



# ASYLUMWORKS

2024 IMPACT REPORT



“

*AsylumWorks doesn't just support asylum seekers—they equip us with the knowledge and tools we need to rebuild our lives. At AsylumWorks, I learned that I have the right to start over and that there are Americans willing to help. Their belief in me gave me the confidence and motivation I needed to move forward.*

**RAHIM** FROM AFGHANISTAN

”

# EMPOWERING NEWCOMERS SEEKING SAFETY

*"A glass of water in the desert."*

*"My home away from home."*

*"Proof that God exists."*

At the end of 2024, AsylumWorks conducted a series of listening sessions with clients to better understand their goals, needs, and priorities. During these dialogues, we asked: "What does AsylumWorks mean to you?" The responses we received, including the three quoted above, were heartfelt, humbling, and consistently referenced the same universal human needs: safety, dignity, and belonging. Their words also serve as a reminder that our work isn't just about providing services; it's about restoring humanity during profound moments of vulnerability.

When I look back on 2024, I am profoundly inspired by the courage of those we serve and the compassion of those who make our work possible. This past year, AsylumWorks provided culturally responsive services to more than 500 asylum seekers, asylees, and resettled refugees from 43 countries. We launched specialized programming to support Afghan allies, introduced innovative employment solutions available regardless of language and education, and secured our third federal grant to serve trauma-affected refugees—one of just

28 organizations nationwide to do so. These achievements affirm both the responsiveness of our approach and our place as a best-in-class provider of holistic care.

AsylumWorks accomplished so much in 2024, but I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the community of supporters who made these achievements possible. To our passionate board, our dedicated staff, our steadfast partners, our energetic volunteers, our committed funders, and our generous donors: Thank you for the time, talent, and trust you continue to invest in us. Together, we are building a world where asylum seekers, asylees, and resettled refugees can thrive in their new communities. As we begin 2025 and challenge ourselves to envision our work in bold new ways, your partnership will be more important than ever before.

Sincerely,



Joan Hodges-Wu, MA, LGSW  
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



# WHO WE ARE

## OUR WHY

The National Capital Area is home to one of America's most culturally diverse regions. Approximately 1.5 million residents, representing 25% of the region's population, identify as foreign-born. Among this demographic are tens of thousands of individuals and families who cannot safely return to their home countries because of war, persecution, or violence, and now face the challenge of an uncertain future.

## MISSION & VISION

Founded in 2016, AsylumWorks provides culturally responsive services to educate, equip, and empower newcomers seeking safety. Together, we are building a world where all refugee newcomers can thrive in their new communities.

## OUR VALUES

### Courage

---

We are willing to take risks and challenge convention.

### Radical Hospitality

---

We believe that welcome fosters belonging.

### Collaboration

---

We believe that effective problem-solving requires a diversity of voices.

### Respect

---

We believe all people have value regardless of power or privilege.

### Accountability

---

We demand excellence from ourselves and take responsibility for our work.



Two clients from Central Africa participate as chefs for Taste of AsylumWorks, AsylumWorks' annual international comfort food-tasting competition.

# WHAT WE DO

AsylumWorks' interdisciplinary service model is designed to help refugee newcomers overcome health, legal, and employment barriers.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

**SERVICES TO PROMOTE HEALTH & SAFETY** Refugee newcomers frequently experience challenges caring for themselves and their family members owing to their unfamiliarity with U.S. systems and the compounding effects of trauma from persecution and displacement.



*AsylumWorks' team of licensed professionals and community health workers helps clients overcome these barriers to access healthcare, address mental health needs, and connect with community resources.*

## LEGAL NAVIGATION

**SERVICES TO ACHIEVE LASTING STABILITY** Newcomers seeking safety often struggle to understand and proactively participate in immigration proceedings given the highly technical nature of U.S. immigration law.



