



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

PROTECTING THE FUTURE WITH A CLEANUP THAT WORKS

[www.hanfordchallenge.org](http://www.hanfordchallenge.org)





# WE ALL LIVE DOWN- RIVER

## A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR

Your generosity, encouragement, and engagement in 2023 propelled our mission of ensuring a safe and effective cleanup at Hanford. Collectively, we delved into the implications of what it means to “all live downriver from Hanford.” This led to thousands of individuals rallying with us, urging President Biden and Energy Secretary Granholm to stick to the plan of a safe and complete cleanup at Hanford.

In 2023, we achieved significant accomplishments that bear repeating. Working alongside WA Attorney General Bob Ferguson and UA Local 598, we reached an extension with the Energy Department reinforcing our commitment to safeguarding Hanford workers from vapor exposures. The emerging technology designed to protect tank farm workers from chemical vapors appears extremely promising. We are more optimistic than ever that Hanford workers will never again face exposure to these carcinogenic vapors once these technological measures are implemented.

We witnessed our membership and social media engagement skyrocket to unprecedented levels. In fact, this year’s membership growth surpassed that of any previous year! Thanks to initiatives such as our Nuclear Waste Scholar Series, Expand the Story Oppenheimer series, worker resource pages, poetry contests, and our collaboration with Patagonia, we reached a wider audience than ever before. Let’s carry this momentum forward into 2024!

This year is set to pose numerous challenges that will test the mettle of our small yet formidable team. One big challenge is the outcome of a significant new cleanup agreement between Washington, the EPA, and the Energy Department. However, with your unwavering support, rest assured that the Hanford Challenge team is prepared to confront these challenges directly and ensure that the Energy Department does not resort to any shortcuts in the cleanup process. Our strength lies in our unity. Together, we will protect our water, wildlife, and way of life from Hanford's toxic legacy.

Because of you, 2023 brought us closer than ever to a safe and effective cleanup. We vow to keep up the pressure on the Secretary of Energy and White House to do the right thing at Hanford.

We could not do this work without your steadfast support. From everyone here at Hanford Challenge, Thank you!



*Nikolas F. Peterson*

Nikolas Peterson  
Executive Director



*Laura Gerber*

Laura Gerber  
Board Chair

# FROM HANFORD





# WHAT WE DO

Hanford Challenge brings greater accountability, transparency, and reform to the Hanford Nuclear Site cleanup. Our work increases safety at Hanford, improves cleanup, prevents waste and fraud, empowers workers, and inspires public action.

Hanford Challenge exists to:

- Ensure permanent protection for the planet and its inhabitants from the effects of contamination at Hanford.
- Ensure worker rights, safety, and security at Hanford.
- Ensure transparency and accountability to the public for the most efficient and effective cleanup of Hanford available.



## OUR MISSION

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To create a future for the Hanford Nuclear Site that secures human health and safety, advances accountability, and promotes a sustainable environmental legacy.





Hanford Challenge is a trusted source of information about Hanford cleanup from the local Tri-Cities press to the NYTimes to international publications in Japan, France, and Germany.

“FEDS GET MORE TIME TO DESTROY DANGEROUS CHEMICALS THAT CAN SICKEN HANFORD WORKERS”

2/15/23 THE TRI-CITY HERALD

“We are hopeful that the renewed commitments will ultimately prevent vapor exposure and lead to a future for Hanford that prioritizes safety and accountability in cleanup efforts.”

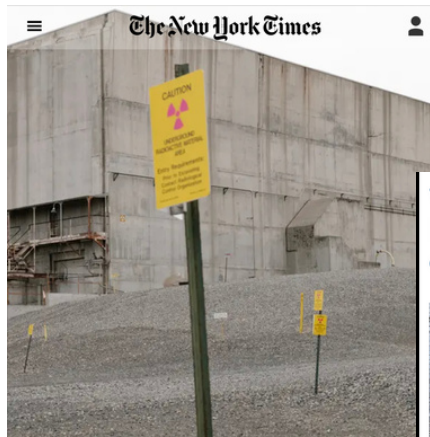
NIKOLAS PETERSON

“ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS CUT PROGRAMS AS FUNDING SHIFTS TO CLIMATE CHANGE”

11/8/23 THE NEW YORK TIMES

“If there is no replacement, it will be a field day for the Department of Energy.”

