

Answering the Call

*Working Together to
End Human Trafficking*

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



✦ **Polaris** Freedom
happens
now.

NOTES *from* OUR LEADERS



Dear Friends,

I am so grateful you stood with us in 2024.

With your support, you helped us navigate a shifting landscape while we stood firm in our mission to fight human trafficking and support victims and survivors, which you'll read about in this report.

Polaris experienced several changes in 2024, one of the most significant being the departure of Catherine Chen, our CEO of five years. We thank her for her service to the anti-trafficking community and wish her well. We also began a thoughtful strategic planning and realignment process that has continued into this year. While working to stay nimble in the face of change, **we remain committed to meeting the needs of victims and survivors.**

Megan Lundstrom, our newly appointed CEO, brings not only deep expertise in the field of human trafficking but also the powerful perspective of lived experience — becoming Polaris's first CEO who has personally endured trafficking. Megan is the visionary leader this moment calls for — with clarity, purpose, and a bold vision for lasting impact.

I hope that you'll join us in celebrating this milestone, in helping us face the challenges which lie ahead, and in looking forward to what's next.

With gratitude,



Jean Gilbert
*Chairperson,
Board of Directors*

To Our Community,

I am honored to step into the role of CEO at Polaris, working alongside so many allies and advocates — including you!

In my first few months, our team has been uniting around what it means to **answer the call**. At Polaris, it means showing up — every single day — for people who have been exploited. We exist to serve victims and survivors of human trafficking, and that purpose needs to drive every decision we make, every program we run, and every partnership we enter.

It also means **listening deeply to survivors**, a practice that's been part of Polaris's DNA since our founding and over more than two decades of anti-trafficking work. It means listening not just to their stories but to their insights, their solutions, their leadership. It means honoring their voices by building systems that center them and respond to what they actually need. It means not only responding but also rebuilding — with survivors leading the way.

In the following pages, you'll see how Polaris answered the call in 2024, assisting victims and survivors through the **National Human Trafficking Hotline** and **Polaris Resilience Fund**, activating data through **Nonechka** and the **Financial Intelligence Unit**, and advocating to remove criminal records as a barrier through the **Trafficking Survivors Relief Act**.

Thank you for how you've walked alongside Polaris in 2024. And I invite you to continue standing with us — to support the work, to share the vision, to center survivors — as we keep building a world where no one is bought or sold.

With hope,



Megan Lundstrom
CEO

National Human Trafficking Hotline

For 17 years, the **National Human Trafficking Hotline** has been the first lifeline for thousands. A connection to safety. To hope. To someone who believes them. **We've answered that call more than 450,000 times — and we're still here, picking up, every hour of the day.**

January – December 2024



Responded to 32,309
substantive
contacts
including
8,024
from victims
and survivors



65% **Sex Trafficking**
22% **Labor Trafficking**
13% **Sex Trafficking and Labor Trafficking**



Identified 11,999
situations of
trafficking
involving
21,865
victims



55% **Calls**
15% **Texts**
13% **Online Reports**
9% **Emails**
8% **Web Chats**



Made 3,000+ additional contacts

with service providers, legal professionals, child welfare agencies, law enforcement, and government agencies to handle complex situations, coordinate assistance, and advocate for victims and survivors

The National Human Trafficking Hotline is supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$6 million annually, with 92% funded by ACF/HHS and \$0.5 million and 8% funded by non-government sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit the ACF website, Administrative and National Policy Requirements: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/administrative-and-national-policy-requirements#chapter-8>.

Bridging the Gap

In 2024, Polaris communicated with nonprofit partner staff on nearly **1,100** contacts — many of which were to coordinate direct assistance for victims and survivors using donated airline miles, hotel points, and rideshare vouchers.

In 2024, we assisted:



107 victims and survivors with 165 flights



32 victims and survivors with 124 hotel nights



66 victims and survivors with 220 rideshares

Here are just a few ways that these resources made a difference:

- Delta SkyMiles provided flights to survivors needing transportation, including to **return home** after safely exiting their trafficking situation.
- Donated hotel nights gave one survivor and her children a **safe place to stay** until they were able to move into their own apartment.
- Southwest vouchers helped several survivors of sex trafficking travel to **long-term housing programs** across the country, taking their next steps on their journeys toward healing and freedom.
- One service provider had collected donated childcare items for a survivor in their program who had recently given birth. Polaris shared Uber resources to help transport these **needed supplies** from the provider's office to the survivor's home.
- Polaris provided Lyft vouchers to help a survivor drop off and pick up her child at daycare while she worked and got her driver's license — supporting her **long-term stability**.
- Many survivors are leaders in the anti-trafficking field. Flight and hotel resources have helped them attend conferences to **share their expertise** and **build their networks and resumes**.

