REFLECTION POINT | ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Working Better Together.

What is Reflection Point?

Reflection Point uses facilitated discussions of powerful stories to build bridges, expand perspectives, and deepen shared understanding. Our facilitators guide small groups through reflection and dialogue.

Why stories? Stories offer a low risk platform to practice honest conversations and to build the skills of collective intelligence. A good story invites a group to gather and reflect about the ways they work together and how to co-create a healthy culture. It opens avenues for sharing and deepening the relationships that support inclusion, collaboration and innovation.



Letter to the Community.

Dear Partners, Participants, Facilitators, Supporters and Friends:

One recent Friday night, we went to a wonderful concert: Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. It was packed. The energy in the hall was palpable as the audience celebrated every solo and applauded every riff.

The energy plummeted at intermission when row after row of faces retreated into their phones. People who had clearly come to the concert together sat side by side, heads down, not talking. As the lights dimmed to signal the start of the second half, the phones slowly retreated and the audience looked up.

Maybe you've shrugged by now. After all, this scenario feels pretty common. And it is. A recent study of American social habits over the last twenty years reveals that Friday nights have stopped being a "night out" with friends. And a sobering Pew study this month reveals that 40% of American adults (including half of the under-30 set) look for community online instead of in person.

If that's what's happening with friends, you can only imagine what's happening at work.

We are moving at breakneck speed. We're isolated, burned out, working remotely (even when we're sitting together) and global engagement remains at its lowest levels in decades. It feels like the demands of our jobs are growing at the same pace as our fear of losing them to AI. We barely have time to get the work done, let alone spend time talking to and reflecting with others: friends or colleagues.

The irony of this particular Friday night moment is real. Jazz is by its nature a conversation - the musical discourse of talented players who make something together that none could make alone. Marsalis himself once said that the conversation of jazz is like a dance of give and take, a conversation with a powerful outcome. "Sometimes you lead, sometimes you follow." Jazz is "the art of negotiating change with style. To be heard demands that we also listen to one another. To sound good, we have to trust one another."

To succeed at anything—not only jazz—we have to trust one another.

What makes us human is our ability to connect to ourselves, each other and to new ideas. To riff on each other's skills, to build something in conversation with each other. But that requires trust, respect and mutual regard.

This is why we do Reflection Point.

Reflection Point creates unique conversational spaces for joint reflection, honest conversation, and deepened connection. And it works: teams that reflect together, grapple with difficult questions, and recognize each other's humanity work better together. And they build the skills to navigate uncertainty and shape a collective future.

These skills have never mattered more:

- Listening with humility in a world where technology competes for our attention
- Asking curious questions when algorithms offer fast answers
- Challenging assumptions in the face of our certainties
- Disagreeing with respect as our polarization deepens
- Widening the circle of empathy when sometimes it's just easier to look inward

We don't build these skills alone because–like jazz–they are collective. We build them together through shared stories: to open minds, explore diverse perspectives, sharpen insights, build trust and deepen understanding. We can't do it if we don't talk to each other.

In this crucial moment, we must not forget what makes us irreplaceably human—our capacity to imagine and wonder, learn and discern, connect and collaborate. In short, we must look up from our phones and slow down the urgency to stay digitally connected. To realize that we're not alone.

A veteran in the VA Domiciliary–a group we serve because of your support and generosity–captured this moment and the impact of this work. "In my recovery, I'm trying to get away from the mentality that everything's all transactional. I can do that in a room full of veterans who are on the same journey. But when I get out there in the real world, everybody acts like they're in too much of a hurry."

The world will continue to challenge our fragile but critical ability to stay connected, to work together. As we leverage the tools that increase our productivity and keep us tethered, we can't lose the skills that shape our best judgment: listening, asking questions, continually challenging our assumptions, disagreeing generatively, caring for each other. These are the skills we need most as we shape the future of work. But they require us to look up.

This year, you helped us continue to invest in people, to bring reflection, conversation and connection to more teams and more community organizations. You stood behind the capabilities that will help us keep working together.

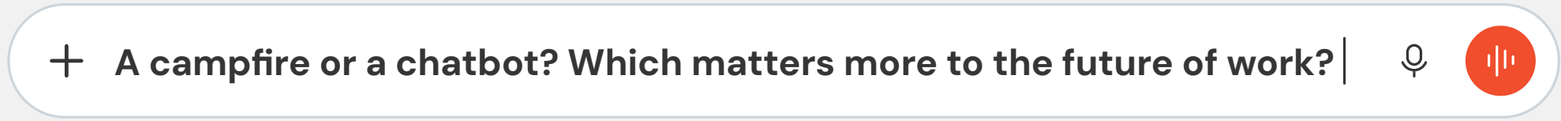
We are deeply grateful for your partnership and our shared commitment to what matters most: strengthening our humanity when we need it most. **Thank you.**

Ann Kowal Smith
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Felix M. Brueck
BOARD CHAIR

> **"It makes me pause in conversations to understand their point of view to have a true discussion."**
>
> —REFLECTION POINT PARTICIPANT

Can We Talk?



