Latino Academy
of Workforce Development, Inc



Impact Report

2025

latinoacademywi.org | 2909 Landmark Pl. Suite #203, Madison, WI 53713 | (608) 310-4573

Trusted Leadership for All, Especially in Uncertain Times

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



Shiva Bidar-Sielaff

Dear Friends and Supporters

In a year marked by uncertainty — from economic pressures to political shifts — one thing remained constant: the Latino Academy's unwavering commitment to those we serve. No matter who walks through our doors, they are met with respect, opportunity, and the tools to pursue a stronger future.

This year reminded us why organizations like ours matter. Because when systems shake, communities look for places of trust, dignity, and action. Under the leadership of Dr. Nydia Martinez, the Latino Academy responded with calm resolve and creative adaptability — expanding access, deepening partnerships, and staying grounded in what matters most: people.

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On behalf of the Board, I want to thank our staff, students, volunteers, and partners. You are the reason the Latino Academy remains a beacon of stability and opportunity. Together, we lead — through challenge, and toward a stronger future.

With gratitude,
Shiva Bidar-Sielaff

Rooted in Community, Leading with Purpose

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dr. Nydia Martinez

Dear Community,

This was not an easy year for many of our students and their families across Wisconsin, and for communities navigating economic uncertainty and shifting policies. Yet what I witnessed every single day at the Latino Academy was this: resilience, brilliance, and unwavering hope.

In 2025, we doubled down on what works: education, industry-aligned training, and personalized support rooted in dignity. We also advanced innovation — expanding digital literacy, strengthening GED pathways, integrating digital and human skills across workforce programs, growing our CDL and construction training, enhancing employment support services, and building stronger bridges for young adults through career exploration and outreach. Guided by our students, we adapted quickly and remained grounded in our values.

In a time when many institutions pulled back, we moved forward. That's what leadership means to us. Not just leading through crisis, but building systems that last. I'm proud of our team, our board, and our entire community for showing what's possible when we stay grounded in purpose and responsive to need.

Thank you for walking with us and for believing in a future where every adult learner can succeed.

In solidarity and gratitude,
Dr. Nydia Martinez



Anchored in Purpose, Driving Economic Equity

Our Core Purpose

The Latino Academy of Workforce Development exists to educate and support adult learners of all backgrounds through high-quality education, workforce training, and personalized services — so they can pursue **family-sustaining employment** and contribute meaningfully to Wisconsin's workforce.

Why It Matters Now

Wisconsin is facing critical labor shortages in key sectors like construction, transportation, and hospitality. At the same time, many adults across our communities are seeking more than just a job; they're seeking stability, dignity, and the chance to provide for their families.

Our programs respond directly to this moment. We offer workforce-aligned training, GED/HSED preparation, ESL courses, digital literacy, career exploration for young adults, and hands-on employment support services. We connect learning to opportunity — and opportunity to economic mobility.

This isn't just about training individuals. It's about meeting the real workforce needs of our state while ensuring that no one is left behind. Through challenge, we lead — with equity, excellence, and care.

Our Programs

Transportation

442 Individuals Received CDL Support Services
53 Participants received CDL Training
46 CDL Participants attained a recognized credential
9 Diesel Technician graduates
25 Forklift graduates



Education

GED/HSED:
- **161** total participants

ESL:
- **143** ESL participants
- **380** ESL placement tests

Computer Literacy:
- **61** Digital Literacy trainees
- **47** participants in Artificial Intelligence workshops

Workforce Development

Construction Skills Training Program:
- **79** completed construction-related programs

Outreach and Career Exploration for Young Adults (16 to 24):
- **168** young adults

Hospitality:
- **47** ServSafe certified students

Foundational Entrepreneurship Development and Workshops:
- **264** participants

Employment Services

334 Participants have received 1:1 support
518 Career Fair participants
238 Participants across LAWD programs obtained employment



Program Highlights

Employment

Employment Support

Participants more frequently used technology to prepare for their appointments, making meetings more efficient for both participants and Latino Academy staff.

