



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2024

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



Leadership Statement

Dear Families First Community,

Families First continues to expand critical parenting support to parents of young children in Greater Boston and Western Mass. Our goal is to ensure that all children grow into thriving and resilient adults by supporting as many parents as possible through our high-impact programs.

It has been a busy year! We ran more Power of Parenting and Ripple programs than ever, reaching over 950 families with our work. We are proud to report that 95% of our parent participants say they would recommend our programs to other parents. We also completed two evaluation studies on the powerful impact of these programs and translated our Power of Parenting materials into additional languages, including Simplified Chinese, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole.

Families First supports parents well beyond their initial participation in our programs. Our recent alumni survey revealed that parents' number one request is to stay involved with Families First in whatever way they can.

With this in mind, this year we expanded alumni services to provide additional parenting resources and professional development opportunities for parents interested in new careers or educational pathways. We have partnered with hundreds of parents who are now in community-based jobs locally and at Families First, where they can continue supporting other parents on the same pathway. Additionally, we launched the Parent Representative Committee, a group of alumni parents who are essential partners in making programmatic decisions at Families First.

At Families First, we believe parents are leaders in both their families and communities, creating better outcomes for children. As one Power of Parenting graduate said, "With love, communication, consistency, and understanding, we can make a difference in the future of our children."

We know that we cannot sustain this work without the support of our broad Families First community. Thank you for all that you do. Together, we can ensure that all families, children, and communities are strong and supported.

With appreciation,



Sue Covitz
Executive Director



Ally Lukas Turner
Board Chair

Our Vision:

Every parent is strong and supported.
Every community benefits from the power of parents.
Every child is thriving and resilient.

Our Mission:

Families First **partners with parents to amplify their power** so they can positively impact the lives of children and communities through our groundbreaking programs.

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Program Highlights



Greater Boston

This past year has been one of growth, impact, and deepened connections for Families First in Greater Boston.

New Team Members: Arpan and Jenn

This year, we welcomed **Arpan Barua** and **Jenn Baez** to our team, and their contributions have been transformative. Having them on the team enabled us to deliver an impressive **30 programs** across Greater Boston—an expansion we couldn't have achieved without their dedication.

Jenn, coming from a background in sales and marketing, has brought unparalleled enthusiasm to the team. Having experienced Families First's programs firsthand, Jenn's unique perspective and high energy resonate with parents, contributing to high retention rates in the Power of Parenting Program. Her firsthand experience and empathy have helped foster strong bonds within the Families First community.

Arpan, on the other hand, introduced a fresh perspective and eagerness to learn that has enriched our program's impact. Meeting the warmth of our community with genuine curiosity, he has cultivated connections that extend beyond the bounds of our programming, creating lasting relationships with both partners and parents.

Their joy and enthusiasm have enhanced Families First's reputation and strengthened our collaborative network across Greater Boston.



Jenn Baez



Arpan Barua



Community Impact Project: Alumni Engagement Strategy

In collaboration with Parent Leaders, Kary Cabrera, Edwina Woods, and Nareeman Zaki, we developed a comprehensive in-person alumni engagement strategy, setting the stage for deeper connections with program alumni. In the coming year, we will put this plan into action with two events.

Western MA

This year, Families First in Western Massachusetts has continued to make a profound impact, creating spaces for family connection, empowerment, and community engagement. Through flagship events like our first Alumni Gala and the launch of our Western MA Advisory Council, we are building a resilient and connected network of families across the region.



Gala Event

Proposed by our Community Impact Project Parent Leaders, the Gala at Open Square's Mill 1 was a joyful gathering that welcomed families who have completed our programs, giving them a chance to reconnect and celebrate. The event featured powerful testimonials from parents Sarah Colby, Adalis Santana, Kamely de la Cruz, and Anne Marie Flores, whose stories underscored the program's impact on their lives. The evening was filled with dancing, delicious food catered by Fiesta Café, and a dedicated children's section with face painting organized by Enlace de Familias. The presence of local leaders—including the Mayor of Holyoke, Joshua Garcia, a City Council member, and State Representative Pat Duffy—further highlighted the community's support for Families First.