The chatbot is fast. It can draft a memo in seconds, summarize a meeting and produce language faster than any human being can read it.

The campfire is old. Long before offices, org charts, Outlook or Zoom, people gathered around fire.

We shared warnings and memories, grief and humor, values and knowledge. We learned who could be trusted. We remembered the past and imagined the future. And we shared stories that helped us think together.

The chatbot produces language. The campfire produces meaning. Human beings didn't become powerful because we were the fastest or strongest species. We became powerful because we could connect, cooperate, and make meaning together. But that distinctive human advantage is under strain.

We're starving at a buffet

We have more ways to reach one another than any generation in history, yet many of us feel farther apart than ever. We're lonely and we don't trust each other. We're reachable all day and harder to reach in the moments that matter. It's like we're starving at a buffet.

This disconnection matters because it undermines the very foundation of productive work. Every major human achievement was a group project before it became a cure, a technology, or a rocket launch. We flourished because we learned to cooperate at scale.

This is the human advantage: not just what one mind can produce, but what many minds can build together. AI doesn't override this advantage, it makes it even more important. AI can code, summarize, analyze, translate, and generate answers at extraordinary speed. But speed is not wisdom.

The five skills every team needs now

At Reflection Point, we've spent nearly two decades studying this. In real conversations, with real teams, across industries, roles, and tenures. And again and again, we've seen five distinctly human skills that help teams work better together.

Listening with humility. Listening well, with genuine humility, enhances our capacity for innovation and drives collaboration.

Asking good and curious questions. Authentic questions surface other people's hidden insights and unleash new ideas.

Challenging strongly held assumptions. Suspending our "known truths" opens us to other points of view and expands our mental models.

Disagreeing with respect and without retribution. Positive disagreement strengthens learning when it is grounded in psychological safety, trust and mutual regard.

Widening the circle of empathy. Deepening relationships expands our understanding and strengthens inclusion and belonging.

These skills sound simple, but they are very hard. And they also take practice. No great sports team waits until game day to practice passing, timing and trust. Yet organizations routinely ask business teams to navigate conflict, uncertainty and change without building these skills first.

Stories bring us back to the campfire

Time and again we see the power of stories to change how people think, act, and work together. Stories give people room to practice the skills, to reconsider what they thought they knew. Room to see themselves and one another more clearly. And teams don't just talk about the story. They talk about trust, conflict, change and the kind of company or community they want to build. As one worker said, "This story isn't about work. But then again, it's all about work."

Stories bring us back to the campfire. Not as a place but as a practice. A way of gathering close enough to slow down, hear one another, reflect together and remember that every person around us carries the wisdom of life experience we don't see at first glance.

Stories are the original human technology. They taught us how to survive together. And now, in a world of intelligent machines, they can help us remember how to stay human together.

The chatbot isn't going anywhere. It will keep getting faster and better. The volume of language it generates will keep rising. The buffet will keep getting bigger. But speed will not tell us what kind of people to become. Language will not make us brave. Generated answers will not make us wise.

For that, we need each other. And our most important job is to be sure that our quest for speed, efficiency and the newest technology doesn't extinguish the campfire.

Can we talk?

We have to.

Our future depends on it.

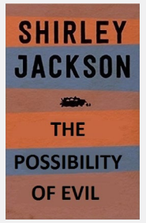
Our CEO presented this question at the City Club of Cleveland in May 2026. To watch these remarks and a mini-session in progress:

WATCH NOW

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN:

Stories Having a Moment

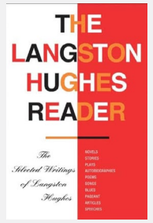
The stories that resonate with teams change like hemlines. Stories that were guaranteed to get people thinking and talking five years ago now seem to leave people cold. But stories we'd all but given up on breathe new life today. The narratives that resonate these days are simple, overwhelmingly human, easy to see ourselves in—even if we don't always like what we see. Here are three tried and true examples—stories that can get even the quietest person in the room to share their thoughts.



"The Possibility of Evil"

Shirley Jackson, 1965

From the queen of gothic horror, an elderly woman's neighbors receive mysterious letters criticizing their life choices. No one can figure out who is sending them, or why. This seemingly breezy story raises questions about community values, how we enforce them, and what we do about those who may not live up to our shared expectations. Reminiscent of the dark anonymity of social media, this story takes teams close to home, offering a powerful window into the meanness of human nature and the disastrous effects of polarization.



"Thank you, M'am"

Langston Hughes, 1958

A teenager attempts to rob a woman but she takes matters into her own hands, turning disaster into a remarkable moment of empathy and care. The story calls upon us to examine the nature of trust and forgiveness. It asks us to reflect on when we extend a helping hand and whether we give people the benefit of the doubt. For teams discussing this story, the woman's actions are a tonic for an isolated post-Covid society, inviting them to consider those whose actions gave them a head start in life, and how they might recognize moments to make life better for another.



