



# 2023 REPORT

Unlocking Potential

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# UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

Dear LLI Community,

In my work, I am privileged to witness the tremendous impact and momentum building around Latino leadership in the United States. I am immensely proud of our organization that not only acknowledges the leadership potential of an increasingly Latino future, but also honors the legacy and work of Latino leaders from the past and present. This is our calling, and this is our opportunity to lead.



As we reflect on 2023, and with LLI celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2024, we remain steadfast in our mission to prepare, connect, and elevate Latino leaders. And now, our commitment is bigger and bolder than ever before.

LLI's programming is leaving a lasting impact on graduates, propelling some to immediate success and others to gradual growth through connections and transformative conversations.

Why does this matter? Because momentum is built upon unlocking potential. And that is precisely what we are accomplishing here at LLI.

In these times of urgency for leadership, LLI graduates are stepping up to the forefront. From classrooms to boardrooms, they are rising to positions of power and influence within their respective career paths. These accomplishments are a testament to the expertise and dedication of our community as we collectively answer the call to leadership.

Thank you to the LLI staff, community, board of directors, and partners who make our work possible. As we celebrate LLI's 10th anniversary, our gaze turns towards an inspiring future, one in which the momentum of our past achievements fulfills its potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joelle Martinez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a stylized "J" and "M".

JOELLE MARTINEZ  
PRESIDENT & CEO

BY INVESTING  
IN LATINO  
LEADERS,  
WE WITNESS  
THE POWERFUL  
AND FAR-  
REACHING  
IMPACT THEY  
CAN HAVE ON  
THEIR  
COMMUNITIES

96%

Have been promoted or have  
increased responsibilities at work  
since graduating from the LLI

89%

Have become a mentor to aspiring  
Latino leaders

2023 LLI Network Survey



Tamara Vigil (Right), Ignite graduate, discusses the impact of Ignite on her journey in a Mile High Living TV interview.

# IGNITE REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

ELEVATING LATINO LEADERSHIP  
THROUGH A NATIONAL PROGRAM

In 2022, LLI introduced Ignite, a national leadership program for Latino professionals. Rooted in context, culture, and neuroscience, Ignite embraces diverse Latino experiences, meeting individuals at their unique leadership stages.

In 2023, Ignite celebrated several significant milestones, highlighting its ability to engage Latino leaders across experience, geography, and generation.

## Nearly 200 Latino Professionals Graduate from Ignite in Program's First Year

This year, we successfully graduated nearly 200 Latino professionals from various sectors and industries, representing a true reflection of the rich diversity of personal and professional experiences within the Latino community. Ignite alums continue to span private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors, showcasing Latino leaders' influence and leadership potential within these fields.

*“This was the first time  
I'd been in a space with  
Latinos discussing  
leadership development  
and it was truly a special  
experience.”*

*Ignite Graduate, Cohort 9*

## **Bridging Geography & Lived Experiences**

Ignite expanded its national and global reach in 2023, with alumni now located in 29 U.S. states, Spain, and Australia. This expansion demonstrates the program's ability to engage and connect Latino professionals from diverse backgrounds, regardless of their geographic location.

## **Cultivating Partnership & Driving Organizational Success**

We are pleased to have secured Ignite partnerships with notable organizations that support our mission. Charles Schwab, U.S. Bank, Guild Education, Marathon Petroleum, Lumen Technologies, and others have recognized the value of Ignite and have become valuable allies in our efforts to elevate and advance Latino professionals.

## **Fostering Growth & Advancement**

The certification of five diverse Latino Ignite facilitators has been an essential step in enhancing our program's credibility and impact. These facilitators bring unique perspectives and experiences, further enriching the Ignite program and ensuring its continued success in leadership development.

*“I was very impressed by the similar themes and experiences other participants shared, even in cases of different career paths. I have already recommended Ignite to colleagues and friends.”*

