

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



**ROOTS AND
WINGS**
FOUNDATION



Social Action Provides Hope – The Most Important Lesson from Our Decade-long Journey

Our tenth year was quite meaningful: our new program, the Women's Solidarity Programme, made a significant impact and received considerable attention, while the Revitalising Small Towns Programme, enriched with many new experiences, embarked on supporting seven new community leaders. We are seeing impressive numbers, deep social impact, and more than ever before, a challenging, uncertain future.





Year after year, we've declared that times are getting tougher: resources are dwindling, money is tight, and the civil sector is drying up and becoming marginalized. This remains true, but the lessons we've garnered from a decade of work throughout the country offer a powerful counterpoint to the oppressive reality of slow erosion.

We see that social action is not a threat, but an opportunity. Wherever our partners and grantees have tried (whether in villages or large cities), they have enacted change that no one previously thought possible. We've found that self-censorship, driven by an atmosphere of fear and passivity,

is the greatest enemy of action. And we see that those who begin to act, in spite of this, encounter some fears, but also curiosity, interest, joy and new allies.

We've learned that social action—and the people and organizations who want to create change locally, along with the donors who support them—cannot be erased. In fact, with our support, their effectiveness, strength, and reach have multiplied. Over the past 10 years, this has required independent, unrestricted funding, flexible, open-minded professional support, and a recognition of our partners' work. When all of this comes together, we've seen that social action can be joyful, effective, and capable of moving mountains. We believe the past decade has proven that the Roots and Wings Foundation (RWF) carries out this work well and will continue to do so in the future.

On the occasion of our 10-year anniversary, we feel a delightful, unabashed obligation to reflect on our achievements.

We turned ten.

We asked many people to share how
RWF has impacted their lives and work.

"As web developers, it makes us proud to support an organization that fights to help dreams come true locally. There is a song that asks: 'What is a human without humanity?' RWF brings humanity back to society."

(Zsuzsi Csorba, Positive Design)

"The Roots and Wings Foundation is a key reference point for community foundations in Colombia. You've made it easier for us to understand the opportunities within community foundations and community philanthropy."

(Carolina González, Colombia)

"For me, RWF is like a home you have already grown out of, but you know you can always return, and it'll cook you chicken soup."

*(Orsi Kiss-Bakucz, Diósdiak
Diósdért Association)*

"RWF = human and professional strength, safety, authenticity. I always think of you with warmth. We are the divers, and you give us the goggles to look around, the snorkel and tank to breathe deeply, and the fins to reach farther."

(Éva Knyihár, Pécs Community Foundation)

"Personally, I'm always amazed by the story of RWF – that a few dedicated people believe in their vision and bring it to life out of nothing. That is the Roots and Wings Foundation."

*(Csilla Parag, Pécs Community
Foundation)*

"There's no better name than Roots and Wings – it grounds you and lets you soar. You provide mentorship and a model for how an organization can be supportive and inspiring."

(Melinda Farkas, Pomáz EcoCircle)

[You can learn more about the Foundation's first ten years and read the well wishes sent to us on our anniversary page.](#)

Celebrating gave us strength

We celebrated our tenth birthday with a fundraising campaign: nine of our ambassadors raised over HUF 3 million to support the work of our foundation. They ran campaigns with creative personal commitments: one composed music, others collected donations while doing sports, some conducted interviews or shared stories about the positive impact of charitable giving.

A very special moment in the campaign occurred when 150 supporters attended a performance of the play, Deep Breath, organized by our ambassador, Kata Pálos, and starring Hanna Pálos. The play is based on Rita Halász's novel about the nature of abusive relationships.

It was incredible to witness the power of community throughout these celebrations, and we are deeply grateful to our ambassadors for believing in our cause and standing with us! You can read a more detailed summary [here](#).

We also held a traditional birthday event, which was beautiful, uplifting, and truly memorable thanks to the wonderful conversations it allowed. Together with friends and grantees, we discussed not only the past ten years, but the road ahead. Some standout quotes include:



[You can find the full summary here.](#)

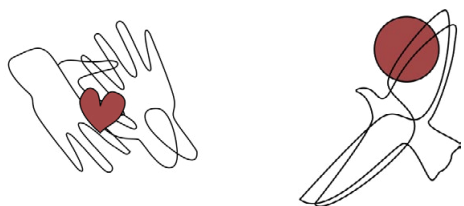
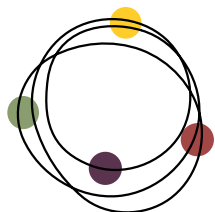
"We initiate, even if everyone else says the context makes it impossible."