TOM CARPENTER



B Plant, the Hanford Site's earliest plutonium processing facility in Washington State. Mason Trinca for The New York Times

A Poisonous Cold War Legacy That Defies a Solution

A \$528 billion plan to clean up 54 million gallons of radioactive bomb-making waste may

WA communities unite to keep Hanford nuclear site cleanup on track



A mural at the Patagonia store in Belltown, Washington, reminds residents they all live downriver from the Hanford nuclear site. (Hanford Challenge)

Suzanne Potter, Producer



U.S. facility that made fuel for Nagasaki A-bomb harmed health, residents say



NIKOLAS PETERSON

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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In 2023, we made a conscious decision to harness our creativity and forge fresh avenues for engagement with Hanford. We pondered, “How can we make engaging with Hanford more fun and exciting? How do we reach more people who are new to Hanford? And, how can we engage students who have so many issues competing for their attention?” Our answers to these questions led to a lot of new projects and exciting opportunities.

We delved into Hanford’s international ties to broaden the narrative presented by the Oppenheimer film. We developed 20-minute interactive stations to familiarize middle school students with Hanford’s history. By launching a nuclear waste themed poetry contest, we helped students across Washington State discover their poetic talents. The enlightening presentations and research shared by the speakers from the Nuclear Waste Scholar Series sparked intellectual excitement throughout the year. We marked the release of Shannon Cram’s book, *Unmaking the Bomb*, at the UW bookstore, which was attended by over 100 people. We received a gift of cultural celebration from Yakama Nation youth and elders during an evening at the Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center and Museum. We fostered relationships and learned new narratives during a tour of the B-reactor with the Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board.

We found it exhilarating to uncover and share information about the cleanup of the 324 Building—information that had been kept from the public. We took action to encourage the Department of Energy to adopt a more transparent approach and to involve the public when plans are altered. Despite the controversy around grouting Hanford tank waste, it continues to be satisfying to speak truth to power by raising concerns and asking questions that have yet to be answered about this problematic waste form, that is as of yet, not “as good as glass”.

Thank you for connecting with us by reading our messages, attending events, signing petitions, sending in comments, and spreading the word about Hanford.



Liz Mattson  
Sr. Program Strategist



Miya Burke  
Program Manager



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# TAKE ACTION

## WE ALL LIVE DOWNRIVER FROM HANFORD

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On February 22nd, Hanford Challenge and Patagonia unveiled our mural, "We All Live Downriver from Hanford," on the windows of the Patagonia Seattle store. Rena Priest, the 2021-2023 Washington State Poet Laureate, kicked off the launch event with poetry readings. Other speakers included Laura Watson, Director of the Washington State Department of Ecology; Nikolas Peterson, Executive Director of Hanford Challenge; Denis Tuzinovic, Environmental Coordinator at Patagonia; and Kathleen Flenniken, the Washington State Poet Laureate from 2012-2014.

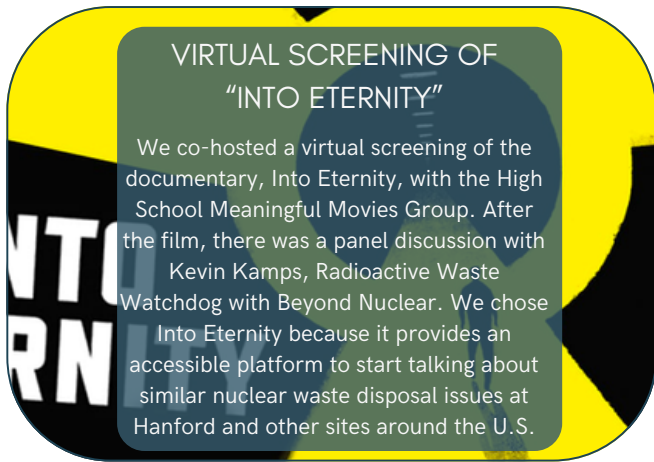
If you missed the celebration, it is not too late to join our calls to action to ensure a safe and effective cleanup at Hanford:

