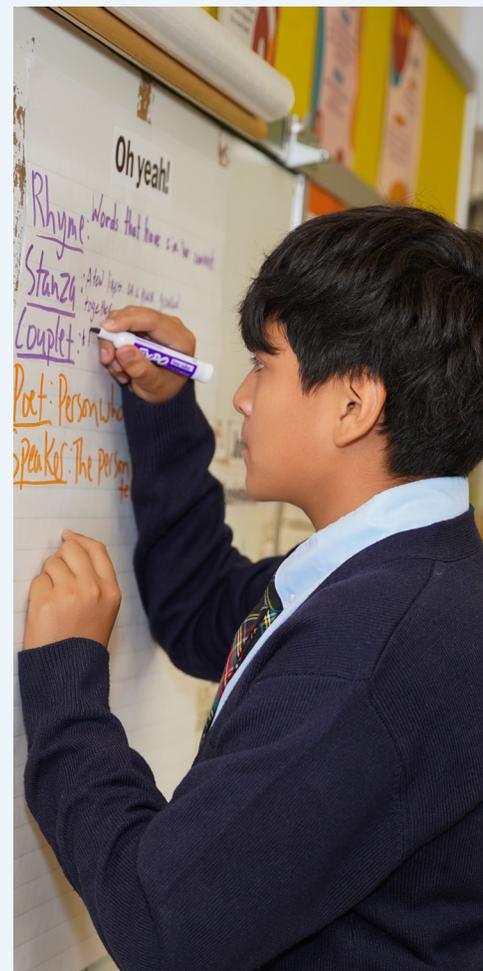




# CITY FORWARD COLLECTIVE

A Great Milwaukee School  
for Every Milwaukee Child



Annual Report  
2024-2025

# OUR IMPACT



## CLOSING FUNDING GAPS

Since 2023, we've helped secure more than \$400M in cumulative funding increases for Milwaukee's nearly 50,000 public charter and private school students.



## CALLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AT MPS

Through our advocacy partner, CFC Action Fund, we called for accountability for the 2024 MPS Referendum — advocating for transparency and clear planning.



## CLOSING THE HONESTY GAP

We were leaders in the effort to restore high standards by warning policy makers that DPI's lowered benchmarks were giving an inaccurate picture of school proficiency.



## ADDRESSING EARLY LITERACY CHALLENGES

During a presentation about 2024 NAEP scores, CFC raised an alarm about the education crisis. Following this, the Milwaukee Mayor convened 75 local leaders into a city-wide Reading Coalition.



## SUPPORTING SCHOOL LEADERS

We coordinate city-wide collaboratives for and serve as the accurate Milwaukee go-to sources for policy insights, support and accountability for school leaders.



**There is no better purveyor of educational knowledge, the reality of where things are at and ability to advocate to improve things than City Forward Collective." – Henry Tyson, Superintendent of St. Marcus Schools**



Dear Friends and Supporters,

As a parent and a product of Milwaukee schools — both public and private — I know firsthand the transformative power of a high-quality education. That's why I'm proud to share City Forward Collective's annual report — my first as CFC's Executive Director — showcasing the progress we've made together toward our vision: a great Milwaukee school for every Milwaukee family.



Together, we're securing our city's future through a relentless commitment to advancing educational opportunity. We've turned data into action, publishing our State of Milwaukee Education analysis and regular polling on K12 education. We're driving critical conversations about accountability and excellence in our schools, sounding the alarm on DPI's lowering of expectations and our city's last-place NAEP rankings.

Our powerful advocacy in Madison has helped deliver real wins: \$400 million in additional state funding over the last two budget cycles. That's \$3,500 per student, directly benefiting nearly 50,000 Milwaukee students, which schools are using to increase teacher salaries and provide necessary classroom supports.

