

# Country Dance & Song Society ANNUAL REPORT 2024



We connect and support people in building and sustaining vibrant communities through participatory dance, music, and song. We steward the living traditions of English country dance, contra and square dance, morris and sword dance, and the music that is an integral part of these traditions.





Photo by Max Newman, American Dance & Music Week.

## *"Farther on, still go farther. Count the milestones one by one."\**

When I look back on 2024, I see important milestones on our strategic plan journey. To **help affiliates adapt in a changing world**, we added more online resources, provided consultations, and hosted programs on succession planning and the Generational Transition Survey. And as we helped affiliates navigate transitions, we tended to our own, bidding fond farewells to Director of Programs Joanna Reiner Wilkinson and long-time Director of Development Robin Hayden.

We also made significant headway in our quest to **achieve financial sustainability** in the post-pandemic economy. Camp enrollment rebounded to pre-pandemic times, a new major donor relationship blossomed, and we saw encouraging growth in donations and bequests. We ended the year with an exciting surplus, which is now funding a strategic staff expansion, boosting our grants program, and establishing a new fund for ongoing operational support.

There are so many parallels between the work of stewarding living traditions and navigating change. How do we preserve the best of what

came before while creating space for what will come next? And how do we also stay grounded in the present—in the community, joy, and music happening right now? These questions are at the heart of all that we do, both as an individual organization and as we serve the broader community.

My hope is that CDSS will help dancers, musicians, and singers feel less alone when facing challenges in their communities. Whether someone is stepping into leadership, starting a new gathering, reinvigorating a beloved event, or passing the torch, I want CDSS to be there supporting them. I want us to be a repository for stories, histories, best practices, and new approaches, a conduit for connecting folks with information and people that can help them achieve their goals.

Thank you for supporting this crucial work and helping our extensive dance, music, and song community thrive!

Katy German, Executive Director

\*From "Farther On," a traditional shape note hymn with alternate lyrics by Randy Wilson.

# Thank You!

My first year on the job with CDSS was a huge inspiration for me. I'm energized by the work of our staff and board. I'm encouraged by the dedication of our supporters. I'm moved by the incredible commitments made by our donors and volunteers. And I'm uplifted by the fellowship across our music and dance communities, in a time when much of our society is in upheaval.

I'm also incredibly proud of what we've accomplished in the short time I've been here! We've made great strides in our continued financial sustainability, while still growing our resources for affiliates and those who look to us for support in cultivating music and dance opportunities within their local communities. I see how our organization strives to reach beyond physical and socioeconomic boundaries and how we continually extend guidance to new and established music and dance communities across the US and Canada.

We couldn't accomplish any of this work without your support. I've witnessed time and again how our donors step up to the challenge of supporting our appeals, growing our special funds, and surprising us with generous legacy gifts. We're grateful for your help making our strategic goals a reality. Thank you for everything you do to help make our communities safe, inclusive, and joyful for all!

See you on the dance floor!



Charmaine Slaven,  
Director of Development



Photo by Armelle Lorczy, ContraQuebec Spring Buds.

Give to CDSS at [cdss.org/donate](https://cdss.org/donate).





# Camp Programs

## *Building skills to take home*

2024 was another successful year for CDSS camp programs! Total attendance across our nine weeks of camp increased again over last year, marking a sustained return to pre-pandemic participation.

We ran five intensive courses at camp (for English and square dance callers, contra dance musicians, and singers), providing training and special instruction to 57 participants from 23 states and provinces.

And Cascade of Music & Dance (left) enjoyed an excellent first year at a new location, Camp Kweebec, near Schwenksville, PA. The staff at the camp facility were very welcoming and plan to make adjustments to food, beds, and more to further improve the camper experience.

**1,174**  
campers and  
camp staff from  
**43** states,  
**5** provinces, and  
**4** abroad

**\$49,326**  
in scholarships  
to **127** diverse  
recipients from  
**26** states and  
**4** provinces

“I remember very distinctly the first evening dance of camp. I had never attended a dance camp or even a dance weekend before, so this was easily the largest dance I had experienced to date. The first couple times I heard everyone’s shoes rhythmically dance, tap, and stomp on the dance floor, I became a little emotional. The sound especially resonated with me that we were a part of a living history and a dance community that extends far beyond my local one...”

—**Emily Bernal**, American Dance & Music Week at Pinewoods  
New Generation Initiative Scholarship



# Across Our Community

## *Helping launch, restart, and nurture events far and wide*

In 2024, we awarded **\$10,080** in community grant funding to **21 projects** in **12 states** and **2 provinces**. 29% of these projects were **brand new events**, 14% were special events or series **restarting post-pandemic**, and a whopping 48% were **trainings for dance musicians and callers**.

