

ANNUAL REPORT



SOCIAL
INNOVATION LAB

20 25

Prepared by
SIL Staff



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Organizational Snapshot

Mission

Social Innovation Lab is dedicated to driving community-led change through partnerships and research to build equitable, innovative, and sustainable systems.

Vision

We envision equipped and empowered communities leading lasting change from within.

Core Values

Integrity & Accountability

We hold ourselves to the highest standards, staying honest and transparent in everything we do.

Compassion & Respect

We approach people and communities with care, empathy, and dignity.

Equity & Inclusivity

We strive to ensure everyone has a voice and a fair opportunity to shape the systems that affect their lives.

Empowerment

We believe in equipping people with the tools and confidence to lead change from within their communities.

Sustainability

We build programs and partnerships that last, creating long-term impact beyond quick fixes.

Collaboration

We work together - with communities and partners - to spark ideas, share resources, and achieve more.





A Message from Our Executive Director



2025 was a year of growth, learning, and intentional foundation-building for Social Innovation Lab.

Throughout the year, **we expanded local partnerships, launched new summer food sites, welcomed new board members, and increased our visibility**—particularly through participation in community events in Wichita. Internally, we focused on restructuring and rebranding the organization, strengthening our systems, and building a more structured and sustainable team.

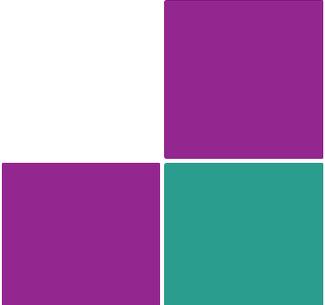
One of our greatest challenges was building the organization’s foundation as a business while continuing to expand our reach. We worked intentionally to help communities better understand who we are and what we do, navigated staff turnover and funding uncertainty in the spring, and welcomed new interns over the summer—all while remaining responsive to community needs.

Our biggest wins reaffirmed the importance of this work. During the summer months, we **provided over 1,500 meals to food-insecure youth**, ensuring access to nutritious, USDA-aligned meals when school was out. We also hosted our first public nonprofit mixer, creating space for local organizations to connect and collaborate. In addition, we launched a new website and refreshed our brand to better reflect our mission and future direction.

As we look ahead, we remain hopeful and bold—grounded in our values and committed to community-led solutions that create lasting change.

With gratitude and determination,

Sarah Simister
Executive Director



Programs & Impact

Better Futures Projects

Healthy Relationships & Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention

Purpose

To provide evidence-based healthy relationships and adolescent pregnancy prevention education to high-school aged youth across Kansas.

Who We Serve

High school youth, primarily rural students and justice-involved youth

Where We Serve

63 counties across the state of Kansas

2025 Impact

- 300 high school students from rural communities
- Approximately 120 incarcerated youth
- 40 youth reached through community partners in Wichita
- Year-round programming using the *Love Notes* curriculum

Key Partners

Family & Consumer Science Teachers, KS FCCLA Foundation, The Dibble Institute, The Center, Youth Crossover Ministry, Sedgwick County Juvenile Detention Facility, The Equity Initiative, Inc. Urban Prep Academy, Seeds of Life Summer Camp

Funded By

Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Family & Youth Service Bureau

Grant Programs

Personal Responsibility Education Program (K-PREP)

Title V Competitive Sexual Risk Avoidance Program (KBFCP and KTHP)



Programs & Impact

That Pop-Up Restaurant

Summer Food Access for Youth

Purpose

To provide free, nutritious, USDA-aligned meals to youth ages 1-18 through trusted community partners while reducing stigma associated with traditional summer meal program.

Who We Serve

Youth and families - youth ages 1-18 eat free, and adults may purchase meals for \$5

Where We Serve

Sedgwick County, primarily ZIP code 67214

2025 Impact

- 1,532 meals served
- Breakfast, lunch, and dinner sites
- Operated June - August 2025

Key Partners

The Center, First Church of God in Christ, The Equity Initiative, Inc. Kansas State Department of Education

Funded By

Partial funding provided Kansas Health Foundation and Kroger



Community & Partnerships Highlights



Social Innovation Lab works alongside schools, community organizations, and public systems to build and implement programs, and provide support where it is most needed.

Partners Include

- The Center
- Kansas FCCLA
- Urban Prep Academy
- Sedgwick County Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF)
- Family & Consumer Science Teachers
- First Church of God In Christ
- Seeds of Life and Youth Crossover Ministry, St. Mark's United Methodist Church
- The Equity Initiative, Inc.
- Violence Impact
- ICT SOS
- Salud y Bienestar
- The Dibble Institute
- Midwest Evaluation & Research

Partnership Roles

- Implementation of *Love Notes*
- Program hosting, facilitation, and coordination
- Execution and supervision of *That Pop-Up Restaurant* sites
- Program evaluation and data collection
- Collaboration on new and refined projects and programs

Equity, Innovation & Learning

In 2025, Social Innovation Lab strengthened its commitment to listening first and adapting in real time. We view community voice not as feedback at the end of a program, but as guidance throughout implementation.