Before their appointments, participants completed an online form with their job history and key information. As a result of arriving better prepared, staff were able to serve more participants each week, increasing the program's overall reach and impact.

GED/HSED

GED/HSED Program

The GED/HSED program demonstrated strong outcomes in student retention, academic preparedness, and post-program success. A total of 58 students graduated in 2025 through the GED/HSED programs.

Through a strong partnership with Madison College, the program achieved a **90% student retention rate**, underscoring high levels of student engagement and persistence.

The program implemented targeted courses focused on basic computer literacy to ensure students could effectively navigate Madison College platforms and complete coursework. Additional instruction in employability, health education, writing, and civics strengthened students' academic foundations, increased confidence, and promoted readiness for college and career pathways.

Program Highlights

CDL

CDL Program

The Human Skills Development Series affirmed CDL participants' dignity and potential through multi-session programming. We recognize that workforce readiness is not only about technical ability but also about trust, communication, and adaptability.

This program increased workplace readiness by preparing participants with stronger communication skills, improved conflict navigation, and a greater understanding of professional expectations.

Learners left with greater confidence and self-advocacy as they increased their comfort in speaking up, asking questions, and seeking feedback - critical behaviors for safety and advancement.

Finally, through structured reflection and goal-setting, participants shift from short-term job focus to long-term career planning.

ESL

ESL Programs

Our English as a Second Language served 173 participants on 2025. Our online Saturday classes continued being in high demand, as they best accommodate students' busy schedules. One of the goals is for students to take ownership of their own progress and to increase their independence to find opportunities to practice and to complement the class instruction.

With that in mind we created several workshops to teach the students how to leverage Artificial Intelligence to serve as a tutor or a conversation partner to improve the specific skills the students need the most in their personal life or professional career.

During 2025, we partnered with two local businesses to bring English classes to their workplace: Chocolate Shoppe and Meriter Hospital. This allows us to address both the needs of the employees and the company to offer a more industry grounded learning experience.

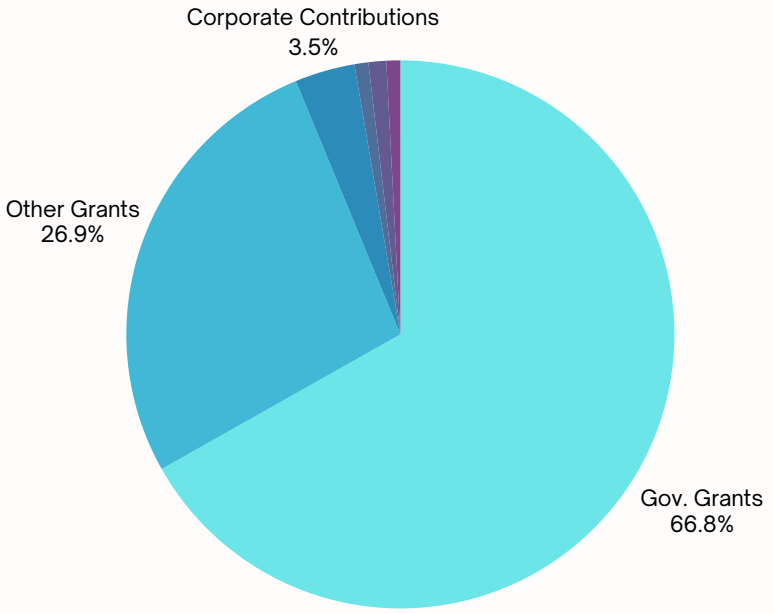
Financial Overview

In 2025, every financial decision we made was rooted in a single principle: putting our community first. Whether investing in advanced career pathways or enhancing student support services, we ensured our budget mirrored the real time needs of Wisconsin's workforce.

This year's success is a testament to the power of collective investment. Government backing, along with increased support from private donors and corporate allies, provided the flexibility to pivot where needed most. This year's financial choices reflect our unwavering commitment to invest in Madison's community.

