

2024 ACT Social Impact and Equity Report

ACT[®] Center for
Equity in Learning



Table of Contents

Welcome	2
Helping Learners Achieve Their Workplace and Educational Goals	3
ACT Fee Waiver Program	3
Free College and Career Planning Resources	3
Scholarships	4
American College Application Campaign	6
ACT Internship Programs	8
Undiscovered Names	9
ACT Work Ready Communities ECMC Pilot Grant — Pathways to Success	10
Corporate Social Responsibility	12
United Way	12
School Supplies	12
Sponsorships	13
ACT Giving	13
In Conclusion	15





Welcome

As we reflect on a transformative year at ACT, we remain steadfast in our commitment to learners, equity, and community. Amid significant changes, our mission and North Star continue to guide us, reinforcing our drive to help all people achieve education and workplace success.

I am pleased to present our **2024 ACT Social Impact and Equity Report**, highlighting ACT's many student-centered programs and community initiatives during our most recently completed fiscal year. Our dedication to generosity, care, and concern for all learners can be seen in the faces of the more than 264,000 students who access their educational dreams through ACT's fee waiver program. Our focus on community success can be seen in the 59 grants that ACT awarded to nonprofit organizations across the country. Our unwavering support for student success can be seen in the record number of high schools participating in the American College Application Campaign. These are just three examples of how ACT strives to make our community, our nation, and the world a better place.



As we embrace an exciting new era as ACT Education Corp., we will continue to share our tools, resources, insights, and generosity with learners and stakeholders in need. Internally and externally, ACT's Center for Equity in Learning will continue to champion and showcase ACT's mission, North Star, and Equity by Design efforts. In collaboration with team members from across the ACT enterprise, we will work to ensure that every learner has access to high-quality opportunities while ensuring inclusivity, accessibility, diversity, and equity.

I want to extend a special thanks to my ACT colleagues whose hard work shows that ACT cares. Together, we make a difference.

Tina Gridiron
Chief Equity and Impact Officer, ACT





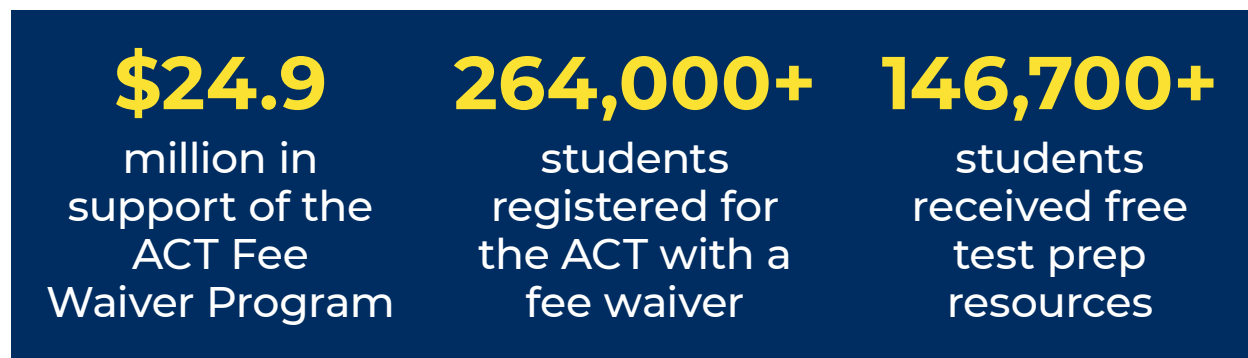
Helping Learners Achieve Their Workplace and Educational Goals

To further ACT's mission of helping learners succeed in education and the workplace, we actively participate in a range of philanthropic initiatives designed to support learners on their pathways. Our efforts are particularly focused on addressing inequalities that have impacted many learners. ACT takes great pride in our programs that strive to ensure all learners have the opportunity to achieve their goals.

ACT Fee Waiver Program

In Fiscal Year 2024, which ended Aug. 31, 2024, ACT set aside more than \$24.9 million to support the ACT Fee Waiver Program, allowing more than 264,000 students to register for the ACT at no charge. In addition to registering for a free test via the ACT Fee Waiver Program, more than 33% of those who took the ACT test also requested a free test information release form, which helped them understand their growth areas, study for a future assessment, and perform better on future tests. Finally, more than 146,700 students gained access to a free version of The Official ACT Self-Paced Course, Powered by Kaplan as part of the program.

