions, equipping young changemakers with the tools and networks needed to influence decision-making.

In Nepal, the Youth Leaders Policy Bootcamp provided 35 youth and government officials with a deep dive into Nepal's National Youth Policy and governance frameworks. Participants developed localized strategies, such as Pokhara's five-year plan for its newly formed Municipal Youth Council and Banepa's roadmap for establishing a municipal youth council from scratch. Meanwhile, Community Frontline Activists (CFAs) played a key role in ensuring that youth concerns translated into policy commitments at the local level.

In Bangladesh, the National Youth Parliament brought together 350 youths for a high-level policy simulation attended by government representatives, including the Minister of Education. Youth leaders debated pressing governance issues, including climate change, digital democracy, and youth employment, with officials committing to raising youth-driven policy recommendations in Parliament. The Media Lab Fellowship, which selected 20 young content creators, is also equipping youth with the skills to produce investigative journalism and advocacy content on democracy, human rights, and governance.

By fostering direct engagement with decision-makers, providing advocacy training, and supporting media literacy, Accountability Lab is equipping young reformers with the knowledge and tools to drive governance change from the ground up. The work in Nepal and Bangladesh demonstrates how proximity, storytelling, and leadership development can accelerate accountability efforts and influence policies at scale. Through sustained engagement, youth-led initiatives are shaping governance, shifting norms, and strengthening democratic participation, laying the groundwork for long-term systemic change.

Civic Charge

EQUIPPING REFORMERS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

Civic Charge is a year-long accelerator program supporting social accountability change agents across 15 countries. Building on a decade of experience from the Accountability Incubator, the program provides mentorship, training, and peer learning opportunities to individuals leading governance and transparency initiatives. Through structured learning modules, networking opportunities, and individualized coaching, participants refine their strategies, expand their reach, and strengthen their impact.

The 2024 cohort included 12 reformers leading efforts in open government, anti-corruption, civic participation, and digital governance. In Nigeria, Damilola Oligbinde is advancing women's political participation through the SHAPE Project, which aims to raise $100,000 to support Nigerian women running in the 2027 elections. A lawyer and advocate for women in politics, she was recently honored with the Mallam Aminu Kano Award for Leadership at the CAHR 2024 Awards, supported by Ford Foundation, recognizing her contributions to governance and civic engagement.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guillaume Mpoko led efforts through OPEN DRC to promote anti-corruption advocacy and election transparency, equipping civil society groups with tools to push for freedom of information laws. Meanwhile, in Belize, Kylah Ciego works on Citizens for Good Governance, training local government candidates on democracy and policy engagement to strengthen decision-making processes.

In Uganda, Annet Namugosa refined her approach to youth engagement and legal advocacy through Civic Charge, realizing that the challenges she faced—youth disengagement, policy inaction, and bureaucratic hurdles—were shared globally. Connecting with reformers tackling similar issues helped her develop new strategies for strengthening civic participation and expanding legal access. Read more about Annet's journey here.

Damilola Oligbinde

Annet Namugosa

Emmanuel Sani

Sameer Ali Khan

Emmanuel Sani focused on participatory budgeting and accountability mechanisms in Nigeria, advocating for more inclusive governance. He graduated from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Open Minds Young Voices fellowship and was officially inducted into the OMYV Alumni Network during its AGM in November 2024. Shahzad Akram in Pakistan worked on anti-corruption policy and legal reforms, helping to shape stronger citizen engagement with governance structures.

Civic Charge also supports those working at the intersection of digital governance, media, and public accountability. In Pakistan, Sameer Ali Khan launched initiatives to strengthen digital peacebuilding and civic heritage education, ensuring youth engagement with historical and governance narratives. Dharma Raj Rimal expanded Jibiko Media in Nepal, producing digital content focused on youth livelihoods, migration transparency, and employment accountability. In Bangladesh, Mahera Musharrat developed digital advocacy campaigns, highlighting human rights and democratic participation through strategic media and storytelling.

Through tailored training and mentorship, these reformers are strengthening governance systems and fostering civic engagement in their communities.

SHIFTING NORMS AND STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY

Civic Charge participants are reshaping the conversation around governance, using storytelling, creative engagement, and advocacy to shift public perceptions of accountability.

