



# 2024



**RISE**

**Annual Report**  
A Year in Review





FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

## A LETTER FROM THE CEO

2024 tested RISE in ways I never imagined when I took the helm in 2018. Last year, RISE and the country faced not only the growing division among Americans, but also the erosion of established rights by our nation's highest court. Despite these challenges, RISE was ready and stepped up. The headwinds were fierce, but our resolve was even stronger. We did not stop. In fact, we pressed forward with determination, engaging nearly 50,000 participants across 979 events. We stayed agile, inclusive, and demonstrated some of the best teamwork I have ever witnessed in my years leading RISE. Above all, we remained steadfast in our mission, knowing that our work is more vital than ever.

RISE is maturing. Last year, we engaged a record number of people and achieved a 97% satisfaction rate—showing we not only did more, but we did it better. This year, as we celebrate RISE's 10th anniversary, we are stepping fully into that maturity. Despite new challenges, we are setting ambitious goals, committed to preparing the sports community to make this country more inclusive and just. To support this, we will focus on strengthening relationship management, expanding financial

diversity, refining and expanding RISE program offerings, and building greater external loyalty to RISE. Our mission is clear, and we are more determined than ever to drive meaningful change in the next decade and beyond.

2024 was also a year of enlightenment for me. This will be my final year serving as CEO of this incredible organization. Over the past several years, RISE has consistently exceeded expectations, and I'm incredibly proud to have helped craft a vision that has been embraced by this remarkable team—from the board to the staff, to our extended family. Together, we've achieved so much.

As I step into this final year, I'm filled with both humility and excitement for what's ahead. However, we can't do it alone. RISE needs your contribution of time, treasure or talent to keep forging ahead. Now, more than ever, we need your increased support to ensure that tomorrow is better than today. Thank you for making 2024 such a meaningful year, and I hope you'll stand with us as we work together to make 2025 a year for the record books.

**DIAHANN**  
**BILLINGS-BURFORD**  
RISE CEO



# A LETTER FROM BOARD CO-CHAIRS



**PETE  
BEVACQUA**

RISE BOARD CO-CHAIR | VICE  
PRESIDENT AND JAMES E. ROHR  
DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS, NOTRE DAME

Change is a constant in the world and this past year has reinforced the belief that focused, principled leadership and a shared commitment to progress are essential in navigating both expected and unforeseen challenges. Through RISE programming, sports leaders nationwide are better prepared to speak out and act on the causes they care about, especially when it comes to eliminating racism and promoting civic engagement through the enduring power of sports.

With your support, RISE will continue to ensure that the sports community is one of the most powerful forces for bringing people together and driving change in the constant pursuit of doing all we can to move in a positive direction.



**TROY  
VINCENT, SR.**

RISE BOARD CO-CHAIR |  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,  
FOOTBALL OPERATIONS, NFL

It has been truly gratifying to see RISE growth since its inception in the Fall of 2015. Not only have we increased the amount of people we touch as an organization, but our message remains consistent and has the intended impact. At Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans, the NFL and RISE's hosted a critical conversation, Authenticity in Action. This event highlighted an important theme- Honoring and elevating culture and our strength through diversity. At the NFL, doing the right thing by promoting diversity and finding the best talent is not a trend, but rather a fundamental pillar that strengthens our league on and off the field. We have a longstanding commitment to fairness, inclusivity and opportunity. This commitment will not change.

Likewise, RISE remains fully dedicated to ending racism through educating and empowering the sports community. We continue our goal since 2015 to end hate. Thank you for your steadfast support of our work, your partnership and engagement fuels RISE's mission. This annual report highlights our 2024 accomplishments, and we hope that it inspires you to stay the course and reach higher in 2025.





# MISSION & VISION

RISE is a national nonprofit that educates and empowers the sports community to eliminate racial discrimination, champion social justice and improve race relations.

Our vision is a nation unified through sport, committed to racial equity and social justice.

Through partnerships and programs, RISE inspires leaders in sports to create positive change on matters of race and equality. At every level of programming, from youth to adult, education to empowerment, RISE brings diverse groups of people together for greater understanding and inclusion.

RISE uses sport as our vehicle for change, as a medium that naturally hosts leaders and diverse populations, coming together for one common cause. RISE programming amplifies the power of teamwork. When the world darkens, sports can grow its power, and RISE is proud to be a part of that change in the sports community and beyond.





# PROGRAMMING ACROSS SPORTS, AGES AND COMMUNITIES

## LOGIC MODEL

RISE brings together participants within the sports community (athletes, coaches, fans and staff), educating them about matters related to racism, diversity, and inclusion. Those individuals are empowered to apply what they have learned and experienced. They take what they have learned back to their teams, organizations and communities, better equipped and empowered to take action and use their platforms to advocate for change.