WMA Advisory Council

This year saw the formation of the Western Massachusetts Advisory Council, a strategic group providing critical guidance as we continue to grow in the region. Comprised of community members from areas we currently serve or plan to expand to, the Council met three times this year to develop a three-year strategic plan focused on regional marketing, community outreach, and resource expansion. The Council's efforts are essential to fostering connections with future partners and funders, laying the groundwork for sustainable growth.

Power of Parenting™

607

Parents
Engaged

1,268
estimated

Children
Benefited

40

Programs

59

Parent
Leaders

21

Ambassadors

13

Program
Facilitators



Power of Parenting outcomes are based on the **Protective Factors Framework** developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy and the **Parental Stress Index**. We don't expect parents to report improvement in every area, because many parents enter the program with a strong foundation of knowledge and skills in one or more of these areas.



Resiliency & Family
Functioning

95%

IMPROVED IN AT
LEAST **ONE** AREA



Social & Emotional
Support

83%

IMPROVED IN AT
LEAST **TWO** AREAS



Nurturing &
Attachment

63%

IMPROVED IN AT
LEAST **THREE** AREAS



Concrete Support in
Times of Need



Decreased Parenting
Stress

The Ripple Program™

228 Parents

engaged, including 84 parents through a contract with the Department of Early Education and Care.

3 Leadership Ambassadors

who previously graduated from the program returned to support the program.

16 Community Impact Projects

co-created by 43 parents in collaboration with community-based partner organizations.

As a result of the **TRANSFORMATIONAL** Ripple Program trainings, parents reported that they:

97%

HAVE
MORE
GOALS FOR
THEIR
FUTURE

96%

MORE OFTEN
LIKE TO HEAR
DIFFERENT
POINTS OF
VIEW IN A
DISCUSSION

96%

HAVE A
STRONGER
SENSE OF
WHO THEY
ARE

93%

SPEAK UP
MORE WHEN
THEY HAVE
SOMETHING
TO SAY

91%

BELIEVE
THEIR
OPINION IS
IMPORTANT



Alumni Services

307

**PARENTS
REACHED**

18

EVENTS

94%

**INCREASE OF
PARTICIPANTS
FROM FY23**

Families First is deeply committed to centering parents' voices in every aspect of our work. Recognizing that engaged parents are vital for creating meaningful systems change and stronger communities, Families First launched the Parent Representative Committee (PRC). The PRC seeks parents' input to inform key programmatic and organizational decisions at Families First, amplifying parents' perspectives and lived experiences in a structured and impactful way.

The PRC was composed of 11 members, each with valuable insights, skills, and experiences.

Key PRC Projects

- **DEIB Needs Assessment:** Evaluating diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging goals from parents' perspectives to identify areas for improvement related to the organization as a whole.
- **PRC Bylaws Development:** Establishing governance standards, roles, and responsibilities for the Parent Representative Committee (PRC).
- **Alumni Survey:** Gathering feedback to better understand alumni needs, enhance programs, and offer additional engagement opportunities.
- **Consultation with Dr. Kathleen Walsh:** Collaborating with Boston Children's Hospital's "Dialogue" study to improve doctor-patient communication through interviews for parental insights.
- **Family Engagement Assessment:** Identifying strategies to enhance family involvement at Families First and align with the evolving needs and expectations of families.



Families First FEST: A Celebration of Community and Connection

On June 8th, Families First FEST brought over 1,000 community members together for a day filled with joy, creativity, and connection. The event featured 40 local vendors who offered a unique mix of goods and services, and an impressive lineup of performances, including the HG Drumline, Jungle Jim, the New England Bhangra Club, and OrigiNation, who even taught children some fun dance moves!

Families enjoyed a range of activities, from a petting zoo and bubble art to a hula hoop contest, face painting, and arts and crafts. Nature lovers explored Nature's Corner, while a balloon artist added magic to the day. To top it all off, Wally the Green Monster made a surprise appearance, thrilling attendees and helping to pick the lucky raffle winner.



This festival was more than just an event; it was a testament to the power of collaboration and the vibrant spirit of our community. It celebrated local talent, fostered connections, and created lasting memories for all who attended. Families First FEST was a perfect way to mark the end of the year, leaving us inspired and excited for the future. Here's to celebrating many more moments together!



