

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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# LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends and Partners,

2024 was a landmark year for ConnectED, defined by growth and resilience. We welcomed our largest cohort yet, 17 Fellows, joining 35 alumni to impact 12,800 students across 170 communities. Their projects addressed critical needs in technology, education, nutrition, and infrastructure, all rooted in community-driven solutions.

A historic milestone was the legal registration of **Asociación ConnectED Guatemala**, further grounding us in rural realities and enabling new partnerships, advocacy, and sustainability aligned with our core values of proximity, relevance, and action.

We refined our mission, vision, and theory of change to emphasize local educators as drivers of real system change; a shift grounded on lived experience and proven results. Our Fellows reinforced this ownership by mobilizing 50–70% of project costs from their communities, reflecting genuine commitment and engagement.

We marked the conclusion of our 2023 Fellows' two-year program, showing clear gains in attendance and learning, while our 2024 Fellows launched new community-led initiatives fueled by local knowledge and leadership.

Looking to 2025, we move forward with gratitude and determination. To our donors, partners, advisors, and champions: thank you for making this transformative journey possible.

With deep gratitude,



ISA LAPORTE  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER





## REDEFINING OUR WHY:

### Centering Local Leadership for Lasting Change

In 2024, we revisited and renewed our mission and vision to reflect what we now know to be true: transformational change in education begins when local education leaders are trusted to lead. These refined statements emerged from a three-day strategy retreat in Antigua, where our team reflected on field experiences, community insights, and Fellows' leadership journeys.

**Vision:** A world where thriving rural communities equitably and sustainably meet their existing and future challenges through a network of resilient leaders.

**Mission:** ConnectED catalyzes a network of educational leaders to transform their communities in rural Latin America.

# REDEFINING OUR WHY...

Our revised **Theory of Change** is rooted in a simple, powerful belief:

If dynamic education leaders are supported to lead change through capacity development, resources, and locally driven solutions, **then** they can address educational barriers in their communities, **which will result** in improved learning outcomes and opportunities for youth, while also enhancing the livelihoods and leadership of local educators, **ultimately** creating thriving, self-reliant communities.

This evolution wasn't just conceptual; it directly shaped our work in 2024. We launched **Phase 7: Elevate!**, a new stage of our Fellows Model focused on long-term leadership development and alumni mentorship. Fellows are not only implementing impactful education projects but are also actively gaining influence within local community institutions. They are driving meaningful change beyond the realm of education, advancing critical issues such as health, equity, and environmental sustainability. Through mentoring others, they multiply the impact of local leadership across the network, fostering a ripple effect that strengthens communities and promotes holistic, lasting transformation.

As we move forward, our mission continues to guide every step we take, ensuring that those closest to the challenges are leading the way toward lasting change.



# 2024 FELLOWS COHORT



In 2024, we welcomed our largest and most diverse cohort to date: 17 educators from schools across Sololá, Quiché, Chimaltenango, and Quetzaltenango, representing K'iche', Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi', and Poqomchi' communities.

These Fellows believe that change begins at the local level. They are leading projects such as inclusive education centers, virtual classrooms, accessible school kitchens, and creative learning spaces, each rooted in the belief that every community voice matters.

They are not only leading today's efforts, they are shaping the future of education and community leadership from within.



FELLOWS



SCHOOLS



STUDENTS  
REACHED



COMMUNITIES  
SERVED



COMMUNITY IN-KIND  
CONTRIBUTIONS

## 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHT



**Project:** Inclusive Resource Center

**Location:** El Edén, Palestina de los Altos, Quetzaltenango

When Jovita envisioned a truly inclusive space for students with disabilities, she saw more than a room; she imagined a caring, community-driven ecosystem. From the start, she brought together teachers, parents, students, and local leaders to shape this vision.

The result was the Inclusive Resource Center: a vibrant hub with audiovisual tools, adaptive games, and specialized resources supporting over 130 students, including 52 with special needs. But its real power is in shared ownership. Jovita mobilized working groups, secured local donations, partnered with the municipality and NGOs, and led volunteers to bring the center to life.