## METHODOLOGY

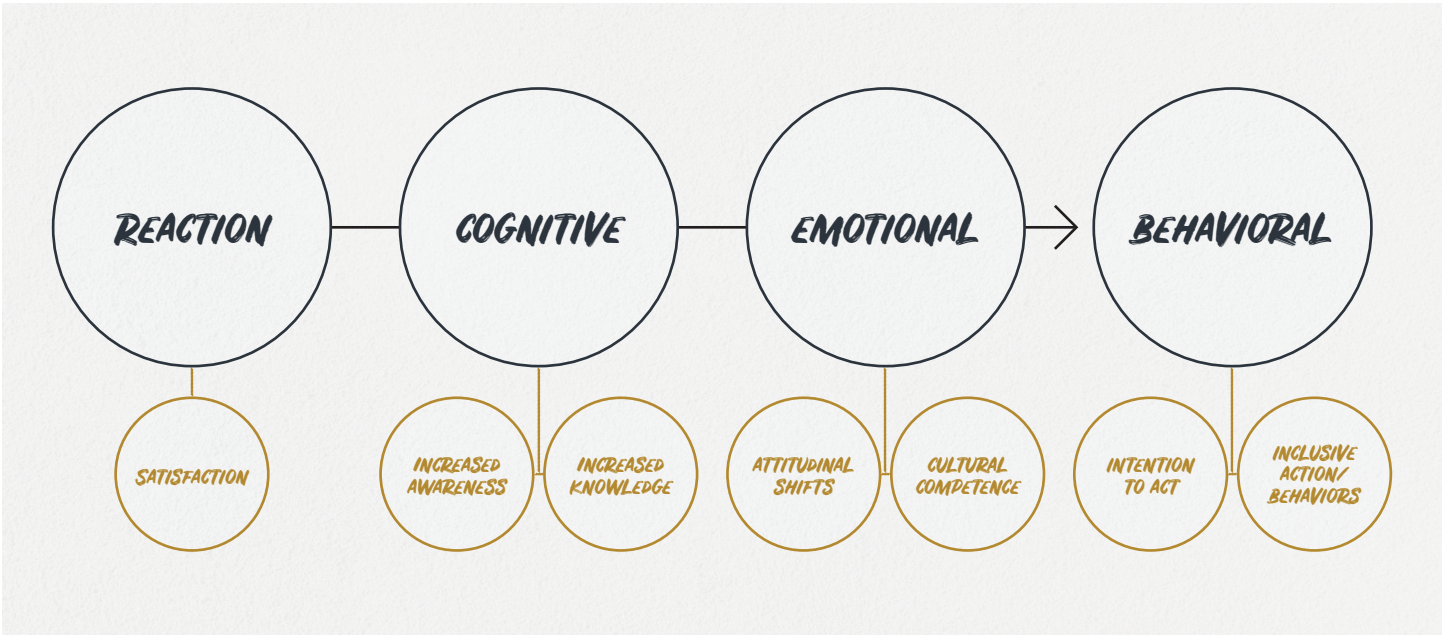
RISE empowers participants to champion social justice by highlighting equity issues with context and deeper understanding, presented to participants in a meaningful and personal way. RISE also inspires people to understand that racism is malleable; that all have a role, not as passive observers but as change-makers within their communities. Finally, RISE aims to change world views by redefining our in-groups, impacting people from different backgrounds by experiencing our programs side by side.

The RISE model for education and empowerment incorporates best practices and principles from social science research that come together in a framework that promotes learner-driven educational opportunities. By using a multi-phase approach, the RISE model allows for participants to first reflect on and assess their personal perspectives on racial equity and social justice, then begin to tackle more systemic and institutionalized forms of inequity and injustice. This transformative learning approach is grounded in Diffusion of Innovation, and the

RISE model creates a space for individual athletes, teams, organizations, and fans to come together to become inclusive leaders in their communities and enact change. By employing practices grounded in positive youth development, social change leadership, and socioecological theories of development, the RISE model strategically supports the construction of knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors of individuals to promote an activist mindset and inclusive leadership practices that lead to positive impacts within their communities.

During program sessions, participants are immersed in an interactive, participatory experience with key topics such as: Identity, Diversity Concepts, Bias, Privilege & Power, Civic Engagement and Community Building. RISE’s program design drives the development of leadership skills that are as relevant to creating unity on the playing field as they are to the community, school board, board room, and beyond. Each module is embedded with social-emotional skill development, helping to ensure that program participants can build and practice the character skills necessary to effectively communicate, connect, and self-regulate throughout and after the program. These leadership skills include critical thinking, perspective taking, active listening, teamwork, and others. Grounded in learning from the reflections of others, these moments of skill development force each participant to think beyond the dichotomy and spark an intensive self-review of identity, privilege and bias through the intentional creation of cognitive dissonance.