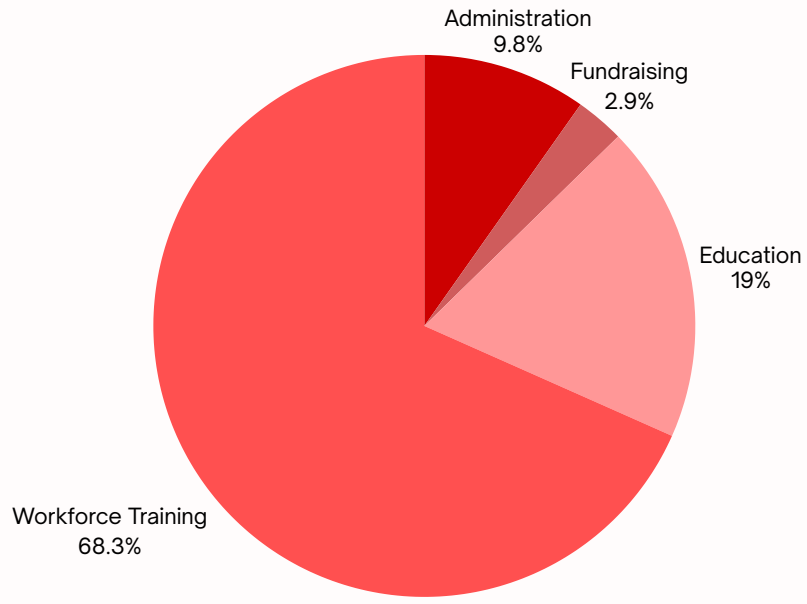
Revenues

Gov. Grants	$1,164,879
Other Grants	$469,723
Corporate Contributions	$61,737
Individual Contributions	$14,279
Program Income	$18,293
Other Income	$14,264
TOTAL	**$1,743,175**



Expenses

Administration	$169,699
Fundraising	$50,335
Education	$329,014
Workforce Training	$1,185,697
TOTAL	**$1,734,175**



Stories of Hope and Resilience



Alejandra Zaragoza

This quarter, we celebrated a milestone at the Latino Academy—our largest graduation to date, with 54 students earning their GED or HSED over the past year. Among them was **Alejandra Zaragoza**, whose journey to earning her High School Equivalency Diploma is a powerful testament to resilience, perseverance, and family support. Alejandra arrived in Madison over 20 years ago, determined to build a life for her family. From the beginning, she never let go of the dream of finishing high school, knowing it would open new doors for her future. She enrolled in a GED program years ago, but had to step away after receiving a cancer diagnosis—a life-altering moment that forced her to pause her education while raising her two daughters.

After recovering from cancer, Alejandra and her husband opened a family-run restaurant in Cross Plains. The business quickly became a full-time commitment, requiring long hours and dedication. Yet, Alejandra's goal of earning her diploma remained firmly in her heart. Recognizing the importance of her dream, her teenage daughters stepped in to help, taking on responsibilities at the restaurant two evenings a week so that Ale could attend class and complete her homework. This spring, Alejandra proudly earned her diploma. But she didn't stop there—she is now enrolled in a post-secondary CNA program, taking the next step toward expanding her career opportunities in the healthcare field. Her story is a reminder that it is never too late to invest in yourself, and that with determination and the support of loved ones, anything is possible.

Key Partners

Lowe's Foundation

The Latino Academy of Workforce Development was selected as the only Wisconsin recipient of a Lowe's Foundation Gable Grant, receiving $300,000 over two-years to expand access to skilled trades careers. This investment strengthens LAWD's bilingual construction training program, supporting industry-recognized certifications and career readiness for adult learners. The grant advances pathways into high-demand, living-wage jobs while helping address workforce shortages across the region.