Through our work at the Juvenile Detention Facility, we learned that traditional lecture-based delivery was not the most effective approach for youth with significant lived experience. Participants responded more meaningfully to hands-on activities, discussion-based exercises, and space for dialogue. By shifting from instruction-heavy sessions to interactive, relationship-centered facilitation, engagement increased and conversations became more authentic.

We also learned that trust must be intentionally built before impact can occur. As facilitators formed consistent relationships with youth, participants began sharing deeper challenges and experiences. This allowed sessions to be tailored in ways that were responsive rather than prescriptive. The lesson was clear: flexibility, cultural humility, and relational trust are essential components of effective youth programming.

Through That Pop-Up Restaurant, we continued refining how and where meals are distributed. We learned that access is not only about location—it is also about dignity, consistency, and trusted partnerships. Ongoing feedback from site partners and families helped us better understand scheduling needs, meal preferences, and barriers to participation. These insights inform adjustments each summer to ensure the program remains community-centered and stigma-free.

Within Better Futures Projects, we strengthened a sustainable network of Family & Consumer Science teachers and community partners across Kansas. One key learning has been the importance of equipping facilitators with adaptable tools rather than rigid scripts. By empowering educators to contextualize content for their specific student populations, we increased relevance while maintaining fidelity to evidence-based curriculum.

Equity, Innovation & Learning

Across programs, 2025 reinforced several core lessons:

- Youth engagement improves when learning is interactive and participant-led.
- Trust-building is foundational to meaningful outcomes.
- Community feedback must shape implementation, not just evaluation.
- Strong local partnerships are critical for sustainability and scale.
- Organizational growth requires parallel investment in internal systems and external relationships.

These insights are shaping how SIL approaches 2026—with deeper intentionality, stronger partnerships, and a continued commitment to equity-driven adaptation.



Voices from the Community

"One of the most meaningful outcomes I've seen involved a 12th-grade student who had experienced significant trauma earlier in her life. Through her participation in this class, she rebuilt her self-esteem, developed healthier boundaries, and recognized her own value. She graduated early and became the first person in her family to earn a high school diploma."

– Amy Turner, Family & Consumer Science Partner Educator, Great Bend High School

"I had so many students interested that I had to cap the group at 10. Keeping the group smaller allowed me to provide the individualized support students truly needed."

– Family & Consumer Science Partner Educator

"Partnering with SIL has been a powerful extension of the outreach and service work happening through First Church of God in Christ here in the 67214 community. Together, we have been able to provide consistent meals, meaningful engagement, and a safe space for families who rely on these resources. Their program has strengthened our ability to serve with excellence, helping us meet both the physical and spiritual needs of our neighborhood while building trust and connection within the community we are called to support."

– Joyea Marshall-Crowley, First Church GIC

"Serving on the board of Social Innovation Lab has deepened my belief in the power of community-led change. What inspires me most is how SIL grounds bold, sustainable programs in research and authentic community partnerships. From my very first conversation with Sarah, I saw a rare combination of passion and discipline. It was a clear commitment not just to ideas, but to the power of building systems that last. I believe in SIL because they don't just imagine a better future; they equip and empower communities to create it. I'm excited to support their work as they continue building equitable, innovative, and sustainable systems from the inside out."

– Kelly Ellenz, Board Vice-Chair, Future Forward Wichita

"Social Innovation Lab holds a close place in my heart. The first draw to service here was Sarah Simister, our director. Her passion for helping others and creating a better, non-discriminatory culture in Wichita truly inspired me to step up and be a part of it! What I've loved most about SIL is that we aren't limited to one way of helping our community. We get the opportunity to impact and partner with lots of different organizations creating positive and sustainable change. From meal services to relationship education to making sure ALL kids get what they need to live a healthy life. I look forward to continuing to grow with Social Innovation Lab and creating more positive change in Wichita and Kansas alike!"

– Jena Curtis, Board Chair, The Heat with Jena

Financial Snapshot

(Unaudited)

Total Revenue: \$477,224

- Federal grants: \$466,007
- State/local grants: \$11,085
- Individual giving: \$130