# IMPACT FRAMEWORK



## COGNITIVE

### INCREASED AWARENESS

A change in understanding or acknowledgement of the manner and extent to which racism affects society today.

### INCREASED KNOWLEDGE

An increased ability to define and explain the ways in which particular concepts in the DEI space show up in society and create unjust social conditions for particular groups.

## EMOTIONAL

### ATTITUDINAL SHIFTS

Increased concern with racism, social justice, civic engagement, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

### CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Agency and confidence in discussing, acting, and interacting with others for the purpose of addressing racism, social justice, civic engagement, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

## BEHAVIORAL

### INTENTION TO ACT

Capturing self-reported or demonstrated intent to take inclusive action, educate oneself, or promote social justice initiatives.

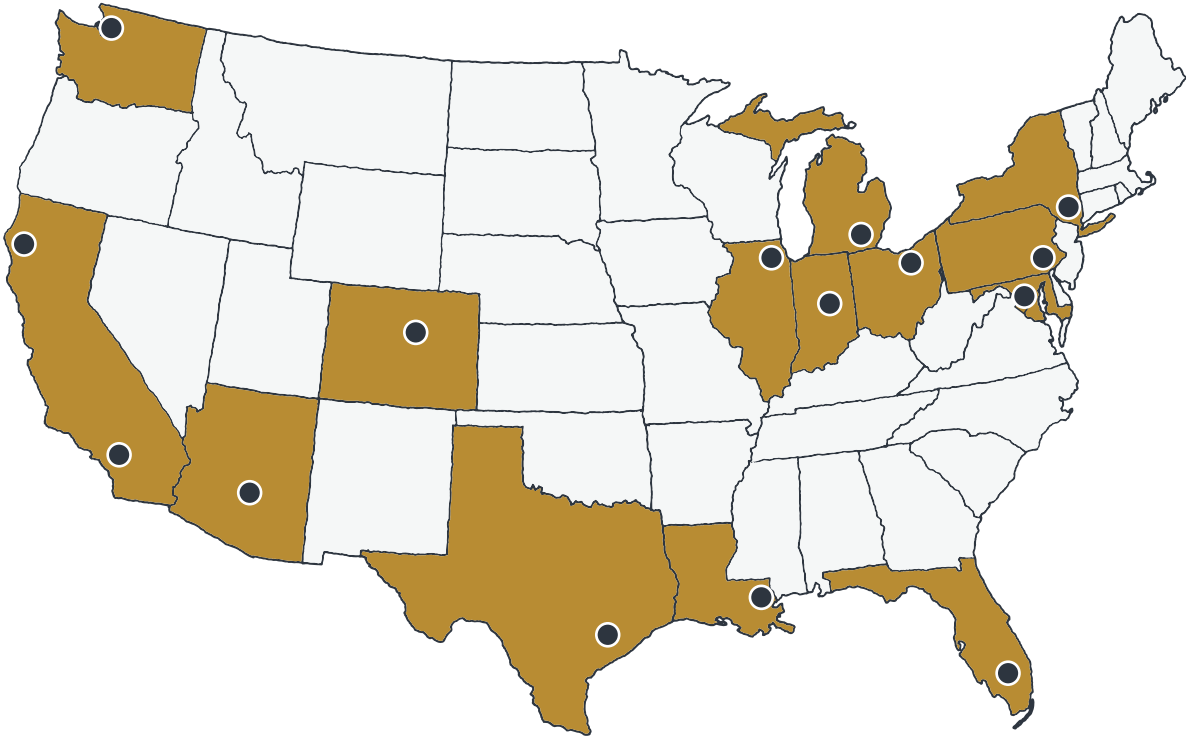
### INCLUSIVE ACTION/BEHAVIORS

This includes individuals who demonstrate inclusive action, educate themselves, or promoting social justice initiatives, as well as organizational action including the creation/execution of systems, resource allocation, structures, policies, procedures, or positions that promote inclusion and/or equity within the organization or the broader society.