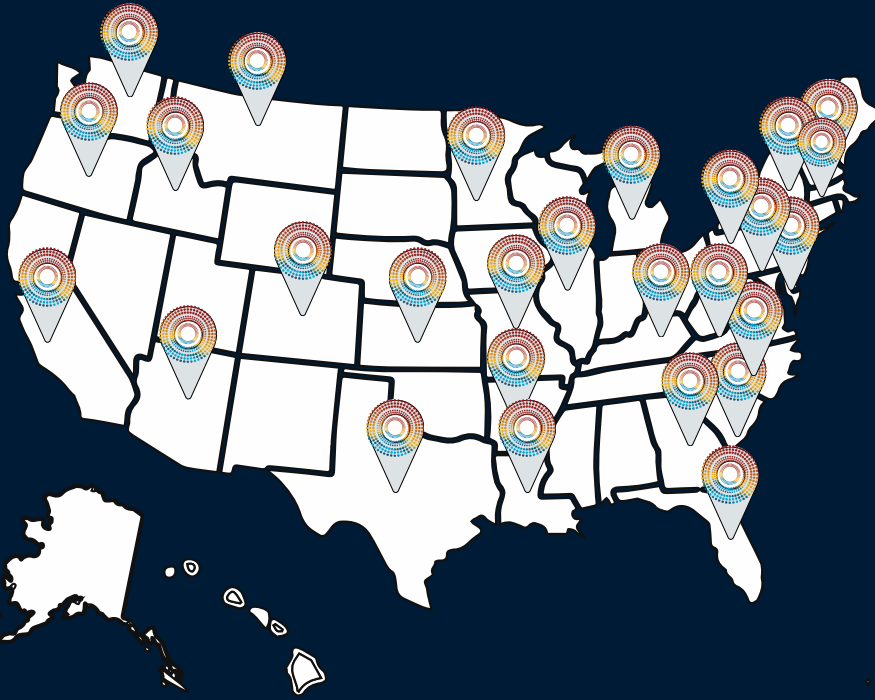
*Ignite Graduate, Cohort 7*

## **Elevating & Connecting Future Latino Leaders**

These achievements highlight the positive impact Ignite has had in fostering leadership growth and equipping Latino professionals with the social and technical capital that will help accelerate their leadership journeys. We are excited about the growth and potential of Ignite as we continue to elevate future leaders within the Latino community.







In 1 year, Ignite connected nearly 200 Latino leaders across:

- 29 U.S. States
- Spain
- Australia

***Ignite helped me understand and embrace my identity as a part of a diverse and vibrant Latino community and leverage those strengths to articulate my value.***

This program provided invaluable opportunities to delve into our shared stories and strengths as leaders within the community. Through Ignite, I have fostered meaningful relationships and learned from the experiences of others, which has greatly impacted both my personal and professional growth.

Aurora Elicerio  
Sr. Manager  
Talent Management and Diversity,  
Equity & Inclusion  
Comcast





Photo: Melissa Black Photography

# LEAP POST-GRADUATION SUCCESS

POSITIONING ENTREPRENEURS FOR ACCELERATED GROWTH AND SCALE

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The Latino Entrepreneur Access Program (LEAP) outcomes have affirmed its mission to advance economic equity for Latino and BIPOC-led companies.

As the inaugural cohort completed the one-year program in 2023, it is evident that LEAP's culturally relevant program structure has positioned entrepreneurs for accelerated growth and scale.

LEAP is designed to provide Latino and BIPOC entrepreneurs in the Denver metro area access to culturally relevant social and technical capital and financial resources that understand the unique journey of a Latino entrepreneur.





## Diverse & Representative Participants

In its first cohort, LEAP attracted a diverse group of nine Latino and BIPOC entrepreneurs ready to move their businesses from high-potential to high-growth. The cohort included two pre-revenue companies as well as companies with a range of annual recurring revenue from \$50,000 to above \$1,000,000. The business sectors represented by the business-owners include service companies (DEI, public transportation, mental health, immigration), tech or tech-enabled companies, one agriculture company (food sustainability), and one product company (flood mitigation).

Among them were four female-led companies and seven male-led companies, with seven identifying as Latino and two identifying as Black.

## Entrepreneurs Guided by Individualized Advisory Boards

LEAP leveraged an entrepreneur business advisory board of forty-nine senior management to C-suite level executives with specific expertise. Each entrepreneur received tailored guidance and mentorship. With 70% of advisors identifying as Latino or BIPOC, we ensured that our participants received culturally relevant support. LEAP carefully matched entrepreneurs with advisors with the expertise needed for their business's growth and scalability.

## Nurturing Networks & Collaboration

Each LEAP entrepreneur met quarterly with their advisory board, which served as essential milestones for progress evaluation, strategic discussions, and networking opportunities. Through the program's Subject Matter Expert Speaker Series, LEAP equipped the cohort with insights from industry leaders and fostered connections within the wider business ecosystem, establishing a nurturing network and collaboration opportunities for participants.

*“The LLI has been important in my entrepreneurial journey. Through the LLI, I have been able to surround myself with other entrepreneurs, business owners, and leaders who are making an impact in their communities.”*

Marisol Solarte-Erlacher  
Founder & CEO  
Marisol Solarte-Erlacher, M.A., LPC & Associates  
LEAP Entrepreneur



## DRIVING HIGH GROWTH & REVENUE MILESTONES

LEAP Entrepreneur Roberto Meza (below) is on track to surpass \$2 million in Annual Recurring Revenue (ARR) within a year of graduating from the program.

