

# ROOTS

YOUNG ADULT SHELTER

ANNUAL REPORT  
2025

[ROOTSINFO.ORG](http://ROOTSINFO.ORG)

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# OUR MODEL:

## WHAT OVERNIGHT EMERGENCY SHELTER MEANS

ROOTS operates the largest and lowest barrier overnight emergency shelter for young adults in Washington State. We are open 365 nights a year, providing immediate access to safety for young people ages 18 to 25.

Each evening, young adults join our intake list seeking a safe place to sleep. When demand exceeds available beds, placements are determined through a randomized process designed to ensure fairness and eliminate favoritism or preference. Beds are offered based on availability, and stays are not guaranteed from one night to the next.

This model is intentional. It allows ROOTS to remain accessible to as many young adults as possible, including those newly experiencing homelessness, working late shifts, navigating unsafe or unstable housing, fleeing violence, or unable to commit to longer-term shelter programs.

By maintaining a night-to-night structure, ROOTS removes common barriers that prevent young adults from seeking help. Access to safety is equitable, flexible, and responsive to the complex realities of youth homelessness. No young adult is required to meet extensive program criteria simply to sleep indoors.

Because our shelter operates overnight, much of the work happens before and after guests are physically in the space. Each day, staff and volunteers prepare the environment with care and intention so young adults are welcomed with dignity. Fresh bedding sets are assembled so every guest receives clean sheets when they claim a bed. Hygiene stations are restocked and thoroughly cleaned. Clothing donations are sorted so guests can access weather-appropriate items. Meals are prepared and coordinated so young adults can eat when they arrive after long days navigating survival.

Every night, ROOTS is intentionally staffed to support a high acuity environment. During evening shelter operations, staffing ratios allow for close supervision, relationship building, and proactive support. After lights out, three to four trained staff members remain on site, resulting in an overnight ratio of approximately one staff member for every 11 to 15 guests.

This staffing structure is deliberate. Many young adults arrive carrying significant stress, trauma, or immediate safety concerns. Our team remains alert, grounded, and well-trained to respond to crises, de-escalate conflicts, support mental and physical health needs, and ensure the safety of every guest throughout the night. Consistent staffing is central to maintaining both safety and dignity in a communal overnight setting.

Unlike shelters that operate on fixed 30-, 60-, or 90-day program models, ROOTS does not reserve beds or offer guaranteed long-term stays. Our night-to-night access model allows us to remain responsive to young adults whose circumstances may shift daily. When demand exceeds capacity, access is determined through a randomized and equitable process, ensuring fairness while prioritizing immediate safety.

Our outcomes look different because our mission is different. ROOTS exists to meet young adults where they are, offering safety, dignity, and care one night at a time, every single night of the year.