# REGIONAL STRATEGY

RISE FOCUSES OUR PROACTIVE EFFORTS TO INCREASE OUR IMPACT AND FOOTPRINT IN 15 MARKETS.'



|                             |                     |                    |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Bay Area                    | Greater Los Angeles | Philadelphia       |
| Chicago                     | Greater New York    | Phoenix            |
| Cleveland                   | Houston             | Seattle            |
| Washington D.C. / Baltimore | Indianapolis        | South Florida      |
| Denver                      | New Orleans         | Southeast Michigan |







## ADULT PROGRAMMING

### REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Addressing the call for diversity in the business of sports, RISE created Representation Matters in 2022. In 2024, with the support of Verizon, RISE brought this program to three tentpole sporting events in Las Vegas, Phoenix and Atlanta. Representation Matters helps cultivate opportunities for meaningful professional networking and builds leadership skills while focusing on equity-building in sports and sports-media business. Created as

a half-day, in- person experience, these events engage executive leaders in the industry to share their expertise and learnings, spark dialogue from student to entry-level and mid-level to executive level, and help employees and employers gain insight and create connections that can last a lifetime. These events brought together more than 150 sports professionals in 2024.



## YOUTH PROGRAMMING

### BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH BASKETBALL

Launched in 2017, Building Bridges Through Basketball (BBTB) is our multi-week leadership program bridging community relationships between teens and law enforcement officers. With the support of Under Armour and the NBA, in 2024 RISE hosted programming in 13 markets for more than 600 middle and high school students and 100 officers. Through BBTB, participants embark on social-emotional skill building, while also engaging in fun, interactive play, using basketball to unite law enforcement with the communities they serve.

The program aims to break barriers, build trust and create the pathways for positive change in communities, using sport as the vehicle for change. During program sessions, participants are immersed in a participatory experience with key topics such as: Identity, Diversity Concepts, Bias, Privilege & Power, Civic Engagement and Community Building. RISE's program design drives the development of leadership skills that are as relevant to creating unity on the court as they are to the community, school board, board room, and beyond.



## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

Throughout 2024, RISE partnered with Cal Athletics to deliver leadership workshops for over 100 student-athletes. These sessions focused on Privilege and Power as well as Civic Engagement, equipping participants with tools to drive change within their teams, communities, and beyond.

During the spring semester, Cal student-athletes engaged with the “Actor, Ally, Accomplice” module, exploring how to leverage their privilege and power to promote racial equality. They identified specific actions to foster inclusion and create meaningful change, both individually and collectively.

In the fall semester, as the election season approached, Cal Athletics participated in RISE’s Civic Engagement module. Through discussions on teamwork, trust, and respect, student-athletes learned how to build stronger, more inclusive communities. They also explored the critical role sports play in uniting people and championing social justice.

These workshops empowered Cal student-athletes to become community leaders, using their platforms to inspire action and inclusion.

### PROFESSIONAL LEAGUES

## NATIONAL WOMEN'S SOCCER LEAGUE (NWSL)

In 2024, RISE partnered with the National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL) to deliver league-wide trainings on identity. These sessions engaged over 400 players, coaches, and team/league staff, encouraging them to reflect on the labels they use to define themselves and those assigned by others. Participants explored the multifaceted and intersectional nature of identity, considering how these aspects shape personal experiences and team dynamics.

The workshops fostered deeper understanding, empathy, and inclusivity across teams, empowering participants to embrace their own identities and appreciate the diversity of others. By challenging stereotypes and emphasizing shared humanity, this initiative advanced RISE’s mission to promote equity and inclusion in sports and society.





# RISE<sup>TO</sup>VOLE

RISE to Vote is a national nonpartisan initiative that partners with sports teams, leagues and community groups to improve civic engagement in our nation. In 2024, RISE facilitated 95 RISE to Vote workshops, educating nearly 14,000 athletes, coaches, and staff on the importance of voting and civic participation.

These workshops equipped participants with tools to amplify their voices and platforms, inspiring their fans and communities to engage in the democratic process. By activating the sports community as civic leaders, RISE to Vote unlocks a unique and powerful avenue to encourage civic participation and build a stronger democracy.



## CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

RISE's Champions of Change activation takes place at fan-focused events. An interactive experience designed to educate participants on the intersection of sports and social justice and to evoke empathy and inspire fans to lead their communities on issues of equity. In 2024, RISE hosted more than 10,000 participants at 10 Champions of Change events including the Super Bowl, programming during the NFL Draft, SailGP and NASCAR races, WNBA and NBA All-Star events, NY Islanders game and both the NCAA Men's and Women's Final Four events. With support of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, RISE incorporated several athletes into the timeline to showcase how they use their leadership to impact community health.



“

“That [RISE to Vote] was a really good presentation. One of the best ones I’ve seen. [The RISE to Vote presentation was] To the point and engaging.”

**ANDY REID, HEAD COACH - KANSAS CITY CHIEFS**

”

Attending today's event has been incredibly beneficial for me in several ways. Firstly, it has provided an invaluable opportunity to connect with organizations that genuinely value diversity and inclusion. Engaging with like-minded professionals reinforces my commitment to promoting representation in executive recruiting.