ACT recognizes that college preparation and success take time and resources that are not equitably distributed to all students and families preparing for college. The ACT Fee Waiver program is available for students in high school, students active with Upward Bound, and students participating with qualifying not-for-profit organizations, to alleviate the cost pressures experienced by so many students as they prepare college applications and seek scholarships. With more than 30 years of history behind the ACT Fee Waiver Program, ACT is proud to aid students in need and to help them realize their educational goals.



Free College and Career Planning Resources

ACT Navigator

Designed as an interactive timeline organized by school year and season, ACT navigator has helped more than 2,500 families receive guidance and resources from ACT and our trusted network of experts to help them navigate through the issues that can arise in college and career planning and ultimately help answer the questions, "What do I do?" and "Where do I begin?" By providing a one-stop interactive and well-organized hub of resources that guides families step-by-step, ACT helps them get started and provides a strong foundation they can return to as they grow.

Learn more at the [ACT navigator website](#).

My Journey Webinar Series

An annual series of free, live webinar events, *My Journey* has helped more than 100,000 learners and their champions gain access to insights into college admissions, finding the right college, wellness, exploring future careers, preparing for the ACT test, and more. With two events in the fall and two in the spring, learners can find pertinent information aligned with where they are in their college and career planning journey and get ahead as the sessions are open to all grade levels. Topics and sessions are expanding, and ACT is excited to continue offering these events and making them accessible to all.

Learn more at the [ACT My Journey Free Virtual Event website](#).

Encourage

Offered in partnership with Encoura, the Encourage program supports more than 20,000 educators annually, helping millions of students make informed decisions about life after high school. The program enhances conversations and planning for students' futures by equipping educators with insights and resources. The Encourage app gives students a starting place to explore the future, where they can receive personalized college and scholarship matches, major and career recommendations, and step-by-step guidance. Students also have the option to connect with colleges and universities, helping to make college more accessible, especially for first-generation students.

“This app has everything you could ever need to prep for your future.”

— 11th Grader, Sept. 2024

Learn more at [encourageme.com](https://www.encourageme.com).

Scholarships

As part of its 50th anniversary celebration in 2009, ACT established the ACT Scholars Program for select students at the University of Iowa, in their shared hometown of Iowa City, and Kirkwood Community College, in nearby Cedar Rapids. The program provides full tuition at each institution, and the University of Iowa program also provides a stipend. ACT aims to provide scholarships for students whose education costs could present a significant barrier to college and students from historically underrepresented populations. To date, 215 students have received a scholarship, 32 at the University of Iowa and 183 at Kirkwood Community College.

Kirkwood Community College ACT Scholar Spotlight

Grace Baluengidi believes that pursuing one's goals is both challenging and achievable. She credits her parents as the first supporters of her college journey. Passionate about the medical field, particularly pediatrics, Grace is working hard toward becoming a pediatrician. Despite facing language challenges as a native French speaker, Grace's determination, willingness to learn, and self-confidence propel her toward her goals.

The ACT scholarship means a lot to me and affects my education journey by providing me more time for my studies and helping me worry less about my tuition.”

— Grace Baluengidi



University of Iowa ACT Scholar Spotlight

Alfonso Martinez began his college journey through a dual enrollment program in high school, where the idea of attending college took root. By the time he graduated from high school, Alfonso knew he didn't just want a bachelor's degree but wanted to pursue a Ph.D. Originally from California, he thought he would go to graduate school there. However, when he was accepted into the University of Iowa's prestigious Measurement and Statistics program and awarded the ACT Scholars scholarship, he knew he could not pass up the opportunity. Having recently earned his doctorate in psychological and quantitative foundations, Alfonso will start a faculty position at Fordham University, where he hopes to establish his own lab to work alongside his students to realize their educational pursuits.



I plan to actively reach out and encourage students to join my research lab, provide personalized mentorship to students ... and verbally express my confidence in my students' abilities in very much the same way my mentors did to me during pivotal moments of my educational journey.”

— Alfonso Martinez

American College Application Campaign

Each year, ACT's American College Application Campaign supports thousands of high schools across the country hosting events to help students through the college application process, especially first-generation college students and students from traditionally underserved populations. During the 2023 campaign season, a record 9,253 high schools hosted a campaign event, supporting more than 467,000 high school seniors in submitting nearly 1.4 million applications.



