

MOSS Annual Report

2023

Sept. 1 '22 - Aug. 31 '23

Mission

Montana Outdoor Science School (MOSS) inspires curiosity, awareness, and understanding of nature and science through quality educational experiences. We engage people through exploration and learning, and prepare students to care for the environment.

Vision

MOSS envisions a future where Montanans have a strong connection with nature, understand and value the natural sciences, and are inspired to care for this extraordinary place we call home.

Being outdoors, engaging with our surroundings, exploring the interplay of natural forces – that’s the best and most effective way to learn science! We at MOSS believe that kids and adults will more highly value our Montana (and global) environment when we understand it better. Based on all the wonderful feedback we get, I know our instructors are both effectively educating and successfully inspiring a connection to nature.

MOSS’s programs are headlined by our week-long, science- and nature-focused summer camps (53 of them in summer '23!) and our regular in-school science programs (36 schools this past year!). Our high-quality day programs and residential field programs got kids outside learning about their corner of Montana. Our adult offerings expanded slightly with field trips addressing ecology and geology.

Our most significant personnel change in the past year was hiring our new summer Program Manager, Kendal Pittman. Kendal orchestrated a very successful season of week-long day camps for kindergarteners through rising 9th graders.

MOSS’s staff seemingly were everywhere in southwest Montana this past year with an abundance of outreach events, while making connections and expanding awareness of MOSS. From the Big Sky Farmers Market to the Red Ants Pants Music Festival in White Sulphur Springs. From numerous afternoons at Bozeman’s Music on Main to the Yellowstone Harvest Festival in Livingston. From the Bridger Raptor Festival to our own Nature Quest events and finally to several Volunteers Socials right at our office in Bozeman.