In Mexico, Leiden Gomis Fernández is using testimonial songwriting to elevate the voices of incarcerated women, advocating for prison reform and justice sector transparency. Her initiative, *Volver al Corazón*, demonstrates the role of cultural narratives in influencing policy discussions. In Zimbabwe, Tatiana Kondo (Banshee) uses spoken word poetry and music to challenge governance failures, advocate for women's rights, and highlight mental health concerns, creating new spaces for civic discourse.
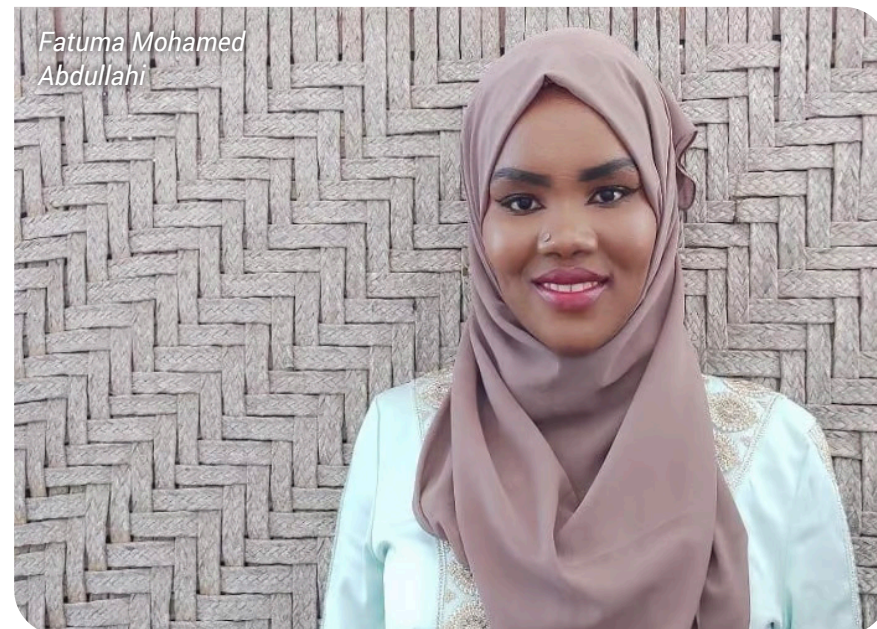
Fatuma Mohamed Abdullahi

In Kenya, Fatuma Mohamed Abdullahi uses sports as a tool for gender justice and youth civic engagement, encouraging discussions on rights, leadership, and governance through athletics. Amanda Chenai Makombe is advancing community storytelling initiatives in Zimbabwe, providing young people with platforms to express perspectives on democracy and governance.

Civic Charge participants are also shaping broader discussions on civic resilience. In Bangladesh, Mahera Musharrat was featured in an AccountabiliTea podcast episode with UN Special Rapporteur Gina Romero, discussing protest strategies, civic safety, and support for human rights defenders in increasingly restrictive environments. Listen to the episode here: AccountabiliTea Podcast – Strategies, Safety Measures, and Support for Human Rights Defenders.

These efforts are creating new ways to engage the public on issues of transparency, integrity, and democratic participation, reinforcing the idea that governance should be responsive to the people it serves.

On 19 March 2025, Civic Charge participants will celebrate their graduation, marking the completion of an intensive year of learning, collaboration, and growth. This milestone is not the end of their journey but a launchpad for their continued efforts to drive accountability, strengthen governance, and inspire change in their home countries.

Mahera Musharrat

Democratic Republic of Congo

ENSURING PROXIMITY AND INFLUENCING POLICIES, PROCESSES, AND PRACTICES

Over the past four years, we have been working to build trust between citizens and powerholders in Eastern DRC for a more robust participatory process for local-level budgeting. By encouraging collective and conscious dialogues and creating and supporting spaces for civic engagement, we've raised awareness on the importance of participatory governance, transparency, accountability, and the fight against corruption.

This has been achieved by canvassing community views in various municipalities of Bukavu and Uvira cities and the Uvira territory on municipal budgets, how they are decided, and where they are spent, sharing these with authorities during public-facing budget forums, then feeding back to communities. In 2024, this process has led to more effective and inclusive participation of citizens in the development of their municipalities' budgets, co-creation of solutions between powerholders and their constituencies, and closing the feedback loop between citizens and local authorities.

Some significant processes have come into being as a result of these trust-strengthening efforts, including a joint plan in Bukavu to address issues of participatory governance, transparency, and fiscal accountability. This plan looks like popular accountability meetings in each municipality to revitalize neighborhood forums, organize budget assemblies, and provide capacity-building workshops on governance and leadership. These initiatives aim to enhance the accountability of both authorities and citizens for the management of their communities now and in the future.

THEME: SHIFTING NORMS AND BEHAVIORS

In its fourth year, Accountability Lab DRC's Integrity Icon campaign not only celebrated the 2024 cohort of exceptional public servants, but it also continued to build out branches of support and collaboration for Icon alumni, public servants in general, and others working in the governance ecosystem. These efforts are strengthening and expanding networks of governance champions both inside and outside government in the DRC.

