

STEP AFRiKA!

FY2025 ANNUAL REPORT

AUGUST 1, 2024—JULY 31, 2025



PC: Keith Major



PC: Keith Major

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LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of Step Afrika!,

With immense pride and gratitude, we celebrate the **culmination of Step Afrika!'s 30th Anniversary**—a milestone year that honored our legacy while amplifying our impact across the globe.

Founded in 1994 as a cultural exchange in Johannesburg, South Africa, Step Afrika! has grown into the **world's leading authority on stepping** and Washington, D.C.'s largest African American arts organization. Today, we continue to carry that founding spirit forward—bringing communities together through rhythm, storytelling, and the shared power of performance.

This year was nothing short of extraordinary.

From a triumphant return to **South Africa**, where our journey first began, to a landmark 30th Anniversary celebration at **Strathmore**, Step Afrika! reached new heights on stages at home and abroad. We proudly launched the inaugural **Step Afrika! Step Classic** in Washington, D.C., uniting step teams and audiences from across the country in a vibrant celebration of culture and community.

Our reach continues to expand in remarkable ways. Step Afrika! performed for tens of thousands of audience members across the United States and internationally, while our arts education programs **inspired more than 32,000 students**—fostering confidence, creativity, and connection in classrooms and communities nationwide.

This year also brought historic recognition. Step Afrika! earned a **GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ title** for the Largest Stepping Dance, a powerful testament to the energy, unity, and global resonance of our art form. Founder C. Brian Williams was also honored with an honorary doctorate from the University of the District of Columbia, recognizing his visionary leadership and lasting cultural impact.

As we celebrate this incredible milestone, we remain energized for the future. Step Afrika! continues to elevate stepping on the world stage, expand access to arts education, and create meaningful opportunities for the next generation of artists and leaders.

To our donors, partners, and audiences—**thank you for being part of this journey**. Your support makes this work possible and ensures that the tradition of stepping continues to inspire communities around the world.

We invite you to enjoy this report and **join us in celebrating a truly remarkable year**.

Warmly,

C. Brian Williams
Founder and Executive Producer

Lamar Lovelace
Executive Director



MISSION

Step Afrika!'s mission is to preserve, expand, and promote an appreciation for stepping through professional performances and to educate, motivate, and inspire young people in and out of school through arts education programs that emphasize teamwork, commitment, and discipline.

VISION

As one of the world's most celebrated African American dance Companies, Step Afrika! deepens connections within the communities we serve and furthers our mission to preserve and promote the tradition of stepping. Our vision is to expand programmatic efforts to engage broader audiences.



12 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT STEP AFRIKA!

1. **Founded in 1994** as a cultural exchange with Soweto Dance Theatre, Step Afrika! is the first professional Company dedicated to stepping.
2. Step Afrika! is one of the **top 10 African American dance companies** in the United States, the **largest African American-led arts organization in Washington, DC**, and Washington, DC's only cultural ambassador.
3. Step Afrika! has **18 full-time dancers**—all college graduates—many of whom attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and are members of Historically Black Greek Fraternities and Sororities.
4. Step Afrika! Founder and Executive Producer **C. Brian Williams** was named a **National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts**, our nation's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts, and is featured in *Roots of American Culture: A Cross-Country Visit with Living Treasures of the Folk and Traditional Arts* (2022).
5. The Company reaches tens of thousands each year through an annual tour of American colleges and theaters and performs globally as an **official U.S. Cultural Ambassador**.
6. Each year, Step Afrika! **engages 50,000 college students nationwide**, teaches teamwork and discipline to nearly 100 kids as part of the Summer Steps with Step Afrika! summer camp, and expands culture-based arts education for more than **20,000 Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia school students**.
7. As part of the world's **first interactive stepping exhibit**, thousands experience Step Afrika! at the **Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture** each day.
8. In 2021, Step Afrika! entered into a dynamic partnership with **Arena Stage** that provides elevated design support, rehearsal space, dramaturgical and artistic support for the Company in our home of Washington, DC.
9. In 2023, Step Afrika! was inducted into the **National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) Hall of Fame**, the first Dance Company to earn this honor.
10. Step Afrika! has **toured to over 60 countries**, with the most recent international engagements spanning across Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and South America.
11. As of February 2025, Step Afrika! is the new **GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ title holder** for the "largest STEPPING dance".
12. The Company has garnered **national recognition in the press**, appearing on the *TODAY Show* and *The Kelly Clarkson Show*.