Polaris Resilience Fund

Answering the call is more than answering the phone. It's launching the **Polaris Resilience Fund** because survivors told us they didn't need more sympathy. They needed money for rent. Groceries. A car to get to work. And no program was built for that — so we built one.

Launched in 2023, the Resilience Fund has provided survivors with monthly cash disbursements, support from a Resource Navigator, and connections to trusted community organizations. In the summer of 2024, we conducted a mid-program evaluation after completing nine months of the pilot.

Key Mid-Program Findings



Improving Financial Stability:

Survivors' reliance on exploitative work decreased from 60% to 25%.

"This is the first time in my life I've gotten to breathe a little bit, and it is because of this. And I want to be able to continue these conversations."



Dealing with Systems Barriers:

62% reported progress in areas like financial inclusion and credit repair.

"[The Resource Navigator] has provided me with all the resources with a very good response time, which has helped me move forward in my journey of economic empowerment without sitting with the feeling of frustration or feeling stuck."



Empowering Through Trust: Participants have autonomy over how they spend their disbursements, and voluntary surveys show that they are responsible with their funds — a consistent finding across cash assistance programs throughout the country.

Transportation: **23.3%** | Food: **20.9%** | Housing: **14%**
Utilities: **14%** | Children-Related: **7%** | Debt: **7%**
Clothing: **4.7%** | Health: **4.7%** | Savings: **2.3%**
Other: **2.1%**

"My focus is on strengthening collaboration across all sectors, while ensuring that the experiences, needs, and rights of survivors remain at the heart of our work."

Megan Lundstrom, Polaris CEO and Inaugural Resilience Fund Director

RESILIENCE FUND COHORT



24 survivors across the U.S.

"I'm grateful to be a part of this program; it's saving my life."



Average annual income:
\$21,823.65



One third of households have an average of two children

"[The Resilience Fund] was game changing for me because I do not have to uproot my children again."

Workers' Rights

Answering the call also means being the safe place that agricultural workers can turn to for help. It's collecting survivor input on public policy when they can't speak up directly. It's standing in the gap when systems fail.

Nonechka

Leveraging technology to ensure workers have access to information and services, and to understand their working conditions and vulnerabilities

Reached
8,000+
workers
since launch

Sent
49,000+
messages about
fair recruitment,
rights, and
resources in 2024



Capacity Building

Enhancing local partners' ability to reach workers and providing education, trainings, and other support for government agencies and other stakeholders who interact with workers

Supported
13
local Nonechka
partners

Trained
621
consular
staff



Strategic Coordination

Building collaboration with grassroots organizations, regional partners, government officials, and industry leaders to strengthen anti-trafficking efforts



- Co-hosted "**Dialogue on Decent Work in the Agricultural Sector in Mexico**," a January convening co-hosted with Fundacion Avina, Periplo, International Organization for Migration, and Institute for Human Rights and Business — welcoming **50+** in-person attendees from civil society, government, international groups, and the private sector; garnering **1,500+** views across social media; and resulting in recommendations for both public and private sectors
- Continued partnership with counterpart hotlines in Mexico and Canada to **strengthen the North American safety net**



Financial Intelligence Unit

Answering the call means creating tools that didn't exist — because survivors told us what was missing. Polaris's **Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU)** mobilizes the lived and professional expertise of survivors and subject-matter experts to empower the global financial sector to stop human trafficking, hold traffickers accountable, and give survivors tangible support in rebuilding their lives. Learn more in this interview with **FIU Director Rafi Aliya Crockett!**



Everybody deserves the opportunity to build the life of their dreams — especially individuals who have already had a life of nightmares. The work we do tracking down money is a small contribution that hopefully will allow survivors to build the life of their dreams.

How would you describe the FIU's impact for survivors?