The center's opening was a true celebration of collective effort. Now, it serves not just the school, but the whole community. Parents co-lead training, teachers experiment with new methods, and everyone takes pride in the space they helped build. Jovita's leadership shows that lasting change happens when communities create solutions together.

*“Seeing the equipment installed, the technology, the learning toys, the tables, it was like watching a shared dream materialize. We knew then that every effort had been worth it.” - Fellow Jovita*

# 2024 PROJECT HIGHLIGHT



**Project:** Computer Center

**Location:** Asentamiento Las Violetas, Nebaj, Quiché

María Olga saw a vital need in her remote school: digital literacy. With little access to technology, students were at a disadvantage. Rather than seeing this as a hurdle, she turned it into a community mission.

Together with parents, teachers, and local allies, she built a computer center from scratch. Families donated funds and labor; students helped paint and clean; local experts provided training. The result is a fully equipped tech lab with laptops, furniture, and ongoing training, all powered by the community's effort.

The project's real success is its sustainability. Parents and teachers co-created a maintenance plan, and students regularly receive tech orientation. For many, this was their first experience with computers, now an integral part of their education.

*"When students entered the lab for the first time, they were wide-eyed with wonder, curious, nervous, and excited. Today, they log in with confidence. This space belongs to them, and to the future we're building together."*

- Fellow María Olga

# BUILDING MORE THAN A ROOF: HOW COMMUNITY-LED ACTION TRANSFORMED A SCHOOL IN SOLOLÁ



**Project:** Roofing the Multipurpose School Court

**Location:** Aldea Godínez, San Andrés Semetabaj, Sololá

*Keny's story is a powerful reminder of what's possible when leadership is shared, and when solutions are built with communities, not just for them. "This project made me feel useful to my community," Keny reflected. "Seeing everyone come together with pride and purpose, that's something I'll never forget."*  
- Fellow Keny

In the highlands of Sololá, ConnectED Fellow Keny Ordoñez faced a common but critical problem: students at Aldea Godínez school were falling ill from sun and rain exposure during outdoor activities, leading to chronic absenteeism. His bold solution, to build a roof over the multipurpose court, became a catalyst for true community transformation.

This wasn't a solo effort. Families contributed labor and meals, the municipal government funded half the project, and the Ministry of Education provided technical support. Local leaders and parents gained new skills in negotiation and project management, emphasizing local investment to attract allies. As Keny put it, "It's easier to gain allies when the community takes the first step."

More than shelter, this project sparked a powerful shift: families, teachers, and students took ownership of their school's future. A maintenance plan was created, and renting out the court to sustain upkeep is being explored.

# A CHALLENGE & OUR RESPONSE:

## Where Inequality Persists, Local Leaders Rise

Educational inequality continues to shape the lives of people in rural Guatemala and across Latin America, particularly within Indigenous communities, where most still lack access to inclusive, relevant, and quality education.

In 2024, one of our Fellows faced harassment simply for leading as an Indigenous woman, a powerful reminder that true change goes beyond infrastructure and requires transforming how leadership is recognized and supported. Given these challenges, we recognized the need to introduce a gender equity component into our core curriculum, co-designed and implemented by a Women's Leadership Council in 2025. The initiative was discussed with all Fellows, who strongly embraced the idea as a valuable tool to confront bias in their communities, and spark broader conversations about inclusive leadership.

**ConnectED's approach remains simple yet powerful: we trust local leaders, equip them with tools and resources, and stand with them as they build the education systems their communities deserve.**



# RESEARCH & LEARNING

In 2024, an external consulting company completed a three-year strategic review funded by the Leopold Bachmann Foundation, combining data with community input to strengthen the Fellows Model. The review focused on performance versus expectations, perceived impact, and scaling considerations based on primary and secondary data, including surveys, interviews, and case studies.

