



# Annual Report 2024–2025



# From the Executive Director



As I enter my tenth year as Executive Director of VIA, I am filled with gratitude reflecting on my own journey with this organization, which began more than 30 years ago as a participant from Japan. These experiences have taught me that growth often begins with a single connection: one conversation, one shared meal, one moment of reflection. In Japanese, there is a saying, *ichigo ichie*, which captures the idea of treasuring each encounter as a unique opportunity. This has been a guiding principle in my life, and it is a privilege to help create such moments for others through VIA.

Over the past decade, I have witnessed our community face extraordinary challenges, from navigating the disruptions of the pandemic to working through times of division and uncertainty. Yet these experiences have only reinforced the importance of our mission: building empathy, understanding, and collaborative leadership across cultures. Seeing our community bounce back, adapt, and continue to engage deeply with one another has been both inspiring and humbling.

The Nichibei Girls Collaborative (NGC), featured in this Annual Report, exemplifies this work. NGC brought high school students from the US and Japan together, providing early cross-cultural experiences that spark confidence, empathy, and global awareness. Our recently launched Nichibei (Japan-US) Nonprofit Leaders Exchange similarly connects social impact leaders to share ideas and approaches for complex challenges. Both programs go beyond simply bringing one group to another location. They foster dialogue, collaboration, and mutual learning, cultivating the skills and relationships needed to drive meaningful social impact.

Our study tours offer another avenue for immersive learning. This year's tour to Indonesia, also featured in this report, gave participants a unique window into grassroots innovation and community-led initiatives. Building on that momentum, we are excited to offer tours in Japan and Thailand next year, reflecting our belief that transformative learning happens when we step outside our familiar environments and engage directly with people creating positive impact on the ground.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to our staff, board, donors, funders, alumni, and partners. Your support allows us to pursue this work with purpose and hope. As we look toward another year, I invite you to continue shaping VIA's future with us. While the world continues to change, our shared commitment to connection, compassion, and collaborative leadership remains a steady source of strength.

Together, we can continue building the kind of communities our world needs.

November 2025

Kazutoh Ishida, PhD  
Executive Director

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# Nichibei Girls Collaborative: Building Bridges Across the Pacific



The Nichibei Girls Collaborative (NGC) was a groundbreaking 7-month cultural exchange and social impact leadership development program for female-identifying high school students in the US and Japan. Launched as a pilot in September 2024 with support from the US-Japan Foundation, NGC brought together young women from two countries to learn, grow, and lead side by side.



The program featured two in-person exchanges, five days in Fukuoka, Japan, and five days in Salinas, California, along with a dynamic virtual component where student teams received mentorship to develop and implement a social impact project in their local communities.

Fukuoka Futaba Senior High School has been a valued partner of VIA Programs since 2016, with more than 70 students participating in VIA's experiential learning programs exploring culture, innovation, and leadership. On the US side, the Salinas Union High School District is widely recognized for its robust Japanese language programs, shaped by the region's deep agricultural ties to Japan, J-LEAP programs, and a longstanding sister-city relationship with Ichiki-

Kushikino in Kagoshima.

Though Fukuoka and Salinas are not always the first destinations that come to mind for travelers, both cities are vibrant, diverse, and culturally rich. Introducing participants to the unique rhythms of these communities was one of the most rewarding aspects of the program.

The online portion of NGC equipped students with essential project management and leadership skills. Through guided workshops, they learned how to define problems, design interview protocols, conduct empathy interviews, brainstorm solutions, write outcome statements, create budgets, and ultimately, bring a community-based project from idea to reality.

The in-person exchanges in Fukuoka and Salinas added another dimension of discovery. Students engaged with academics, nonprofit leaders, and business leaders to better understand how communities tackle challenges and create change. They also immersed themselves in everyday life through home visits and even a city-wide scavenger hunt, memories that forged bonds beyond borders.



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# Nichibei Girls Collaborative (cont'd)

The Nichibei Girls Collaborative not only empowered students to see themselves as social impact leaders but also showed them the power of cultural connection in sparking innovation and resilience. As these young leaders return to their communities with new skills, lifelong friendships, and broader perspectives, they embody the future of cross-cultural collaboration. The pilot year demonstrated just how impactful such connections can be, and set the stage for future cohorts to continue building bridges across the Pacific.



“ I believe others should join this program because it's a wonderful experience. You meet incredible new people, learn so much, and create lasting memories. It's a chance to travel, grow, and have fun while connecting with new people and places. I highly recommend it!

- NGC Participant 2025

“ I enjoyed my time here at Via and I can't wait to join another program like this. This program definitely opened my eyes to different opportunities.

- NGC Participant 2025

## via COMMUNITY IMPACT: BY THE NUMBERS

**230** community connections

We reached over 230 students, teachers, facilitators, and community members in Japan and the USA.