- We All Live Downriver- [Safe and Effective Cleanup](#) petition
- We All Live Downriver- [Hanford Budget](#) petition



# EVENTS

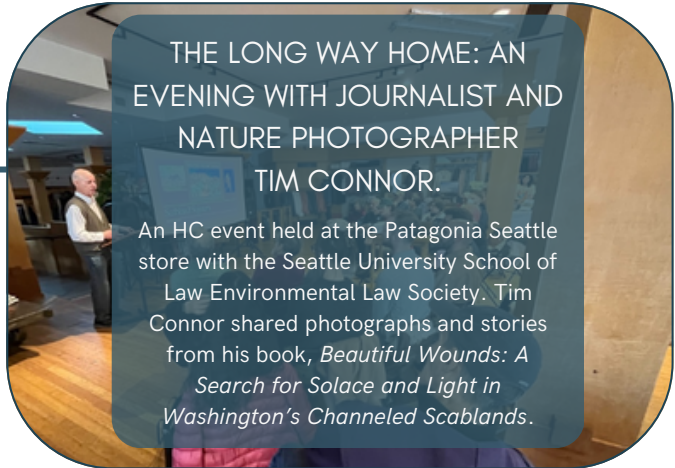
## OUTREACH, EDUCATION, AND ACTION



**VIRTUAL SCREENING OF "INTO ETERNITY"**

We co-hosted a virtual screening of the documentary, *Into Eternity*, with the High School Meaningful Movies Group. After the film, there was a panel discussion with Kevin Kamps, Radioactive Waste Watchdog with Beyond Nuclear. We chose *Into Eternity* because it provides an accessible platform to start talking about similar nuclear waste disposal issues at Hanford and other sites around the U.S.

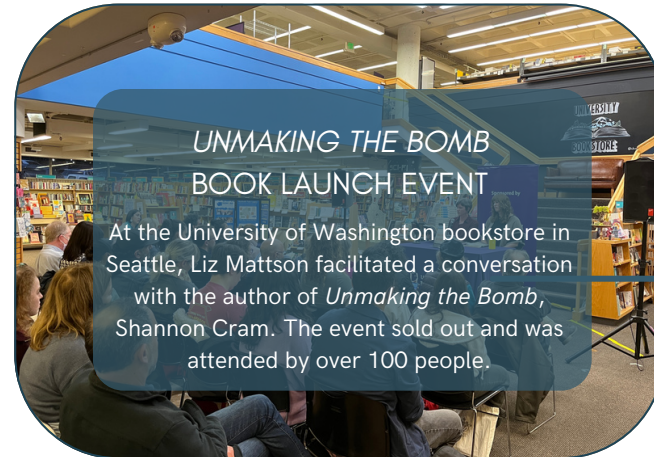
APR



**THE LONG WAY HOME: AN EVENING WITH JOURNALIST AND NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER TIM CONNOR.**

An HC event held at the Patagonia Seattle store with the Seattle University School of Law Environmental Law Society. Tim Connor shared photographs and stories from his book, *Beautiful Wounds: A Search for Solace and Light in Washington's Channeled Scablands*.

MAY



**UNMAKING THE BOMB BOOK LAUNCH EVENT**

At the University of Washington bookstore in Seattle, Liz Mattson facilitated a conversation with the author of *Unmaking the Bomb*, Shannon Cram. The event sold out and was attended by over 100 people.

OCT



**SPOOKY STORIES FROM THE HANFORD SITE**

In a co-hosted webinar with Columbia Riverkeeper, five storytellers shared their spooky stories about Hanford that included radioactive alligators, burping tanks, clandestine surveillance, and a glowing fish lab.

NOV





Hanford Challenge sponsored and tabled at the From Hiroshima to Hope event at Green Lake.



We made a concerted effort to table at events and locations in Pasco to prioritize outreach to the Spanish-speaking community in the Tri-Cities.



Miya and Britany leading a Take Action workshop on the 324 Building for Dr. Holly Barker's UW class.



Hanford Challenge maintains a seat on the Hanford Advisory Board. Miya is the Vice Chair.



The Oregon Hanford Cleanup Board toured the B-Reactor. Miya is a board member.