The 4th Regional Summit on Integrity was themed around "Transparency and Accountability for the Reconstruction of the South Kivu Province". It focused on one of the province's most significant taxes from the import of petroleum products – the Conventional Tax on Petroleum Products – and recommendations for better governance, transparency, and accountability around it.

Integrity Icon alumni were invited to a retreat to further strengthen the Icon network, providing an opportunity for mutual learning. Icons shared knowledge and experience on good governance practices, lessons about anti-corruption mechanisms, personal development, the identification of the challenges they face, and the definition of actions to be undertaken to strengthen integrity within their communities.

Leadership training sessions were also held for integrity icons, public service authorities, and civil society that aimed to improve participants' knowledge, commitment, responsibility, and ethical behavior in managing public affairs.

Joining the call for transparency and accountability from powerholders are socially conscious creatives. Artists and filmmakers from across North and South Kivu provinces completed training with industry experts to produce songs and short films on a range of themes, including fiscal accountability, natural resource management, and the intersection between accountability and transport, education, peacebuilding, and taxes. The Lab's music and film fellowships train participants in the technical skills of production as well as governance and accountability issues, enabling graduates to produce high-quality, resonant pieces of work that have the power to raise consciousness and support among their audiences and communities.

The impact of the program traveled as far as Senegal, where 2023 film fellowship alumnus Gloria Chabene was invited to screen her film HAKI at the Festival Dakar Théâtre Humour. The film follows the widow of an Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo soldier, dealing with the aftermath of her husband's death and running a small business to support her family. After being harassed by a civil servant to pay double her taxes, she stands up by reporting him. Other alumni have established music therapy projects and even created their own film and sound production studios.

I'm Landry MUHANUKA, an accountapreneur of cohort 4 and bearer of the "Tembeza Habari" project. I would like to sincerely thank CEDEJ-GL and Accountability Lab DRC for their support through the Accountability Incubator. It's rare to see people so committed without earning something in return. When I look at myself, before I joined the Accountability Incubator and now, I realize that at the same time, I'm maturing in terms of knowledge and even profes-sionalism. At first, I thought I'd been selected because I was excep-tional or had an idea that was very different from the others, but in the end, the further along I got in the training courses, I realized that I was no longer ignorant and that there was a better practical and professional way of looking at things. Today, I'm able to design and manage a project. Our duty remains to pass on everything we've learned through this support to other young people so that they, too, can get involved in the fight against corruption and de-mand accountability, while hoping that this country will go further and the political situation will improve.

**ACCOUNTABILITY INCUBATOR 2024 PARTICIPANT,
LANDRY MUHANUKA**

EQUIPPING REFORMERS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

One of the first questions our Accountability Incubator participants were asked was about their expectations of the program. This was to ensure that their requests could be worked into the content of the course going forward. Participants requested training, advice, and guidance to achieve their objectives, the opportunity to observe the implementation of activities by our partner organization CEDEJ-GL, as well as an opportunity to connect with program alumni. This exercise is emblematic of our co-creation approach to supporting governance champions.

The 2024 cohort of 10 governance champions hailed from Bukavu, Goma, and Uvira and joined the program to sharpen their ideas and gain practical knowledge on how to establish a successful social initiative. They received training on accountability, tools to measure impact, and how to build teams. As well as how to better define objectives and select stakeholders.

As participants began implementing what they'd learned, they received further training addressing social, environmental, and governance issues for community well-being, but also learning to create intuitive solutions based on community needs. They also developed fundraising strategies and practiced public presentation skills.

Accountapreneurs raised awareness among other young people about the causes they defend to create greater momentum. At the Université officielle de Bukavu 17 students joined the Integrity First project as integrity ambassadors, while 17 young leaders from the Nyakaliba district community recognized the importance of citizen oversight and joined the Nyakaliba exchange framework, which aims to assess the district's situation and capacitate youth to strengthen their civic engagement and hold elected officials accountable.

Somaliland

LOCAL OWNERSHIP, CIVIC HEROES, AND INSPIRED CHANGE

In Somaliland, the Good Governance Heroes campaign has attracted support for being rooted in local ownership, civic participation, and the pursuit of excellent civic leadership. Working with our local partner, Media Ink and ISIR, we've produced films of our winning Heroes in their home regions - from the bustling streets of Hargeisa to remote areas like Borama and Goda. They document individual achievements but also demonstrate the ripple effect of civic action. The campaign has also strengthened partner capacity, expanding teams and opening doors for new project ideas and broader program implementation.