Additionally, ACT selected 27 School of Excellence awardees who demonstrate commitment to student success and are key contributors in helping the college application campaign fulfill its mission. We're grateful for the campaign network of schools and advocates that allow us to share messages with outside audiences, build new relationships, and engage in thought leadership activities.

Meet the most recent class of [School of Excellence awardees](#).

“We celebrate the success of the 2023-24 School of Excellence winners, and the communities of educators, volunteers, and students who help drive the ACAC nationwide campaign forward. These schools are removing many of the obstacles faced by so many students in applying to college.”

— Janet Godwin, ACT CEO



Ocean View High School – School of Excellence

Ocean View High School in Huntington Beach, California, has played an integral role in the success and growth of the college application campaign in California. As one of the first campaign participants in the state, Ocean View High School has demonstrated continued success for the past eight years. In that time, school leaders have devised new and more effective ways to encourage more students to apply to college during the 2023–24 school year campaign; seven in 10 seniors submitted at least one college application.



“Many students don’t have a clear-cut vision for their future, so by applying to college, and creating an education plan, it can help focus their goals for the future.”

— Robert Rasmussen, Principal, Ocean View High School

Varina High School – School of Excellence

In Henrico, Virginia, Varina High School’s counseling department worked with the Virginia College Advising Corps to roll out a week of creative activities to equip every senior with a plan after graduation. Varina High School’s Spirit Week and College Expo engaged students with career possibilities, practical college insights, and onsite visits with college admission officials. A panel discussion with Varina High School alumni and a financial aid advisor provided real-world advice to students. The school’s “Passport to the Future” raffle gave students extra incentive to participate in the week’s activities, and the week ended with an exciting Seniors vs. Staff volleyball game. Varina’s student population includes 75% students of color and 90% eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch. Overall, the school’s nearly 300 seniors submitted 294 college applications during the week.



ACT Internship Programs

For more than 20 years, ACT's internship opportunities have reflected our mission of helping people achieve education and workplace success. ACT provides interns with a great opportunity to gain knowledge and workforce experience through projects that are aligned with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed in their current field of study and future work goals. ACT-supported internship opportunities include:

- **School year internships** during which college students work 10–20 hours per week on projects aligned to their area of study and continue to work on projects while going back to school.
- **University of Iowa REACH Partnerships** that provide internships for students with intellectual and cognitive disabilities.
- **University of Iowa Law Program Partnerships** that offer students externships and internships within ACT's legal department.
- **Kirkwood Community College “Mini Internships”** that are offered to students through Kirkwood Community College's Creating Futures Program for young adults and Workplace Learning Connections for high school students.
- **Iowa STEM Teacher Externships Partnerships** during which ACT hosts a teacher from the Iowa City area during the summer. Through this program, ACT benefits from a skilled, motivated worker, and the teacher benefits by seeing how content is applied outside of the classroom, bringing relevance to their classroom and learning career opportunities for their students.
- **Summer internship programs** provide paid internships for students across the country.

Below are a two brief student stories highlighting the impact of their internship experience:

CJ Arévalo was a REACH Program Intern who supported ACT's Communications, Internal Communications, and Facilities teams during the spring of 2024. CJ set out to build experience working with digital media and workplace technology in a corporate business environment. Working with Eric Dickerson on ACT's Facilities team, CJ helped plan and support several important events at the Ferguson Conference Center, served as a production assistant on video projects, co-produced several Internal Communications live-stream broadcasts, created an instructional video in support of the Facilities team, and completed several impressive solo projects.



When asked if he had a time machine where would he go, CJ said, “I would stay where I am in time. While the future can be changed, it depends on the present and how you act, not the past and how you wish it went.”

Yao Sun is a student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County who interned with Jill McVey within ACT's Behaviors and Skills Measurement team. While at ACT, Yao focused on students' social, emotional, and academic learning measurements. She examined the validity and reliability of equity-based assessment questions, allowing her to gain hands-on experience with both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a business setting.



“I was encouraged to engage with a variety of projects, which broadened my skill set and gave me a taste of industry work after having primarily worked in academic environments.”