**Review Highlights:** 44 Fellow surveys; Interviews with students, educators, parents, and Indigenous leaders; Internal + global research reviewed

## Key Insights

- 100% of Fellows said the Program met or exceeded expectations; 68% said it surpassed expectations.
- 98% affirmed maximum student benefit, citing gains in motivation, attendance, and community-focused projects.
- 79.5% reported stronger leadership skills, reflecting lasting capacity building and community mobilization.

Change takes trust, time, and courage. In 2024, we saw how co-designed solutions, backed by data and rooted in equity, lead to deeper community ownership and long-term impact.



# 2024 FELLOWS SUMMIT



In December, 32 ConnectED Fellows from the 2023 and 2024 cohorts gathered in Panajachel, Sololá, for a transformative three-day Summit to reflect, connect, and celebrate their shared journey. This annual event marked the graduation of the 2023 cohort into the Alumni Network. It launched Phase 7: Elevate!, focusing on long-term leadership in gender equality, inclusive leadership, systems change, sustainability, and peer mentorship.

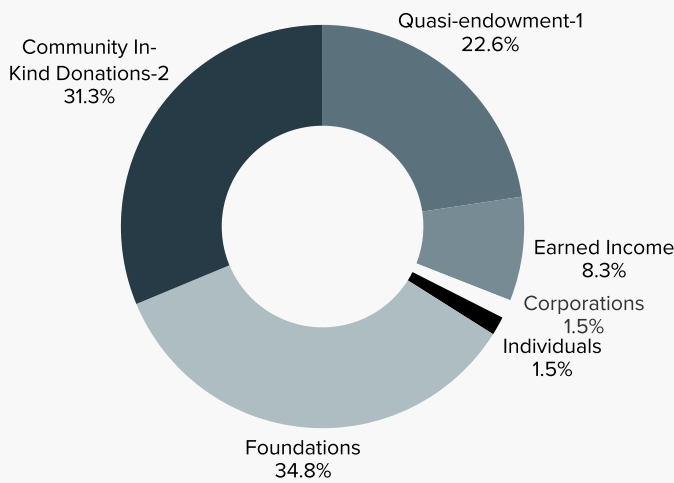
Since 2020, 52 educators have joined this vibrant, collaborative network, strengthening leadership and enhancing rural education in Guatemala. Fellows have shared knowledge, confronted challenges, and co-created locally rooted solutions, driving visible impact, including improved academic performance, increased scholarships, reduced dropout rates, and stronger community involvement.

To be a Fellow means becoming a bridge, guide, and force for positive change, leading with empathy, learning continuously, and embracing a collective vision of inclusive, community-centered quality education. The Summit celebrated this powerful journey of growth, resilience, and lasting local leadership.

**This leadership network continues to grow, proving that when local capacities are strengthened, change is not only possible, it is already happening.**

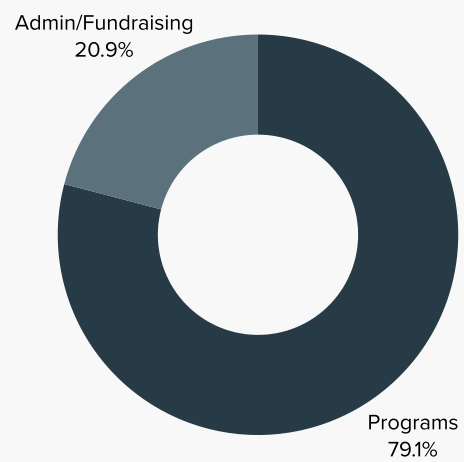


# FINANCIALS



### Annual Revenue

\$466,614.33



### Annual Expenses

\$452,105.84

1- The quasi-endowment is currently held as a reserve, accessed sparingly and not meant for routine use, contributing to the organization's pursuit of long-term financial sustainability through various income streams. Use of the fund to cover any annual operational, or one time costs is at the discretion and approval of the ConnectED Board of Directors.

2- The In-Kind donations reflect the full value of community in-kind contribution (labor, volunteer time, materials, equipment, locally contributed resources).