"Poseidon"

Franz Kafka, 1920

"This story should be required reading for anyone who leads a team," exclaimed a partner in a private equity firm who marveled at Kafka's prescient story. Poseidon, the god of the sea, feels stuck in his role as a leader. "Drowning" in paperwork, he struggles to delegate, chafes in his role but can't imagine himself in any other job. A humorous examination of job satisfaction, leadership and managing expectations, Poseidon resonates with teams at all levels, igniting lively and sometimes vulnerable discussions about how leadership can be both a privilege and a prison.

These stories share common themes.

They are simple, direct, timeless and profoundly timely. In a moment where ambiguity feels like a bridge too far for many of us, these stories open the imagination without requiring participants to grapple with complex metaphors. But they also offer something we all need: they invite us to talk - to each other. This preference for more realistic stories is broad; many teams simply shut down with science fiction or fanciful tales. But there's a story for every era, and these classics do not fail to deliver the fodder for deep conversation and honest introspection.

FISCAL YEAR 2025

Financials

LESSONS LEARNED

No one reads the same story.

Stories are uncanny in their ability to home in on the thing you are already grappling with. As a result no two teams ever read and discuss the same story. This is the magic of story: it invites teams to explore their own issues in a new light. Whether strategic direction or talent management, characters and their foibles let team members try on new ideas in a low risk space.

Speed is not wisdom.

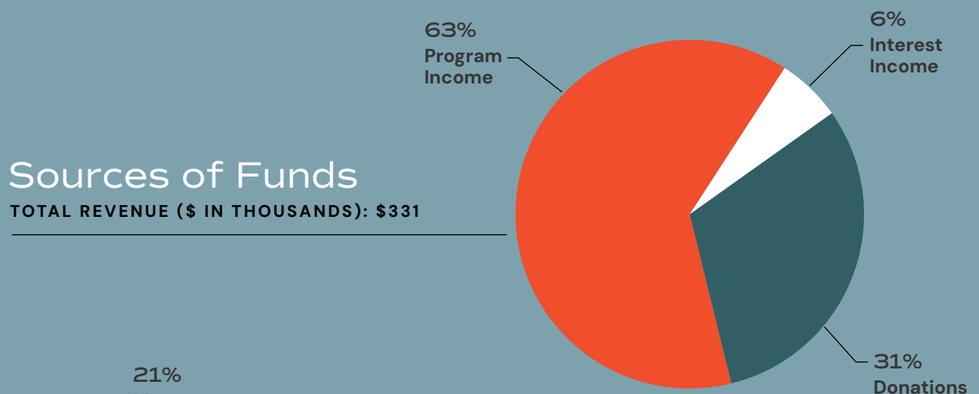
The faster we go, the more likely we are to lean on what we already know instead of taking the time to explore different approaches. We rush to action with little reflection. We ignore different voices in the zeal to reach an outcome. The skills of collective intelligence (listening with humility, asking good questions, challenging assumptions, disagreeing respectfully and widening our empathy) are not just good practice. They're the antidote to speed.

The pause matters.

Many are skeptical when asked to give up an hour to discuss a story with colleagues. But it doesn't take long before they've forgotten their concerns. The chance to pause, wonder and imagine with the people you work with is as rare as hen's teeth. And what's rare is also valuable. Time spent on building relationships pays back in collaboration and performance.

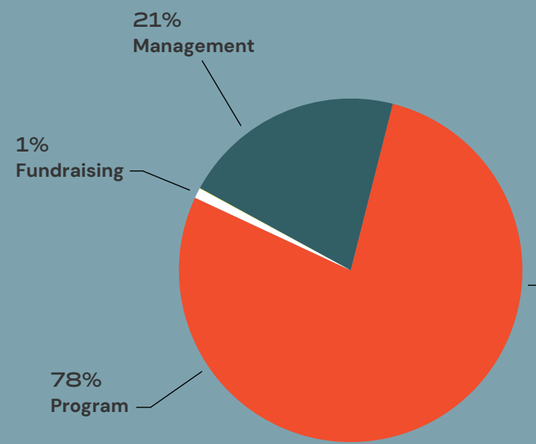
Sources of Funds

TOTAL REVENUE ($ IN THOUSANDS): $331



Uses of Funds

TOTAL EXPENSES ($ IN THOUSANDS): $298



By the Numbers

SINCE INCEPTION THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2026, WE HAVE SERVED:

21,569
Participants

144
Organizations

8
Languages

> **"It's the best opportunity that I know of to have meaningful discussions with colleagues on the human experience.**
>
> —REFLECTION POINT PARTICIPANT

Thank You.

You—our donors, partners, participants and facilitators—give life to Reflection Point. Your dedication to lifelong learning helps individuals, teams and communities. You are making learning inspiring and relevant. Together we are breaking down barriers and building collaborative and inclusive workplaces and communities.

“I love to hear other perspectives. It’s amazing how differently others will read a story and it gives it a whole new direction.”

—REFLECTION POINT PARTICIPANT

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Workplace Learning System

“A parachute once opened never closes... Once your mind opens and your boundaries expand to accept something new, you never shrink back into where you were before...”

—REFLECTION POINT PARTICIPANT

Reflection Point

We help you work better together.

That Can Be Me, Inc.
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