*AsylumWorks provides brief legal screenings, Know-Your-Rights trainings, and referrals to free and low-cost immigration attorneys to fully comply with all immigration requirements.*

## EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

**SERVICES TO ACHIEVE FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY** For job-seeking newcomers, stable employment forms the foundation of financial independence.



*AsylumWorks provides professional career coaching services to help clients prepare for, find, and maintain living wage employment, regardless of language or education.*

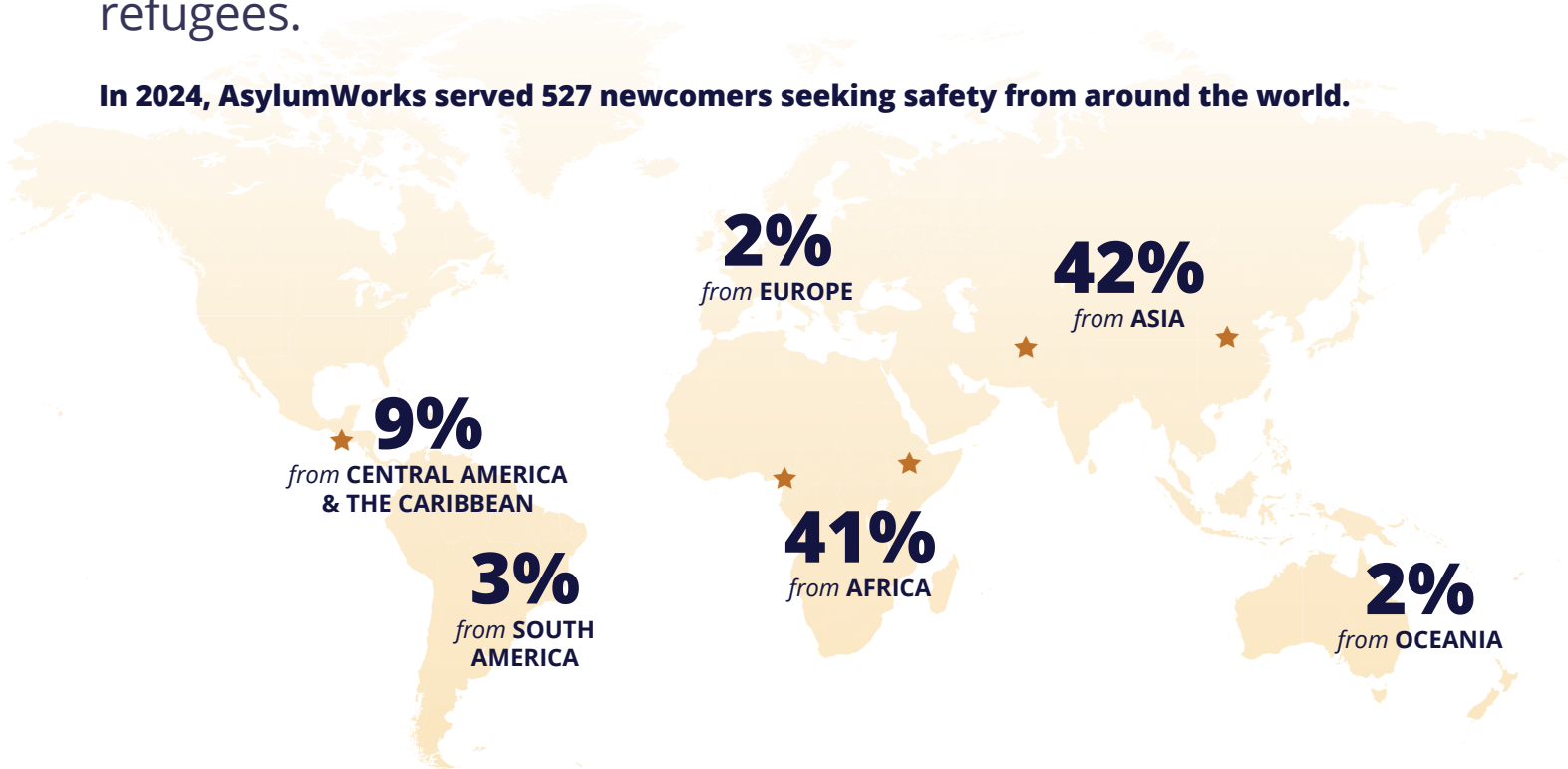
*"When I came to AsylumWorks, I felt helpless, hopeless, and depressed. Today, my life is totally different. AsylumWorks helped me get my smile back."*