# 2025 SHELTER AT A GLANCE

UNDUPLICATED GUESTS SERVED

**520** YOUNG  
ADULTS

AVERAGE  
LENGTH OF STAY

**29 DAYS**

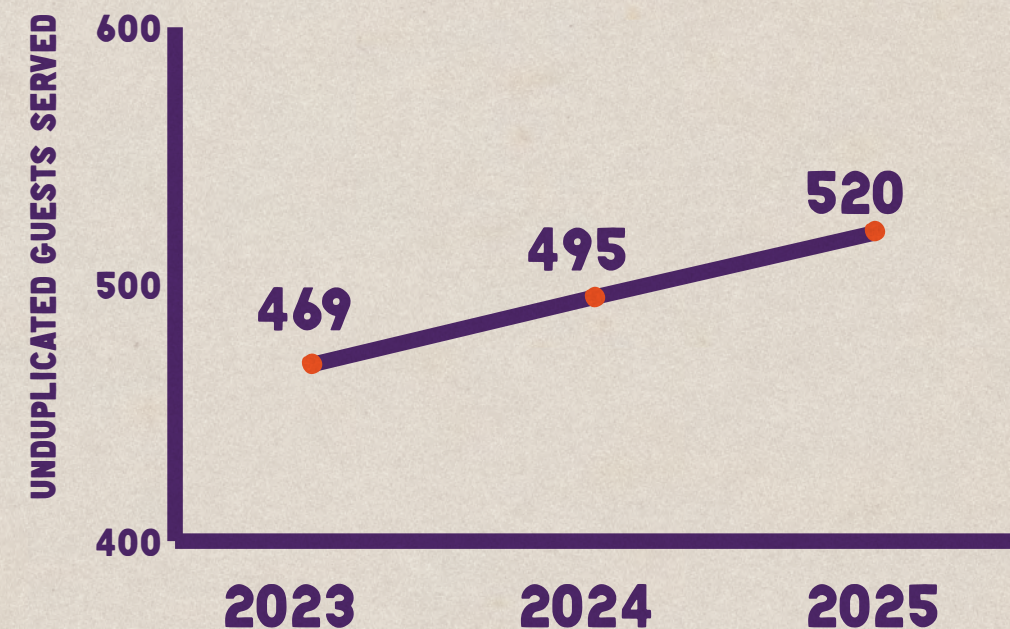
**13,435**

NUMBER OF  
BEDNIGHTS  
PROVIDED

**1,022**

NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL SERVICES  
PROVIDED TO NON-SHELTER GUESTS

This past year, ROOTS was able to serve even more young adults than the year before, with a 10.9% increase in unduplicated guests from 2023 to 2025. This growth reflects both our ability to meet young people where they are and the reality that more young adults continue to need safe places to sleep. It has only deepened our commitment to remain present, responsive, and open night after night.



ROOTS saw steady growth over three years, with a 5.5% increase from 2023 to 2024, a 5.0% increase from 2024 to 2025, and a total increase of 10.9% from 2023 to 2025

# CASE MANAGEMENT

## IMPACT WITH LIMITED CAPACITY

For much of 2025, ROOTS operated with one full-time case manager supporting shelter guests. Within the context of a night-to-night, low-barrier overnight shelter where beds are not reserved and stays are not guaranteed, this role is both complex and essential. Case management at ROOTS is voluntary and relationship-based, offering young adults individualized support as they navigate housing, healthcare, employment, education, and other stability goals.

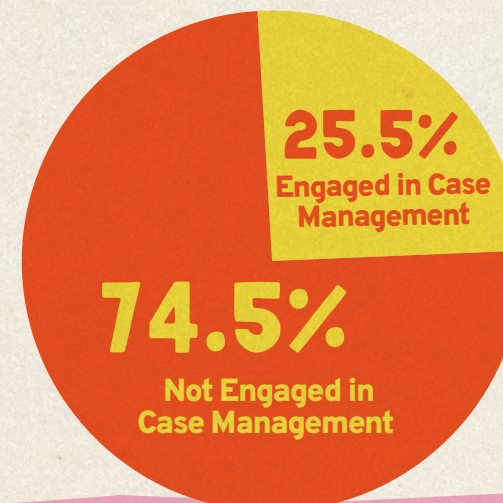
Once enrolled, guests can meet with case managers during shelter hours or during daytime appointments to discuss housing navigation, medication management, physical or mental health needs, and other areas where additional support is needed. These meetings are flexible and responsive, designed to meet young adults where they are and adapt to changing circumstances.

Even with limited staffing capacity, case management remained a vital pathway to stability for many young adults. In 2025, 133 shelter guests enrolled in case management, representing 25.5% of all young adults who stayed overnight at ROOTS. On average, young adults engaged in case management for 4.4 months, demonstrating meaningful continuity of care despite the challenges of night-to-night shelter access.

Because ROOTS does not reserve beds or guarantee nightly stays, sustaining case management engagement requires persistence, trust building, and flexibility from both staff and guests. Young adults often balance case management alongside work, school, survival needs, and changing housing situations, making consistent engagement a significant accomplishment.

Case management at ROOTS is not a requirement for shelter, but an opportunity offered to guests who are ready and interested in deeper support. Within these constraints, the ability to sustain months-long engagement highlights the strength of staff relationships and the impact of a low-barrier, youth-centered approach.

### SHELTER GUESTS ENGAGED IN CASE MANAGEMENT VS NOT ENGAGED



### AVERAGE LENGTH OF CASE MANAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT



## LOOKING AHEAD

ROOTS is actively working to expand the case management team to 3 full-time staff members. This growth nearly triples the number of young adults we can offer case management support to within the shelter, significantly expanding access to housing navigation, health coordination, and long-term stability planning for guests who want and need that support.

# HOUSING OUTCOMES

## PROGRESS IN A LOW-BARRIER SYSTEM

ROOTS supports young adults in moving toward housing whenever possible, even while operating an overnight shelter without reserved beds or guaranteed stays. In a system where young adults access shelter one night at a time, every housing connection requires persistence, trust, and consistent follow-up.