"This sector is indestructible because of its diversity and adaptability."

"The situation in Hungary has always been lousy."

"I don't think we should wait on the state for anything."





In 2024, the Roots and Wings Foundation was among the “richest” 4% of traditional civil organizations in Hungary. This is a serious responsibility – both generally and towards those we support. Our exceptional position was due to our generous and loyal international donors, though unfortunately, their numbers are dwindling.

The global landscape of philanthropy is shifting: private foundations open to supporting social and global challenges are increasingly turning their attention to the Global South, climate change, and causes affecting all of humanity. As a result, Europe, the EU, and Hungary are disappearing from their radar.

The situation is not helped by the U.S. turning inward with the aversion of the new (old) president and his administration towards civil organizations and resulting funding cuts. It is further hindered by the Hungarian government’s growing hostility

toward domestic NGOs funded from abroad. Contrary to the propaganda, we see Roots and Wings Foundation’s decade of work as deeply patriotic; through sources we ourselves found, not taxpayer money, we have strengthened civil communities that had no other resources.

Our greatest challenge now is maintaining our programs, for which we are actively seeking new partners. What’s already clear is that finding and securing flexible resources to pass on to our grantees is the most difficult task ahead.



We Build Community, Offer Support, and Bring Change – The Women’s Solidarity Program

In 2024, the Roots and Wings Foundation continued its Women’s Solidarity Program, which aims to support the safe and sustainable operation of grassroots civil initiatives representing women’s perspectives, and to build a solidarity-based community around them. Based on our

experience thus far, the significance of this support lies not only in the financial resources provided, but in the professional and personal support that has contributed to strengthening and sustaining these organizations.



NADE! – Women Give Together: Season Two



Roots and Wings Foundation experienced a very special moment on 5 November, with the launch of the second season of NADE! – Women Give Together. Twenty-seven women joined the giving circle to collectively promote the visibility of women's perspectives and support causes related to women's issues. Ranging in age from twenty to seventy-something, and coming from diverse backgrounds and experiences, they have formed a true community. They contribute monthly to a shared fund, and meet to speak and learn about topics affecting women. Over the course of nearly a year, they will democratically decide which organizations and groups to support with their pooled resources.

At the meetings they've held so far, they've reflected on what it means to give as women, and where they see the need



Our Grantees' Experiences

“The impact of RWF’s support went beyond financial contributions, as the professional and human support also significantly contributed to the success of our activities.”

NADE! was launched two years ago as a pilot, and we are currently summarizing the insights from its experimental phase. We are evaluating the results to learn and further develop the program. We are particularly interested in documenting the actual impact of support, and how RWF’s contributions add real value.

Several of the organizations that received support achieved long-term results in 2024. For example, one online group from “Support Network for Detainees and their Families”, has evolved into a continuous, active, self-help group. “She for She,” a Hungarian-language learning and community-building club for





immigrant and refugee women in Hungary, earned the opportunity to take part in an international student competition. In the “Experiential Youth Association” initiative, the “Csajműhely” (Girls’ Workshop) group launched a citywide child protection roundtable in Pécs. In the autumn of 2024, the Mamakör Foundation continued to organize support groups for mothers in the suburbs, forming stable professional teams in Veresegyház and Gödöllő.

At the same time, several organizations faced difficulties. The insecurity of finances and human resources remained an issue, and in some cases, professionals left due to

burnout. We deeply understand the challenges facing civil organizations – especially those working for and with women – to maintain stable operations, ensure continuous funding, and retain committed team members.

The feedback we received has confirmed the visibility and impact of RWF’s support in 2024. Significant progress was made in professional work, organizational sustainability, and building stronger connections with target groups and broader society.

Grantees made full use of the flexibility RWF offered, allowing them to adapt their programs to their evolving circumstances. They emphasized that working with RWF felt like a true partnership – without excessive bureaucracy or rigid documentation requirements when changes were needed. This helped them respond more effectively to challenges and transitions.

Community Building and Collective Action for the Future

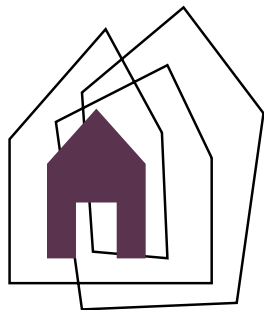
The events of 2024 reinforced that the Women's Solidarity Program offers not only financial support, but also fosters a community that can contribute to the long-term sustainability of organizations focused on women.