Power of Parenting Program Material Translation

Families First has always been dedicated to fostering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) across its programs. Recently, we expanded this commitment by enhancing language accessibility for the families we serve. Recognizing that many parents feel more at ease accessing materials in their native language—beyond English and Spanish—we set out to better understand and meet those needs.

Our process began with surveying parents and conducting detailed research in three areas: analyzing regional data to assess language preferences among families with young children, gathering insights from regional directors on community trends, and engaging parents through Program Coordinators to identify which languages would best support their participation.

Based on this research and survey results, we identified Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and Simplified Chinese as additional languages to prioritize. With this information, we selected a translation service provider aligned with our DEIB goals after evaluating their practices, quality standards, and references. We also tested their accuracy with sample documents to ensure high-quality translations.

Although programming is currently available in English and Spanish, these additional translated materials give parents greater flexibility to engage with our programs in their preferred language, enhancing accessibility and comfort.

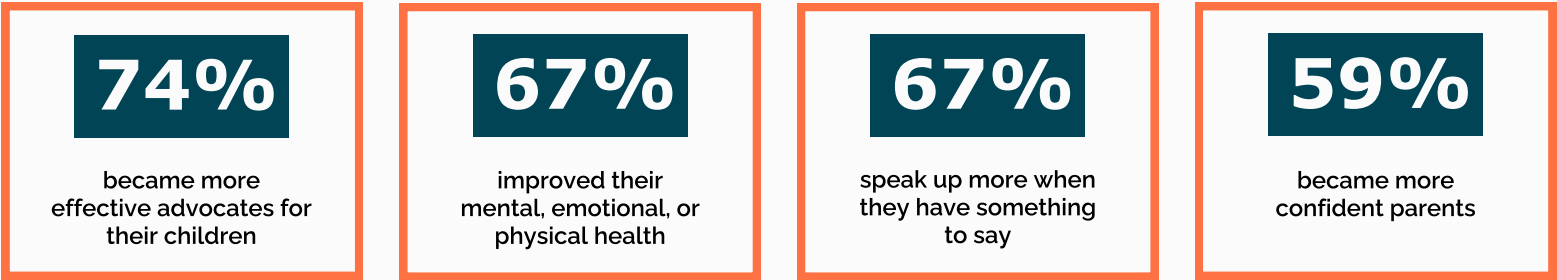
Through these efforts, Families First has strengthened its support for diverse families and taken an exciting step toward greater inclusivity.