# 2020-2024 - IMPACT AT A GLANCE



## Post-Fellowship Initiatives: Making Change Happen

- **Education:** Renovated schools, built vibrant libraries, created inclusive learning spaces, upgraded furniture, and added entertainment areas to inspire students.
- **Health & Well-being:** Improved nutrition programs, enhanced water and sanitation facilities, and expanded access to essential health services.
- **Environment:** Led reforestation and recycling efforts, developed school gardens, and created green spaces that promote sustainability and well-being.
- **Community Development:** Repaired streets for safer neighborhoods, supported women entrepreneurship, and launched empowering youth development programs.

Through these initiatives, our Fellows are cultivating stronger, healthier, and more vibrant communities, extending the impact of ConnectED far beyond the classroom.

One word, one experience: We asked our Fellows to define the essence of the ConnectED Fellowship



# OUR TEAM

Grounded in Guatemala. Growing with Purpose.

2024 marked a major milestone: the official establishment of Asociación ConnectED Guatemala. With legal status and full operational capacity, we are now more locally rooted and better equipped to lead with insight, ownership, and accountability.

## Team Growth

- Program Specialist → Program Manager
- Finance role expanded to full-time Ops & Finance Manager
- New consultants onboarded for development & fundraising

## Governance Expansion

- Planning underway for Guatemala-based Board of Directors & Advisors
- Builds on support & guidance from our U.S. Board



**Isa LaPorte**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Sooni Gillet**  
Co-Founder & Senior Advisor



**Selvin Lutín**  
Financial Manager



**Laura Dell**  
Development & Communications Manager



**Claudia Meneses**  
Program Manager

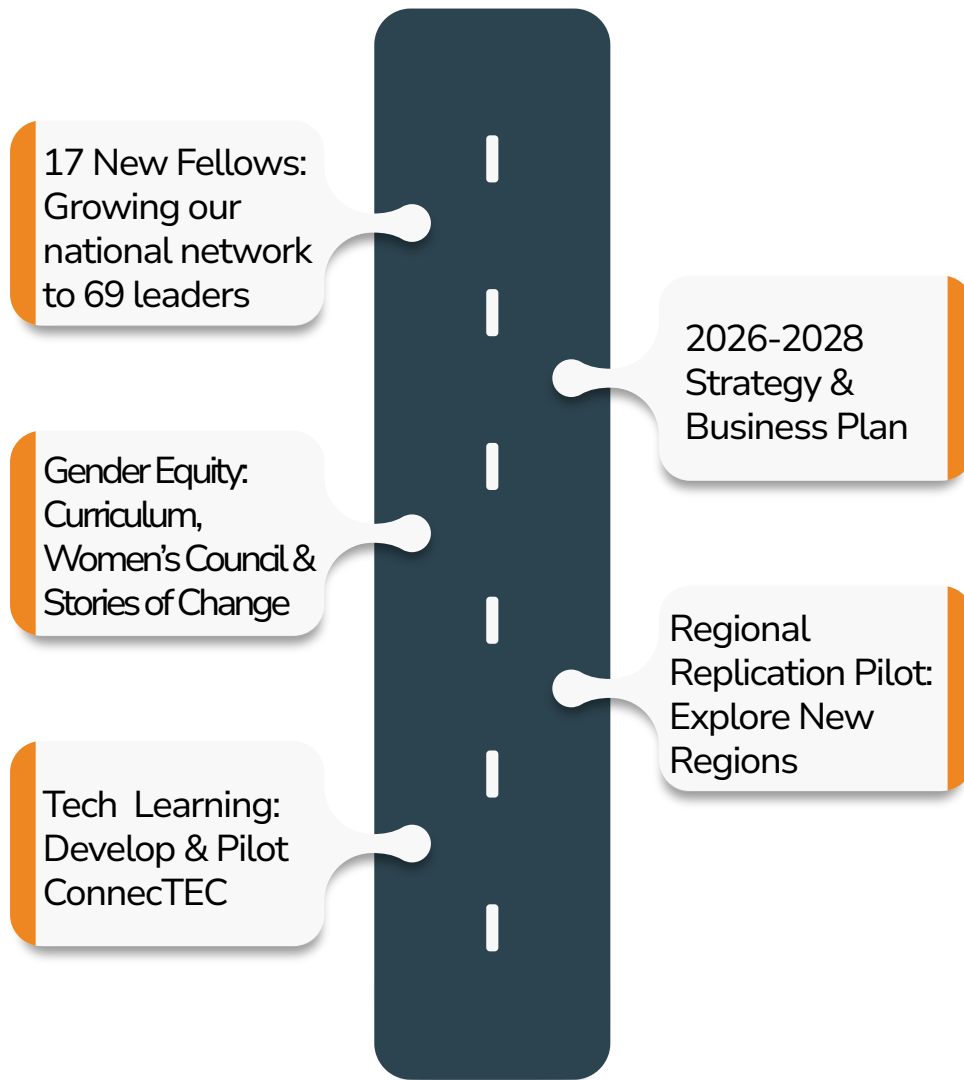
Across two countries, our team reflects a shared belief: collaboration and community leadership are the foundation of lasting change.