Participants increasingly voiced the need for a platform to connect with other communities working towards similar goals. In response, the Alumni Community Program was conceived of in 2024. It aims to reduce isolation, promote the sharing of experiences and best practices, and strengthen both human and financial sustainability.



Revitalising Small Towns Programme: Launching Round Two



In 2024, we closed our first round of support for the Revitalising Small Towns Programme and launched a second. In between rounds, we evaluated: we had a close look at both our successes and failures. Based on this experience, we fine-tuned the program's framework and embarked on the next three-year funding cycle. In total, we worked with eleven municipalities this year. But let's take it step-by-step.

“The Roots and Wings Foundation's Revitalising Small Towns Programme aimed to strengthen communities that create an intellectual atmosphere, organize a supportive environment, and mobilize local funds to realize the ideas of the people living there. (...) The goal of the program is to enhance the creative capacity of small-town communities and strengthen community leaders. (...) Our foundation's program aims to empower those who stay, and to show that it is worth acting for civic, civil behaviours and



democratic values. (...) [These goals were set because] the population of small towns has, on average, decreased by a third. It's not hard to interpret what this means: the more affluent, educated, and mobile segment has left. In many places, anomie, alienation, isolation, helplessness, inability to act, and division remained." RWF 2019 Annual Report

We brought in an outside evaluator to thoroughly assess the impact and success of the program. According to their evaluation, our grantees formed five to ten active member groups capable of mobilizing an additional fifteen to twenty-five supporters, thus truly invigorating civic life in their towns. Over the three-year course of the program, our partners' commitment to their local communities strengthened, their leadership skills improved, their visibility increased, their networks grew both within and beyond the community, and many of them tackled local divisions, becoming influential actors for local authorities.



Our partners greatly valued the program's flexibility in implementing their professional ideas. Instead of bureaucratic oversight, we built a trust-based relationship with participants. We provided high-quality, nearly unrestricted-use funding, and operated with an unusually long, three-year timeframe. We have showcased this in a short film.

We too learned valuable lessons from the first round of our support. For example, during the selection process, we should have articulated more precisely our ideal candidates and what we could offer. This has now led to more relevant applications: twenty-six out of twenty-eight interested parties applied, twenty-one with excellent proposals. It was hard to choose.

Another important takeaway was that beyond financial support, we can influence local communities by strengthening the skills of the selected leaders, boosting their confidence, and helping them develop their external communications. In the next three years, the program will focus on leadership development activities.

We got to work: in summer 2024, we visited new grantees, and in October, we all met in Leányfalu. We saw commitment, momentum, action, and curiosity—based on which we can confidently say: the program's professional goals are likely to be achieved; every small town will stir, and we expect new actors and visible change.



“I’m trying the other side too”

We asked Péter Peták, the new Revitalising Small Towns Programme expert, what inspires him in this work and why he chose the Roots and Wings Foundation.

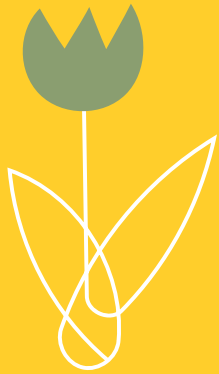
“I have a long history with the Foundation and the people involved—good personal relationships and a shared professional outlook. I’ve worked in very different development programs as a professional advisor, and I like the philosophy of this one: the small-town perspective is often left out today. I like that we provide long-term support, and that a lot can happen

in three years. I also like the personalized mentoring and the high degree of independence we allow the grantees. Plus, I feel safe working with Edit—we’ve done it before and it worked well. It feels good to be in this role again.

I should also say that I took part in the conversations that laid the foundation for the Roots and Wings Foundation. Later, when the Community Foundation Support Programme was already running, I found myself on the grantee side, as the program supported us in launching a community foundation. I’m mentioning this because I joined the community foundation for the same reason that Revitalising Small Towns Programme grantees work: love for the town and a drive for positive change. Now I’m trying the other side too.”