**In 2025, 41 shelter guests moved directly from ROOTS into housing, including:**

**25**  
INTO TRANSITIONAL  
HOUSING

**7**  
INTO RAPID  
REHOUSING

**4**  
INTO PERMANENT  
HOUSING THROUGH  
HOUSING CONNECTOR  
PLACEMENTS

**3**  
INTO PERMANENT  
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

**2**  
INTO FAMILY  
HOUSING

These outcomes reflect both the realities and the challenges of a nightly access shelter model. When young adults leave the shelter each morning, there is never a guarantee they will return that night or the next. Staff often continue working to stay connected with guests even when they are no longer coming through the door regularly, making housing navigation and progress more complex than in program-based or transitional housing settings.

Despite these challenges, ROOTS' housing outcomes align with national homelessness system performance data, which show that roughly one-third of people exiting emergency shelter and related programs across the country move into permanent housing. Within this context of limited housing availability and high demand, ROOTS' 30.8% housing entry rate for case managed guests reflects effective, relationship driven connection to housing resources.

Behind every housing placement is the dedication of staff who remain committed to showing up, following up, and continuing to support young adults even when the path forward is not linear. Rather than discouraging the work, the complexity of this model reinforces ROOTS' commitment to meeting young adults where they are and supporting progress toward housing, however long it takes.

**AMONG YOUNG ADULTS WHO  
ENGAGED IN CASE MANAGEMENT,**

**30.8%**

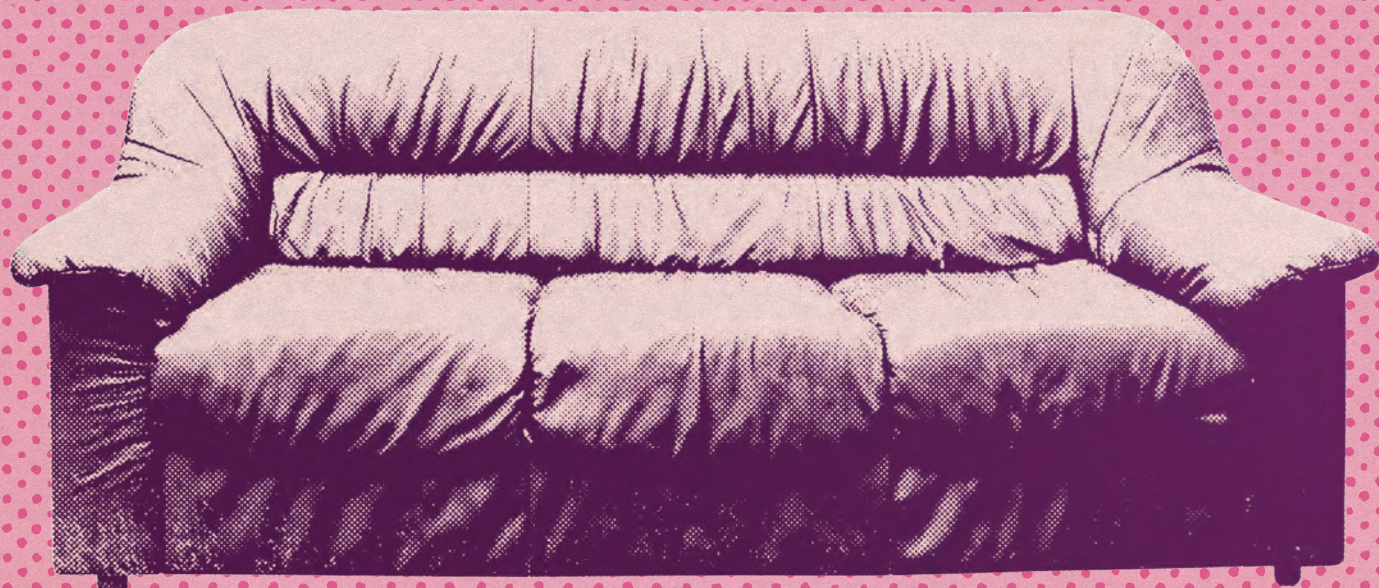
**ENTERED HOUSING WITHIN  
THREE MONTHS OF  
ENROLLMENT.**



# MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

In the middle of 2025, ROOTS began a new partnership with Ryther, expanding our ability to support young adults' mental health needs as part of holistic care. This partnership allowed ROOTS to connect guests with licensed mental health therapists and substance use counselors at no cost, strengthening access to professional, skilled care within the shelter community.

