

Connect-Ed

Annual Report 2024

The year 2024 has been a true milestone in the growth of Connect-Ed. We not only continued our mission but also felt the organization's growing confidence in its expertise. This allowed us to enhance our work in multiple dimensions, strengthen partnerships, and expand opportunities for our community.

One of the year's proudest achievements was our progress in advancing digital literacy. Inspired by the international standards of ICILS and UNESCO, our team conducted an extensive study, the results of which became the foundation for updated courses. These courses will soon be available to all schools in Kazakhstan, thanks to our partnership with the Altynsarin National Academy of Education. We are confident this step will make a significant contribution to the development of education and digital literacy in the country. We deeply value the power of partnerships. Thanks to the support of our partners, we were able to implement projects that would have been impossible otherwise. Together, we are creating a world where everyone has access to quality education and digital tools.

Our team is the heart of Connect-Ed. These are people who share our mission and inspire us daily with their dedication, creativity, and willingness to find solutions even in the most challenging situations. We are also grateful to our community for its unwavering support. Your feedback, ideas, and engagement help us grow, move forward, and make our projects more meaningful and beneficial to everyone. Looking ahead, I am confident that together we can achieve even more. In April 2025, Connect-Ed will celebrate its 5th anniversary. These years have laid a strong foundation for the ambitious new goals we are setting for ourselves.

Thank you to each of you for contributing to this work. May 2025 bring us new opportunities, successes, and achievements!



Sincerely,
Gulnaz Kordanova
Founder, Connect-Ed Public
Foundation

4 Years of the Foundation's Work

Connect-Ed began as an idea that emerged four years ago. Since then, we have remained committed to striving for digital equality.

Thanks to you—our dear friends, partners, followers, and everyone who believes in our mission and vision—we have achieved significant results over these four years and continue to move forward.

Through our collective efforts and your support, we have provided equipment to more than 2,000 children, distributed devices from companies like Shell, Air Astana, Kaspi, Halyk Bank, EPAM, and Lenovo, and trained over 300 participants in digital literacy courses. Over 20 organizations and companies have supported us. The value of our contribution to digital inclusion in Kazakhstan has been recognized in the USAID 2024 report and the ICILS 2023 study.

Our efforts have been highlighted in the media, with coverage in outlets such as Informburo.kz, The Steppe, Manshuq, Peremena Media, Тіл кеспек жоқ, Forbes Kazakhstan, The Village Kazakhstan, and more. Thank you for choosing us.

Even greater opportunities to fulfill our mission lie ahead.

What 2024 Meant for Connect-Ed

The past year was a time of growth, ambitious initiatives, and strengthening ties with our community. Thanks to the combined efforts of our team, partners, and compassionate supporters, we achieved significant milestones that affirm the importance and impact of our work.

We secured grants, launched new courses, made new friends and partners, spoke at forums, and, most importantly, continued our core mission—reducing the number of children in need of technology.

Below, we delve into each of these achievements in more detail:

Connect-Ed in Competitions and Grants

“Birgemiz: Bilim”

Our organization participated in the “Birgemiz: Bilim” competition and won a grant to implement our digital literacy training program for retirees. As part of this initiative, we also produced a video showcasing participant feedback and program results.

The program engaged 25 wonderful individuals aged 62 to 78, all of whom successfully completed the training.



Grant from the U.S. Embassy

A significant milestone for us in 2024 was receiving a grant from the U.S. Embassy in October to support the implementation of our digital literacy initiative.

Over the course of six months, we will create a series of educational videos in Kazakh to help teenagers, young adults, and senior citizens acquire essential digital skills.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the U.S. Embassy for selecting us to receive support in implementing Connect-Ed's projects.

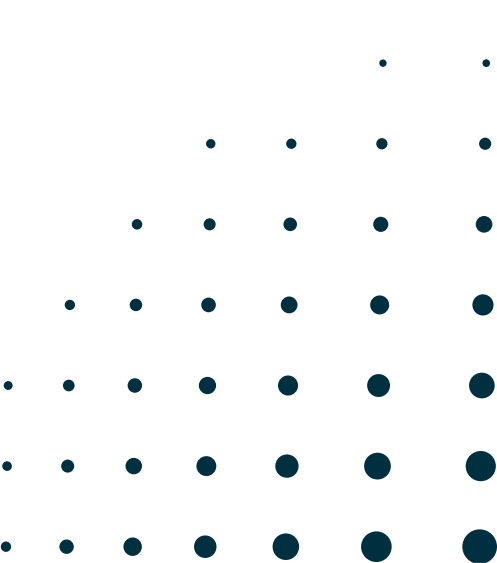




Victory in the NU Social Impact Competition

Thanks to the support of the Corporate Fund "Social Development Fund" (NU SDF) and the Yelim-ai Fund, we were able to update and enhance our digital literacy courses for schoolchildren.

A total of three course cohorts were conducted, during which students learned the basics of working with computers and the internet, how to use social media safely and effectively, how to protect their personal data online, and much more.