— Yao Sun

ACT is proud that our engagement with students via various internship opportunities has resulted in our ability to hire former interns. ACT has hired more than 50 people who first worked with ACT as interns into full-time ACT roles.

Undiscovered Names

The Undiscovered Names program connects high school seniors who have engaged with ACT and/or Encoura college planning programs but may have been overlooked by higher education institutions. These students, known as “undiscovered students,” have not been targeted by Encoura-member schools and often represent demographics that face additional barriers in accessing higher education.

As a mission-driven organization committed to equity in education, ACT and Encoura offer member institutions complimentary access to these students. Institutions can then identify students they may have previously overlooked for future communications to aid recruitment, such as campus promotional materials.

The demographics of students in this program may include:

- Underserved students.
- First-generation college-going students.
- Students from low-income households.
- Students with low test scores.
- Students who selected career and academic preferences that higher education institutions have overlooked.
- Students from rural areas or zip codes that higher education institutions have overlooked.

Between September 1, 2023, and July 31, 2024, Encoura's Undiscovered Names program enabled more than 79,000 students to be discovered by higher education institutions. During this period, approximately 1,200 member institutions used the program, allowing more than 72,000 students to learn about postsecondary opportunities they may not have been previously aware of.

ACT Work Ready Communities ECMC Pilot Grant – Pathways to Success

Fiscal Year 2024 year marked the start of a two-year pilot for the Work Ready Communities - Pathways to Success grant. The grant was designed to support three geographically diverse sites within the WRC network to develop locally driven initiatives to increase the talent development of African American, Latino, and other traditionally underserved populations. The pilot will recruit 2,000 learners to enroll in an initial stackable credential program that will provide a pathway for each learner to persist and attain credentials and degrees while connecting them with local employment opportunities. Each geographically diverse site will use ACT's National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) as a crucial component of its intake process.

This project seeks to advance ACT's North Star and Equity by Design commitment. It provides an opportunity for ACT to highlight the value of the ACT Work Ready Community network as a pathway to effectively support learners of color along their education and career journey. This project is made possible via support from the ECMC Foundation.