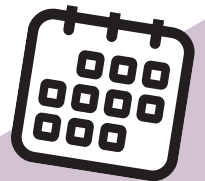
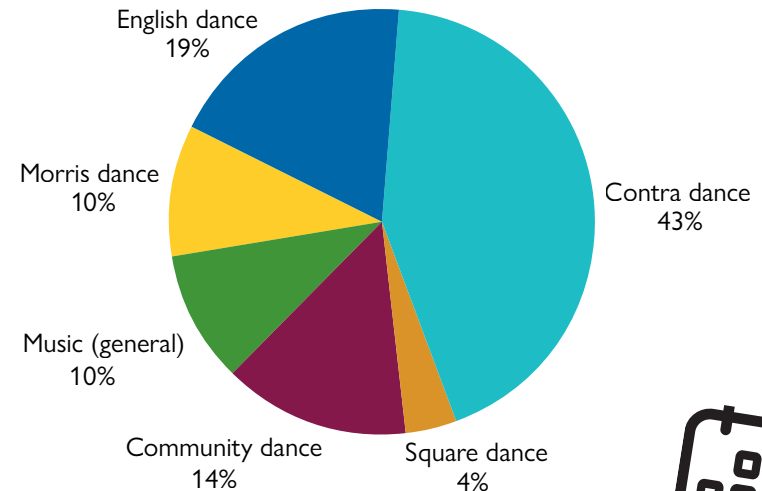


Photo courtesy of Wendy Graham.

“The CDSS grant helped us bring our long-time monthly dance series back after the pandemic, and **that successful relaunch generated enough energy** and enthusiasm for it to keep it going even after I moved away! That was a great feeling—that it mattered enough to people to keep it going.”

—**Wendy Graham, Durango Contra Dance**  
Durango, CO, CDSS Community Grant recipient

### 2024 Grant Recipients



**5,370 events**

**363 organizers**

**146 new submitters**

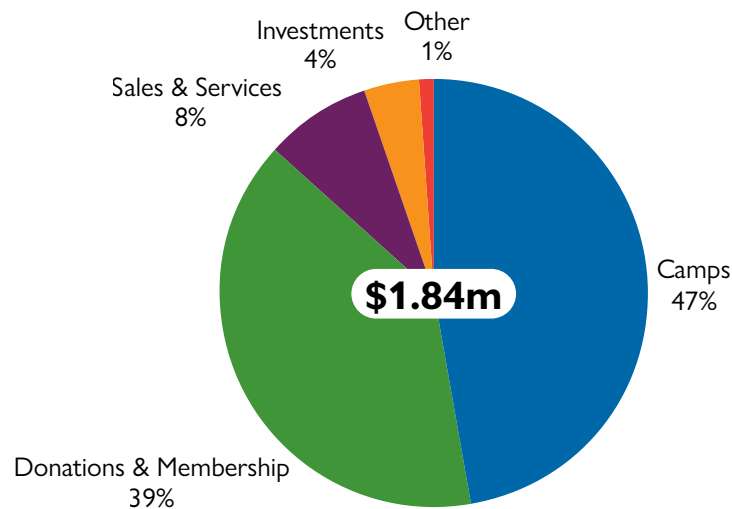
Our free Community Calendar helped grant recipients and other organizers reach a wider audience for their (many!) events.

# 2024 Financial Snapshot

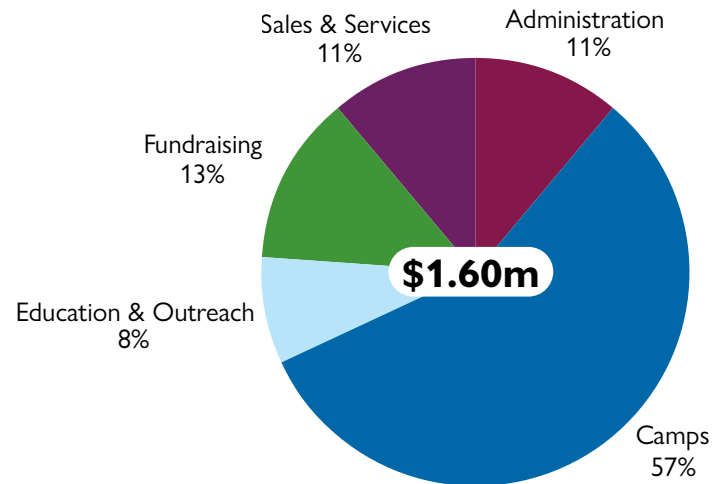
2024 was another strong year for income. Camps remained our largest source of revenue, accounting for 47% of our annual income and highlighting just how essential they are to what we do. Donations and membership dues accounted for 39%, bolstered by generous bequests. And we saw modest year over year growth in our sales and services (8%) and investments (4%). Our 2024 total income increased by almost 8% over 2023.