# LOOKING AHEAD

Growth. Equity. Local Leadership.

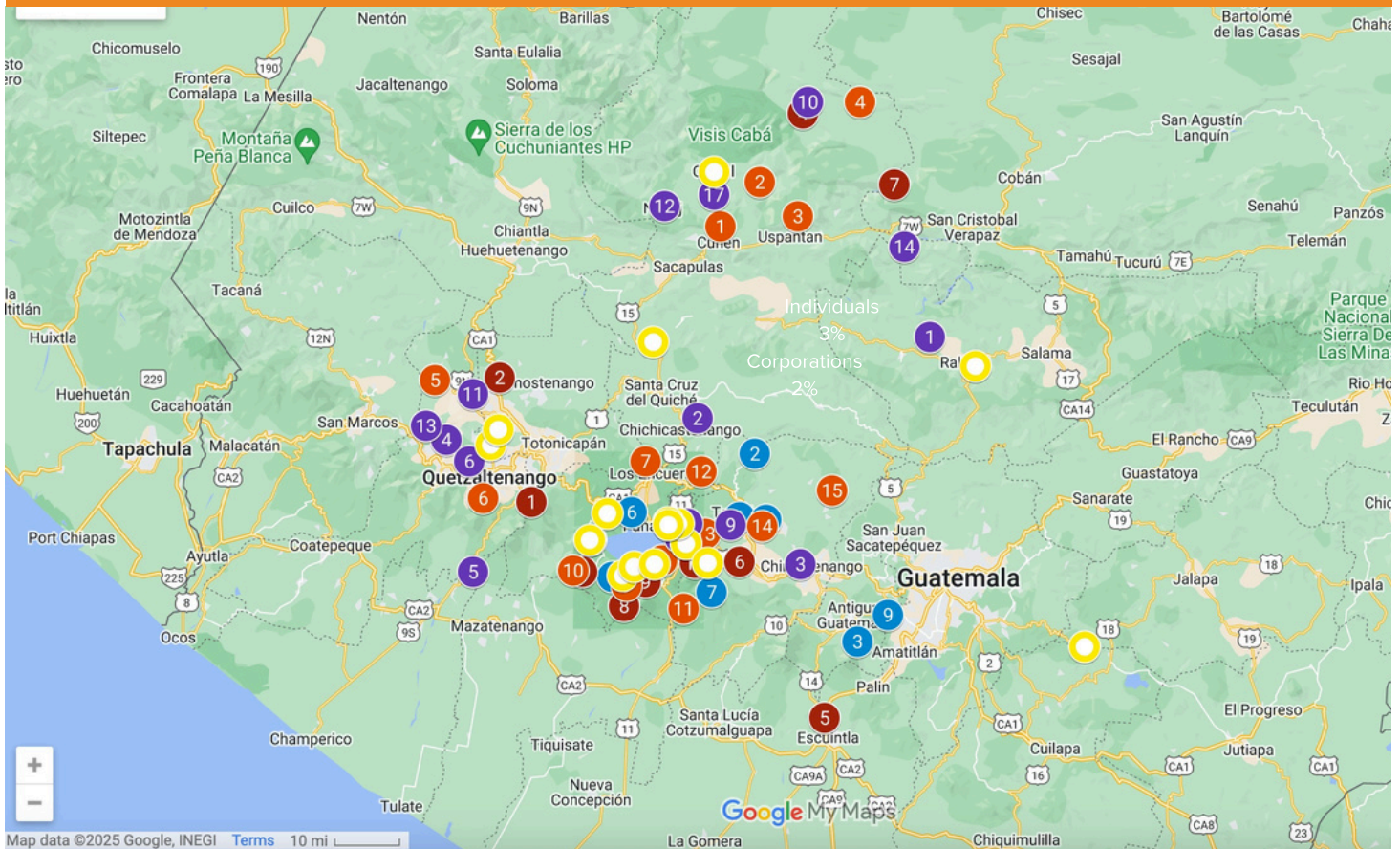
2025 marks a bold new chapter for ConnectED, rooted in what we've learned and driven by what's possible. This year, we deepen our impact and scale what works.