## #EXPANDTHESTORY



In a seven email series with corresponding social media posts, we invited our email list and social media followers to **#ExpandTheStory**. This summer, the blockbuster *Oppenheimer* movie created a lot of buzz around the world. With the movie's hyper-focus on the team that built the atomic bomb, many stories were left out. Over the course of seven weeks, we introduced some of the stories that we wanted people to take the time to sit with and get to know, including stories about the Marshall Islands, nuclear weapons testing, impacts to Native American Tribes, Japanese hibakusha, downwinders, uranium miners, and Hanford.

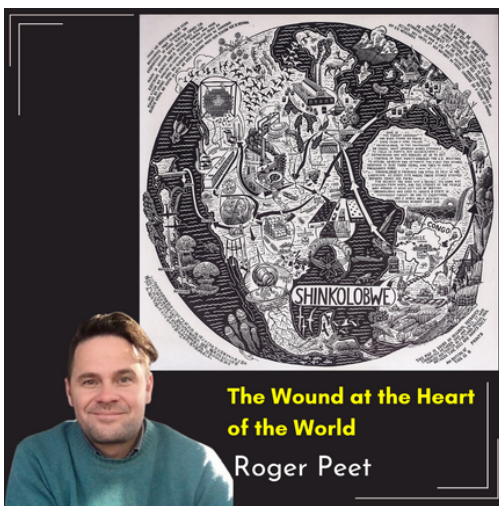
For our Get it While it's Hot Poetry contest, students were encouraged to submit a poem on the theme of nuclear waste. We were so grateful to have Rena Priest, 2021-2023 Washington State Poet Laureate, as our contest judge. We put together a basic presentation about the contest that gave a brief overview of Hanford, ideas for topics, and some poetry prompts. We also created a list of resources organized by theme to help students dig into the topic of nuclear waste. Finally, we worked with multiple professors by facilitating presentations about Hanford, providing resources, and encouraging them to incorporate the poetry contest into their courses. The contest closed on 3/31/23 and we received 37 submissions. The [2023 Hot Poetry contest winning poems](#) are: *Atomic Over Education* by David SJ Kim, *Contamination Haiku* by Rebecca Jacobson, *Hanford: Our Threatened Heritage: How Clean is Clean Enough?* by Leah Sue Aleck, *Madre de mi vida* by Stephanie Guillen-Romero, and *Shrubsteppe Resurgence* by Iliza Afilleje.

## GET IT WHILE IT'S HOT POETRY CONTEST

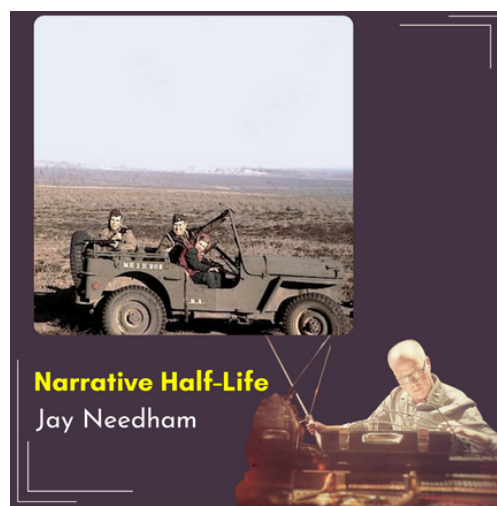


# NUCLEAR WASTE SCHOLAR SERIES

Hanford Challenge continued the Nuclear Waste Scholar Series to share groundbreaking scholarship on nuclear waste with a wider audience and to inspire action and greater involvement with Hanford cleanup. Together we are determining the future of nuclear waste, how clean is clean, who is protected, and what futures are imagined.



Roger discussed the Shinkolobwe uranium mine in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its connection to the Hanford Nuclear Site.