The campaign's overarching lesson in 2024 was that sustainable change must be locally led. AL created space for authentic conversations around integrity, governance, and civic responsibility with partners, including the Good Governance Commission and local CSOs.

The Good Governance and Service Delivery Summit took place in Hargeisa in May, gathering more than 150 participants from government, academia, civil society, media, and youth organizations. Participants got the opportunity to meet Good Governance Heroes and broke into groups with them to discuss potential solutions to challenges the winners face in their areas of work. Participants considered successful models for public educational institutions with Abdilahi Osman Jama. They also explored social activism and the creative arts with activist Osman Ali Hassan, who, outside of his role as a teacher, has worked to uplift and support young people through training, contributing to the building of a public library, and assisting people with special needs.

The summit also allowed attendees to discuss revolutionary new health services with Anab Mohamed Ismail, who has worked voluntarily as a midwife in mother and child care centers for 31 years. Another topic that came up in discussions included mapping pathways for social change with social activist Khadra

Abdi Kayse, who primarily focuses on educating her community on gender based violence, including female genital mutilation.

Subsequent road shows to hold panel discussions linked to the documentaries of the Good Governance Heroes allowed the team to explore these topics from diverse local perspectives. Participants around the region emphasized the need for collaboration between public and civil society institutions. Extensive discussions were also held about the need for women and marginalized people to participate more strongly in decision-making processes.

Nominations are currently open for the next round of Good Governance role models. Ultimately, this initiative is more than a campaign—it's a movement. By amplifying local voices and celebrating everyday changemakers, Somaliland is reimagining what governance can look like: inclusive, accountable, and deeply rooted in the strength of its people.

Integrity Icon Philadelphia

NAMING AND FAMING CIVIC HEROES

Now in its fifth year, our Philadelphia-based Integrity Icon campaign celebrated unsung and unelected workers behind the scenes who are all focused on excellent service delivery in different ways. Adara Combs is the City's first Victim Advocate. She has become an essential connector, pushing to improve victim services at a time when we more clearly understand the links between victimization and the perpetration of crime. Eric Kapenstein, meanwhile, worked 10-hour days for 340 days in 2020 to ensure a fair and safe election in Philadelphia. Now, the Deputy City Commissioner — a Republican in an overwhelmingly Democratic town — is gearing up to make voting just as safe and even more accessible in 2024.

Then there is Lesha Sanders, Director of Problem Solving Courts for the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, known widely as a one-woman resource hub. Deion Sumpter is Director of the City's Gun Violence Intervention program who faces the brutal reality of gun violence every day with seemingly endless energy. Lastly, Tracey T. Williams is Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Records. She turned her role managing the 20,000 cubic feet of the City Archives into becoming a tireless advocate for victims of deed fraud in Philadelphia.

In May 2024, our partner The Philadelphia Citizen named and famed all five winners in a public ceremony designed to inspire all public workers to strive for excellence. Former Philadelphia Mayor, Michael Nutter, handed out the awards. Since 2020, The Citizen has honored 20 incredible city employees working in departments ranging from parks to police, arts to immigrant affairs, and beyond.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS
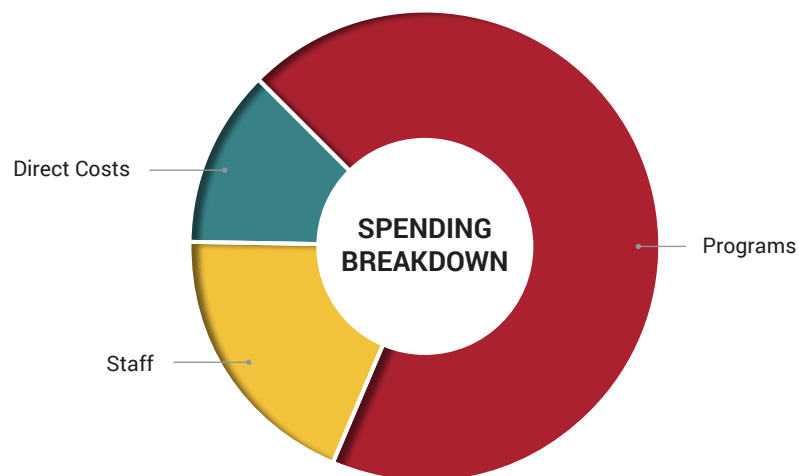
REVENUE:

Government Grants **$6,107,857**

Corporate & Foundations **$154,357**

SPENDING BREAKDOWN

- Direct Costs
- Programs
- Staff

LEARN MORE