Many young adults arrive at ROOTS navigating significant mental health needs, often without prior access to consistent or ongoing support. For some, this includes mental health concerns that have never been formally assessed or treated, as well as challenges related to medication management and continuity of care.



Following the start of the Ryther partnership, 35 guests were referred to mental health services through ROOTS in 2025. Of those, 27 successfully enrolled in care, and all 27 continued receiving ongoing mental health support. These outcomes reflect both the need for services and the persistence required to move from referral to sustained care within a complex and often overwhelmed behavioral health system.

Mental health support at ROOTS often involves navigating new or previously unaddressed diagnoses, coordinating medication management, and engaging in ongoing therapeutic care. These connections require significant coordination due to system barriers, provider waitlists, and the challenges of accessing care while experiencing housing instability. Despite these obstacles, ROOTS staff remain committed to walking alongside young adults as they access and sustain mental health support.

**35**  
GUESTS REFERRED  
TO MENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICES

**27**  
GUESTS  
SUCCESSFULLY  
ENROLLED

**27**  
GUESTS RECEIVING  
ONGOING CARE

*These connections were facilitated through partnerships, including Ryther, and often required significant coordination due to system barriers and waitlists.*

**REFERRALS** →  
**ENROLLMENT** →  
**ONGOING CARE**

# WHY THESE NUMBERS MATTER

ROOTS' outcomes must be understood in the context of our access-first, equity-driven shelter model. Each number in this report reflects real people navigating an unpredictable system, and a shelter designed to remain open and accessible, even when stability cannot be guaranteed.

**At ROOTS, we believe overnight emergency shelter should remain available to as many young adults as possible. Low barrier access saves lives, and meaningful, relationship-based support can happen even without guaranteed stays or long-term placement.**

Because young adults access ROOTS one night at a time, our data reflects presence, trust, and consistency rather than control or predictability. These numbers highlight both the impact of showing up night after night and the reality that demand continues to outpace available housing and staffing resources.

Together, they tell a story not only of outcomes achieved, but of the urgent need to sustain and grow this work so more young adults can access safety, support, and pathways toward stability.

# NATIONAL YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS STATISTICS

## ESTIMATED NUMBER OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS EACH YEAR

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults (ages roughly 13–25) in the United States experience some form of homelessness each year, whether that means sleeping on the street, in a shelter, couch surfing, or experiencing unstable housing.

## PREVALENCE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

National estimates suggest that about 1 in 10 young adults ages 18–25 experience homelessness in the United States over the course of a year.

## HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

Because many young people experiencing homelessness are not visible in shelter counts (e.g., couch surfing, unstably housed), the actual scale is often larger than official counts suggest and includes a wide range of unstable living situations.

## CONNECTION TO LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS

Research indicates that half of adults experiencing chronic homelessness were first homeless before age 25, showing that early intervention matters for long-term stability.



# VOLUNTEERS

ROOTS could not open night after night without the dedicated and highly trained support of our volunteers. From sanitizing bunks and deep cleaning hygiene stations to organizing clothing donations and coordinating meal service, volunteers are essential to maintaining a safe, structured, and dignified shelter environment. Many arrive early in the morning or stay late into the evening to ensure the space is fully prepared before young adults walk through the doors.

**Their commitment makes consistent access to safety possible every single night of the year.**

In 2025, 270 volunteers contributed 11,366.85 hours in support of ROOTS young adults. On average, volunteers gave approximately 42 hours each over the course of the year, reflecting not only broad community engagement but meaningful, hands-on commitment.