**REPRESENTATION MATTERS PARTICIPANT**

“

“The ECC [East Coast Conference (Division II)] is proud to continue our relationship with RISE and provide opportunities for our student-athletes and administrators to learn about important social issues and discuss their ideas with each other [...] We have found these sessions can serve as tools for personal growth.”

**DR. ROBERT DRANOFF, FORMER EAST COAST CONFERENCE COMMISSIONER**

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“As athletes we have an advantage that others may not have and it is important to use that advantage for good.”

**YOUTH MULTI-WEEK LEADERSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANT**



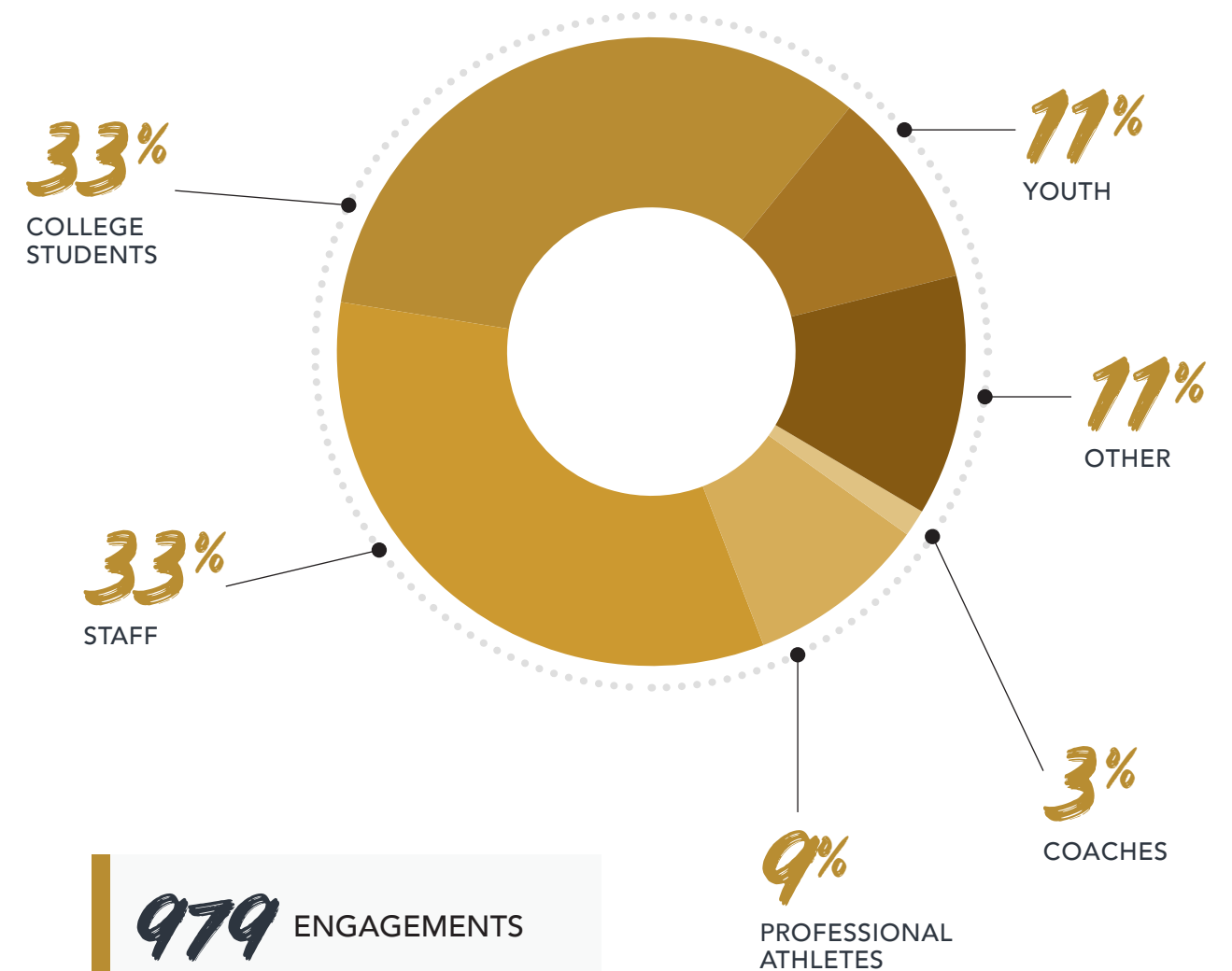




# MEASURING OUR IMPACT

**49,573**  
PARTICIPANTS

**36,852** IN-PERSON  
**12,721** DIGITAL



**979** ENGAGEMENTS

**641** HUB  
ENGAGEMENTS

**226** UNIQUE PARTNERS  
ENGAGED



ENGAGEMENTS BY TYPE

527  
MULTI-WEEK  
LEADERSHIP SERIES

237  
LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS  
& ROUNDTABLES

102  
DIGITAL LEARNING SERIES

95  
RISE TO VOTE

11  
CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

9  
CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE  
FAN ACTIVATION

4  
REPRESENTATION MATTERS

IMPACT FRAMEWORK

RESULTS

REACTION

97% average satisfaction  
across all programs

The data below comes from 2024 Multi-Week Leadership Program participants who completed pre and post-surveys assessing their knowledge, perspectives, attitudes, and skills.