We saw a continued downward trend in expenses, thanks to ongoing internal efforts to reduce operational costs. Camp expenses made up the largest share (57%). We also devoted resources to fundraising (13%) and administration (11%) to keep everything running smoothly. And money for sales and services (11%) and education and outreach (8%) made possible our insurance programs, grants, podcasts, publications, and free online resources, helping us support our affiliates and the community at large in meaningful and lasting ways.

## 2024 Income

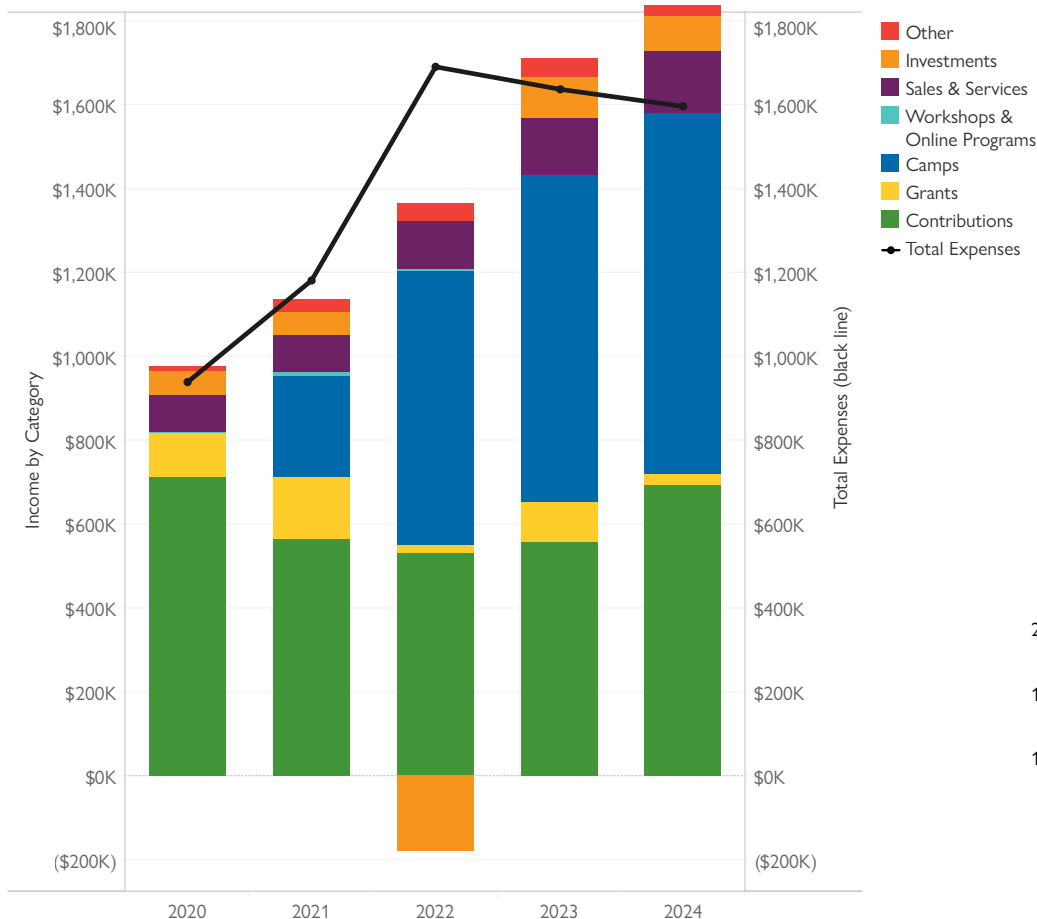


## 2024 Expenses



*Thanks to support from our community, we're able to continue doing work that makes a difference while staying thoughtful about how we manage our resources.*