# \$2M

In just a few months after graduation, Roberto Meza, CEO of East Denver Food Hub and Emerald Greens, witnessed a remarkable 25% increase in revenue.

On track to surpass \$2 million in ARR, this rapid growth showcases the potential for accelerated expansion that programs like LEAP can provide within Latino and BIPOC-led businesses.



***LEAP granted me invaluable resources and access to mentors who played a pivotal role in the growth of my enterprise, East Denver Food Hub.***

These mentors and advisors cultivated a genuine and authentic connection with me, offering benefits on both a personal and professional level, with a keen understanding of the cultural nuances that I experience as a Latino CEO.

As a result of my time in LEAP, I successfully scaled my business, enriched my knowledge, and sharpened my skills, setting my company on a trajectory to new heights.

Roberto Meza  
CEO  
East Denver Food Hub & Emerald Greens  
LEAP Entrepreneur



# OUR TIME TO LEAD

LLI STORIES OF IMPACT  
& LEADERSHIP

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## **Diane Garcia Takes Her Seat in the C-Suite**

Chief People Officer, Congruex  
LLI Graduate

Diane Garcia is shattering glass ceilings. With a little more than 1% of Latinas in executive roles among 12.8 million Latinas in the U.S. workforce, Diane's unique perspective is crucial for future growth. [Read More](#)

*"Programs like the LLI help us as Latino professionals understand our value and show us how to build our confidence to lead in an authentic way."*



## **Santo Alvarez: Leadership by Choice**

Business Program Lead and Teacher  
Mentor, CEC Early College  
Nonprofit Founder, Clutch Performance  
LLI Graduate

*"I want my students to see me being a leader so that they can expect that from themselves."*

We shadowed Santo Alvarez during his 12-hour daily sprint to understand his approach in the classroom, with teachers, and at his non-profit, Clutch Performance - all taking place in the neighborhood he grew up in.

[Read More](#)





## STORIES OF IMPACT

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### **Growing Local Impact: Lydia Lachino Demonstrates How HR Skills Can Benefit a Community**

Lydia Lachino-Ramirez  
People Operations Supervisor  
Tofurky

Like many Latino leaders, Lydia Lachino-Ramirez, Ignite graduate, shares her professional expertise with her community, many of whom work in Hood River's large agricultural workforce. [Read More](#)

*"Being in my Ignite cohort really empowered me to claim my voice with confidence and not stay quiet. I have the knowledge. Ignite changed the way I see leadership, especially for myself."*



### **5 Practices to Better Serve Latino College Students**

Cristóbal Garcia  
Staff Fellow for Hispanic Serving  
Institution Initiatives  
University of Northern Colorado

*"As leaders in higher education, we share the opportunity and responsibility to better serve the students and families who are enrolling and investing in our institutions."*

[Read More](#)



# HONORING LATINO LEADERSHIP

2023 LATINO LEADERSHIP & LEGACY  
AWARDS RECOGNIZED  
EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP

This year during our annual gala, the LLI proudly recognized three distinguished leaders and one influential organization exemplifying the scope and depth of Latino leadership at the grassroots level, behind the scenes, across borders, and in front of the camera. The gathering served as a reminder of the importance of continued leadership, collaboration, and dedication to our community's advancement.

## 2023 Latino Leadership & Legacy Award Recipients

### Legacy Award:

**Anne Trujillo, Denver7 News  
Anchor & Community Leader**

### Influence Award:

**Tony Salazar, VP of Outreach and  
Engagement, University of  
Colorado**

### Innovation Award:

**Cultivando**

### Heritage Award:

**Marisol Villagomez, Director of  
Multicultural Marketing, Denver  
Broncos Football Club**

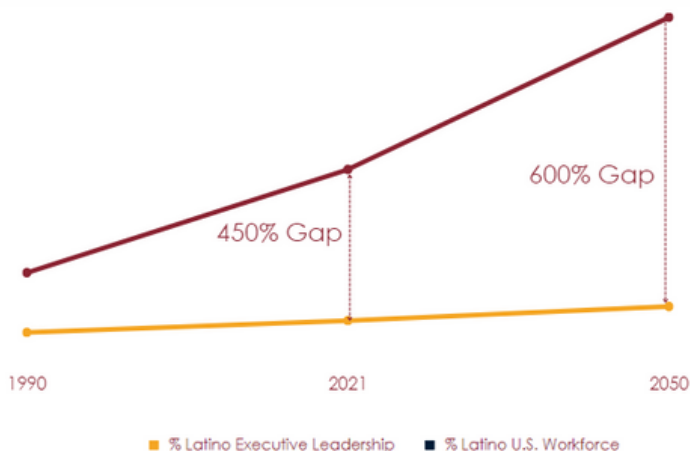




Photos: MFHA

# INSPIRING ACTION

JOELLE MARTINEZ'S KEYNOTES  
BRIDGE DATA & NARRATIVE



With nearly 78% of new workers in this decade identifying as Latino, Latinos are the backbone of our talent pipeline. Yet, despite their undeniable contributions, Latinos face the most significant leadership gap of any demographic group in the U.S.



