

Project Imo

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2024



Empower. Build. Connect.

Our Mission



Our mission is to empower and inspire the next generation through immersive experiential and adventure education initiatives.

In providing transformative experiences, we aim to foster leadership skills, ignite a passion for environmental conservation, and promote positive change, while ensuring equitable access for all.

**A letter from our
Executive Director**

Hello everyone,

Gratitude sums up 2023. It was a huge year for Project Imo and the amount of support we received from our community, partner organizations, and dedicated volunteers was a tremendous factor in our growth. For this, we thank you.

The past year saw a noted change in our operations as a nonprofit organization. We transitioned from a part-time, wholly volunteer organization in 2022 to a full time organization with paid staff in 2023. The Board of Directors authorized an ambitious 5-year strategic plan to open a scaled youth center in Willimantic in 2028. In partnership with our friends at NAFI CT, we launched our cornerstone youth program, Youth Promise. We opened a burgeoning youth center, called Base Camp, in the fall. We even helped over 150 children make magic wands on Halloween. From large-scale endeavors to the joy of watching young people grow, it was a busy year here at Project Imo.

None of what happened in 2023 could have been accomplished without a full-scale lift from an amazing team of individuals who share a common purpose and drive to help their communities. Our annual grassroots fundraising campaigns hit new heights in support of our teen center and volunteers eagerly shared of their valuable time and expertise to create this exciting new phase in Project Imo's existence.

As we move into 2024, the sense of excitement is building here at Base Camp. The reception by the youth in our region has been, in a word, staggering. More and more youth are signing up for open teen hours and specialized programming. Each week sees new Base Camp members, often recruited by their peers. One thing has become abundantly clear, youth WANT to be engaged. A lot of diligent work has been done in recent years about the crisis of disengaged youth in our state. The call to action has focused on the lack of opportunities, technological impacts, educational struggles, socioeconomic disparities, and a variety of localized challenges to youth engagement in school or the workforce. There is no denying that our state faces a crisis, but we here at Project Imo have seen one thing happen repeatedly.

When given the opportunity, youth choose engagement.

All that is left is for us to give them the chance.

Thank you for sharing this journey with us.



Jason Hyland, Founder and Executive Director

2023- A year of dynamic growth

Project Imo significantly expanded our programs and services.

We launched our cornerstone youth career development and leadership program, Youth Promise.

We transitioned from wholly volunteer to full-time staffing.

Our community grew as we strengthened our existing partnerships and welcomed new.

We launched our peer mediation training to support high school youth as they help their peers navigate conflicts.



We provided immersive professional development programs to multistate nonprofits, school districts, camps, and more.

We launched mentoring through our partnership with a globally renown youth development framework, The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award.



In October, we opened our Base Camp Teen Center in Willimantic, CT.

2023- Key programs



Adventurous youth leadership programs and summits.

Summer camp staff training and camper programs.

Corporate leadership development training



Creative Worlds educational tabletop gaming.

School paraeducator professional development.

Youth Promise Initiative- Career development, youth leadership, and community service.



2023 by the Numbers



Number of Programs-	+391 %
Programs-	54
Participants-	455
Program Hours-	163
Learning Hours-	2,940
Teen Center open hours-	53

Base Camp Teen Center



Why Base Camp?

Base Camp serves as a dynamic hub for youth, inspired by the traditional base camps that provided explorers with supplies, shelter, communications, and a place to connect.



From this...



To this...



At Base Camp, youth can find a safe, fun, and engaging place to connect with their peers, access resources, build skills, and ignite future journeys.

In just 2 short months, 26 teens signed up for free memberships, enjoyed open teen hours one night a week, and connected through special events.

Base Camp Teen Center



Youth Promise

EMPOWERING youth to **BUILD** capacity, foster self-confidence, and **CONNECT** with career opportunities.

Funded through a federal workforce development grant with our partners at NAFI Connecticut, Youth Promise is a three-pathway approach to bright futures. Participants are offered immersive career development and leadership skills workshops with a community service component to build critical 21st century workforce and life skills.



Regionally relevant career pathways:

- Advanced manufacturing, technology, and trades,
- Healthcare and healthy living,
- Advanced agriculture and food systems,
- Outdoor education, recreation, and green jobs,
- Arts and communications, and
- Public service

Educational story building combining nature, science, community, and magic.

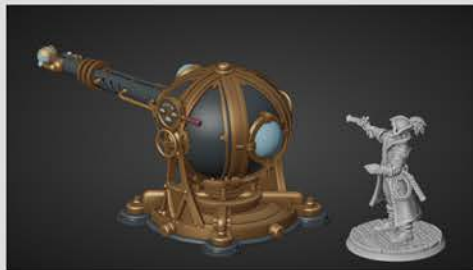
Using our own educational role playing game, The Sky Isles of Seorsus and our Creative Worlds game system, we amplify creativity, problem solving, teamwork, and story building through immersive tabletop gaming experiences. We also are able to integrate technology and art into youth-led creative learning experiences.



Creative technical integration



Immersive game-based learning



Diverse volunteerism & internships



Essential social emotional learning



The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award

Founded in 1956 by HRH The Prince Philip and Kurt Hahn, The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is an internationally recognized program for young people, building their skills to equip them for life and work. Project Imo is thrilled to be an official Award Center.



The Award is the world's leading youth achievement award.