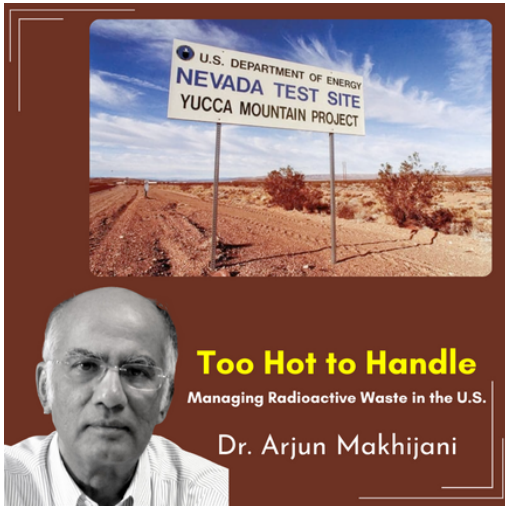
Jay invited us to travel back to the 1940s through archival sound recordings about Hanford that co-mingle and complicate family histories.



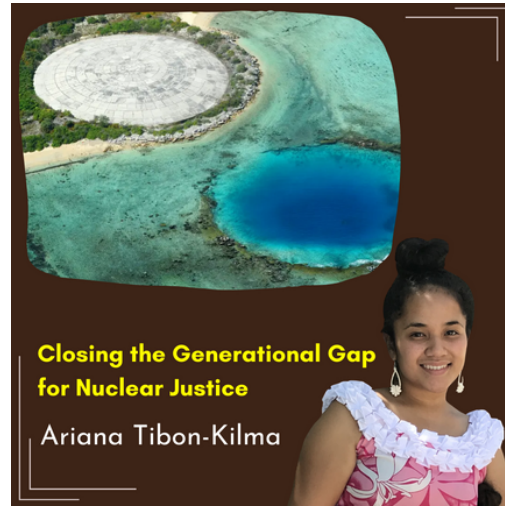
Irene shared materials from her latest documentary film, RICHLAND, which offers a portrait of the community of Richland staking its identity and future on its nuclear origin story.



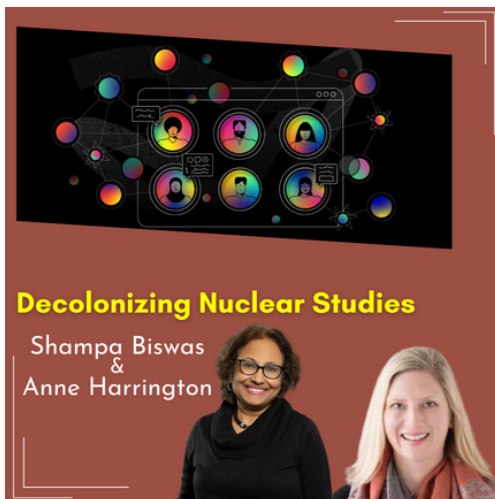
Joshua shared stories of scientists from the medical section of the Manhattan Project and their research on the biological effects of radiation at the Hanford Fish Lab and in the Marshall Islands.



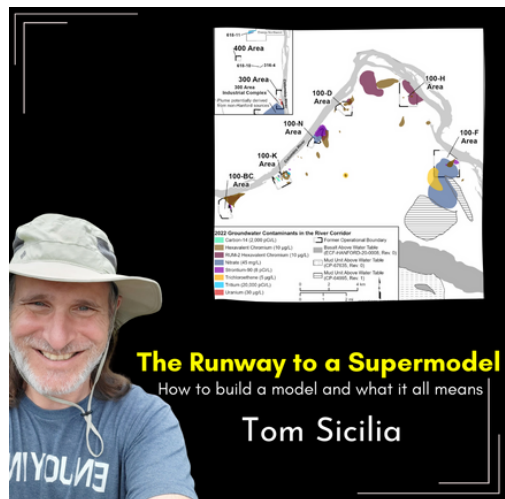
Dr. Makhijani dug into the issues we face in the U.S. as we navigate how to dispose and manage our nuclear waste.



Ariana, Marshallese local, discussed the events that took place in the Marshall Islands and highlighted the generational gap in knowledge about the history of nuclear testing in her home and the challenges resulting from this lack of knowledge.



Shampa and Anne introduced participants to each of the three modules they built that center questions of race, colonialism, gender, and the environment as they relate to nuclear weapons.



At Hanford, models are used to do things like predict how contamination moves in the environment. In his talk, Tom shared a brief overview of what models are, what makes them wrong (but useful, sometimes), and some ways they are used at Hanford.