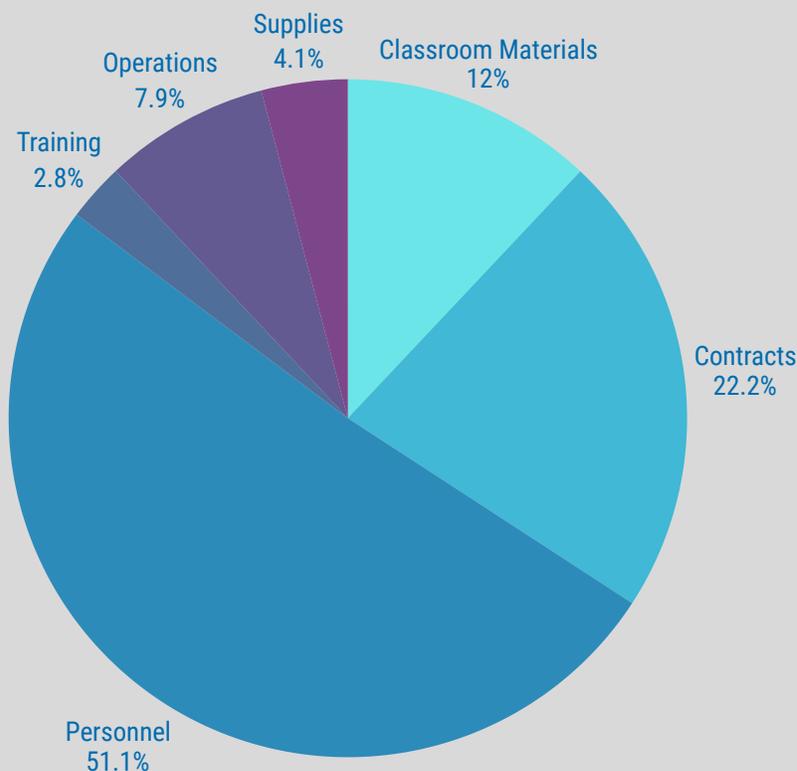
Total Expenses: \$468,802

- Program expenses: \$455,931
- Administrative expenses: \$12,871

Financial Context

In 2025, Social Innovation Lab was primarily supported through federal funding. This year was intentionally focused on strengthening internal systems and preparing for diversified fundraising in future years.

2025 Expenses



Thank You to Our Funders

With Gratitude

Social Innovation Lab's work in 2025 was made possible through the generous support of public and private funders who invested in Kansas youth, families, and communities.

Their partnership allowed us to:

- Deliver healthy relationship education across 63 counties
- Provide over 1,500 nutritious meals to youth during the summer months
- Strengthen internal systems to ensure long-term sustainability

We are deeply grateful for the trust placed in our mission and for the shared commitment to empowering communities from within.

- Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Family & Youth Services Bureau
- Kansas Health Foundation
- Kansas State Department of Education
- Kroger
- Kelly Martin and Rent One, Great Expectations Fund



KANSAS HEALTH
FOUNDATION



This annual report was made possible by Funding Opportunity Number HHS-2024-ACF-ACYF-TS-0040 from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Its contents are solely the responsibility of Social Innovation Lab and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Governance & Capacity



Board of Directors*

- Chair: Jena Curtis
- Vice-Chair: Kelly Ellenz
- Secretary: Evelyn Garcia
- Treasurer: Logan Matzke

Staff

- Sarah Simister – Executive Director
- LaWanda DeShazer – Community Engagement Specialist
- Madison Densberger – Project Director
- Lillian Mohling – Food Insecurity Program Director (AmeriCorps VISTA)

Capacity-Building Highlights

- Expanded board leadership
- Added Community Engagement Specialist LaWanda DeShazer, whose passion for community-centered work strengthened SIL's outreach and impact
- Joined local and regional professional networks to strengthen partnerships and increase collaboration across sectors
- Increased participation in community coalitions and convenings to ensure SIL's programs align with broader community priorities
- Invested in relationship-building across Wichita and statewide networks to expand long-term sustainability

*All Board Meeting Minutes are accessible on our website.

*2026 Board Meeting Dates: February 23, May 18, August 17, November 9

Looking Ahead: 2026

In 2026, Social Innovation Lab will continue strengthening partnerships, expanding community-led initiatives, and building a more diversified and sustainable funding base across Kansas.

We will deepen relationships with schools, community organizations, and public systems to ensure programs are not only delivered—but embedded within trusted local networks. By investing in long-term partnerships rather than one-time collaborations, we aim to strengthen local capacity and increase program continuity.

We will also continue refining and expanding initiatives that respond directly to community needs. This includes strengthening youth programming through Better Futures Projects, improving access and coordination within That Pop-Up Restaurant, and creating more opportunities for cross-sector collaboration through convenings and relationship-building events. As we grow, we will remain committed to listening first and adapting programs in ways that reflect lived experience.

Organizationally, 2026 will focus on sustainability. Building on a year largely supported by federal funding, we will intentionally diversify revenue through local partnerships, philanthropic support, and individual giving. Strengthening internal systems, board leadership, and operational infrastructure will remain a priority to ensure long-term stability.

Above all, we will continue advancing our mission: equipping and empowering communities to lead lasting change from within.

The work continues—and we're excited for what comes next.

Have questions or interested in partnering with us? Reach out – we're always open to conversation.



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