We know we don't do this work alone — we're proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with parents and school leaders in our efforts to advance quality school options. LaToya Woods, our Parent Engagement Coordinator, conducted 150 one-on-one meetings with parents, equipping them to testify at legislative hearings and engage directly with policymakers like State Senator Dora Drake. Our School Leader Collaboratives, designed by Robb Rauh, have supported over 20 leaders monthly, while our national learning visit to Indianapolis strengthened our collective capacity.

Milwaukee's children — my own two girls, and each of the nearly 110,000 students educated in classrooms across our city every day — are limitless in their brilliance. Each and every one of them deserves nothing less than excellence.

At City Forward Collective, we're committed to being bold and unapologetic advocates for our students and schools, ensuring that we deliver on the inherent promise in every Milwaukee child. Thank you for standing with us in this critical work.

For All of Milwaukee's Kids,

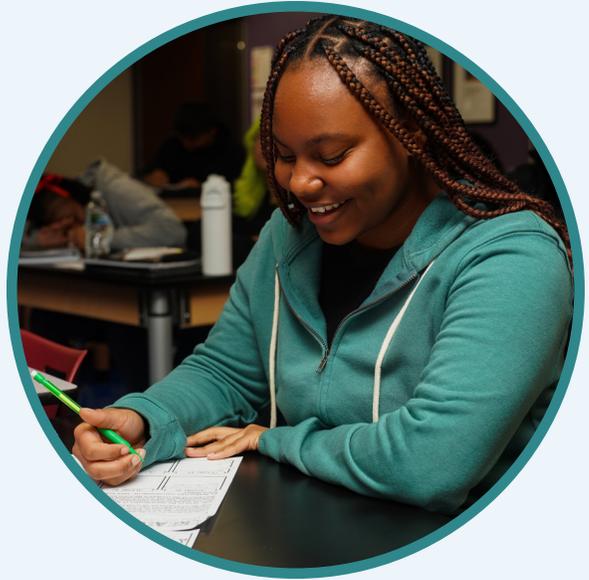
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colleston Morgan, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Colleston Morgan, Jr.



## MISSION

City Forward Collective's mission is to secure Milwaukee's future by transforming the city's educational ecosystem.



## VISION

We envision a city where every Milwaukee child receives an excellent education that prepares them to thrive at the high-quality school of their choice.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### **Children First:**

Every child is capable, and children must be at the center of how we make decisions and design systems.

### **Power of Schools:**

High-quality schools transform students' lives and prepare them for success in life.

### **Choice for Families:**

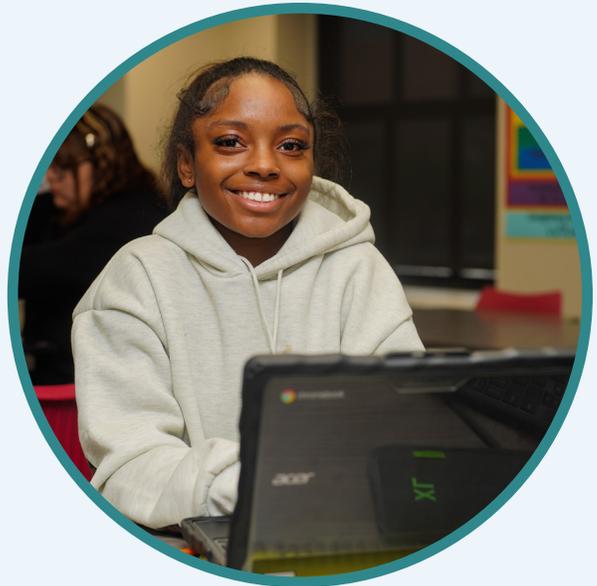
Families must have access to schools that best cultivate each child's unique talents, recognizing that choice is a means to quality.

### **Accountability for Outcomes:**

Those entrusted with the care and education of our city's children are responsible for delivering promised outcomes.

### **Autonomy in Approach:**

Educations closest to students must have the authority, flexibility, and resources they need to deliver a high-quality education.



# OUR STRATEGY



## WE INFORM

We inform our community through insightful and incisive policy and data analysis.