**13** organizational partnerships

Girls Inc., MILPA, Ichigo Farms, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Boys & Girls Club, MIIS, Lurasian Institute, El Gabilan Library, YOUMAKEIT, and many more.



**27** guest speakers

University and high school teachers, non-profit founders and leaders, and agricultural and cultural organizations.





# VIA Alumni Study Tour: Connecting Alumni to Indonesia's Social Impact Leaders

“The study tour was a wonderful mix of discovery and personal interaction with remarkable people doing good for others. The leaders found a way to incorporate meaningful encounters with fun explorations of the places we visited.” – VIA Volunteer, Indonesia 1977



This year, VIA's Alumni Study Tours continued to offer alumni and friends the chance to immerse themselves in Asia's cultural landscapes while engaging with inspiring leaders across the region. Our 2025 Indonesia Study Tour was a 10-day journey through Bali and Yogyakarta, two regions that represent the vibrancy and diversity of Indonesia's cultural heritage and contemporary innovation.

Participants explored Bali's lush rice terraces, intricate temples, and vibrant arts, while also engaging with grassroots organizations like the Suwandi Foundation (a VIA partner through our Global Community Fellowship (GCF) program) and Cahaya Mutiara Ubud, a foundation founded by and for people with disabilities that empowers its members through arts, sports, and vocational training. In Yogyakarta, often considered Indonesia's cultural capital, the group experienced sunrise at Borobudur, a gamelan workshop, and discussions with

local academics and activists on sustainability and social justice. Visits with partners such as the Bumi Langit Institute offered practical models of community-based environmental stewardship, showing how traditions can align with modern sustainability practices.

The study tour also offered participants a window into Indonesia's rich history and traditions. From the royal heritage of the Jogja Palace and the dramatic storytelling of the Ramayana Ballet, to the spiritual significance of Pura Tirta Empul Holy Water Temple in Bali and the historic silver workshops of Kotagede, the participants gained a deeper appreciation for the cultural roots that continue to shape Indonesia today.

In true VIA fashion, the Indonesia study tour went beyond sightseeing, offering participants opportunities to reflect, exchange perspectives, and connect deeply with local communities. Through home visits, cultural workshops,

and shared meals, they became part of a living dialogue between cultures and generations of leaders. More than a trip, the study tour served as a bridge between VIA's past and present – inviting alumni to return to Asia and witness the lasting impact of VIA's partners and fellows, and reaffirming that VIA is not just a program but a lifelong, ever-growing community built on shared experiences and meaningful connections.

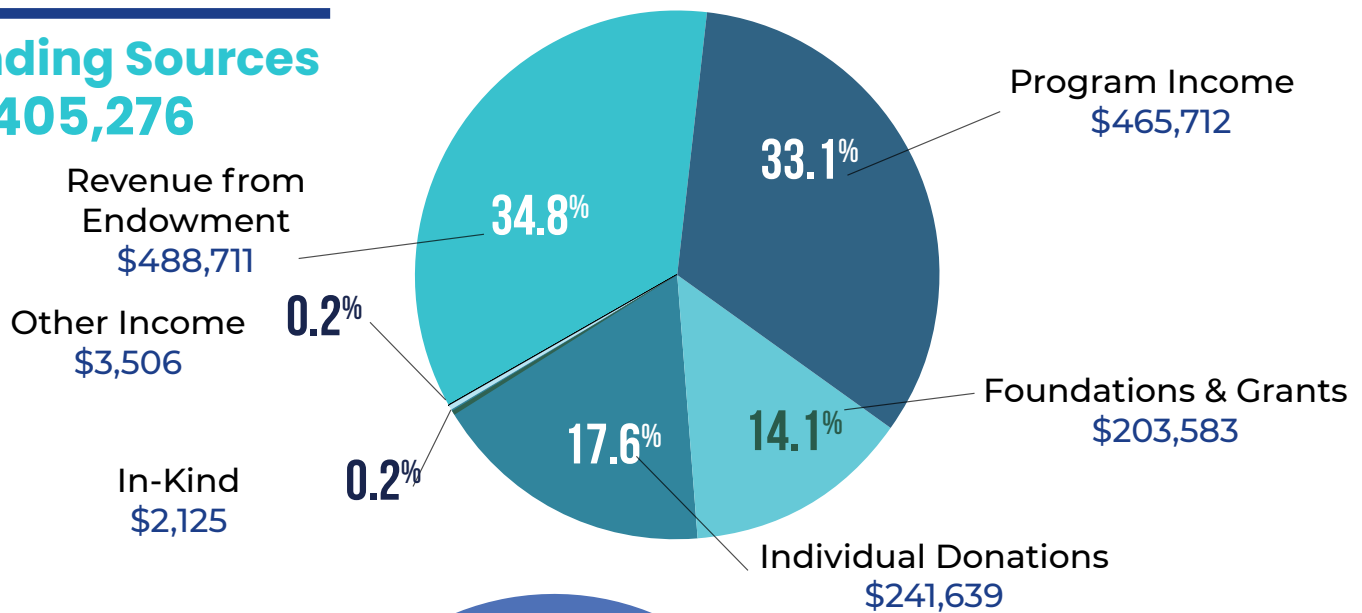
This year's Indonesia Study Tour was made possible with the support of our sister organization, VIA Indonesia, whose guidance, local expertise, and hospitality helped bring the program to life.