Ascendium Education Group

Ascendium Education Group provided $300,000 over two-years in seed funding to help the Latino Academy of Workforce Development expand pathways to well-paying jobs in southcentral Wisconsin. This early investment allowed LAWD to strengthen and scale workforce training programs aligned with high-demand industries, creating greater access to credentials and career advancement for adult learners. Ascendium's support helped lay the foundation for sustainable growth and expanded economic opportunity in our region.

Oscar Rennebohm Foundation

The Oscar Rennebohm Foundation provided critical support to strengthen digital literacy pathways at the Latino Academy of Workforce Development. This investment allowed LAWD to intentionally integrate digital skills across workforce, employment, and adult education programming. As a result, digital literacy was successfully embedded into both the GED/HSED and CDL training programs, ensuring that students build the technology competencies required for today's workforce. This grant strengthened not just a single program, but the Academy's overall instructional model and long-term impact.

Roots & Wings Foundation

Roots & Wings Foundation provided a multi-year general operating grant to the Latino Academy of Workforce Development, strengthening the organization's long-term stability and capacity. This flexible investment supports core operations, allowing LAWD to sustain high-quality workforce training, adult education, and wraparound services while responding to emerging community needs. Their commitment reflects trust in LAWD's mission and leadership, and reinforces the importance of investing in organizational infrastructure, not just programs.

Looking Ahead: 2026 Priorities

2026 Priorities

The year ahead will continue to bring economic uncertainty and workforce challenges across Wisconsin. For many of the adults we serve, even small disruptions can create significant setbacks.

Our responsibility is clear: remain steady in our mission while adapting thoughtfully to what this moment requires.

In 2026, the Latino Academy will launch a three-year, $2,000,000 campaign to strengthen and stabilize access to ESL, GED preparation, digital literacy, workforce training, and employment retention services. This effort is not about rapid expansion. It is about protecting and improving the core programs that connect adult learners to meaningful employment and support Wisconsin's workforce.

We enter this campaign from a position of impact and credibility. Our graduates are contributing across key industries. Employers trust our training. Partnerships are strong.
What must grow now is our base of community support.

Historically sustained primarily through public funding and institutional grants, Latino Academy now seeks to broaden individual philanthropy to ensure long-term stability. This campaign's goal is intentionally measured and achievable — designed to reinforce what works and build resilience in uncertain times.

Through this effort, LAWD will:

- Maintain and expand ESL, GED, digital literacy, and workforce training programs
- Strengthen employment retention and advancement services so workers can stay and grow in their careers
- Serve hundreds of adult learners annually with improved long-term employment outcomes
- Support employers who depend on a skilled, reliable workforce

Most importantly, we will ensure that opportunity remains accessible — even when external forces threaten to disrupt pathways to work.

Leadership, in times like these, means staying grounded in purpose while building systems that last. In 2026, we remain committed to doing both — with clarity, care, and the steady resolve our community depends on.

Acknowledgments & Gratitude

Because This Work Belongs to All of Us



At the heart of the Latino Academy are the students and families who trust us with their goals, their time, and their futures.
To every adult learner who walked through our doors this year: thank you.

Thank you for your courage, your commitment, and your trust. Our mission exists because of you. Your determination to build stronger futures for your families inspires our work every single day.

To our families - thank you for believing in the power of education and for supporting your loved ones as they pursue new opportunities. Your trust is an honor we do not take lightly.

To our staff: thank you for carrying this mission forward with professionalism, compassion, and unwavering commitment. You show up each day ready to support every student and community member with dignity and care. Your dedication makes this work possible.

To our Advisory Council and Board of Directors: thank you for your steady guidance, thoughtful leadership, and deep belief in our mission. Your commitment ensures we remain accountable, strategic, and rooted in purpose.

To our funders, community partners, and employer partners: thank you for investing in people and possibility. Your support strengthens families, businesses, and Wisconsin's workforce. Together, we are building systems that open doors and create lasting opportunity.

This work is shared work.
And we are deeply grateful to walk it together.