PC: Phelan Marc

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND IMPACT

In FY25, Step Afrika! celebrated the culmination of its 30th Anniversary with bold artistic achievements, expanded educational reach, and global cultural exchange. From record-breaking milestones to transformative performances and programs, the Company elevated the art form of stepping while deepening its impact across communities in Washington, DC, and around the world.

30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

STEP AFRIKA! 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AT THE SOWETO THEATRE

Step Afrika! celebrated 30 years with a ground-breaking production from September 4-5, 2024, at the Soweto Theatre, bringing its anniversary full circle in the place where its international journey began. South African and American dancers united in a vibrant fusion of rhythm and culture, demonstrating how two rich traditions came together in powerful harmony. This milestone performance honored the Company's history while celebrating its global future.

STEP AFRIKA! STEP CLASSIC

Step Afrika! presented the Step Afrika! Step Classic from February 14-16, 2025, in Washington, DC, a three-day event centering community, culture, and the powerful tradition of stepping. The weekend brought together step teams from across the country and honored the legacy of stepping from its roots in the Divine Nine to its evolution into a professionally celebrated art form. Community Day at the National Building Museum and the culminating step show at the Warner Theatre, hosted by LaLa Milan, created an electrifying, high-energy celebration of culture, community, and the enduring legacy of stepping. *Many thanks to our generous sponsor, Events DC, and our media sponsors Destination DC and Watch the Yard.*

STEP AFRIKA! CELEBRATING 30 YEARS AT STRATHMORE

Step Afrika! celebrated 30 years of percussive performances across the globe in a groundbreaking production at Strathmore, featuring two world premieres choreographed by Assistant Artistic Director Conrad R. Kelly II, alongside works nurtured and refined in Johannesburg, South Africa. The performances served as a powerful culmination of the Company's 30th Anniversary Season, and featured Grammy-nominated African American vocal ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock®. The performances drew enthusiastic audiences and marked a defining moment in the Company's anniversary year.

NOTABLE RECOGNITION

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ TITLE

Step Afrika! achieved a GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ title for the Largest Stepping Dance, uniting 268 participants during Community Day at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC.

C. BRIAN WILLIAMS RECEIVES HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM UDC

Founder and Executive Producer C. Brian Williams delivered the commencement address at the University of the District of Columbia and received an Honorary Doctorate in recognition of his unparalleled cultural and artistic impact in the District.

“Williams and Step Afrika! are continuing **barrier-breaking work that not only offers joy and entertainment, but brings people together in the name of art.**”

- Micha Green, The Washington Informer





PC: Jati Lindsay

ARTS EDUCATION

Step Afrika!'s award-winning arts education programs bring rhythm, confidence, and creativity into classrooms and communities across the nation. In FY25, the Company reached **9,697 students in the Washington, DC metro area and an additional 22,544 students nationwide**, using stepping as a tool to inspire teamwork, discipline, and self-expression.

Step Afrika! Reads: 103 students

A 35-minute interactive performance for PreK–2nd grade students, Step Afrika! Reads combined storytelling, movement, and music to promote early literacy and active learning. Through rhythmic engagement and audience participation, students explored the connection between reading and creativity while reinforcing the importance of daily reading habits.

Stepping with Step Afrika!: 7,675 students

A 45-minute interactive performance for K–12 students that introduced the history, rhythm, and physicality of stepping. Participants actively engaged in learning choreography while exploring connections between stepping, academic achievement, and teamwork, with demonstrations of global traditions including South African Gumboot dance.