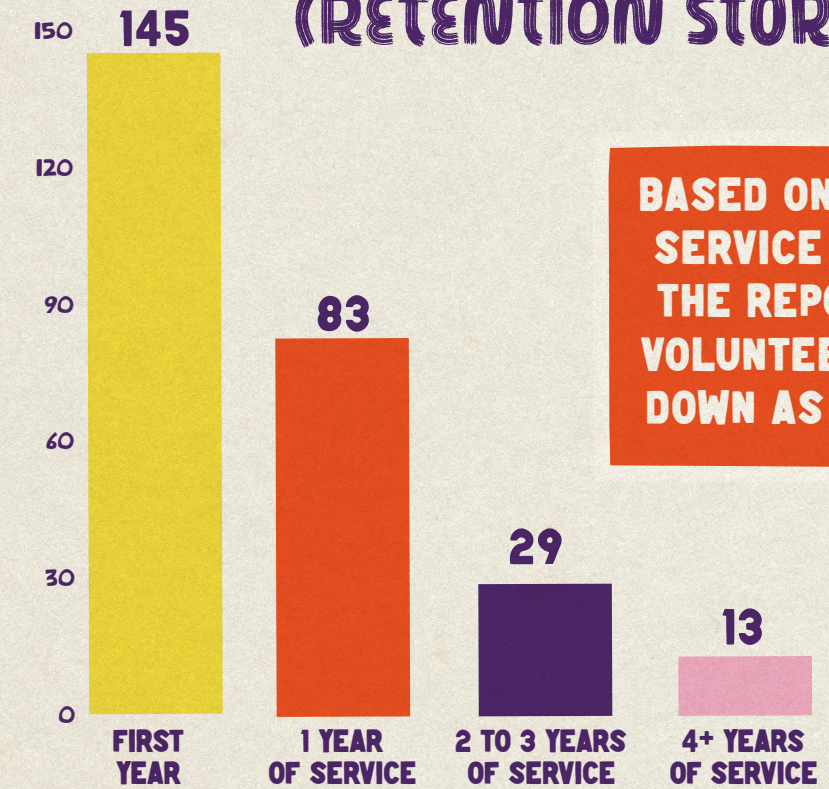
ROOTS volunteers demonstrate strong retention and deepening engagement over time. Nearly half of the 2025 volunteers had served with ROOTS for more than one year, and long-term volunteers contributed significantly more hours. Volunteers with four or more years of service gave an average of over 100 hours in 2025, reflecting sustained commitment, reliability, and leadership within the volunteer community.

**270**  
TOTAL UNIQUE  
VOLUNTEERS IN 2025

**11,366**  
TOTAL VOLUNTEER  
HOURS IN 2025

**42**  
AVERAGE HOURS  
PER VOLUNTEER

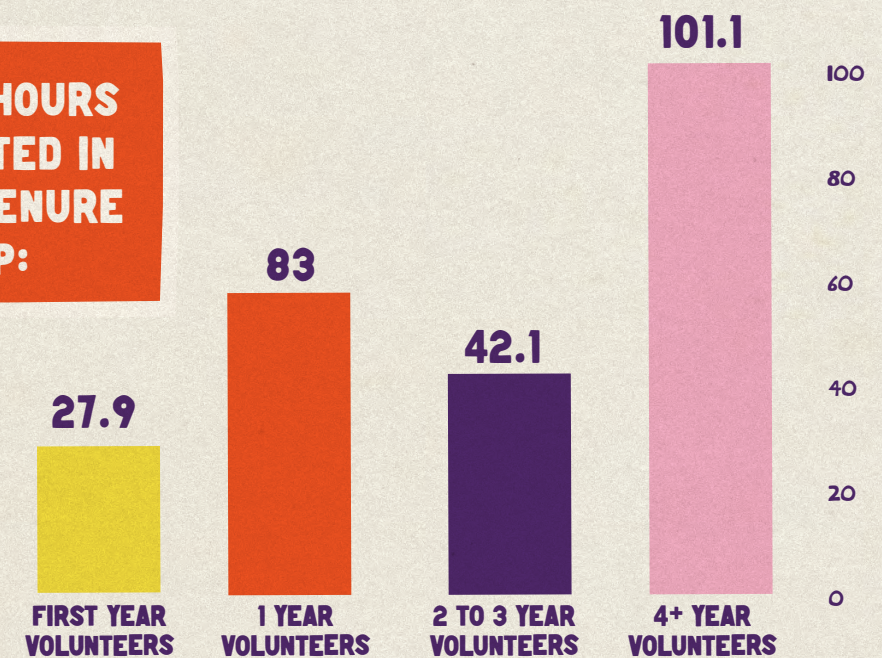
## VOLUNTEER TENURE BREAKDOWN (RETENTION STORY)



**BASED ON YEARS OF SERVICE LISTED IN THE REPORT, 2025 VOLUNTEERS BREAK DOWN AS FOLLOWS:**

This means 125 volunteers had been with ROOTS for more than one year, which is a strong retention signal for a shelter-based volunteer program.

### AVERAGE HOURS CONTRIBUTED IN 2025 BY TENURE GROUP:



# FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

ROOTS operates with a deep commitment to fiscal responsibility, transparency, and long-term sustainability. In FY2025, total operating revenue reached \$2.31 million, reflecting strong community investment in young adults experiencing homelessness.