# PUBLIC COMMENTS

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- 1/19/23 Hanford Challenge comments on [Permit Mod for Integrated Disposal Facility Leachate Collection System](#)
  - 3/27/23 Hanford Challenge comments on [FY2025 Cleanup Priorities](#)
  - 4/19/23 Hanford Challenge and Columbia Riverkeeper joint comments on the [High-Level Waste Analysis of Alternatives](#)
  - 11/3/23 Hanford Challenge 324 Building petition
  - 11/10/23 Hanford Challenge comments on [USDOE Hanford 5-Year Plan](#)
  - 12/21/23 Hanford Challenge comments on [EPA's Treatability Variance for Test Bed Initiative Phase 2](#)
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## 2023 HANFORD HERO: MEREDITH CRAFTON

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Meredith Crafton is a passionate and committed advocate for our environment and the Hanford Nuclear Site.

As an attorney committed to environmental protection as well as corporate and government accountability, Meredith has successfully represented dozens of Hanford workers, including whistleblowers who experienced retaliation after raising nuclear safety concerns and workers who brought fraud cases against Hanford contractors. These cases have made Hanford a safer place to work and returned over \$50 million back to U.S. taxpayers and the cleanup.



Hanford Challenge and Hanford workers are indebted to Meredith for her accomplishments in the *Hanford Challenge v. U.S. Department of Energy* case. Hanford Challenge and the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local Union 598 brought a lawsuit because the Energy Department and private contractor were failing to protect Hanford workers from chemical vapors. Thousands of Hanford workers will benefit from her work on this case for decades to come.

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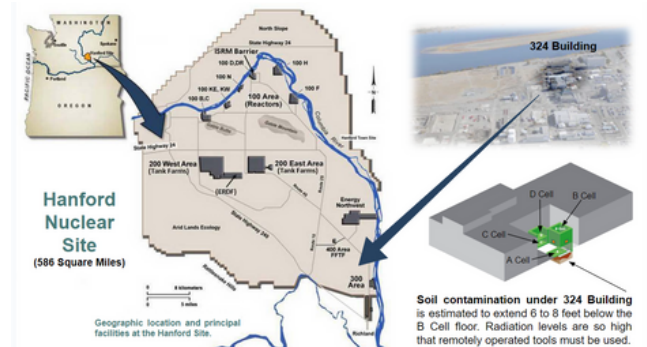
# 324 BUILDING

## HOT SECRETS REVEALED

Hanford Challenge continued to be a champion for transparency at the Hanford Site in 2023. We were the only source to reveal big secrets about a super radioactive cleanup site with major problems. We heard rumors that work at the 324 Building was going “cold and dark” (insider lingo for the work shutting down). This information was locked down so tightly that workers on the project and the lead regulator (EPA) didn’t know what was going on. All of this was intentionally hidden. USDOE and its contractor came up with changes to the cleanup plan and announced them in a meeting where everyone, including EPA and workers, was hearing about the changes and issues for the first time. This kind of thing is not supposed to happen.

We've said it before, and we'll say it again—public involvement on cleanup should happen early and often. In that spirit, we built a [webpage](#) to share information about 324 Building history and regularly update with information we uncover. And then we put the pressure on with a take action petition, signed by 64 people, to get more information out in the open and push USDOE to work with EPA and its 324 Building contractor to:

- Protect worker health and safety
- Protect the environment
- Keep up regular involvement of EPA
- Stop hiding, start sharing
- Ensure formal consultation with Tribal Nations
- Involve 324 Building workers and the public
- Safely dispose of 324 Building contamination



By forcing a conversation about 324 Building cleanup and pushing for information to be shared, USDOE reversed course and started to include EPA in evaluating options for changing the cleanup plan.