Step by Step: 1,603 students

A 45-minute school-wide workshop for PreK–12 students, Step by Step introduced the ties between stepping, college life, and academic achievement. Participants learned choreography while gaining a deeper understanding of cultural expression, rhythm, and the history of stepping.

Step Up to College: 216 students

A multi-week residency program for grades 4–12, offered in-school and after-school, Step Up to College combined stepping instruction with college readiness, health, and personal development. Students built confidence through choreography creation and performed for family and peers in a culminating showcase.

Summer Steps with Step Afrika!: 100 students

Recognized as a “Best Summer Camp” Finalist by Washington City Paper three years running, Summer Steps immersed 4th–12th grade students in stepping and South African Gumboot dance for a week while building leadership skills and exploring college prep. The camp culminated in a dynamic showcase of student work.

Student Matinees: 22,544 students

Interactive performances presented in theaters across the country, Student Matinees combined the core elements of Step Afrika!'s education programs with live performance. Students engaged directly with the art form through call-and-response, movement, and storytelling, deepening their understanding of stepping's cultural roots and contemporary relevance.

COMPANY

Step Afrika!'s dancers are performers, educators, and cultural ambassadors. The Company is home to **18 full-time artists**, many of whom are proud HBCU alumni and members of Divine 9 organizations. Through the tradition of stepping, they bring narratives of academic excellence, perseverance, and creativity to life on stages worldwide.

Conrad R. Kelly, Assistant Artistic Director

Kenneth L. Alexander Jr. • Nya Christian • Jerod Coleman

Joseph Vasquez • Keomi Givens Jr. • Kamala Hargrove

Terrence Johnson • Jemeema S. Montrose

Isaiah O'Connor • Keanu Powell • Valencia Springer

Ericka Still • Brie Turner • Ariel Dkyes • Pelham Warner Jr.

Robert Warnsley • TreShawn Williams



We want to create **full-time, excellent places of employment for Black artists**. The form we celebrate comes from African American culture and history, and we honor that daily."
- C. Brian Williams

LOCAL AND NATIONAL TOURING

In FY25, Step Afrika! brought the tradition of stepping to audiences across the United States and around the world through dynamic productions that blend percussive dance, storytelling, and audience engagement.

STEP AFRIKA!

The Company's self-titled work, Step Afrika!, introduced audiences to stepping through both a traditional and a contemporary lens. These performances are much more than dance shows; they integrate songs, storytelling, humor, and audience participation.

THE MIGRATION: REFLECTIONS ON JACOB LAWRENCE

Using Step Afrika!'s hallmark style of percussive dance-theater, this signature work told the story of one of the largest movements of people in United States history—the Great Migration. Inspired by Jacob Lawrence's iconic Migration Series, the production drew from its imagery, color palette, and themes to bring this powerful history to life through pulsating rhythms and visually stunning movement.

STEP AFRIKA!'S MAGICAL MUSICAL HOLIDAY STEP SHOW

As the world's first holiday show highlighting the African American tradition of stepping, Step Afrika!'s Magical Musical Holiday Step Show was a feast for the eyes and ears. Audiences joined DJ Nutcracker and his Arctic friends for an electrifying journey packed with high-energy stepping, festive music, and non-stop holiday cheer.

“Step Afrika!'s Magical Musical Holiday Step Show is always joyful, inclusive, and soul-filling, but **this year's program was a tour de force.**”

- DC Theater Arts' Sherrita Wilkin

STEP AFRIKA! 101

Step Afrika! 101 is an energetic, educational introduction to the art form of stepping. Merging the steps and strolls created and still practiced by Black Greek-letter organizations with the sounds of AfroBeats and popular music, Step Afrika! 101 fused explosive footwork, vibrant choreography, and contemporary African movement into an incredible, unique campus experience.