COGNITIVE

AWARENESS

+4% increase in awareness of issues with  
racism at their school or place of work

92% affirmed that racism is  
still a national concern

KNOWLEDGE

+20% increase in youth  
self-reported understanding

+17% increase in youth  
concept mastery

BEHAVIORAL

INTENTION TO ACT

88% said they would intervene  
against discrimination

EMOTIONAL

ATTITUDINAL SHIFTS

92% noted that racial equality  
is of personal concern

95% were open to learning  
more about these issues

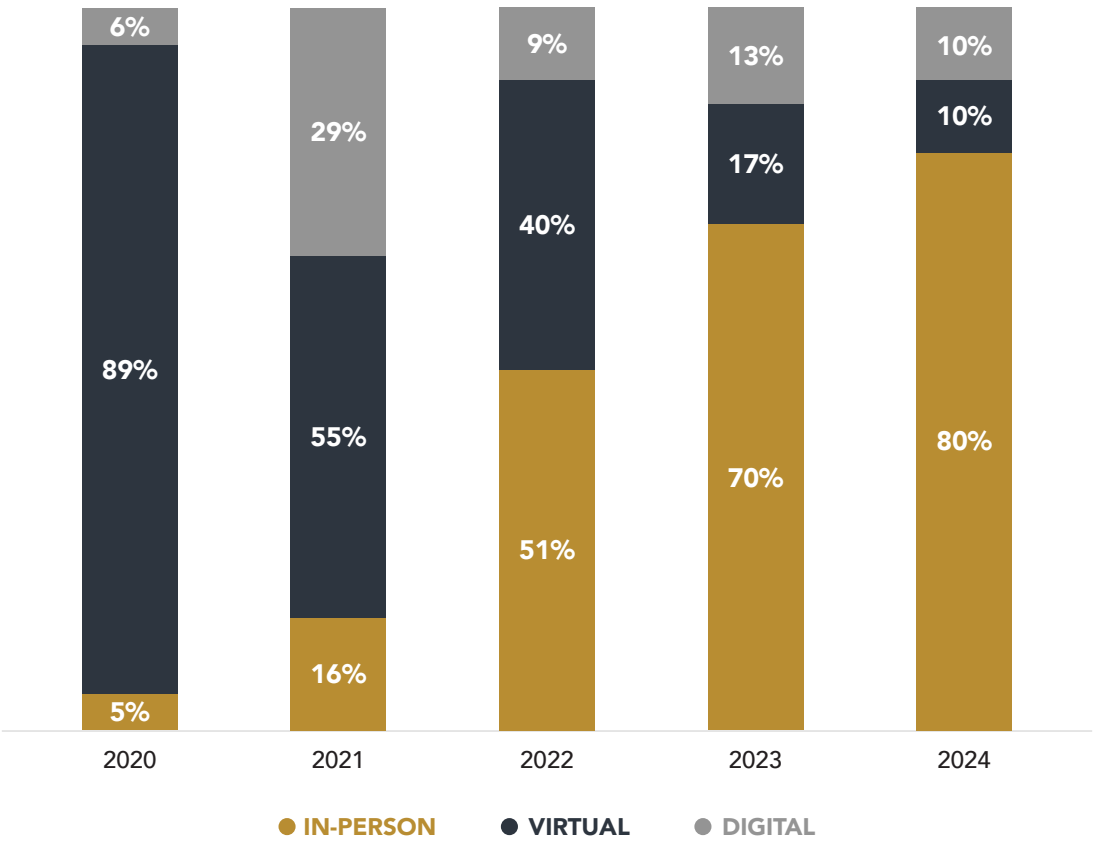
CULTURAL COMPETENCE SKILLS

83% agreed that they have the skills to have  
difficult conversations of race and diversity

YEARLY GROWTH

|   | 2020   | 2021   | 2022   | 2023   | 2024   |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| ENGAGEMENTS                             | 534    | 637    | 671    | 745    | 979    |
| PARTNERS ENGAGED                        | 136    | 224    | 249    | 249    | 226    |
| PARTICIPANTS<br>(Not Including Digital) | 14,175 | 19,923 | 17,692 | 25,265 | 36,582 |
| DIGITAL MODULES                         | 14,292 | 19,304 | 14,134 | 17,924 | 12,721 |
| PARTICIPANTS (TOTAL)                    | 28,467 | 39,227 | 31,826 | 43,189 | 49,303 |