## 2020-2024 Income and Expense Comparison

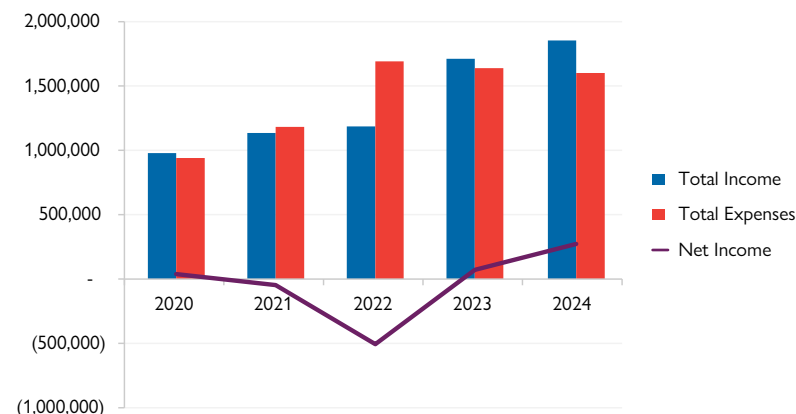


*The Bright Futures gift supplemented our annual income from 2020-2023, enabling us to launch online programming. The increased grants income in 2020, 2021, and 2023 represents special pandemic-related state and federal funding in these years.*

This five-year overview reflects a story of resilience, innovation, and robust community investment in CDSS.

Although expenses rose dramatically after 2020, we adapted and worked fervently to regain a better balance. Our concerted efforts to reduce operational costs in 2023 and 2024 made a significant difference. Steady income growth over the past five years speaks to both the strength of our community support and our successful expansion of programming following the challenges of the pandemic. In 2024, board fundraising efforts and substantial bequests helped drive income to a five-year high, positioning us well for 2025.

## 2020-2024 Annual Net Income



We were able cover the 2022 deficit and keep our reserves intact thanks to a low-interest federal COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL).

See more 2024 financial information at [cdss.org/annual-report](https://cdss.org/annual-report).



*Individuals nourished and communities strengthened  
by dancing, singing, and making music together.*

## 2024 GOVERNING BOARD

### Officers:

President: David Smukler, Syracuse, NY  
Vice President: Luanne Stiles, Asheville, NC  
Secretary: Michael Bean, Ann Arbor, MI  
Treasurer: Joel Bluestein, Arlington, VA  
Treasurer-elect: Michael Wood, Wilmington, DE

### At Large Members:

Jenna Barron, Easthampton, MA  
Margaret Bary, Brooklyn, NY  
Jeremy Carter-Gordon, Concord, MA  
Wendy Clarke, The Plains, VA  
Susan English, Wooster, OH  
Norman Farrell, Ridgefield, WA  
Sandy Knudson, Norman, OK  
Glenn Manuel, Richardson, TX  
Robbin Marcus, Stonecrest, GA  
Craig Meltzner, Santa Rosa, CA  
Justin Morrison, Burlington, VT  
Marni Rachmiel, Seattle, WA  
Diane Silver, Asheville, NC  
Juliette Webb, Nashville, TN

## 2024 OFFICE STAFF

Kathryn German, Executive Director, Asheville, NC  
Robin Hayden, Director of Development (outgoing), Greenfield, MA  
Charmaine Slaven, Director of Development (incoming), Indianapolis, IN  
Joanna Reiner Wilkinson, Director of Programs, Cheltenham, PA  
Julie Brodnitzki, Director of Finance, Barkhamsted, CT  
Sarah Pilzer, Director of Technology, Winooski, VT  
Kate DiSanto, Accounts Payable Coordinator, Westfield, MA  
Nicki Perez, Gifts & Database Coordinator, Northampton, MA  
Audrey Jaber, Membership Coordinator, San Diego, CA  
Sarah Babbitt Spaeth, Programs Coordinator, Burlington, VT  
Ben Williams, Publications, Sales, & Services Manager, Northampton, MA  
Kelsey Wells, Marketing & Communications Manager, Murfreesboro, TN  
Janet Brown, Office Assistant, Easthampton, MA

## 2024 CONTRACTORS

Anne Campbell, Webmaster, Orlando, FL  
Anna Gilbert-Duveneck, Designer, Gorham, ME  
Dana Dwinell-Yardley, Designer, Montpelier, VT  
Brit Stokes, Designer, Murfreesboro, TN

**SPECIAL THANKS** and fond farewells to  
Robin Hayden and Joanna Reiner Wilkinson.

## COUNTRY DANCE & SONG SOCIETY

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CDSS is funded in part by generous grants  
from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.  
massculturalcouncil.org

- 2024 Governing Board
- 2024 Office Staff
- 2024 Contractors