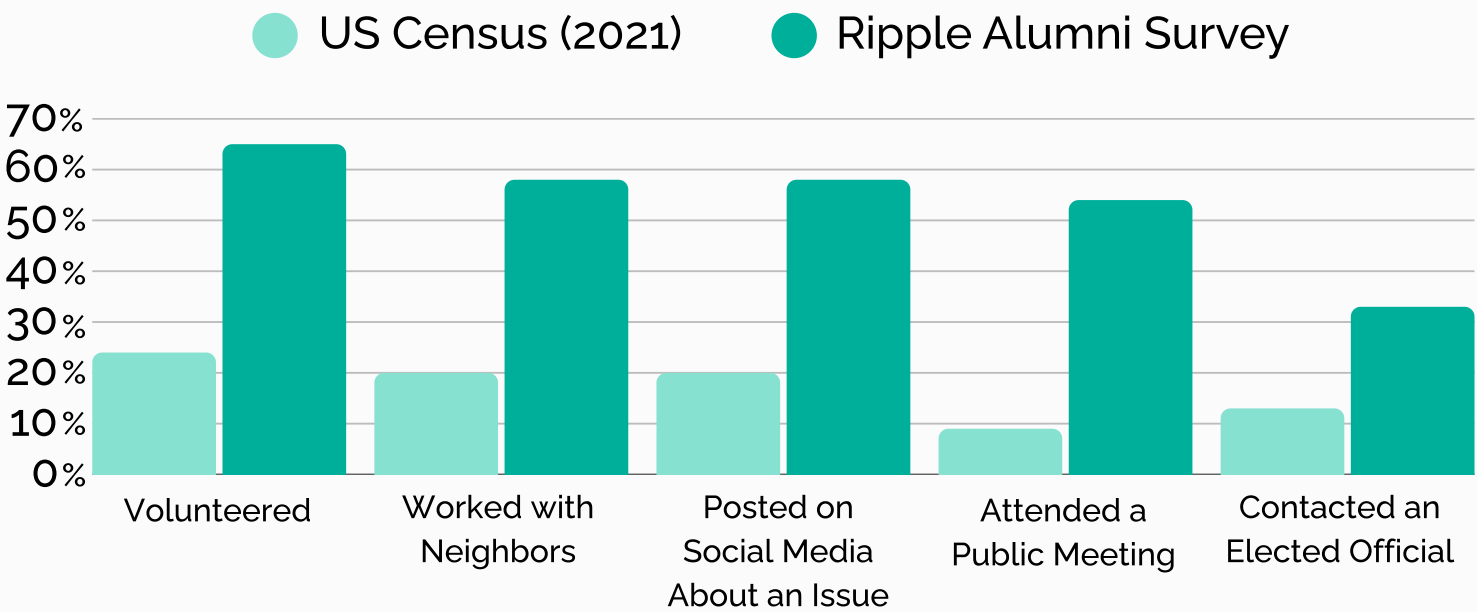
Ripple Program Evaluation Study

In 2024, Families First partnered with New York University Metro Center’s Center for Policy, Research, and Evaluation to assess the Ripple Program’s impact on families and partner organizations. Dr. Joanna Geller, an expert in family engagement and parent leadership, led the study. Dr. Geller and her team completed interviews with parent leaders and partner staff members. They also surveyed alumni and staff who took part in the Ripple Program over three years. In total, 231 parent leader alumni and 31 staff members filled out the survey.

The study’s findings show that the Ripple Program’s unique model has had a positive impact on parents and families across many areas of their lives. Partner organizations reported that the program helped them improve their parent leadership and family engagement practices.



Parents who participated in the Ripple Program are also more civically engaged compared to a nationally representative group:



Partner staff and their organizations benefited from participation in the Ripple Program, which helped them grow and improve their parent leadership and family engagement practices:



The Ripple Program’s innovative trainings and collaborative projects provided opportunities for growth for both parent leaders and partner organizations, creating ripple effects of positive outcomes for children, families, and communities across Massachusetts.

“Every parent who attended the training gained confidence and insight. It was our privilege to hire two program attendees onto our staff. We also encouraged and supported two other attendees in pursuing career goals. Several other parents continued in leadership roles in local parent associations. The program raised awareness of the potential impact of parent leaders and gave them courage, confidence, and vision to pursue their passions and impact their communities.”

- Partner Staff

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

We continue to center our work in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) by building our ongoing DEIB work into all aspects of our organization. DEIB continues to be the number one organizational goal across departments.



DEIB Needs Assessment

We completed a DEIB needs assessment by collecting feedback from staff, board, and parent leaders and reviewing policies. We also identified areas for improvement and provided suggestions to create a more inclusive and fair organization.



DEIB Committee and Learning Subcommittee

We planned, organized, and monitored initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Representatives from various groups in the organization met to track progress on goals and supported learning opportunities for staff to build awareness and understanding around DEIB topics.



Learning Session and DEIB Baseline Training for Staff

We worked with Korsi Consulting to complete the *From Unconscious Bias to Conscious Inclusion* learning session, enhancing understanding of bias and strategies for inclusivity. Additionally, we created and tested a DEIB baseline training session for new staff, incorporating it into onboarding to ensure consistent education on key concepts.