**JAMEELA** FROM AFGHANISTAN

# WHO WE SERVE

AsylumWorks serves asylum seekers, asylees, humanitarian parolees, special immigrant visa holders (SIVs), and resettled refugees.

In 2024, AsylumWorks served 527 newcomers seeking safety from around the world.



★ The five most common countries of origin: Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Cameroon, El Salvador, Russia

## OUR CLIENTS

| By country               | By language         | By location                | By gender              | With children                                   |
|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 43 countries represented | 50 languages spoken | 25% DC<br>39% MD<br>36% VA | 44% Female<br>55% Male | 44% of clients arrive in the U.S. with children |

## TOP THREE CLIENT REFERRAL SOURCES

|                                         |                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| How do clients learn about AsylumWorks? | 1. Friends/word of mouth<br>2. Internet research<br>3. Immigration attorney |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Client services are free and available to individuals and families living in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia, regardless of language or country of origin.

# OUR IMPACT

From learning to ride public transportation to reuniting with children after years of separation—we know that every client success is a meaningful step toward safety, stability, and self-sufficiency.

## CLIENTS SERVED

### AsylumWorks provided:

**527** individuals and families with Health & Wellness services

**132** migrants with Legal Navigation services

**116** job seekers with Employment & Education services

## PROGRAM RESULTS

### After receiving AsylumWorks services, clients reported the following gains:

**94%** of clients report good or improved mental health

**97%** of clients report sufficient or improved access to healthcare

**99%** of clients report sufficient or improved access to community resources

**97%** of clients report they are better able to work with their lawyer

**95%** of clients report good or improved ability to prepare for, find, and keep employment

*"Coming to the United States was so scary. I didn't know who I could trust or count on for advice and support. I felt so lost until I found AsylumWorks. Me and my daughter have our papers now because you didn't let us give up."*

**MELESSE** FROM ETHIOPIA



# NEW INITIATIVES

## TRANSFORMING REFUGEE FUTURES THROUGH INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

For most refugee newcomers, employment serves as the cornerstone of self-sufficiency. Traditional employment services, however, often impose barriers such as English language requirements or advanced education prerequisites. These obstacles effectively exclude many job-seeking newcomers eager to contribute to their new communities and achieve economic independence.

In 2024, AsylumWorks transformed our Employment & Education program to address this gap. Our solution was to replace our in-person job readiness training with a robust, three-tiered approach designed to serve job-seeking newcomers regardless of language or education.

### **Our new program features:**

- **Personalized Job Coaching:** Staff provide one-on-one support to help job seekers identify and translate personal goals, needs, and priorities into customized employment plans—whether focused on securing immediate work, advancing their careers, or re-entering their professional fields.
- **Flexible Digital Curriculum:** Job seekers can access our comprehensive online job readiness curriculum featuring 18 interactive e-modules covering essential topics from networking strategies to preparing for an interview. Staff assign modules based on client goals. Modules can be viewed at any time, from any device, and as often as job seekers need.
- **Dedicated Resource Hub:** To provide additional support, staff maintain a clients-only website serving as a comprehensive resource center featuring curated job opportunities, English language resources, and practical advice.

By removing structural obstacles and providing targeted support regardless of starting point, AsylumWorks is creating accessible and adaptable pathways to employment to ensure refugee newcomers have the knowledge, tools, and confidence they need to thrive in their new communities.