INTERNATIONAL TOURING

Step Afrika! introduces the tradition of stepping to international audiences through performances, workshops, and cultural exchange programs around the world. In FY25, the Company continued its role as a cultural ambassador, engaging global audiences through performance, education, and cultural exchange.

SOUTH AFRICA

(AUGUST 26–SEPTEMBER 7, 2024)

Step Afrika! celebrated its 30th anniversary alongside the 30th anniversary of South Africa's independence with a two-week return to South Africa, re-engaging the Company's origin story. The tour included performances, workshops, and artistic exchange in Johannesburg and Soweto, where the first Step Afrika! International Cultural Festival took place in December 1994. Anchored by performances at the Soweto Theatre, the program featured a collection of works from the United States alongside new and returning works by South African artists, highlighting decades of collaboration and connection.



LESOTHO (SEPTEMBER 8 – 11, 2024)

Following its engagements in South Africa, Step Afrika! traveled to the mountain kingdom of Lesotho for the first time. The visit included a reception with local government representatives, workshops and performances for students at a series of local schools, and a well-attended public performance. These engagements emphasized cultural exchange while introducing stepping as both an art form and a pathway for personal and professional growth. “We want the young people here to understand that dance is not merely an art form – it can be a career, a means to make a living and a way to express oneself,” said Sentebale’s Country School’s Director, Ntoli Moletsane.

“Laughter rang out, surrounded by the unity of culture and creativity, illustrating that **though they may come from different corners of the world, the language of dance knows no boundaries.**” - Lesotho Times

ESWATINI

(SEPTEMBER 11 – 14, 2024)

In Eswatini, Step Afrika! engaged with U.S. Embassy representatives, conducted workshops with the Eswatini National Dance Association, and led educational programs at two schools. The visit culminated in a free public performance at the Eswatini Theatre Club, offering audiences an opportunity to experience stepping firsthand and participate in a shared cultural exchange.

SENEGAL

(NOVEMBER 23 – 27, 2024)

In partnership with the U.S. Embassy, Step Afrika! brought the African American tradition of stepping to Senegal through a dynamic series of workshops, performances, and cultural exchanges. The Company engaged with the National Ballet La Linguère and students from Artea Culture Ecole, participated in educational outreach at CEM Soumbédioune, and presented a collaborative performance at the renowned Théâtre National Daniel Sorano. The tour also included a feature on the popular television program After + on 2sTV, expanding the reach of stepping to broader audiences.

2024 - 2025 PERFORMANCE LIST

THE SECOND HALF OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Step Afrika! 30th Anniversary Celebration at the Soweto Theatre in Soweto, South Africa (September 4-5, 2024)

Step Afrika! at various locations in Lesotho (September 8-11, 2024)

Step Afrika! at various locations in Eswatini (September 11-14, 2024)

Step Afrika! at the Alice Tully Hall in New York, NY (September 20, 2024)

The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln, NE (October 3, 2024)

Step Afrika! at the Marion Cultural and Civic Center in Marion, IL (October 12, 2024)

The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence at the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago, IL (October 19, 2024)

The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence at the Modlin Center for the Arts in Richmond, VA (October 26, 2024)

The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence at Cal Performances in Berkeley, CA (November 2-3, 2024)

The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence at Penn State in University Park, PA (November 14, 2024)

Step Afrika! at the Stockton Performing Arts Center in Galloway, NJ (November 16, 2024)

Step Afrika! at various locations in Senegal (November 23-27, 2024)

Step Afrika!s Magical Musical Holiday Step Show at Arena Stage in Washington, DC (December 13-22, 2024)

Step Afrika! at the State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick, NJ (January 17, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the University of Georgia's Performing Arts Center in Athens, GA (January 24, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Florida Theatre in Jacksonville, FL (January 26, 2025)