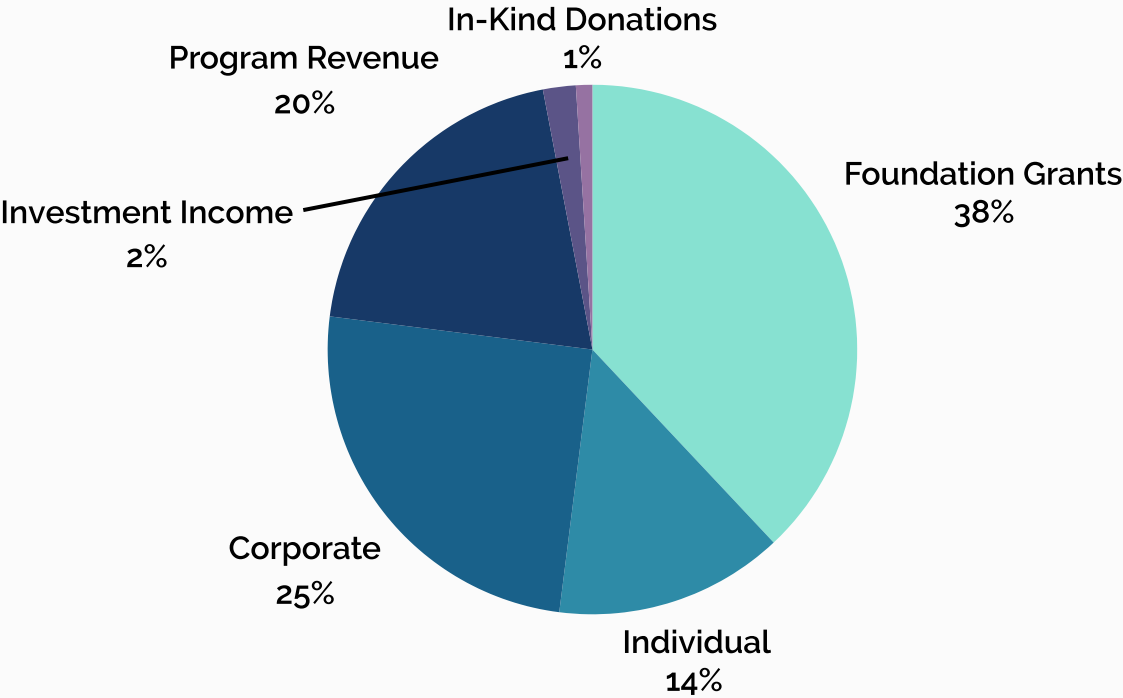
Managers Complete *Managing to Change the World* Training

We ensured new managers completed *Managing to Change the World* training with The Management Center, building skills in goal setting, delegation, feedback, and team alignment to strengthen mission-driven leadership.