The Award is a program of activities. Each young person who takes part in the Award learns a skill, improves their physical fitness, volunteers in their community and experiences a team adventure in a new environment.



“There is more in you than you think”

-Kurt Hahn



Power of Partnership- NAFI CT



Bringing Base Camp and Youth Promise to life in eastern Connecticut

For three years running, the partnership between Project Imo and NAFI CT has brought immersive programming to youth across Connecticut.

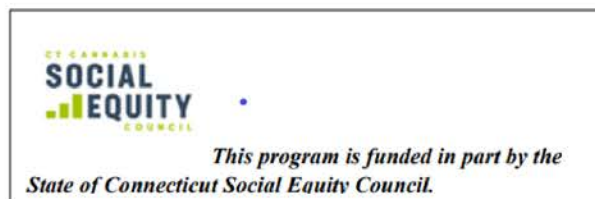
In 2023, NAFI CT was awarded a career readiness program grant through Congressionally Directed Spending championed by Senators Blumenthal and Murphy. Together, Project Imo and NAFI have opened Base Camp in Willimantic and are bringing afterschool and summer programs to youth through our Youth Promise program.



NAFI CT is a multi-service agency that provides programming, consultation, and individualized support services to youth, families, and adults in a variety of settings across Connecticut. Their core services include foster care, developmental services, residential treatment, and in-home services and consultations. They take a respectful and dignified approach to all care services, with the mission of empowering individuals and strengthening families

Social Equity Council & the Community Foundation of Eastern CT

Integrating Youth Promise
into schools for a bright
future



The Connecticut Social Equity Council plays a pivotal role in this initiative. Funded in portion by the SEC's Community Reinvestment Grant, the Youth Promise Program at Phoenix Academy is a testament to the Council's commitment to healing and supporting communities historically affected by the war on drugs. The SEC's approach is multifaceted and deeply collaborative, focusing on developing a comprehensive community reinvestment plan.



The Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut plays a pivotal role in the Youth Promise Program, serving as a key intermediary in the allocation of funds from the Connecticut Social Equity Council's (SEC) Community Reinvestment Pilot Program. Their involvement is critical in targeting communities in Eastern Connecticut, particularly New London, Norwich, and Willimantic/Windham, which have been disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs.

Sustainable & Ethical Nonprofit Practices

Key Organizational Developments

- Expanded our Board of Directors
- Enacted a bold 5-year strategic plan to open a scaled, multi-agency youth center in Willimantic
- Increased nonprofit revenue streams with sustainable variance
- 462% increase in nonprofit revenue from 2022
- Candid Guidestar Gold 2023



• Contributions, gifts, and grants-	\$55,311
• Program service revenue, fees, and contracts-	\$85,840
• Total Revenue-	\$141,151
• Salaries, compensation, and benefits-	\$70,259
• Professional fees, occupancy, printing, other expenses-	\$42,747
• Total expenses-	\$113,006

EOY Net Assets- \$40,228

Vision and Strategy

Dedicated to a vision

Our vision is to be at the forefront in youth-led experiential education, recognized for cultivating empowered changemakers and fostering a deep connection between people, communities, and the environment. We see a world where every individual, regardless of background, is equipped to drive meaningful change and contribute to a sustainable future.

How we get there

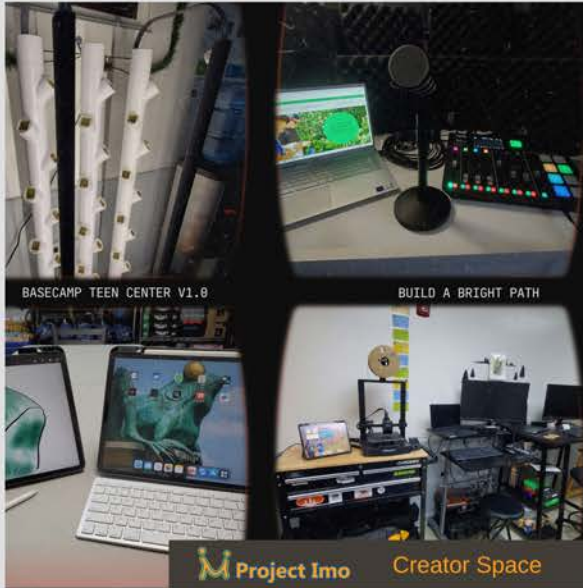
In a word... **together.**

Our 5-year strategic plan builds toward the opening of a scaled youth center serving eastern Connecticut by 2028.

- Expansion of the Base Camp concept to act as a hub of services for young people.
- Integrating multiple organizations with various services and aligned missions to deliver a holistic approach to healthy youth development and community success.
- Sustainable growth to a large-scale initiative.
- Collaborative governance incorporating a strong youth-led approach.
- Incorporating open teen center services, mental health services, substance use prevention programs, career development training, our SparkSpace maker space, regional small business incubation partnerships, and more.

Paths Ahead

SparkSpace



A creative space for career development.

- Supporting 21st century skills development.
- Leveraging regional business partnerships and job pipelines.
- Integrating outdoor pursuits and tech.

Expanding services & partnerships

A community in motion.

- Expanding services through sustainable partnerships and increased funding stream capacity.
- Multifaceted approach to holistic youth services.
- Expansion of volunteer services to broaden access to immersive learning.



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OUR FOOTPRINTS



2024 Annual Impact Report

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