Step Afrika! at The Parker in Ft Lauderdale, FL (January 29, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at Carleton College in Northfield, MN (January 30, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at Winona State University in Winona, MN (January 31, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the FMU Performing Arts Center in Florence, SC (February 1, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at Purdue University Fort Wayne in Fort Wayne, IN (February 3, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Reynolds Performance Hall in Conway, AR (February 4, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at the Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, IN (February 5, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center in Nashville, TN (February 7, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at Denison University in Granville, OH (February 8, 2025)

Step Afrika! Step Classic at the Warner Theatre in Washington, DC (February 16, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at the West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon, WV (February 17, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at the West Virginia State University in Institute, WV (February 18, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the River Run Centre in Guelph, ON (February 19, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at the King School in Stamford, CT (February 21, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Kingston Grand Theatre in Kingston, ON (February 21, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at the St. Paul's School in Concord, NH (February 22, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Place des Arts in Montréal, QC (February 23, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, MS (February 24, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines, ON (February 25, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at the Coahoma Community College in Clarksdale, MS (February 25, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at the Northeast State Community College in Blountville, TN (February 27, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Gallo Center for the Arts in Modesto, CA (February 28, 2025)

Step Afrika! 101 at the Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, TN (February 28, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Eldorado Casino Reno in Reno, NV (March 2, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Aronoff Center for the Arts in Cincinnati, OH (March 11, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Great Lakes Center for the Arts in Bay Harbor, MI (March 14, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Alberta Bair Theater in Billings, MT (March 21, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center in Gallatin Gateway, MT (March 22, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Mother Lode Theater in Butte, MT (March 23, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Wachholz College Center in Kalispell, MT (March 26, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Kupferberg Center for the Arts in Queens, NY (March 28, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Savannah Music Festival in Savannah, GA (April 2, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Oregon Symphony in Portland, OR (April 11, 2025)

Step Afrika! at The Washington Center for the Performing Arts in Olympia, WA (April 13, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Hult Center in Eugene, OR (April 17, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Edmonds Center for the Arts in Edmonds, WA (April 19, 2025)

Step Afrika! at The Grand Theater in Wausau, WI (April 22, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Midland Center for the Arts in Midland, MI (April 25, 2025)

Step Afrika! at the Viterbo University Fine Arts Center in La Crosse, WI (April 27, 2025)

Step Afrika! at The Oscar Larson Performing Arts Center in Brookings, SD (May 1, 2025)

Step Afrika! Celebrating 30 Years at Strathmore in Bethesda, MD (June 27 - 28, 2025)





DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Step Afrika! is deeply grateful for the generous support of our sponsors and donor community. Your investment fuels our performances, expands our education programs, and ensures that the tradition of stepping continues to inspire audiences around the world.



PC: Phelan Marc

STEP AFRIKA! VIP GALA 2025

On June 9, 2025, the Company's key supporters and friends gathered at the historic Howard Theatre for Step Afrika!'s VIP Gala 2025. The event was an electrifying celebration with live performances, a beautiful sit-down dinner, and a dance party hosted by the incredible DJ Tanz. Sponsorship of our 2025 Gala supported Step Afrika!'s award-winning arts education and community programs in Washington, DC, ensuring continued access to these transformative experiences.

FY25 DONOR LIST



PC: Soweto Theatre

\$100,000 AND UP

Anonymous
DC Commission on the Arts
and Humanities

\$25,000 - \$99,999

Ann Belkov
CoStar
DC Housing and Finance Agency
Reginald Brown & Tiffeny Sanchez

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Accenture LLP
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Dallas Morse Coors Foundation for the
Performing Arts
John W. Hill Family
LaTisha Gasaway
Pepco
Washington Gas

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Erica Green and Jeff Kennerly
Katherine Kane
Maia Hunt Estes
Marlissa Hudson
The Menkiti Group and Keller Williams
Capital Properties
Michele V. Hagans
Natalie Cofield
Seattle Foundation
Venable LLP