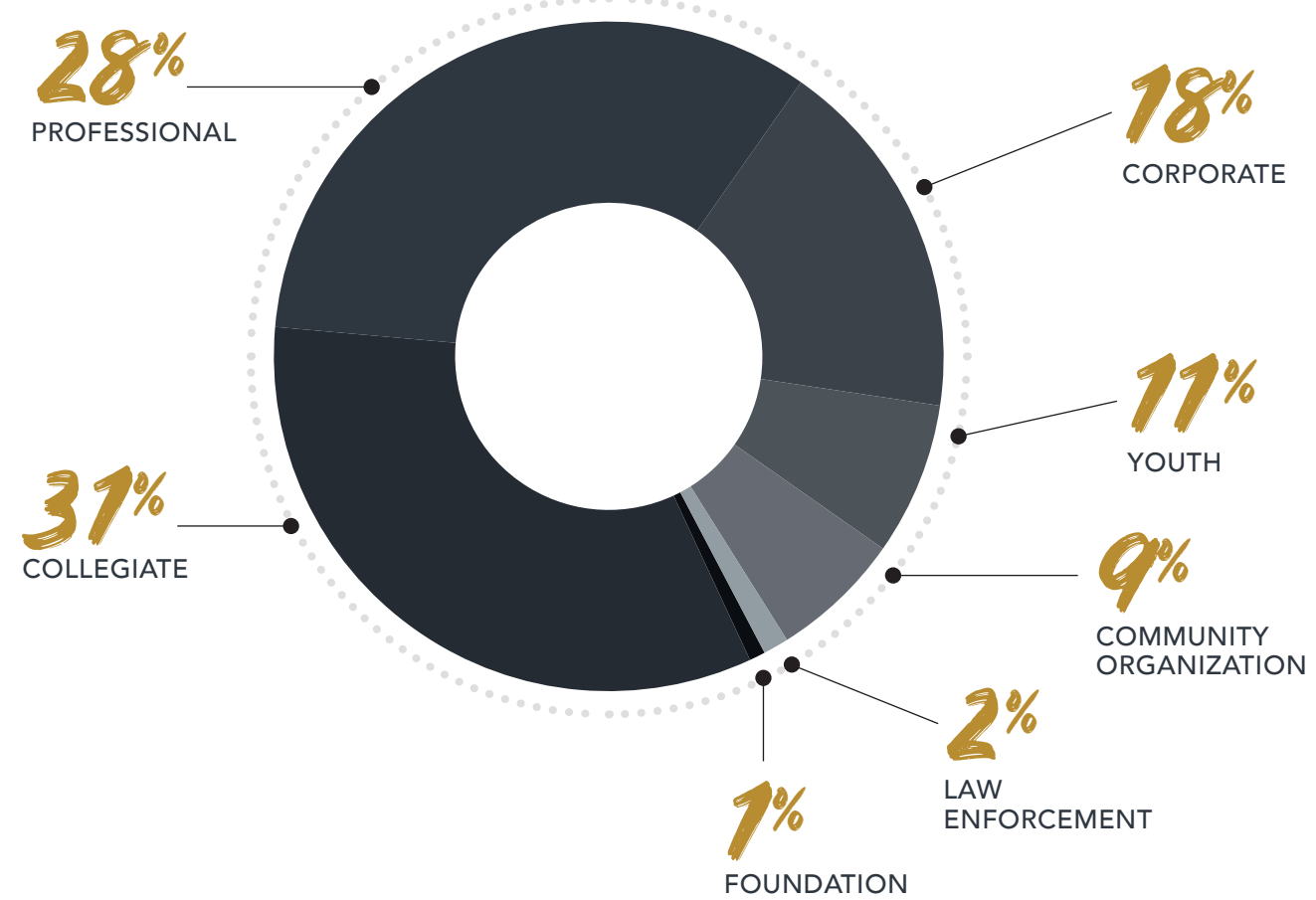
DELIVERY FORMAT



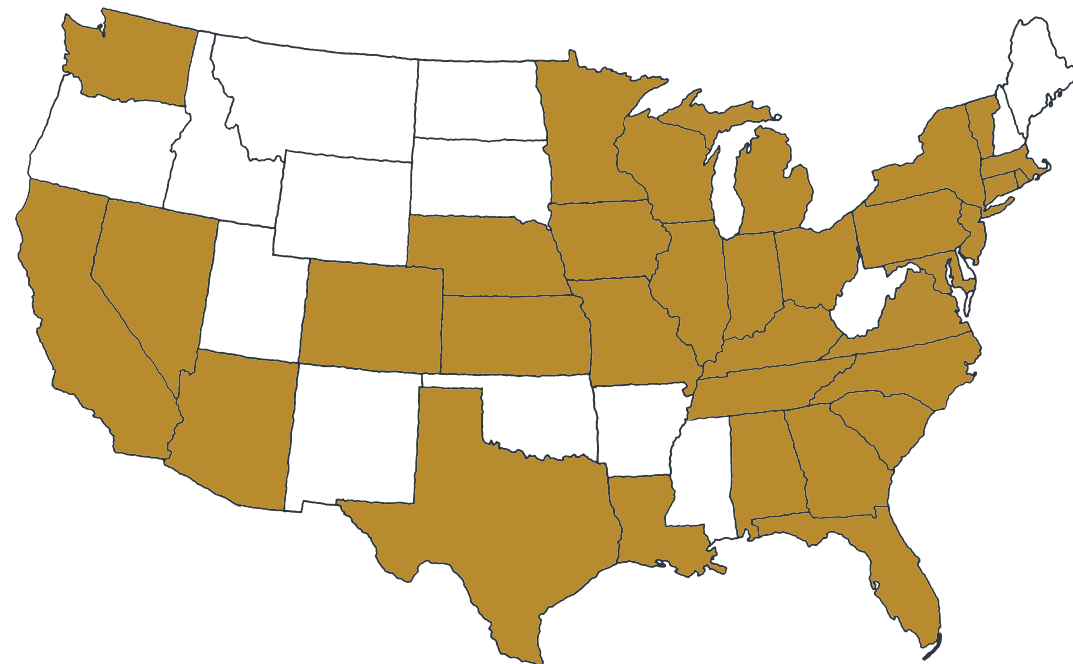


## OUR PARTNERS

PARTNERS BY TYPE



## OUR FOOTPRINT









# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Like sports, the work required to unite our country and create a more inclusive society takes a team. RISE can only create lasting change with the contributions of our incredible donors and partners. Together, we are working to create a nation unified through sports, committed to equity for all.



## \$1,000,000+

Stephen Ross

## \$250,000+

Under Armour

Group 1001

## \$100,000+

NFL Foundation

NASCAR

Verizon

Robert Wood John Foundation

National Football League, Inc. (NFL)

National Basketball Association (NBA)

## \$50,000+

love.fútbol

National Hockey League (NHL)

## \$25,000+

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

Morgan Stanley

ESPN

National Women's Soccer League (NWSL)

NBC Sports

PGA of America

US Tennis Association (USTA)

USA Track & Field

## \$10,000+

Denver Broncos

Reebok International Ltd.

Chicago Bears

Seattle Seahawks

Clemson University

Ben Simmons Family Foundation

BSE Global (Brooklyn Nets)

Los Angeles Rams

Big East Conference

Florida Panthers

JD | Finish Line Foundation

Sean McManus

Sporting Kansas City

St. Mark's School

University of California - Berkeley

University of Notre Dame

Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA)