By following the money and identifying traffickers' assets, the FIU helps survivors on two fronts. First, prosecutors can charge traffickers with financial crimes like tax evasion, fraud, and money laundering, which often don't require victim testimony for conviction and offer a more trauma-informed path to justice. Second, we can help survivors start to rebuild their lives by making sure they receive restitution from traffickers' seized assets. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act already requires this financial compensation for survivors, but judges order it in fewer than one in four cases.

Financial intelligence contributes to restorative justice and makes accountability possible in a very tangible way. More than just helping secure convictions, it responds to the clear call we've heard from survivors through the National Survivor Study, Resilience Fund, and so many other avenues — they just need money. Many still have terrible credit. They can't get a job. Their benefits are getting cut. The answer is simple: Take the money from the people who did wrong, and give it to the people who were wronged. And when you take away traffickers' assets, you also take away their ability to earn more money by exploiting other people.

And survivors aren't just benefiting from the FIU's work — they're contributing to it. Through our relationships with survivors, the FIU has up-to-date information about trafficking patterns and changing trends. It's great to see financial institutions creating investigative units focused on specialized topics, but they are staffed by experts in money movement, not human trafficking. That's where the FIU's analysts — informed by survivors — come in.

How did you get into this work?

Since starting my career in the U.S. Department of the Treasury in 2006, I've worked on financial crimes and compliance in every setting: government, financial institutions, global consulting firms, and independent consulting.

In 2020, I was doing risk assessments for financial clients, but they felt like check-the-box exercises that were put on a shelf rather than resulting in actual change. I ended up walking away from all of it. I took

several months to travel, write and produce a documentary, and contribute to freedom, justice, and joy in my community.

I was ready to throw away more than 15 years of financial crimes experience when the opportunity to lead the FIU came about. It gave me an alternative to walking away from my long career in financial compliance and the chance to use my skills for positive impact.

What's one of the FIU's most significant accomplishments from 2024?

Last year, we brought on our first credit card partner, Discover — which is a big deal! In trafficking, money flows in so many different ways. We've traditionally addressed banks and payment processors, but credit cards also play a huge role.

Bringing this credit card company into the fold has grown our FIU network to 20 partners, who meet bimonthly to exchange information and best practices. Including this credit card company has given them insights from other FIU partners, many of which are global institutions working on a larger scale. On the other hand, financial institutions interface with credit card companies all the time but have no idea what they're doing on human trafficking, so it's a good opportunity for them to learn about credit card processing in the risk mitigation space.

Can you share a lesson that the FIU took away from 2024?

One trend we've seen is the need to build partners' awareness of and capacity for labor trafficking investigations. For financial institutions, sex trafficking is easier to detect. Banks traditionally use transaction monitoring to flag suspicious activity for human review. The process is designed to identify patterns of money movement that might indicate trafficking. But with labor trafficking, there's often an absence of money movement. Workers don't get paid; there are no transactions to monitor. If there's no money moving, there are no patterns, so it's hard to understand what labor trafficking might look like.

Given this reality, Polaris has been advising FIU partners to incorporate labor trafficking questions into broader risk assessments when they onboard new customers or conduct reviews on current clients. Banks are already looking for red flags for drug trafficking, corruption, and weapons. The same could be done for labor trafficking with questions like, "Is this business in a state rolling back child labor laws?" or, "Is this business in an industry that relies heavily on migrant labor?"

Besides this education, the FIU has also committed to producing at least as many, if not more, labor trafficking as sex trafficking intelligence packages for our partners. We've seen that if our analysts don't do it, no one else will, so we know we're fulfilling a critical role in this space!

What challenges and opportunities are you facing now?

Our biggest challenge is technology — as a nonprofit, we're often stuck with limited tools while tech-adept criminals have the money to invest in the latest developments. Fortunately, the FIU passes our intelligence on to financial partners who do have the necessary resources, but I would love our analysts to be able to learn and use the latest technology too.

One opportunity is expanding our geographic scope. Right now, our work stops at U.S. borders. But trafficking and money definitely don't. With more resources, we would be able to follow the money wherever it leads. If there are foreign transactions involved in a U.S.-based trafficking operation, we can get to the root of how money is being funnelled out of the U.S. in exchange for victims being brought in. This information would be invaluable not only to current partners but also to entities working to ensure that supply chains are free of enslaved labor.