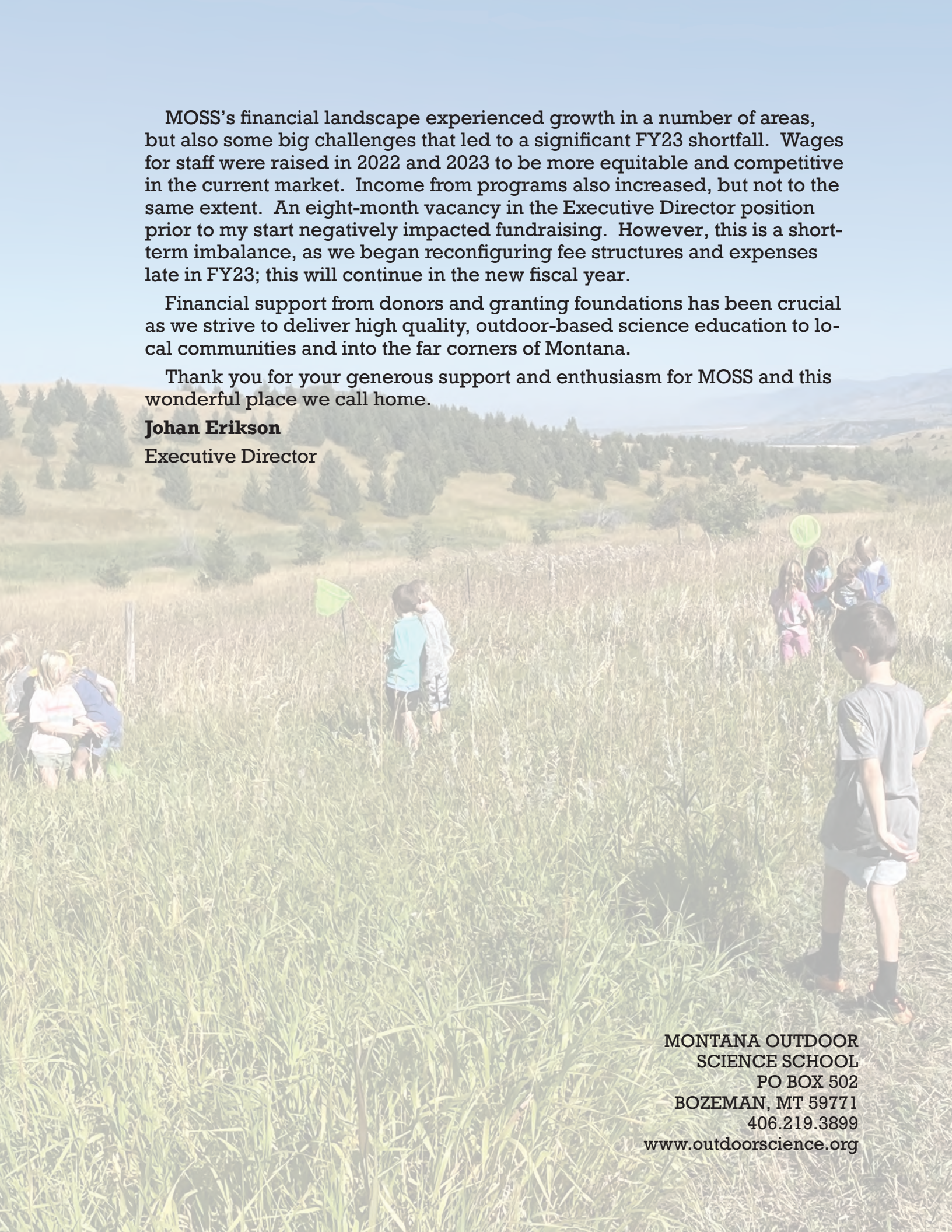


MOSS's financial landscape experienced growth in a number of areas, but also some big challenges that led to a significant FY23 shortfall. Wages for staff were raised in 2022 and 2023 to be more equitable and competitive in the current market. Income from programs also increased, but not to the same extent. An eight-month vacancy in the Executive Director position prior to my start negatively impacted fundraising. However, this is a short-term imbalance, as we began reconfiguring fee structures and expenses late in FY23; this will continue in the new fiscal year.

Financial support from donors and granting foundations has been crucial as we strive to deliver high quality, outdoor-based science education to local communities and into the far corners of Montana.

Thank you for your generous support and enthusiasm for MOSS and this wonderful place we call home.

Johan Erikson
Executive Director



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Hello MOSS Community! I'm MOSS's Education Director - Molly Iversen. Here to reflect on the 2022-2023 school year.

During the last school year, we fully escaped our Covid-related changes and charged ahead with some adjustments for the better. Our new, improved and popular Homeschool Science Program grew out of our Tuesday Science program, which had thrived during the pandemic. To provide longer-term, more in-depth programming, Homeschool Science progressed from an initial 4-week session in fall '22, to two 6-week sessions with longer visits in the spring '23, to a full semester (14-week) session in fall '23.

2022-2023 also saw MOSS testing the waters with a semester-long collaboration with a private K-8 school in Livingston that operates M-Th. MOSS offered a full day of programming most Fridays throughout the fall of 2022. It serves as an excellent model for new programs in rural areas where 4-day school weeks are becoming the norm.

Throughout the last school year we continued our regular, long-term schoolyard visits with several schools, including Pass Creek, Amsterdam and Shields Valley School. Last fall we tried out a field day for Shields Valley students at Crosscut - one of those perfect, sunny, blue sky days where everything was right with the world - or at least for those who participated.

Our Water Wise Kids program grew to 10 classrooms in 2022-2023. This program, which focuses on water conservation and storm water management in our watershed, is increasing in impact and stature. Our success with Water Wise Kids to date has led to funding for ALL Bozeman Public School 5th grade classrooms in 2023-2024!

Another great accomplishment in 2022-2023 was our founding role with the Gallatin Valley Community of Resource Educators Group (C.O.R.E.). This collaboration brings together like-minded individuals from many different organizations so that we can capitalize on or avoid overlap in programming, sharing volunteer needs and opportunities, funding resources, etc..

In addition to these highlights, we:

- completed school visits with about 36 classrooms and organizations;
- provided PIR (out of school day) programming in Bozeman, Livingston and a trial run in Manhattan;
- completed our second successful field season with American Prairie Field School;
- attended and presented at important regional education conferences;
- completed two more sessions of our Master Naturalist program with the help of Cedar Mathers-Winn;
- and more!

Molly Iversen
Education Director



Yet another wonderful MOSS summer has come to a close! This year, 16 incredible instructors led place-based, outdoor science programming for 658 campers in 53 week-long camps for kindergarten through 9th grade. Based out of Headwaters Academy this year, we traveled to in-town parks, local trailheads, and as far as Paradise Valley and Yellowstone National Park. We observed macroinvertebrates in mountain streams, made meals with wild edible plants, camped under the stars, tested the water quality in numerous streams around the Gallatin Valley, and much more!