This balanced revenue model strengthens ROOTS' stability and reduces reliance on any single funding source. Individual donors and institutional partners together form the backbone of our operating support, while government contracts provide essential infrastructure for sustained service delivery.

Total operating expenses for FY2025 were \$1,682,700, reflecting disciplined resource management and careful investment in direct services, staffing, and facility operations.

As ROOTS continues to grow, financial stewardship remains central to our mission. Every dollar invested supports safe shelter, high acuity staffing, case management, and the systems that make 365 nights of access possible.

Strong financial performance in FY2025 positions ROOTS to meet increasing demand while remaining responsive to shifts in the broader funding landscape.



**\$140K**  
CORPORATE SUPPORT

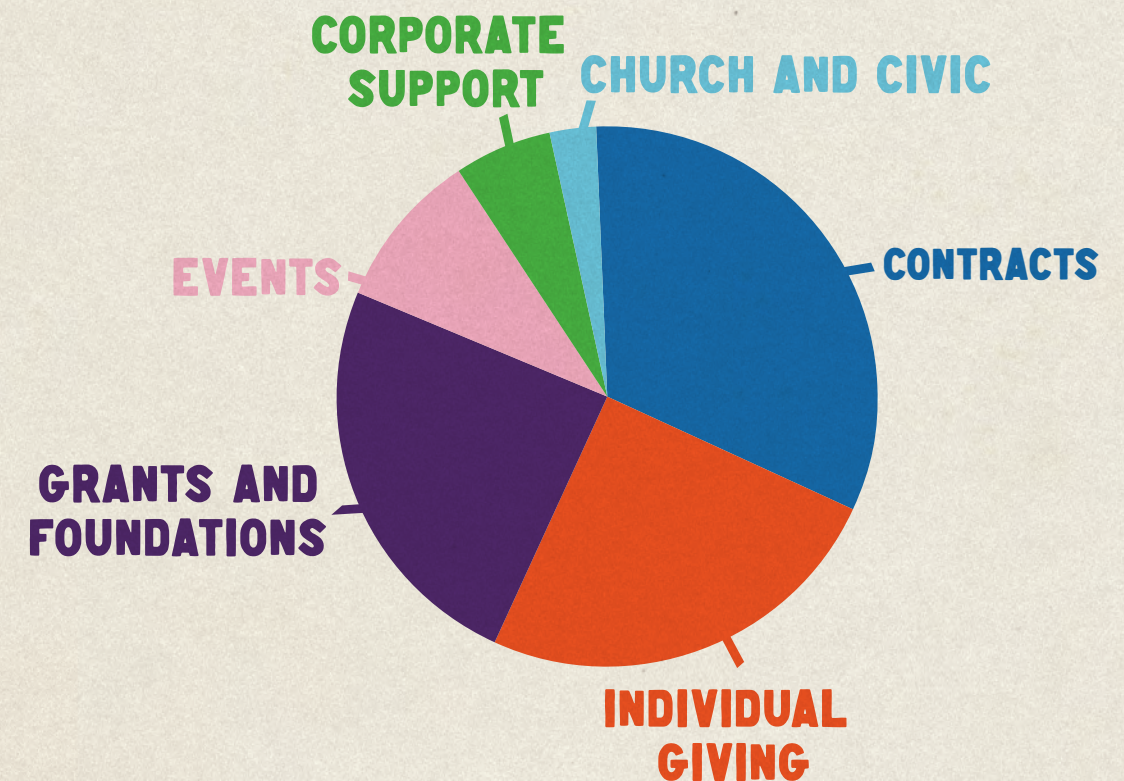
**\$65K**  
CHURCH AND CIVIC PARTNERS

**\$221K**  
SPECIAL EVENTS GROSS REVENUE

**\$782K**  
GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**\$588K**  
GRANTS AND FOUNDATIONS

**\$594K**  
INDIVIDUAL GIVING



# INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENT AND GROWTH

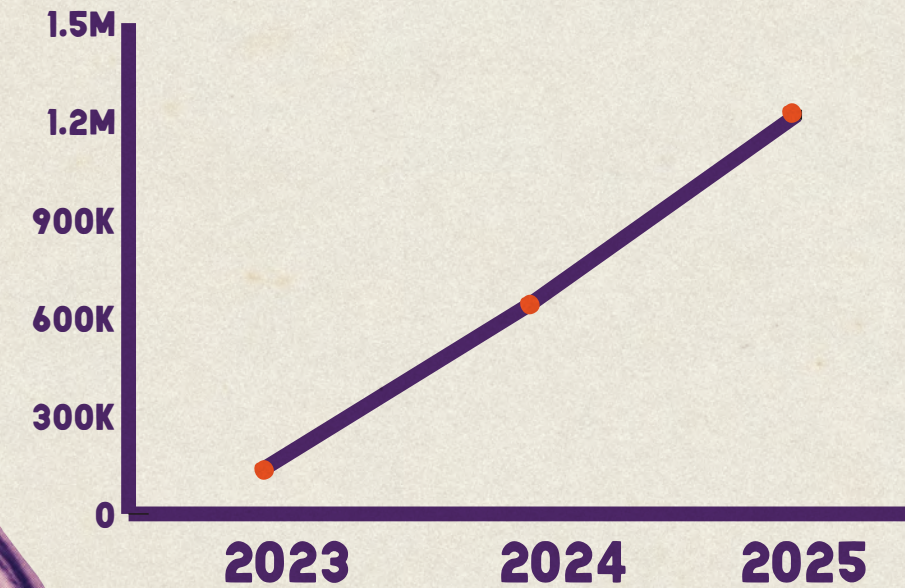
In addition to operating revenue, ROOTS experienced significant growth in private institutional investment in 2025. Grant awards associated with 2025 applications totaled more than \$2.75 million, including a \$1.53 million capital repair award supporting major facility improvements.

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Excluding capital-specific awards, ROOTS secured more than \$1.22 million in private program and operating grants. This represents substantial growth compared to prior years, with \$640,000 awarded in 2024 and \$135,600 in 2023.

This trajectory reflects increasing confidence in ROOTS' model, measurable impact, and long-term sustainability.



# COMMUNITY GENEROSITY IN ACTION

OVER \$205,000  
IN IN-KIND SUPPORT

In 2025, ROOTS received over \$205,000 in in-kind donations, a powerful reflection of community care in action. These gifts meet immediate needs inside shelter and help young adults move forward with dignity as they transition into housing.

Throughout the year, supporters purchased items directly from our wish list, organized company clothing and food drives, contributed during the holiday season, and showed up with consistent generosity month after month. Every item was chosen thoughtfully and delivered with care.

## In-kind donations included:

Body wash, shampoo, and hygiene supplies that allow guests to care for themselves with dignity

Clothing for job interviews, work shifts, and daily life