Photo: Tony Florez / SBJ

**Latinos are not just an excellent addition to our nation's economic growth and community prosperity; they are essential.**

In 2023, Joelle Martinez delivered 9 national keynote presentations bringing together data, personal narrative, and practical solutions to unlock Latino potential and inspire action to promote Latino career, economic, and social success.



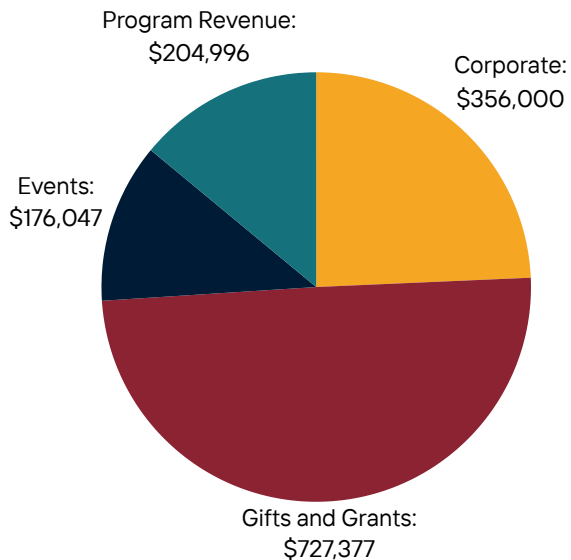
## FINANCIALS

In 2023, LLI received its highest grant funding to date, with the most significant grant awarded by the City and County of Denver in collaboration with CABB+. This grant directly supported our LEAP program, totaling over \$350,000.

Additionally, nearly 90% of all funds were allocated directly to support LLI's two programs (Ignite and LEAP), the annual gala, and our thought leadership work. As an organization, we faced increased expenses due to rising costs for goods and services, particularly expenses related to technology, vendors, and insurance.

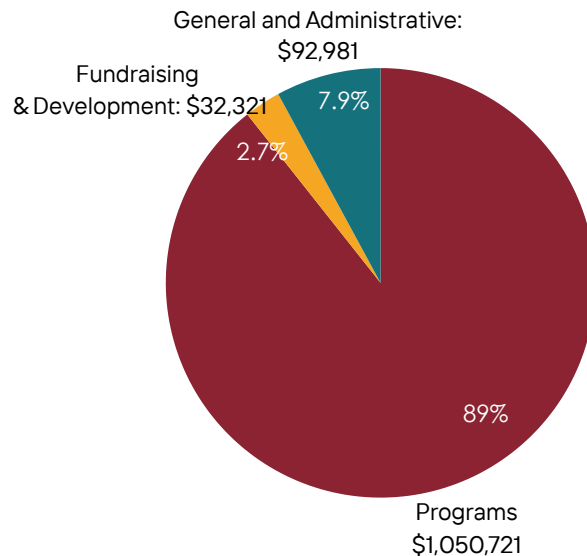
In 2023, we brought back our annual gala for the first time since 2019 and secured over \$175,000 in direct sponsorship. We plan to build on this success and expand our sponsorship efforts in 2024 as we celebrate our 10th anniversary.

REVENUE 2023



TOTAL: \$1,464,420

EXPENDITURES 2023



TOTAL: \$1,176,023

# PARTNERS

TOGETHER, WE ARE TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

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## **\$250,000+**

City and County of Denver

## **\$100,000+**

Coca-Cola

W. K. Kellogg Foundation

## **\$75,000+**

U.S. Bank

## **\$50,000+**

Bellco Credit Union

The Gates Family Foundation

Marathon Petroleum Corporation

## **\$25,000+**

Beacon Foundation

Bud Light

The Colorado Health Foundation

The Colorado Trust

Kenneth King Foundation

Lumen

Molson Coors

Slalom

University of Colorado

Xcel Energy

Vistage

## **\$10,000+**

The Anschutz Foundation

Guild Education

Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance

Verizon

## **\$5,000+**

Amazon

Anschutz Family Foundation

AT&T

Boettcher Foundation

CSU College of Business

DaVita

Denver International Airport

Farm First Energy

FirstBank

Metropolitan State University of Denver

SEIU

University of Denver

## **\$1,000+**

Colorado Rapids

Hispanics in Philanthropy

Panda Express

Sinch

**We are immensely grateful for the generous support we have received from over 100 individual donors who contributed to our mission and work.**

We are able to continue our work because of your support, engagement, and investment. Thank you for your partnership.

