

2023 Year In Review

America FORWARD
an initiative of NEWPROFIT

December 2023

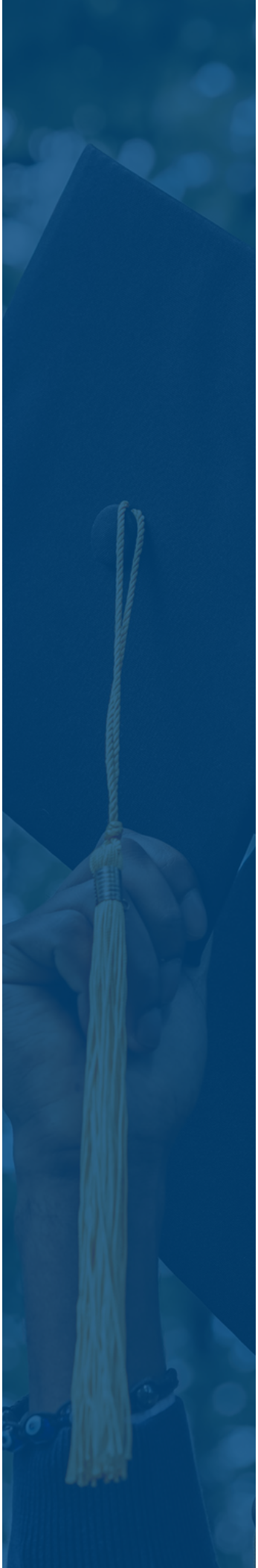
America Forward 2023 Highlights

1. Celebrating 15 Years:

2023 marked the 15th anniversary of America Forward. To celebrate the profound impact of America Forward and the America Forward Coalition over the past decade and a half -- and explore our shared vision for the future -- America Forward hosted more than one hundred Coalition members, funders, partners, and friends as part of New Profit's broader 25th Anniversary gathering. Attendees heard from David Wilkinson, Former Director of the White House Office of Social Innovation; Alise Marshall, Senior Director of Global Corporate Affairs and Social Impact of Pinterest; and Maria Kim, President and CEO of REDF, about the power of collective advocacy and innovative partnerships, as well as former Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick and Elizabeth Clay Roy, CEO of Generation Citizen, about the importance of fostering civic engagement and uniting around shared values. And we had a chance to share an inspiring short video highlighting America Forward's story, the impact we've made together, and the commitment that will guide us into the next 15 years!

2. Social Impact Partnerships to Pay for Results Act (SIPPRA) Implementation:

Following years of advocacy by America Forward and its Coalition, the U.S. Treasury Department published the long-awaited, much-improved second Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the $100 million SIPPRA pay for success demonstration fund in 2023. The America Forward Coalition played an integral role in SIPPRA's passage in Congress in 2018, and since then, we have continued to work closely with Treasury as we seek to realize the program's potential to transform how the federal government can invest in locally-driven, cost-effective programs under an innovative financing structure that rewards measurable improvements in people's lives. We were pleased to see America Forward Coalition members, including Social Finance, Third Sector Capital Partners, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, have each contributed to the success of one or more SIPPRA-supported projects.



3. Advancing the Whole Learner Education Initiative:

In 2023, America Forward continued to make great strides in our $5 million partnership with the LEGO Foundation advancing our Whole Learner Education Initiative. This year, we spearheaded a digital media campaign focused on elevating key messages about the characteristics and importance of whole learner education that reached more than 30 million educators, parents, students, and partners across Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter/X, and LinkedIn. We also worked with the America Forward Coalition to develop new legislation, the Whole Learner Act, which would establish a dedicated funding stream to support innovative whole learner approaches to education, and advocated for whole learner priorities in current federal programs and funding streams. Additionally, as part of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP) Committee's work to reauthorize the Education Sciences Reform Act (AERA), America Forward provided recommendations that we were happy to see included in the initial draft.

4. Report: Unlocking Innovation: Advancing the Continuous Improvement of Federal Evidence Funds:

America Forward published *Unlocking Innovation: Advancing the Continuous Improvement of Federal Evidence Funds*, a groundbreaking report analyzing the impact of federal evidence funds through $10+ billion of investment over the past 15 years, and highlighting the perspectives of an array of Coalition members. We recommended key changes to support continuous improvement of Federal evidence funds, advance equity, and increase access moving forward, and have received positive feedback from a number of federal policymakers.

5. WIOA Reauthorization:

America Forward and its Coalition advocated for fundamental reforms to the nation's federal workforce legislation, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). In December, the House Education and the Workforce Committee passed a WIOA reauthorization bill which incorporated many of America Forward's recommendations for foundational reforms to performance improvement, data and learning, funding accessibility, and program coordination. The full House of Representatives is expected to vote on the bill in early 2024.