Winter blankets and warm layers during the coldest months

Dog and cat food so young adults do not have to choose between feeding themselves and feeding their pets

Brand new bed sheets and household essentials that we gift to guests as they move into their own apartments

These items do more than fill shelves. They communicate safety, belonging, and worth. A new set of sheets becomes the first layer of a young adult's new home. A warm blanket makes a cold night feel survivable. A donated jacket can mean showing up confidently for a job interview.

Because ROOTS operates as a first-come, first-served overnight shelter, we serve a wide range of young adults throughout the year. In-kind donations allow us to respond quickly and equitably, ensuring that basic needs are met without barriers or delays.

Community generosity sustains our model. It allows us to remain accessible, responsive, and rooted in care. Every donated item represents someone choosing to stand alongside young adults on their journey toward stability.



# OUR STORIES

## WHEN SAFETY REQUIRES MORE THAN A BED

On some nights, the most important thing ROOTS provides is not a place to sleep, but sustained presence, patience, and coordination across systems.

One young adult arrived at ROOTS carrying deep trauma and an overwhelming sense of being unsafe. Her fear and distress were rooted in past abuse and ongoing concerns for her personal safety. While the shelter could meet her immediate needs, it quickly became clear that a single night indoors was not enough to support her well-being.

Over the course of several days and nights, ROOTS staff and case managers worked together to respond with care, consistency, and clarity. Team members spent hours checking in, offering reassurance, setting clear and predictable boundaries, and adjusting their approach to avoid escalating fear. Leadership and case management staff coordinated intakes for higher levels of care and reached out to domestic violence and women-focused shelters to identify safer, more appropriate placement options.

At the same time, staff navigated crisis response, medical and mental health considerations, and safety planning, all while continuing to support dozens of other young adults in the shelter each night.

This level of effort is not an exception. It is what trauma-informed, youth-centered shelter work looks like in practice. ROOTS staff balance compassion with accountability, prioritize the safety of the entire community, and remain focused on long-term stability rather than quick or temporary solutions. Even when outcomes are still unfolding, the work reflects a deep commitment to meeting young adults where they are, especially when the path forward is complex, time-intensive, and largely unseen.