## WE ENGAGE

We engage through convening Collaboratives of our core stakeholders: parents/families, educators, civic/community leaders, policymakers, and elected officials.



## WE ADVOCATE

We advocate for policies and support candidates and elected officials that champion excellent schools for all in partnership with our affiliate, CFC Action Fund.



## WE CATALYZE

We catalyze the growth of excellent schools for all Milwaukee students.





# ACTIONABLE DATA ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

By turning data into action and raising public awareness, City Forward Collective drives accountability and high standards across Milwaukee schools.



## SOUNDING THE ALARM

Our analysis of NAEP results revealed Milwaukee’s last-place ranking in Math and Reading.



## INSIGHTFUL INFORMATION

Our *Milwaukee Schools by Numbers* report tracks enrollment and funding across sectors.



## A TRUSTED VOICE

Through op-eds, panels, weekly social media posts and blog posts to our over 500 subscribers, we have shaped public dialogue on education.



<b>Colleston's Corner</b>	Cleaning Up A Mess: DPI's School & District Report Card Revamp Better Process, But Unfinished Work Remains
	The Truth About Milwaukee Schools: Looking Beyond Lowered Standards CFC's Assessment on 2023-24 School Performance Data

## **milwaukee journal sentinel**

### **OPINION: Wisconsin school choice isn't controversial among students and families it helps**

*We've noticed that parent choice is not controversial for the families it was designed for and the students who truly need it.*

### **Black and Hispanic families in Milwaukee deserve better than status quo in school system**

*We must break from the 'MPS versus the rest' mentality and go beyond simply signaling support for one sector or the other as a shield from criticism*



### **Opinion: When will our kids become a true priority for Milwaukee?**

### **Wisconsin must follow the lead of Florida and Tennessee on how it funds schools | Opinion**



# ELEVATING PARENT VOICE

We work with parents to help them become strong advocates for high-quality education.



## INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

150 parents received 1:1 coaching from our Parent Engagement Coordinator.



## SKILL BUILDING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

30 parents joined monthly Collaboratives to strengthen advocacy and leadership skills.



## ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Parents met with legislators and shared testimony to advance educational equity.



*LaToya Woods, Parent Engagement Coordinator, testifying at the Joint Finance Committee Hearing*

# 30

parents attended five monthly Collaboratives

# 60

parents attended the Joint Finance Committee Hearing

# 150

1:1 Parent meetings



**CFC gave me better insight into the funding discrepancies with our children — we don't receive as much as a public school would. There is a lot of important information that I or parents and families like me would have missed. Its been very informative for me."** – Zasha Carter, Parent – LUMIN Schools

*Zasha Carter, Parent – LUMIN Schools*



*Parent leaders hosting research meeting with Senator Dora Drake*



# BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS SECTORS

We create the space for leaders to come together, across sectors, to solve their most pressing challenges.



## RESOURCE HUB

School leaders rely on CFC for policy insights and accountability.



## COLLABORATIVES

20+ leaders attended monthly workshops for professional growth and policy learning.



## NATIONAL VISITS

Annual high-quality school visits to cities like Indianapolis (2024) and New Orleans (2025) spotlight best practices.



*Robb Rauh, Senior Advisor speaking at our School Leader Back to School event*



**The Indianapolis HQSV was “both inspiring and reaffirming. My team is better equipped to enhance outcomes for our scholars and staff. Additionally, the opportunity to connect with other leaders within the city further strengthens our collective capacity to drive meaningful change for scholars in our city.”**

*– High Quality School Visit Participant*





# POWERFUL ADVOCACY FOR BETTER POLICY



Together with our 501c4 advocacy partner, CFC Action Fund, we are bold advocates for the policies that lead to the best educational outcomes.



## LEADING THE WAY TO EQUAL FUNDING

Parent mobilization and advocacy secured hundreds of millions in new funding, raising teacher pay and expanding services.