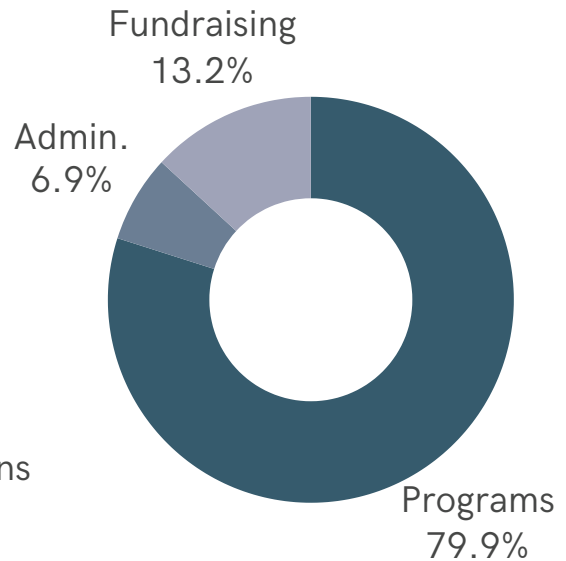
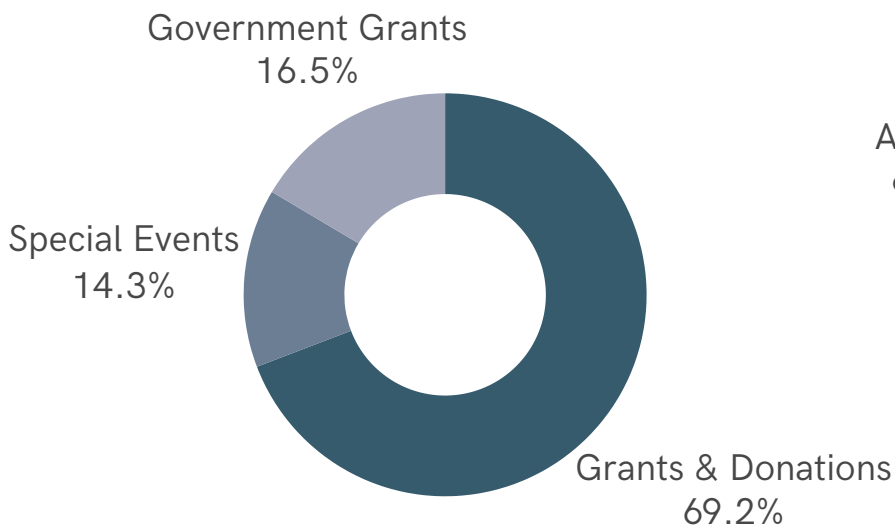
We are continuing to track [324 Building](#) cleanup in 2024 and will continue pushing for more openness and transparency - stay tuned!



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

TOTAL REVENUE = \$495,464

TOTAL EXPENSES = \$522,139



Thanks to our steadfast donors, sponsors, and grantors, we were able to concentrate more than ever on our program efforts in 2023. Despite the negative net revenue this year, Hanford Challenge is in a good financial position due to the 2022 settlement for attorneys fees in a legal case Hanford Challenge worked on for many years. These funds were budgeted over three years in order to keep providing free legal services to Hanford workers.

# GRANTS & SPONSORS

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# 2023 STAFF & BOARD

**Miya Burke**  
Program Manager

**Jeanna Deforeit**  
Development & Operations Director,  
Development & Operations Contractor

**Britany Kee' ya aa. Eichman-Lindley**  
Staff Attorney

**Liz Mattson**  
Senior Program Strategist

**Nikolas Peterson**  
Executive Director

**Laura Gerber**  
Chair

**Deanne Meek**  
Vice Chair

**Randal Dick**  
Secretary

**John Kriese**  
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**Vicky Vreeland**  
Chair Emeritus

**Allen Brecke**

**Nick Bumpaous**

**Chris Cazares**

**Steven Gilbert**

**Sen. Adam Kline**

**Kathleen Flenniken**

**Jim Millbauer**

**Nathan Reeves**

## MEET OUR INAUGURAL ADVISORY BOARD

The Advisory Council serves primarily as a resource for input, advice, and support. Visit [www.hanfordchallenge.org/advisory-council](http://www.hanfordchallenge.org/advisory-council) to read their full bios.

**Nick Bumpaous**  
**Ellen Ferguson**  
**Dana Gold**  
**Patti Goldman**  
**Sen. Adam Kline**  
**Craig McGlinchey**  
**Tom Robinson**  
**Randy Walli**