Policy Priority: The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act

Polaris has also answered the call to fight for policy change — because survivors told us how.

In 2024, Polaris advocated for passage of the **Trafficking Survivors Relief Act** (TSRA) to enable survivors to clear their federal records of crimes committed as a result of their trafficking. Check out our progress below!

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITY IN 2024

- **January 30:**
Introduced in the House of Representatives (H.R.7137)
- **April 30:**
Introduced in the Senate (S.4214)
- **September 25:**
Passed the House Judiciary Committee

Polaris in Action

- Partnered with **18 survivor leaders** to create videos and op-eds supporting the TSRA
- Mobilized **3,400+ members** of our community to send letters to Congress
- Created a **TSRA Information Center** to share National Survivor Study data, survivor videos and op-eds, an advocacy toolkit, and more

Beyond the Bill

Signing a new policy into law isn't the last step in our advocacy. Polaris continues to work with partners to ensure that laws are not just on the books but that they get implemented in ways that center and benefit survivors.

Case in point: **The Debt Bondage Repair Act** (DBRA) passed in late 2021 to enable survivors to block adverse information related to their trafficking experiences from their credit reports. Since then, we've been working to help survivors actually get their credit reports cleared. In 2024, we not only raised awareness about the DBRA but also developed and piloted a process to provide survivors with letters certifying their eligibility for relief — helping build the infrastructure to ensure that a law we supported fully achieves its intended impact.

Bipartisan Support



House of Representatives:

20 Republican and
18 Democratic cosponsors
from 20 states

Senate:

5 Republican and
4 Democratic cosponsors
from 9 states



Anti-Trafficking Field:

100+ organizations
across the country

Although the TSRA did not ultimately pass in 2024, it was **reintroduced in both the House and Senate in July 2025**, and we are committed to the process of seeing it passed and signed into law.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Teaming Up with Law Enforcement

Answering the call takes all of us — and partnerships with survivors, law enforcement, social service providers, and industry leaders turn that call into action to end trafficking.

Since launching the Trafficking Hotline in 2007, Polaris has worked closely with law enforcement agencies to ensure victims and survivors get the help they need. Today, we work with **1,600+ law enforcement partners in 300+ jurisdictions** across the country.

In 2024, we followed up with law enforcement, child welfare, and other government agencies on **560+ contacts**, advocating for victims and survivors, responding to questions, and helping coordinate assistance. Here are just a few examples of the ways these partnerships strengthened response for victims and survivors in 2024:

Helping Survivors Get Out

An individual contacted the Trafficking Hotline to report that two family members were being labor trafficked. After learning how the Hotline could assist, she called back with one of them, who asked for help getting out. A Hotline Advocate stayed on the phone with the survivor and helped her plan their exit, while another called law enforcement to request their assistance. We stayed on the phone with the survivor until she was safely removed by law enforcement, and we later heard that both survivors were en route back home.

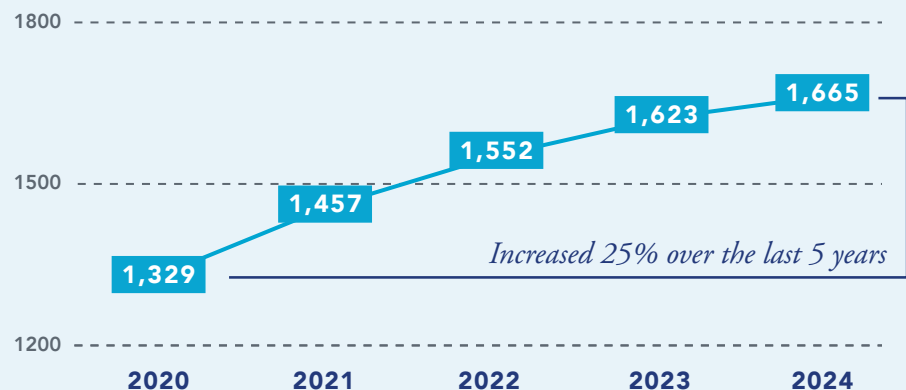
Is It Human Trafficking?