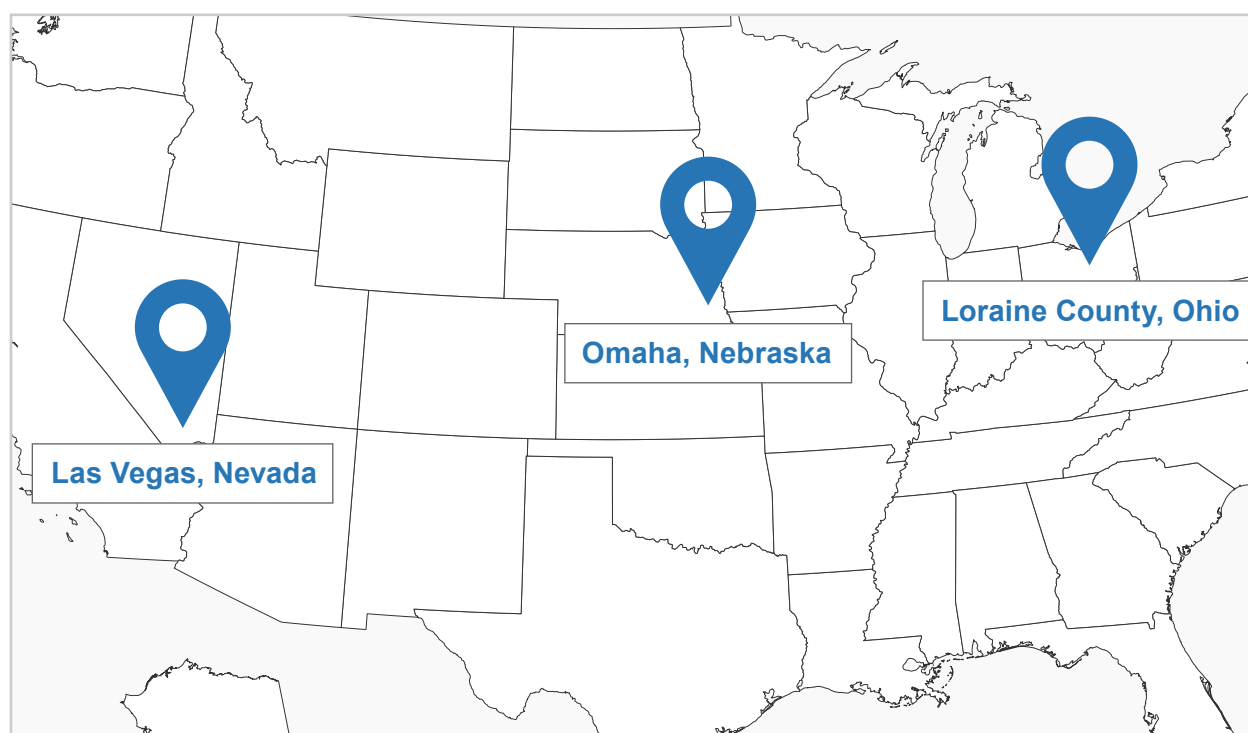


For example, a project in Loraine County, Ohio, has developed two unique ways to help learners succeed:

- A used car program: Since public transportation in Loraine County is very limited, this program helps learners arrive on campus in time to attend their classes and helps eligible learners purchase a used car with matching funds. Through this program, Lorain County also helps to provide classes on the financial aspects of owning a car.
- The program offers incentives to take the NCRC and attain a certificate, as well as additional incentives to achieve a Gold-level NCRC. Traditionally, the funds were only available for youth. However, with the support of the ECMC Grant, Lorain County can now offer the program to adult learners in the ECMC Pathways to Success pilot project.



The Pathways to Success pilot project seeks to expand to other communities as additional philanthropic dollars are secured.





Corporate Social Responsibility

As part of ACT’s commitment to the local communities where our team members live and to help address public needs where possible, there are many annual initiatives and activities that ACT consistently supports. Below is a brief overview of a few of these activities.

United Way

ACT’s United Way Drive collectively raised \$107,842.55 through the ACT pledge, special events, and employee giving.

School Supplies

In preparation for fall 2024, several ACT team members helped send students in the Iowa City area back to school with much-needed school supplies via monetary donations through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County. ACT team members’ donations helped reduce the stress experienced by families during this back-to-school season and ensured local children had new school supplies to start the school year ready to learn.

Collectively, ACT team members came together to donate:

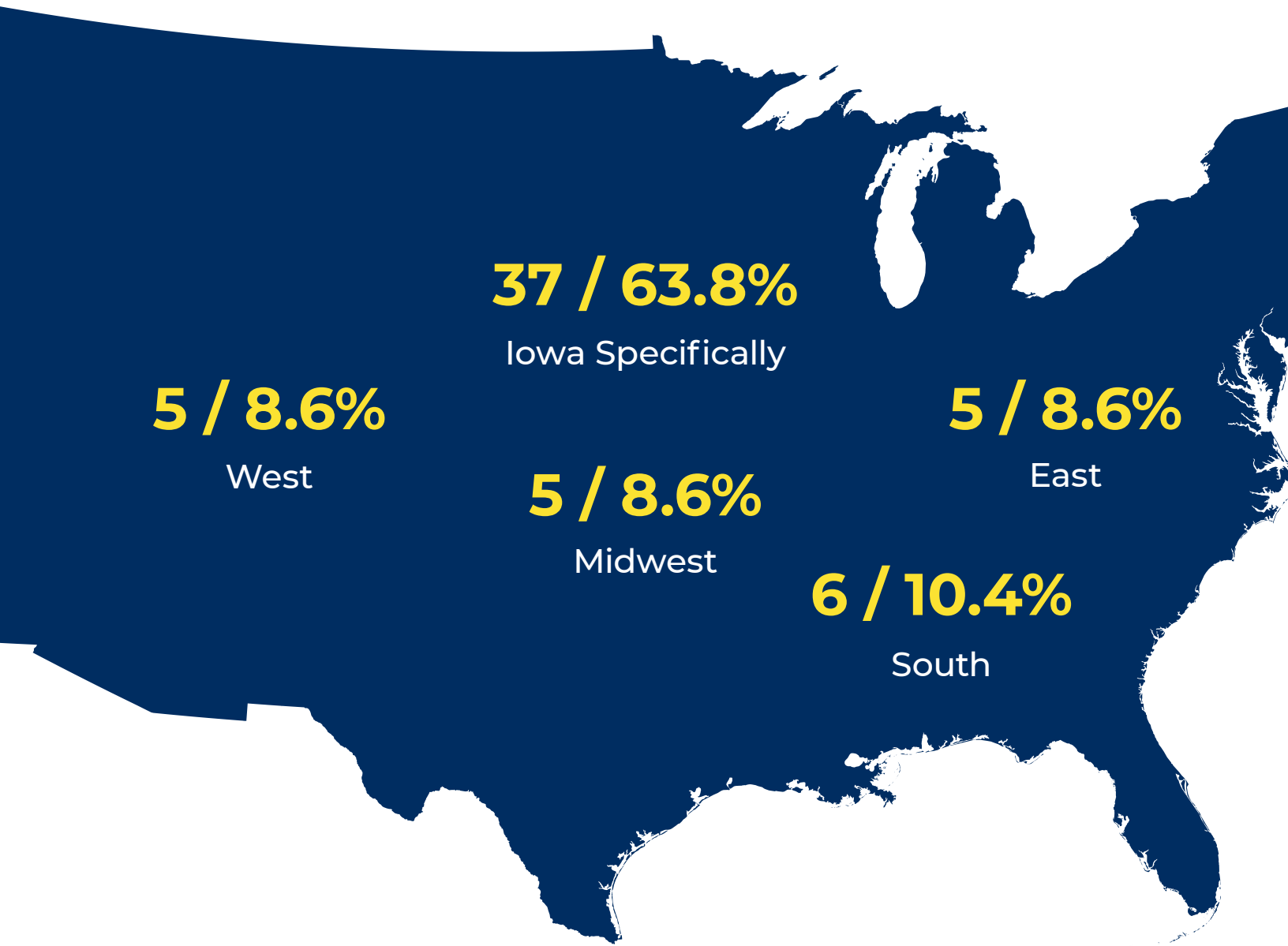
1,290 Sharpened #2 Pencils	120 Glue Sticks
60 Dry Erase Markers	90 Pencil Pouches
48 Markers	775 Folders
100 Erasers	252 Highlighters
36 Sharpies	