6. Short-Term Pell Grants:

America Forward and Coalition members have advocated for Congress to expand the applicability of Pell Grants to high-impact, short-term workforce programs proven to boost students' economic outcomes. In December, House leaders introduced the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act, which incorporated many of our proposed reforms, including strong outcomes guardrails, accessibility to high-quality online programs, and leveraging administrative data to reduce burden on providers and strengthen transparency. The House Education Committee passed the bill in December and plans to move it to the full House of Representatives in early 2024.

7. Fiscal Year 2024 Federal Appropriations Advocacy:

America Forward led advocacy efforts to advance the Coalition's funding and policy priorities within the Fiscal Year 2024 federal appropriations cycle. America Forward organized impactful Coalition events – including our annual Appropriations Hill Days and policy briefings – and provided guidance and training to America Forward Coalition organizations through the America Forward Advocacy Institute.

8. America Forward Advocacy Institute:

This year, America Forward held eight training sessions as part of the America Forward Advocacy Institute, designed to help our Coalition and New Profit Portfolio organizations become better, bolder advocates. These trainings included sessions on influencing state and local policy, leveraging media to amplify organizations' messages and maximize advocacy impact, and understanding the power that nonprofits have to lobby and advocate on behalf of those they serve. Additionally, America Forward released several written training guides for Coalition members, including a toolkit for August Recess and a Congressional Guidebook.

9. Strengthening SNAP: Employment & Training:

America Forward and its Coalition championed the RESET for America's Future Act introduced by Senator Amy Klobuchar this year as Congress works to reauthorize the Farm Bill. The RESET Act will provide States the essential support and incentives to strengthen evidence-based, innovative workforce development approaches in the billion-dollar SNAP Employment and Training program.

10. Building a National Coalition for Workforce Data Ecosystem Improvement:

America Forward partnered with Data Quality Campaign to assemble leading national stakeholders to develop shared principles and priorities aimed at addressing critical gaps in the availability and reliability of workforce data. These principles and priorities have informed action by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to improve public outcomes data and led to continued conversations with federal stakeholders about the need for reform, as well as major improvements related to data infrastructure in the bipartisan House WIOA bill.

11. Postsecondary Student Success Grants:

The U.S. Department of Education issued the first tiered-evidence grant application for the landmark Postsecondary Student Success Grants program, which Congress funded last year following years of advocacy by America Forward and the Coalition. The Department's implementation included many of our in-depth recommendations to ensure the program supports equitable, transformative investments in promising and proven strategies.

12. National Service:

In an exciting partnership with Pinterest and the Schultz Family Foundation, America Forward has been working to create a new national Youth Mental Health Corps. Launching in 4-6 states next year, the Youth Mental Health Corps will provide students with AmeriCorps members focused solely on their mental health and well-being. In addition, we continue to push for resources to support AmeriCorps through our appropriations advocacy. This year, America Forward submitted detailed comments to the AmeriCorps agency on behalf of the Coalition to fight for a more equitable and sustainable AmeriCorps.



13. Amplifying America Forward's Advocacy Work:

In 2023, we worked with members of the America Forward Coalition to launch updated America Forward policy platforms that outline our Coalition's policy priorities and create a foundation for our ongoing collective advocacy efforts with Congress. In addition, we worked with dozens of Coalition members and partners, including Results for America, Data Quality Campaign, REDF, CEEMI, and more, to write blog posts and Medium posts that explored key priorities related to federal legislation and national trends. We were also delighted to see America Forward's advocacy philosophy and successes featured in Triple Pundit in an interview with Executive Director, Deborah Smolover.

14. America Forward Coalition:

The America Forward Coalition has grown to 109 organizations operating in 9.5 million communities in all 50 states. We were thrilled to welcome eight new members in 2023 committed to advancing our collective priorities, including BARR, FutureFit AI, i.c. stars , Power of Place Learning Communities, Social Creatures, TalkingPoints, Vehicles for Change, and Voice for Adoption.

15. Democracy:

As our Coalition grapples with issues on civic engagement and leadership, America Forward is actively partnering with member organizations to fortify our Democracy portfolio. In 2023, data collection was undertaken within our Coalition and the wider community, strategically pinpointing key issue areas that America Forward aims to address as we roll out this work in 2024. Last month, we hosted a roundtable in collaboration with Generation Citizen. During this discussion, Coalition members shared insights and experiences, shedding light on their efforts to enhance democratic strength and sustain civic engagement among their constituents.

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