Along with many of our classic trips and curricula, we expanded our camp offerings to better meet the needs of our Gallatin Valley community. We shifted the timing of our camps to start slightly earlier in the day so that families could drop their students off before beginning work and continued to offer our After-Camp Care program so families had childcare through the end of the workday. This year, we provided \$13,000 in full and partial scholarships to more than 30 students who would not have been able to join us otherwise. Recognizing that tuition is not the only barrier to access, we partnered with the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC) to provide free breakfast and lunch for any student attending our camps. Through this partnership, we provided over 50 students with healthy meals that fueled their adventures and experiments while at MOSS.

For the first time ever, we offered a bilingual Spanish/English camp - a geology camp called Rock Jocks for rising 3rd-4th graders. Our bilingual instructors ensured that regardless of each student's Spanish and English level, all students came away with a better understanding of our local geology, as well as learned new vocabulary in Spanish and English!

These programs have made it possible for even more Montana students to explore the outdoors, participate in environmental science, and form connections with the land through MOSS summer camps. Our summer materials might be back on the shelves for now, but we're already planning and looking forward to summer 2024 at MOSS!

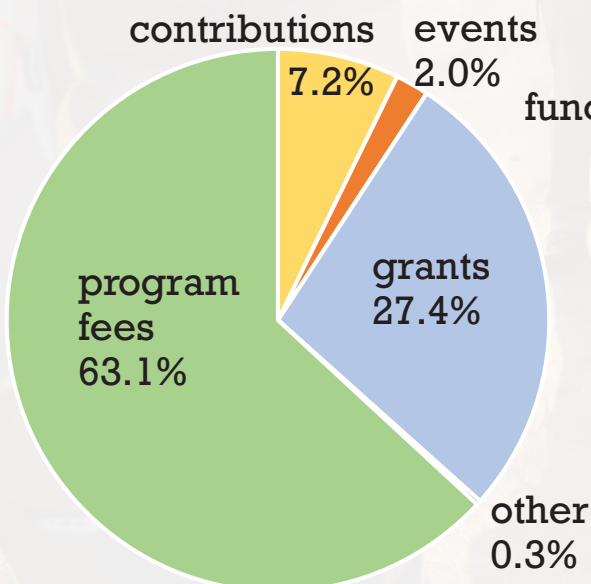
Kendal Pittman
Program Manager



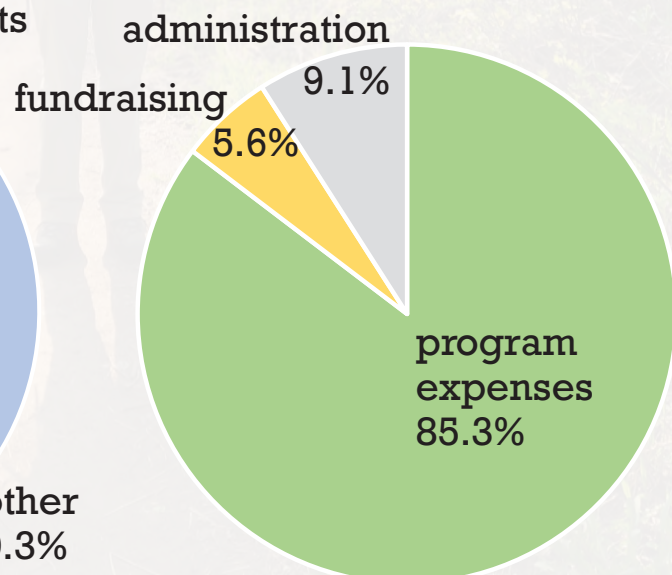
FY2023 By the Numbers

- 8,033 hours learning with 2106 school kids at 36 schools
- 19,600 hours exploring in the summer with 658 campers in 53 camps
- 27 Montana Master Naturalists were certified plus 15 adults joined 3 day-long field trips
- 145 hours were volunteered by 17 individuals (exclusive of Board of Directors)
- \$15,000 in fee waivers were awarded to almost 40 families and 9 schools served through our scholarship program

Revenue FY23
\$693,827



Expenses FY23
\$865,812



Thank you donors and grant-makers!

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