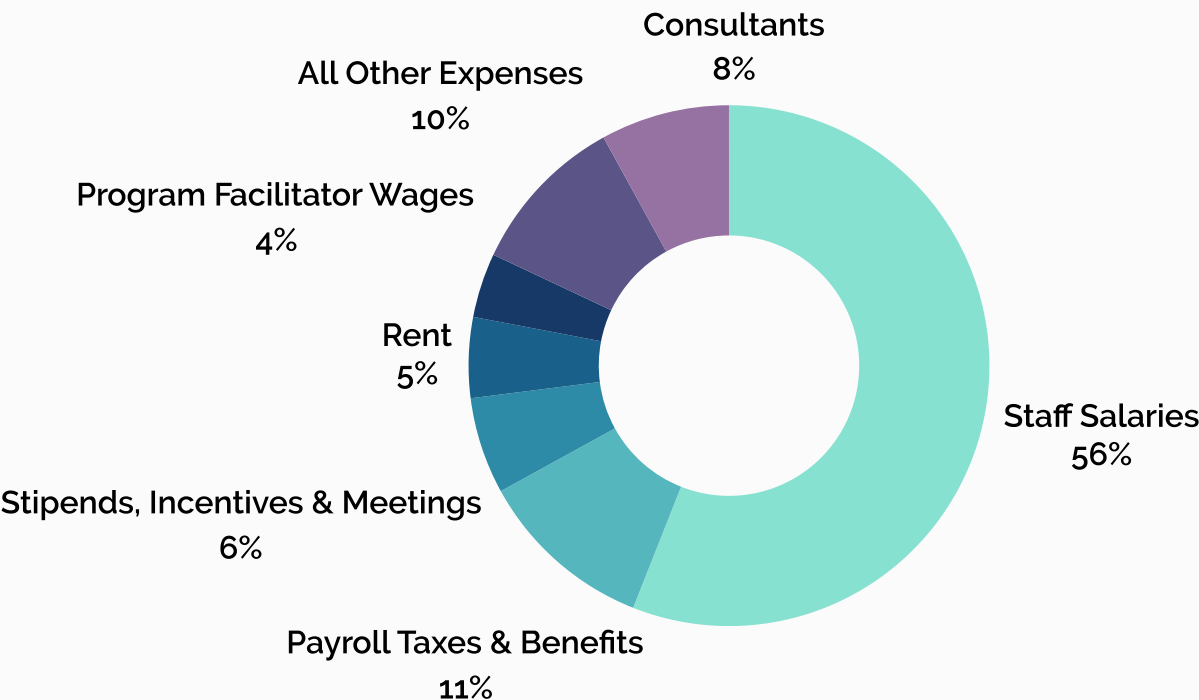
Financial Overview

July 2024 - June 2025

Revenue \$2,257,764



Expenses \$2,622,702



In FY24, Families First ran a deficit as part of a strategic investment to increase capacity and sustainability for both our program and administrative teams. We saw growth in each contributed revenue stream, secured new funders, and engaged more families than ever. Our strong financial position enabled us to continue to focus on our mission through this investment period.

Community Partnership

Cross-sector partnerships are pivotal to our program model so that parents are connected to resources, support, and opportunities in their communities. For a complete list of our many partners, please [visit our website](#).



Thank You!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

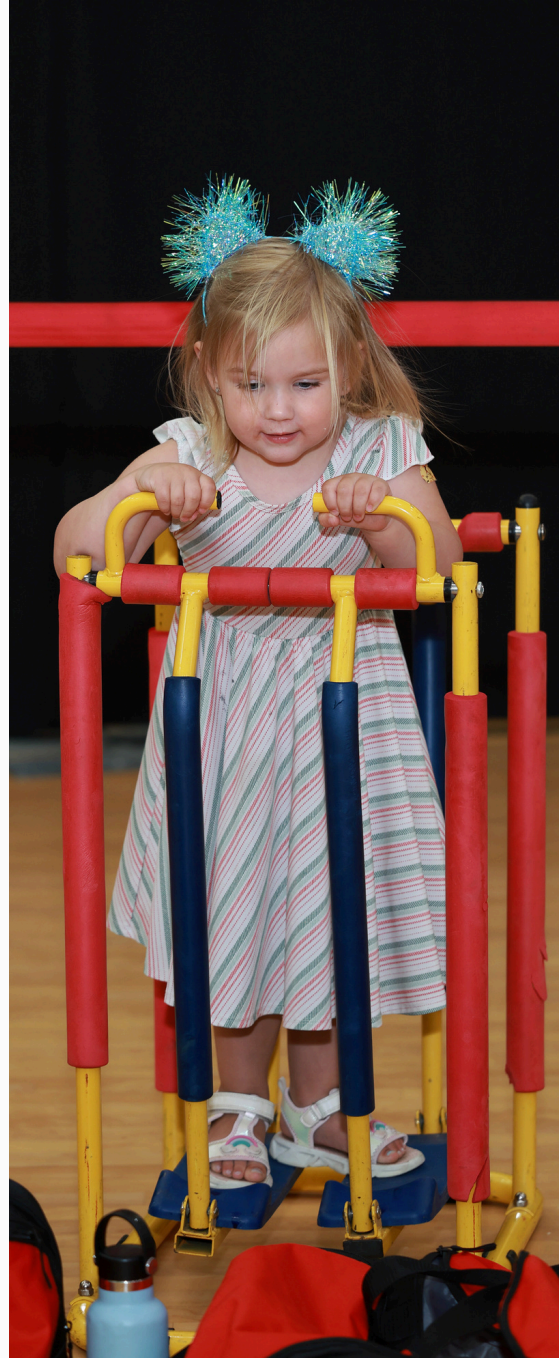
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Ashley Myers, Co-Secretary
Kennithya Ellis

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THANK YOU TO ALL OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS.
For a full list of foundation and corporate support, please
[visit our website.](#)

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