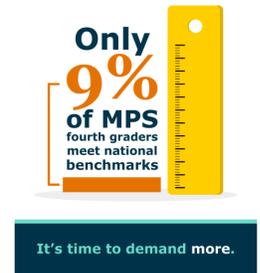
## ADDRESSING THE HONESTY GAP

When state officials tried to lower standards, CFC exposed the process and preserved academic integrity.



## HOLDING MPS ACCOUNTABLE

We analyzed MPS' budget and called for transparency and accountability around sound stewardship of financial resources.



# \$400M = \$3500/pupil



Our relationship with CFC has been invaluable to Rocketship Wisconsin. Their leadership in the Equal Funding Campaign helped close the gap for charter schools, making our schools more sustainable and ensuring we can serve students more efficiently with greater classroom resources." – Kadeem Ruiz, Executive Director of Rocketship Wisconsin



# EXPANDING ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION



## SCHOOL QUALITY GAP

CFC invests in schools to address the school quality gap — the fact that there are not enough high-quality schools to serve all of Milwaukee’s students.



## CITY FUND INVESTMENT

We are proud to have brought The City Fund, a national funder, back to invest in Milwaukee’s schools, helping to launch the Catalyze Impact Fund.



## IMPACT INVESTMENT FUND

These investments help schools plan, expand, and merge strategically to serve more students.



**Growing Tenor Journal Square from 300 students to 500 students requires an increased investment in operating expenses to ensure we continue to meet and exceed the academic, social-emotional, and safety needs of our students as enrollment grows. City Forward Collective’s Catalyze Fund grant helps us meet these needs as we expand, empowering students to jumpstart their futures.”**

*– Jodi Weber, Chief Executive Officer of Seeds of Health*

# CITY FORWARD COLLECTIVE FINANCIALS

Revenue	2024	2023
<b>Exchange Transactions</b>		
Program Service Revenue	\$ 13,500	\$ 346,158
<b>Non Exchange Transactions</b>		
Contributions	\$ 1,172,791	\$ 1,918,859
Grant Revenue		
Change in discount on loans receivable	\$ 29,054	\$ 14,718
<b>Investment Activity</b>		
Interest & Dividends, net	\$ 114,419	\$ 93,580
Realized gain on investments	\$ 378,927	\$ 50,588
Unrealized gain on investments	\$ 145,868	\$ 183,925
<b>Other Revenue</b>		
Interest on loans receivable	\$ 26,675	\$ 30,576
Miscellaneous revenue	\$ 18,280	
Cost sharing contract revenue	\$ 125,929	
<b>Total revenues, gains, and other support</b>	<b>\$ 1,733,707</b>	<b>\$ 2,902,933</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Program Services	\$ 1,212,894	\$ 2,883,836
General and Administrative	\$ 270,359	\$ 335,966
Fundraising	\$ 106,348	\$ 270,105
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,589,601</b>	<b>\$ 3,489,907</b>
<b>Change in net assets from operations</b>	<b>\$ 144,106</b>	<b>\$ (586,974)</b>
<b>Net assets, beginning of year</b>	<b>\$ 6,052,505</b>	<b>\$ 6,639,479</b>
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b>\$ 6,196,611</b>	<b>\$ 6,052,505</b>

Learn more about our work by subscribing to our Substack



Colleston Morgan, Jr.  
*Executive Director*  
[Colleston.morgan@cityforwardcollective.org](mailto:Colleston.morgan@cityforwardcollective.org)

Blaque Robinson  
*Development Director*  
[Blaque.robinson@cityforwardcollective.org](mailto:Blaque.robinson@cityforwardcollective.org)



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## City Forward Collective Staff

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Spencer Schien, Senior Director — Strategic Investments

Robb Rauh, Senior Advisor

Chelsea Cross, Communications Director

Blaque Robinson, Development Director

Gennea Gaughan, Finance & Operations Manager

LaToya Woods, Parent Engagement Coordinator