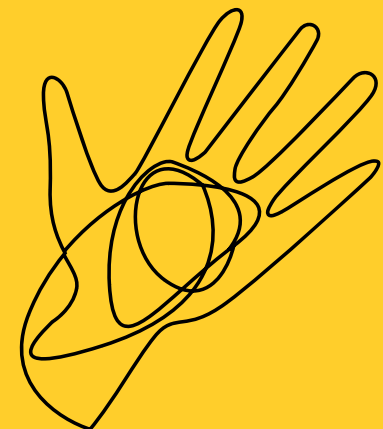


The Joy of Giving



Mrs. Judit [Farkas] Kovács donated HUF 25 million to honour her late husband's legacy and support social initiatives through our foundation. We provided structure for her noble act, and together, realized her vision: supporting important and timely social causes in a human-centred, flexible way, tailored to the needs and interests of the recipients.

Judit came into contact with our foundation in the first half of 2023, when she decided to dedicate the legacy she received from her late husband to social causes. Our then-director, Tamás Scsaurszki, began working with her and recommended civil organizations from around the country that aligned with her interests. Judit wanted to support disadvantaged children, and help civil initiatives and entrepreneurs near her home in the Balaton Highlands. As a result of her generosity, seven individuals/organizations received support totalling HUF 25 million. Our media partner, nlc., made a short film about Judit, [\[click here to watch it.\]](#)



Community Foundation Support Programme: Community Foundations Connect More Closely

For us, the most memorable events of 2024 were two national gatherings of the now thirteen Hungarian community foundations. We were delighted to see the enthusiasm, competence, and good spirits of the participants, enjoyed their curiosity about each other, and witnessed the shared language and experience that transcends age or location.



LOCALLY-RAISED FUNDS (HUF):

24 602 500

LOCALLY-DISTRIBUTED GRANTS (HUF):

14 111 000

SUPPORTED CAUSES

PEOPLE REACHED BY FUNDED PROJECTS

8450

VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED

340



(Note: Some community foundations will distribute the funds raised in 2024 in 2025.)





In early June, we held a picnic in Budapest, to discuss our experiences and future plans, explore donor circles and the idea of building a positive narrative. At the third national meeting of community foundations in October, we spent nearly three days together in Nyíregyháza, hosted by the Helyi Szálak Community Foundation. We dove deeply into discussions on how to collaborate more closely on key themes, such as climate action and youth engagement.



Alongside these large events, younger foundations participated in diverse trainings on the topics most useful to them. Throughout the year, we gave board chairs the opportunity to reflect together as organizational leaders, and enabled ongoing training, knowledge-sharing, and fundraising skills and development.



International cooperation among community foundations also reached a new level: several domestic foundation representatives visited the Székelyudvarhely Community Foundation in Romania. Young people from Eger studied the practices of Italian and Belgian foundations. Our representatives visited The Funding Network in London, to attend an “original” live giving event. And, we participated in the European Community Foundation Initiative’s (ECFI) annual gathering in Berlin. Interest in Hungarian community foundations has grown so significantly that a study visit to Hungary has been planned for summer 2025.

We believe that our 2024 activities have greatly contributed to the transformation of Hungarian community foundations into interconnected, impactful, resilient, and well-functioning organizations.

The Giving Circle Programme Lives On Everywhere

Our foundation's second initiative, the Giving Circle Programme, organized its first live fundraising event in 2018, which was followed by six more events. Despite the success of the programme, we became uncertain of its future.

"During the programme's evaluation, it became clear that Live Giving events mainly attract small donors from within the civil sector. We failed to reach people outside the sector—potential major donors open to giving." – RWF 2022 Annual Report.

The Giving Circle Programme hasn't been relaunched in its original form. However, its mission—developing a culture of giving—remains central to our foundation and is evident in all community fundraising actions, the Live Crowdfunding Nights we plan to host, and the NADE! donor circle.



Our involvement with Live Crowdfunding Nights is far from over. In 2024, with Scale Impact's help, we developed a service and methodology we confidently offer to civil and business sectors alike. We organize events that become meaningful experiences, engage company staff in corporate social responsibility efforts, amplify social impact, encourage joyful and responsible giving, and serve as an excellent tool for brand-building—without an administrative burden. We believe this brings us closer to a key goal: building bridges between civil society and the business world.