## \$2,000+

Inclusion in Canadian Sports Network (ICSN)

New York State DOH Social Services (via Asian American Federation)

First Tee

Minnesota Hockey

Atlanta Falcons

Atlantic 10 Conference

Centre College

Columbia University

GamePlan

Houston Dynamo FC & Houston Dash

Miami Dolphins

North Central College

Robert Sterling Clarke Foundation

Sail Newport

SailGP - Team USA

Stacy Lindau

Vassar College

Wake Forest

Westchester County Human Rights Commission

New York Islanders

Section V Athletics

Baltimore Ravens

University of Alabama

Charles Schwab & Co., Inc.

US All Star Federation - Cheer & Dance

San Francisco Giants

Scott Pioli

Arizona Cardinals

Indianapolis Colts

University of Miami

Capital University

Phi Beta Sigma

Philadelphia Union

Ripon College

Ruth and Seymour Klein Foundation

## UP TO \$2,000

Hayden Hill

Charlotte Hornets

United Soccer League

University of Washington

Woods & Watts Effect

Michigan State University

David Baker

George Casey

Pro Football Hall of Fame

Washington Commanders

Marymount University

Microsoft

Adam Marcus

Morgan Henderson

USRowing

Cynthia Mullins

Dickinson College Athletes of Color Coalition Account

Kevin Brown

Nancy Kaplan

John Gantz

Patrell Green

Lauren Capone

Ashley Schumacher

Alphabet Inc.

The National Combat League (NCL) Account

Wendell Conn

Kailey White

Greg Carrillo

Johnny Ward



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