As we look ahead, VIA Study Tours remain a key way for alumni to stay engaged with VIA, rediscover the transformative power of immersive exchange, and contribute to building a future where global citizenship thrives. If you are interested in joining VIA's next Study Tour to Japan in March 2026, please contact VIA Strategic Relationships Director at [wallace@viaprograms.org](mailto:wallace@viaprograms.org) or visit [viaprograms.org/japan-tour](https://viaprograms.org/japan-tour) to sign up.

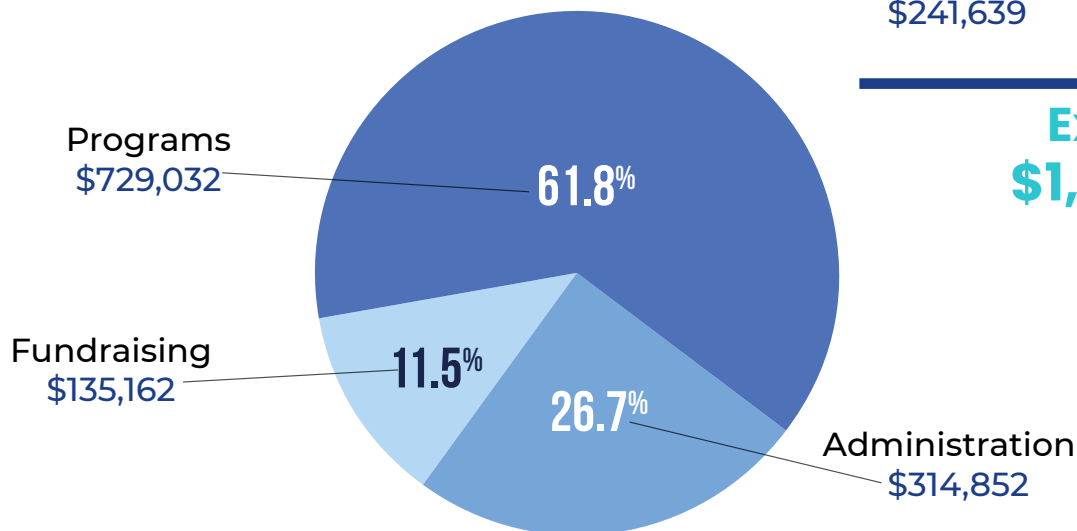


# 2024–2025 By The Numbers

## Funding Sources \$1,405,276



## Expenses \$1,179,046



## Creating Your VIA Legacy

We would like to thank and honor all of those who have made a legacy gift promise to VIA.

Planned giving can be an advantageous way to provide a future gift to VIA. By including VIA for any amount in your estate plans, you ensure the continuation of rich, immersive cross-cultural learning experiences that transform lives and strengthen our global community.

If you have included VIA in your will or trust, please inform us so that we can thank you for your special commitment. For more information, please contact **VIA Strategic Relationships Director Wallace Wong** at [wallace@viaprograms.org](mailto:wallace@viaprograms.org).

There are several ways to create your legacy for VIA:

- *Bequest in Your Will or Trust*
- *Life insurance*
- *Individual Retirement Accounts*
- *Life Income Gifts*
- *Personal Property*

### ***Thank you***

*John Affeldt & Karen Hoy*  
*Jeanne Blamey*  
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*Dwight Clark*  
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*Joan Karlin & Paul Resnick*  
*Stephen McNeil*  
*Michael Moradzadeh*  
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*Joel Stratte-McClure*  
*Robert Textor*

# Contributors

*Your contributions add miles to each participant's journey.  
For that, we sincerely thank you.*

**July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025**

## Foundations, Corporations & Organizations

BelleJAR Foundation  
B.K. Kee Foundation  
Douglas Young Charitable Fund  
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## How to Support

As we reflect on a year of growth and impact, we're excited to announce the launch of two new VIA Global Community Fellowship posts that will support transformative educational initiatives in Southeast Asia. These fellowships, at the Education for Friendship Foundation (EFF) in Mae Sot, Thailand, and the Suwandi Foundation in Bali, Indonesia, will create educational opportunities for underserved youth and empower them to build brighter futures.

Your support is essential to sustaining this important work. By donating to VIA, you help fund our transformative programs and fellowships that reach thousands of students, educators, and communities each year. You can also make an impact by volunteering or partnering with VIA to further our mission.

If you're interested in getting involved, please reach out to VIA's Strategic Relationships Director, Wallace Wong, at [wallace@viaprograms.org](mailto:wallace@viaprograms.org).



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