A federal agent contacted the Trafficking Hotline for help determining whether or not information for a current investigation constituted trafficking. The Case Response team advised the agent to pursue investigating the case as labor exploitation, provided referrals for the victim in their home country, and connected the agent to a partner specializing in labor trafficking and exploitation of foreign national adults — an illustration of how we use our subject-matter expertise to support active cases.

Collaboration Crossing State Lines

One Trafficking Hotline report helped facilitate collaboration among the FBI, Homeland Security Investigations, and state police, streamlining their investigation into a sex trafficking situation happening across two states. Working with a national hotline enables our partners to see and hear across jurisdictions, learning about what's happening outside their own regions.

Number of Law Enforcement Contacts in Trafficking Hotline Reporting Protocols



Powering Purpose: Our Corporate Partners

We deeply appreciate our corporate partners for their investment in our mission and their efforts to stop human trafficking in their sectors.

SIRIUS

\$500,000+



CAPELLA

\$100,000 - \$249,999



ANTARES

\$50,000 - \$99,999



REGULUS

\$25,000 - \$49,999



AHARA

\$10,000 - \$24,999

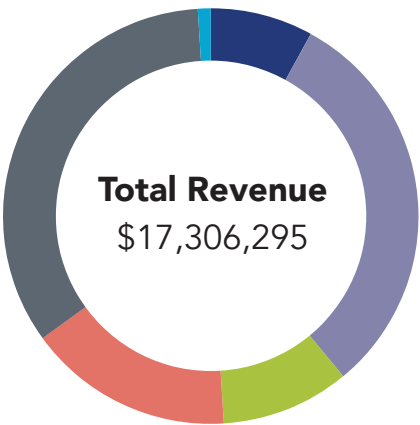


Financial Summary – 2024

As of August 1, 2025

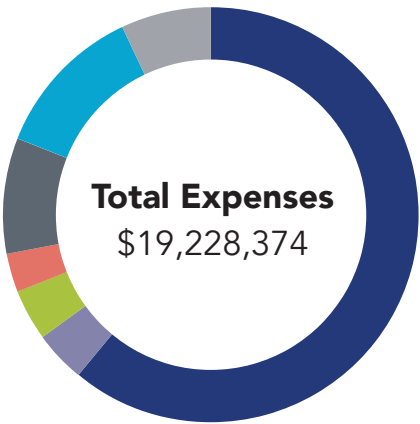
REVENUE

Corporate Donations (8%)	\$1,403,205
Government Grants (31%)	\$5,357,208
Individual Donations (10%)	\$1,681,274
Private Foundations (16%)	\$2,821,328
Donated Goods and Services (35%)	\$6,005,000
Other Income (<1%)	\$38,280



EXPENSES

Trafficking Hotline (61%)	\$11,649,702 (\$6,005,000 in-kind)
Financial Intelligence Unit (4%)	\$708,197
Workers' Rights (4%)	\$705,261
Advocacy/ Communications (3%)	\$659,989
Other Programs (9%)	\$1,732,564
Administration (12%)	\$2,386,513
Fundraising (7%)	\$1,386,148



Change in Net Assets \$(1,922,079)

ENDING NET ASSETS \$107,325

Note: We are committed to transparency. Our audited financials are in progress and will be published soon. Past audited financials are available at <https://polarisproject.org/financial-information>.

**Thank you for standing with us —
and for answering the call when it matters most.**

POLARIS MISSION

**To end sex and labor trafficking and
support victims and survivors on their
journeys toward freedom**

POLARIS LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jean Gilbert, *Chairperson*
Liz Kiehner, *Secretary*
Maria Gollayan, *Treasurer*
Roy L. Austin, Jr.
Susan Coppedge
Tanya Gould
Sangeeta Naik
Angel Nguyen Swift
Frederick Reynolds

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Megan Lundstrom, *Chief Executive Officer*
Heather Wagner, *Managing Director of People & Operations*
Sara Woldehanna, *Managing Director of Data, Strategy & Impact*

RESILIENCE FUND ADVISORY COUNCIL

Aims Babich, *You Are More Than, Inc.*
Zoe Christine Bellatorre, *Community Representative*
Rebecca Bender, *Elevate Academy*
Alicia Ley, *Survivor Alliance*
Rebekah Leyton, *National Survivor Network*

U.S. NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE



1-888-373-7888



233733

polarisproject.org



@polaris_project



@polarisproject



/polarisproject

