

NAA Research and Education Foundation

Celebrating

40

Years

The NAA's Research and Education Fund (the REF) Celebrates its 40th Anniversary in 2025 with a Goal of Raising \$100,000

It is beyond dispute that most of us would credit the National Academy of Arbitrators as being one of the most important sources of our professional success and of our personal and professional friendships. One of the many services provided by the NAA is the Research and Education Fund (the REF). The REF serves both NAA members and the broader public with valuable research and training in our field. All REF funded projects prominently "advertise" the role of the NAA and the REF.

The REF has a strong Board. Our newest members are Kevin Banks, Charles Kohler, Colin Johnston, Mary Theresa Metzler, and Harvey Shrage. We are grateful to the members whose terms expired in 2024: John Alfano, Keith Greenberg, and Andrew Strongin.

40th Anniversary of the REF in 2025:

The REF was established in 1985 to foster educational and training programs related to the resolution of workplace disputes. It is a non-profit organization legally separate from the NAA. In the first 35 years, the REF funded 45 grants. For the past five years, however, it has seen a significant growth in both the number of applications and in the size of requested grants. Indeed, since 2020, the Board has approved 30 grants, ranging from a mini grant of \$636 to a number of major grants of \$50,000.

Recent REF Grants:

An updated list of REF grants is posted under the "History of Grants" on the REF page of the NAA website. Some recent exciting projects funded by the REF are:

- A survey of NAA members about their awareness and use of Artificial Intelligence in arbitration and mediation so as to allow the NAA to get ahead of the rapid developments in this technology.
- A study comparing arbitration and litigation outcomes of employment claims by plaintiffs and describing the efforts to provide the results of this study to Congress as it considers legislation that could potentially restrict arbitration.
- A study of police discipline practices in the U.S. and U.K. in order to provide ideas for effective reform.
- Educational films such as the *Senator George Mitchell Interview*; *The Memphis Sanitation Strike: Its Place in Labor History*; *The Art and Science of Arbitration*; and a recently completed video on *The Boston Labor Guild*, the last worker school of the more than 100 that were formed during the Depression. The Boston Labor Guild's volunteer teachers (including many NAA members) educate workers on such skills as collective-bargaining, grievance and arbitration procedures, the conduct of union meetings based on *Robert's Rules of Order*, union fiduciary duties, and worker legal rights and obligations.
- The development of programs for local chapters and the NAA Annual Conference, such as the New England NAA Chapter's work on race and gender bias in labor arbitration, which was developed by the NE Chapter and was also presented at the NAA 2024 Annual Conference, at other NAA chapters around the country, and at several LERA regional programs.
- A program to train public school teachers, unions, and administrators in mediating labor disputes and developing training materials to enable other school systems to replicate this model.
- Programs for the International Day at the NAA Annual Conference.
- A survey of advocates who choose arbitrators from the FMCS labor panel and the bases for their selections.

History of REF Finances through Calendar Year 2023:

When the REF was founded in 1985, it was funded with a loan of \$5,000 from the NAA. By 2010, the REF assets had grown to \$250,000, which the REF used to open an investment account. In 2023, as a result of its investment strategy and member contributions, the assets had increased to \$439,000.

Between 2019 and 2023, because of the high quality and importance of the applications received, the REF was consistently able to award between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually. However, during the same time period, donations to the REF have averaged only \$23,000 – about a quarter of the grant expenditures. **This is a crucial point, because, annually, although the REF was excited about the caliber and growth in the number of grant requests it was receiving and able to fund, member donations have stagnated to the extent that the grants funded well exceeded donations by roughly four-fold.**

We know you are asking, “How is there any money left in the REF account with grants exceeding donations by 4 to 1 in the last five years?” Good question. The answer is NAA member George Fleischli, the REF’s longtime financial advisor. Over the years, George has maintained a very successful balance of investments in stocks and bonds. The record growth of the stock market in 2024 has substantially helped the fund, but, as brokers warn, “past performance does not guarantee future returns.”

REF’s Response to Need to Raise Donations to Meet Expenditures:

In 2024, the REF Board decided that increased donations were needed to match the REF’s level of grants. How has the REF responded to this critical need to increase donations?

There have been “challenges” totaling \$32,500 to the Board of Governors, the REF Board, and the general membership. These efforts have seen total “buy in” by REF and NAA leadership with **all members of the Board of Governors, the NAA officers, and the REF contributing.**

A major new initiative of the REF’s fundraising program has been to accept gifts of appreciated stock, contributions from mutual funds, or gifts from IRAs. Financial advisors can advise on how to give generously while receiving tax benefits.

As a result of the efforts to increase donations for calendar year 2024, the members responded with a record-breaking \$77,063 – more than double the prior record of \$34,210 in 2011.

THANK YOU TO ALL THE NAA MEMBERS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE REF’S RECORD-BREAKING SUCCESS IN 2024!

While the REF was fortunate in its fundraising for 2024, it was equally fortunate in the growth of the stock market for the year, which was about 20 percent. At the end of 2024, the REF’s assets stood at \$511,429 – a record high despite record expenditures to grant recipients of \$136,240. In sum, the REF’s donations, while a record high of \$77,063, were about half the REF’s distributions.

REF Goals for Calendar Year 2025:

Responding to the increase in vital grant requests, the Board has set a fundraising goal of \$100,000 for calendar year 2025.

The plan to achieve that goal includes:

- The REF webpages on the NAA website have been expanded to better inform grant applicants and NAA members about the REF’s history of grants.
- A matching challenge of \$50,000 has been set for the year.
- All REF Board members and NAA Officers are committed to contributing to the REF.
- The REF is encouraging an expansion of the highly successful practice of using gifts to the REF to honor members and memorialize members who have passed away to specifically honor “mentors.” This category could also include the rapidly expanding NAA salons.
- Encouragement to consider donating at the level of a “cancellation fee.”
- An expansion of giving circles to recognize donors for their annual giving in addition to the current lifetime giving circles.
- A request that NAA chapters with extra funds consider a gift to the REF for the overall benefit of the NAA and the practice of arbitration.

The REF looks forward to celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2025 with another record-breaking year!

Rosemary Pye, President, REF

Rafael Gely, Vice President, Outreach, REF

Betty Rankin Widgeon, Vice President, Donations, REF 



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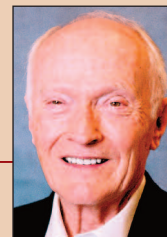
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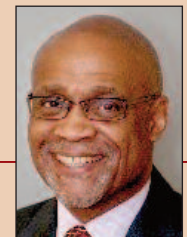
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