# NEW INITIATIVES

## ASYLUMWORKS AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS GRANT TO SERVE TRAUMA-AFFECTED REFUGEES

Research demonstrates that refugees experience trauma at substantially higher rates than the general population. Trauma symptoms often manifest as persistent sadness, anxiety, fatigue, chronic pain, headaches, and difficulty concentrating. When left unaddressed, these symptoms can impair daily functioning, leading to decreased workplace productivity, lower academic performance among children and youth, and higher rates of family conflict.

Despite these challenges, empowering refugee newcomers to access mental health services remains difficult, as many fear seeking treatment would bring shame to their families or communities.

In 2024, AsylumWorks embraced this challenge when we applied for—and were successfully awarded—our third federal grant to provide services to trauma-affected refugees.

AsylumWorks is one of only 28 organizations nationwide to receive this grant and the only grantee in the National Capital Region. With this funding, AsylumWorks will:

- Scale our innovative on-the-job training program, which trains former clients to support new clients as therapeutic case managers
- Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services
- Strengthen community wellness programming

By amplifying refugee voices and honoring lived experiences, AsylumWorks looks forward to delivering vital resources to our community while developing a replicable model to inform newcomer-serving organizations nationwide.

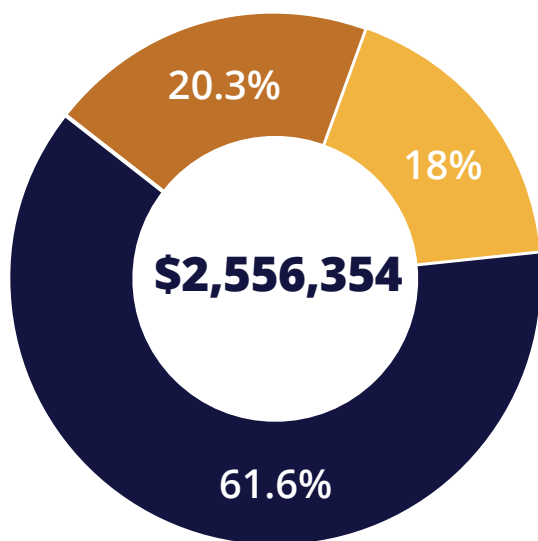
*"I didn't expect to talk about my feelings when I came to your office, only what I needed in terms of resources and information. But you gave me an opportunity to talk about my sadness, loss, and grief. When I think about what that means to me, I tear up!"*

**YILDEZ** FROM AFGHANISTAN



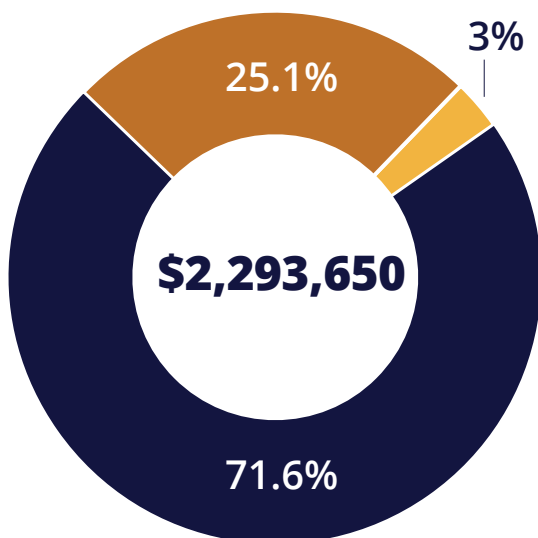
# FINANCIALS

FISCAL YEAR 2024



## Total income

- **\$519,170** CONTRIBUTIONS
- **\$461,389** CONTRACTS
- **\$1,575,795** GOVERNMENT GRANTS



## Total expenses

- **\$574,658** MANAGEMENT
- **\$76,878** FUNDRAISING
- **\$1,642,114** PROGRAM

“

*You never not once treated me like a client. You didn't even treat me like a friend. The impact you've had on my life will live on forever because you always treated me like family.*

**MOHAMMED** FROM TUNISIA

”



1718 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20009

[asylumworks.org](https://asylumworks.org)