\$2,500 - \$4,999

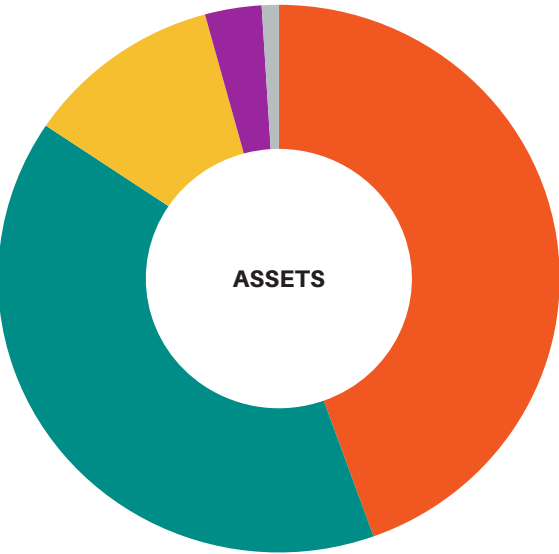
Angel Brunner
Dr. Benjamin & Natasha Watkins
Christopher Montgomery
Connie & Patricia Williams
Dameon & Frenika Rivers
Dyonicia "Dy" Brown
Elliott Ferguson
Kym & Steve Taylor
Mary Nicholson
Melanie Trottman
Michelle Prewitt
Troy Patterson



FY25 FINANCIALS

In FY25, Step Afrika! maintained strong financial health, with growth in both contributed and earned revenue. Investments in program services continued to drive mission impact, reflecting the organization’s commitment to artistic excellence and arts education.

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

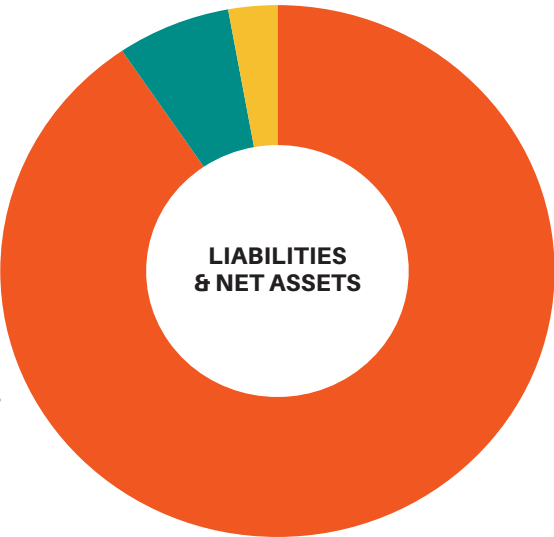


ASSETS
Cash and cash equivalents: \$2,192,926
Investments: \$1,965,132
Property and equipment: \$558,021
Accounts receivable: \$160,521
Prepaid expenses: \$48,206

TOTAL ASSETS: \$4,924,806

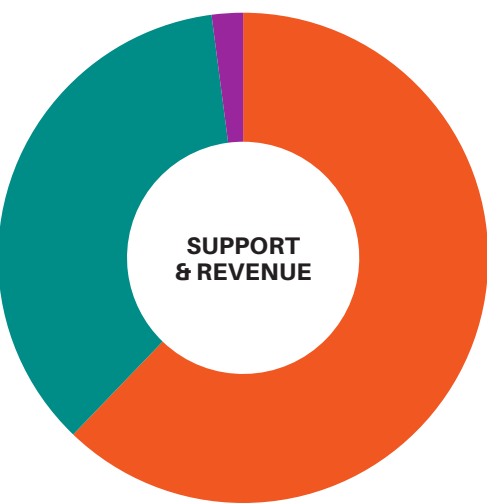
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS
Current Liabilities: \$326,030
Long-Term Liabilities: \$140,450
Net Assets: \$4,458,326