Sponsorships

Through sponsorships, ACT benefits from showing the value of our solutions and tools at various conferences and meetings. However, these sponsorships also fulfill an important component of the nonprofit’s mission. By hosting events, nonprofits encourage the learning and sharing of ideas for hundreds of thousands of people nationwide looking to increase opportunity through their workplace or education. In 2024, ACT contributed \$323,427 in sponsorships to 59 organizations.

ACT Giving

ACT is committed to communities where our learners and our team members reside. To demonstrate our deep commitment, ACT gives grants to nonprofits across the United States through our Center for Equity in Learning. An internal volunteer review committee, made up of 22 ACT team members, reviewed and awarded 59 organizations with grants between \$500–\$5,000 during FY24. Selected organizations represented a diverse mix of missions and locations, and 37 of the 59 organizations resided in ACT’s historic home state of Iowa.



Highlighted Grantees



In 2023, ACT's grant award to the North Liberty Community Pantry helped fund essential supplies, including five separate purchases of toilet paper and tampons, helping 650 households and 1,300 individuals. This support came at a crucial time, as the Pantry faced a 20% increase in people served (2,942) compared to 2022. The North Liberty Community Pantry also experienced a 38% increase in family visits (16,703 visits, total) than in 2022. The ACT Giving Committee's contribution helped equip the Pantry to meet these growing needs and continue supporting the community. [Learn more](#) about the Pantry.



With ACT's support, GirlForward purchased test prep materials and technology like graphing calculators for young people to prepare them for the next step in their journey. The GirlForward Education Team also prioritized an ACT prep course for juniors in FY24, which the organization last offered in 2019 due to the pandemic. ACT's support helped reduce language barriers for the newcomer refugee youth that GirlForward serves. [Learn more](#) about GirlForward.



In Conclusion

For 65 years, ACT has been dedicated to empowering learners to reach their full potential in college and career. We have an unwavering commitment to breaking down systemic barriers that stand in the way of success. Through strategic programs, collaborations, and resources, ACT champions pathways to success and advocates for equitable opportunities that benefit both learners and the communities in which they live.

For additional information about the ACT Giving Program and the ACT Center for Equity in Learning, visit us at equityinlearning.act.org.



For more information, visit equityinlearning.act.org.