## Top 5 Priorities for 2025



The future of education is local, and it starts now.

# WHERE WE WORK, 2020-2025



**Baja Verapaz: (1)**

- Rómulo Hernández

**Escuintla: (1)**

- **Yomira Acabajón**

**Jalapa: (1)**

- Omar Polanco

**Sacatepéquez: (3)**

- Melissa Miranda
- Esther Alquijay
- Carlos Sicán

**Sololá: (29)**

- Rogelio Tecún
- Marcelino Morales
- Brenda García
- Sammy Muj
- Keny Ordoñez
- Abraham Sac
- Jorge De León

- Yolanda Yaxón
- Miriam Coché
- Yolanda Xinico
- Micaela Sicay
- Concepción Esquina
- Ismael Tacaxy
- Pedro Xeché
- Catalina Sisay
- Rubén Sisay
- Candelaria Esquina
- Pascual Mendoza
- Erick Locón
- Verónica Sic
- Francisco Sapalú
- Juan Sac
- Reinaldo Tacán
- Francisco Batz
- Susana Tuj
- Ingrid Pacay
- Faviola Mota
- Diana Yoxón
- Rebeca Ramírez

**Quetzaltenango: (11)**

- Dorian Alonzo
- Román Díaz
- Carolina Pérez
- Sergio Castellanos
- Karen Tarax
- Marcelina Cuyuch
- Wilfredo Yac
- Magda Amado
- Jovita De León
- Jimmy Escobar
- Marvin Momotic

**Chimaltenango: (9)**

- Flor Morales
- Israel Telón
- Rodia Sisimit
- Byron Colón
- Glenda Xulú
- Hugo Leonel Ramírez
- Mardoqueo Pérez
- Nazario Mejia
- César Augusto Ajpop

**Quiché: (13)**

- Esmeralda Aguaré
- Johana López
- Lorena Herrera
- Geysy Cano
- Juan Rodríguez
- Orlando Ostuma
- José Mejía
- Martín Ixim
- María Olga Santiago
- Jorge Luis Girón
- Wenceslao Ical
- Mónica Gil
- Ofelia Calel

**Totonicapán: (1)**

- María Juliana Tacám

# COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

This year, ConnectED strengthened a powerful network of local and global partners committed to community-led change. These alliances, both intentional and organic, helped us scale impact, co-create tools, and open new opportunities for Fellows and their schools.



Collaboration rooted in community leads to sustainable, systemic change.

## A Thank You to Our Institutional Funders:





Email: [info@connectedfellows.org](mailto:info@connectedfellows.org)

Website: [connectedfellows.org](http://connectedfellows.org)

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