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS: \$4,924,806



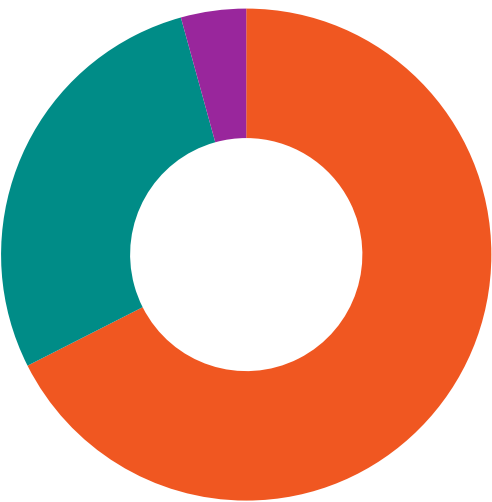
FY25 FINANCIALS

REVENUE AND EXPENSES



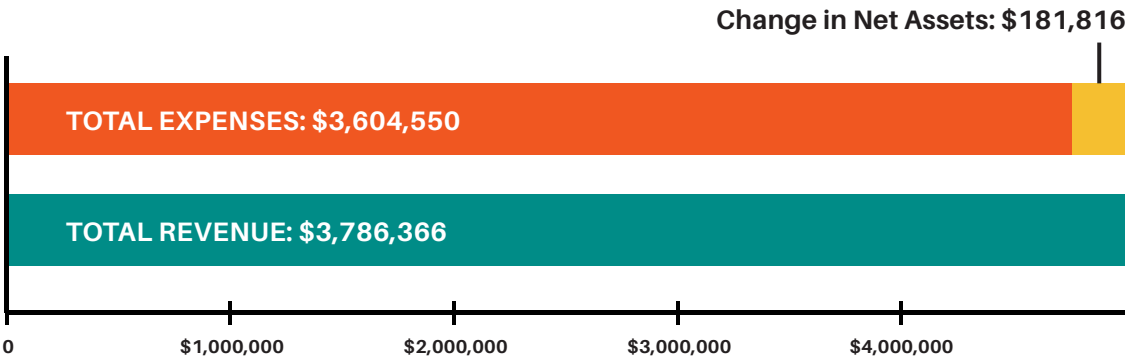
SUPPORT & REVENUE
Contributions, Gifts, & Grant Income: \$2,354,873
Performance Income: \$1,353,482
Other Income: \$78,011

TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE: \$3,786,366



EXPENSES
Program Services: \$2,434,650
Management and General: \$1,015,002
Fundraising: \$154,898

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$3,604,550



NATIONAL PRESS

Step Afrika! continues to expand its national media presence, increasing awareness and celebrating the cultural significance of stepping.

AMERICA'S BLACK FORUM

In September 2024, America's Black Forum, a nationally syndicated television show highlighting Black American stories, sat down with Step Afrika! Founder C. Brian Williams for a conversation about the Company's roots and evolution into the world's leading authority on stepping.

TODAY SHOW

On December 20, 2024, Step Afrika! stepped onto the national stage with a feature on the TODAY Show in New York City. The appearance included a stepping workshop with hosts Craig Melvin, Vicky Nguyen, and Al Roker, followed by a high-energy in-studio performance. With a daily audience of more than 5 million viewers, the segment brought stepping into homes across the country during the holiday season.

KELLY CLARKSON SHOW

During Black History Month 2025, C. Brian Williams joined singer, songwriter, and television personality Kelly Clarkson for an interview highlighting the history of stepping and Step Afrika!'s national impact. The segment included a live stepping workshop and a dynamic Company performance, blending education and entertainment for a national audience.

PC: The Kelly Clarkson Show





PC: Phelan Marc

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Pascha Barnwell, Company Manager
Margo Cunningham, Senior Marketing Manager
Milen Matthews, Manager, Arts Education and Community Programs
Chrystal 'Chrys' Vaughan, Manager, Events and Special Projects

For more than three decades, Step Afrika! has honored, shared, and expanded the tradition of stepping while fostering unity and cultural awareness around the world.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to advancing this vital art form, creating opportunities for artists, and inspiring the next generation through the power of stepping.

STEP AFRIKA!!

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STEP FORWARD WITH US



PC: Jati Lindsay