# STABILITY MAKES GROWTH POSSIBLE

After fleeing an abusive relationship, one young adult arrived at ROOTS seeking safety, stability, and a chance to rebuild. She entered shelter while navigating homelessness, untreated mental health needs, and the disruption of her education. Early on, she struggled to trust systems and connect consistently with staff, reflecting the impact of trauma and repeated instability.

Through ongoing case management, ROOTS staff worked with her over many months to identify goals that aligned with her hopes for the future. She expressed a strong desire to return to school and believed transitional housing would provide the stability she needed to focus on her education and mental health. While housing opportunities remained limited for an extended period, staff continued to support progress in other critical areas.

During this time, she was connected to medical providers to address both physical and mental health needs, supported in obtaining identification documents, and assisted in rebuilding meaningful relationships, including reconnecting with a trusted family member. These steps laid out the groundwork for long-term stability, even as housing remained out of reach.

After a prolonged wait, she was offered a transitional housing placement. The timing allowed her to return to school online during the winter term. For the first time in years, she was able to study from her own room, with space for her long-time pet, Snoopy. Stable housing did not mark the end of her journey, but it made continued growth and healing possible.



# DETERMINATION IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY

Another young adult came to ROOTS after experiencing multiple losses in a short period of time. Following the death of her father, she was left with little family support and limited resources. Developmental challenges and housing instability forced her to leave school before graduating, and she continued to fall through gaps in the systems meant to support young people.

At 19, she arrived at ROOTS unhoused and pregnant.

Despite exhaustion and the daily challenges of living outside while expecting, she remained focused on finding housing before her due date. She arrived at shelter night after night, often visibly worn down, yet consistently asking for updates and advocating for herself.

While housing options remained uncertain, ROOTS staff worked with her on foundational goals. She obtained identification documents, secured more reliable phone service, and explored options to return to school. Case management staff coordinated across systems, submitted multiple housing nominations, and held impromptu meetings with partners to keep her case moving forward.

After months of persistence, coordination, and shared determination, housing was secured. She moved into a safe place she could call home before her child was born. With stability in place, she now hopes to complete her education before welcoming her son later this spring.

# MOVING FORWARD

With expanded case management capacity, stronger housing partnerships, and continued community support, ROOTS remains committed to increasing positive outcomes while staying open, accessible, and responsive to young adults experiencing homelessness.

At ROOTS, impact is not measured only by exits. It is measured by nights of safety, moments of dignity, and the belief that everyone deserves a place to land, even when the path forward is uncertain.

# INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF ROOTS

In 2026, ROOTS begins a long-planned building renovation project that will significantly improve the safety, functionality, and sustainability of our shelter. These renovations will allow us to better support both guests and staff by addressing critical infrastructure needs, improving accessibility, and creating spaces that are more welcoming, trauma-informed, and functional for overnight shelter operations.

This project represents a major investment in the future of ROOTS and the young adults we serve. While the majority of funding has already been secured, 15% of the total renovation budget remains to be raised. Securing this remaining support is essential to avoiding delays and ensuring the project can move forward as planned.

Every contribution brings us closer to a safer, stronger space for young adults to rest, heal, and rebuild. Community support at this stage directly impacts our ability to remain open and operational throughout the renovation process.

Help us cross the finish line and build a space that meets the needs of young adults today and for years to come.



# EXPANDING SUPPORT BEYOND SHELTER

Looking ahead, ROOTS is also focused on deepening and expanding programmatic support for young adults. With increased case management staffing, we are positioned to offer more consistent, individualized support to guests navigating housing, health care, education, and stability.

In 2026, ROOTS is looking to fully incorporate our Saturday Lunch Program, which was piloted at the end of 2025. This program addresses immediate food insecurity while creating an additional point of connection for young adults outside of overnight shelter hours. By meeting basic needs in flexible ways, ROOTS continues to strengthen trust and access for young adults who may not yet be ready for overnight shelter or case management services.

As needs continue to evolve, ROOTS remains committed to adapting our services while holding fast to our core values of access, equity, and dignity.

## LOOKING AHEAD TOGETHER

The work ahead is significant, but so is the opportunity. With community partnership, sustained investment, and a shared commitment to young adults, ROOTS will continue showing up night after night, building safety where it is needed most.

Together, we can ensure that young adults experiencing homelessness have not only a place to sleep, but a place to belong.



# A YEAR AT ROOTS