**€17,304
donation**



**2 host
organisations**



180 donors

2 locations



**6 supported
projects**

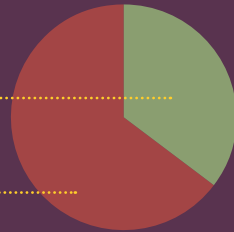


2 events



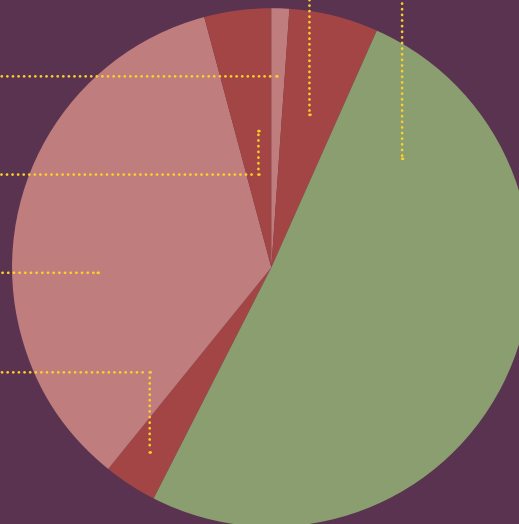
thousand HUF

FUNDS RECIEVED	
Domestic	7088
International	130 485
TOTAL:	137 546



thousand HUF

EXPENDITURE	
Staff wages	75 360
Remuneration of external experts	8 214
Travel expenses	1 795
Promotion & Events	5 985
Grants	51 595
Office and administrative costs	4 800
TOTAL:	147 749
Fundraising costs	25 100



Donors and Finances

Including carryovers from previous years, our foundation had approximately HUF 222 million at its disposal in 2024. Of this, we spent about HUF 147 million, and carried over HUF 72 million into 2025. A significant portion of our support came in the form of multi-year grants, but as noted earlier in this report, philanthropic funding is undergoing major shifts, which is pushing our foundation to change its financial model. This was evident in our 2024 budget: we spent HUF 25 million on fundraising. The majority of this went to the proportionate salaries of colleagues involved in grant scouting, idea generation, and writing. A smaller portion covered the preparation and organization of our anniversary fundraising campaign. We will report the results of this investment in our 2025 annual report.

Our detailed financial report, including the auditor's statement and public benefit annex, is available on our website. If you have questions, please contact us!

Supported Organisations and Individuals



● COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Pécs Community Foundation (Pécs)
ITT-HON-KA Community Foundation (Tatabánya)
Kétker Community Foundation (Budapest, 2nd district)
Community Foundation for Miskolc (Miskolc)
Cegléd Community Foundation (Cegléd)
Jóbruda Community Foundation (Budapest, 3rd district)
Csabai Community Foundation (Békéscsaba)
Helyi Szálak Community Foundation (Nyíregyháza)



● REVITALISING SMALL TOWNS PROGRAMME

Szabolcs Márk Kis (Karcag)
Anita K.Nagyné Karácsony (Komádi)
Alíz Mária Martók (Szentes)
Janka Becsey (Szécsény)
Petra Sára Kiss, Zsófia Lázár (Szentendre)
Andrea Baraksó-Kovács (Szeghalom)

● GIVING CIRCLE PROGRAMME

Ferencvárosi Közösségi Alapítvány (Budapest, IX. kerület)
Pécsi Közösségi Alapítvány (Pécs)
Közösségfejlesztők Egyesülete (Budapest)

● WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY PROGRAM

Parforum Nonprofit Kft. (Budapest)
Mamakör Foundation (Budapest)
She4She (Budapest)

● ORGANISATIONAL

SF Foundaion (Zánka)
Vadon Élő Kft. (Pécsely)
Élményelő Ifjúsági Egyesület (Pécs)

Pro bono supporters and volunteers, whose work we especially appreciate:
Kinga Kánya, Viki Keszler, Tímea Ágota Rózsa (ICG), László Szalay (ICG), Antonia Burrows

Roots and Wings Foundation is a member of the Self-Regulatory Body of Fundraising Organisations.

Headquarters: 1092 Budapest, Ráday utca 32.

Tax Number: 18626166 - 1 – 43

Bankszámlaszám: 16200106-11617026

Representative: Iván Bardócz

Direcor: Julcsi Dés

Members of the Board of Trustees:

Iván Bardócz, Gabriella Benedek, Axel Halling, Edit Kovács, Barbara Máté

Members of the Supervisory Board:

Miklós Kis, Hanna Sztripszky (president), dr. Tímea Váci

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR PROGRAMMES:

Fanni Aradi, Iván Bardócz, Gabriella Benedek, Júlia Dés, György Hámori, Eszter Kállay, Krisztina Koncz,
Edit Kovács, Zsuzsa Mekler, Péter Peták, Tamás Scsaurszki, Dóra Simay and Dóra Szegő

FIND US ONLINE:



Supporters:



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Hungarian Firms and Private Persons



**ROOTS AND
WINGS**
FOUNDATION