The course was very cool; I really liked it. I learned how to use Zoom, manage data with spreadsheets, and I especially enjoyed studying and practicing in PowerPoint. I didn't know much about Microsoft Excel, effective email usage, and data protection. I found the homework assignments in PowerPoint very interesting. However, I found the homework assignments in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets somewhat unclear

Ubaydullayev Karim



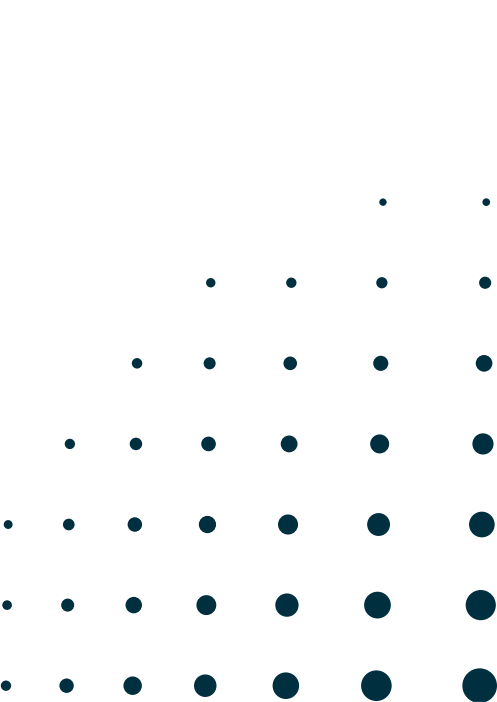
Our courses were highly praised by the expert and coordinator of the ICILS study in Kazakhstan, Munira Vasilova.



"The key feature of the courses is their alignment with international standards of computer and information literacy, particularly the analytical framework of the ICILS (International Computer and Information Literacy Study). The thematic scope and content of the lessons are carefully designed and aligned with ICILS areas such as basic computer use, information gathering, creating informational products, and digital communication. For example, the module on working with Microsoft PowerPoint corresponds to the third area of ICILS—'Creating an Informational Product.'

It is noteworthy that the courses go beyond the traditional ICILS model by offering participants the opportunity to learn modern digital tools and platforms, such as ChatGPT, Quizlet, Zoom, Google Meet, and Canva. A significant emphasis is placed on media literacy and safe behavior in the digital environment, including important topics such as cyberbullying. This makes the courses not only an educational but also a socially significant project that fosters responsible use of digital technologies.

The format of the material delivery also deserves high praise. The video lessons are produced at a high technical level, and the structure of the modules ensures accessibility and engagement, even for beginners. Complex topics are broken down into understandable segments, making it easier for learners to grasp the multifaceted aspects of digital literacy."



Grant FLEX

On November 19, the Connect-Ed team held a Digital Literacy Day in the city of Shakhtinsk, where 70 sixth-grade students, their parents, and teachers learned about digital security, digital footprints, online etiquette, academic integrity, and safe use of AI.

The event was organized with the support of a FLEX grant aimed at developing digital literacy and strengthening ties with the local community.

We sincerely thank the FLEX program for supporting our projects and initiatives!



Connect-Ed Partners

The successful implementation of our initiatives would not be possible without reliable partners who share our mission and values. Collaboration with organizations, businesses, and like-minded individuals has enabled us to scale our projects, enhance their effectiveness, and reach a larger number of beneficiaries. Through our joint efforts, we launched and successfully implemented a number of significant initiatives, each of which stands as an example of the power of collaboration and a shared goal. We sincerely thank all our partners for their contributions to these projects and are confident that even more inspiring achievements lie ahead.

Stories of joint initiatives between Connect-Ed and our partners in 2024:

A photograph showing a woman with curly red hair and glasses, wearing a green floral patterned shirt, looking down at a smartphone held in her hands. Another woman, wearing a green hijab and a green long-sleeved shirt, is leaning over her, pointing her right index finger at the screen of the phone. They are seated at a wooden table. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting like a library or classroom.

Digital Literacy Course for Retirees

Thanks to our partnership with the AlmaU Library, KIMEP University, and SDU University, we were able to conduct two offline digital literacy course sessions for retirees in April and August 2024. As a result of the course, our students gained a deeper understanding of the digital space, learned how to navigate it, and expanded their horizons through the opportunities provided by internet access. This course has already become our flagship initiative and is held annually, attracting more participants each year and receiving positive feedback.

Receiving Equipment from Partners



The year 2024 was rich in events, particularly with the generous donation of equipment from our partners:

- Air Astana provided 20 desktop computers, 20 monitors, and 30 headphones,
- Halyk Bank donated 25 units of equipment,
- EPAM contributed 15 units of equipment,
- Kaspi supplied 10 all-in-one computers with accessories.

These donations have played a crucial role in enhancing our efforts to bridge the digital divide and support digital literacy programs for children and communities in need. We are immensely grateful to these organizations for their support and contribution to our mission.



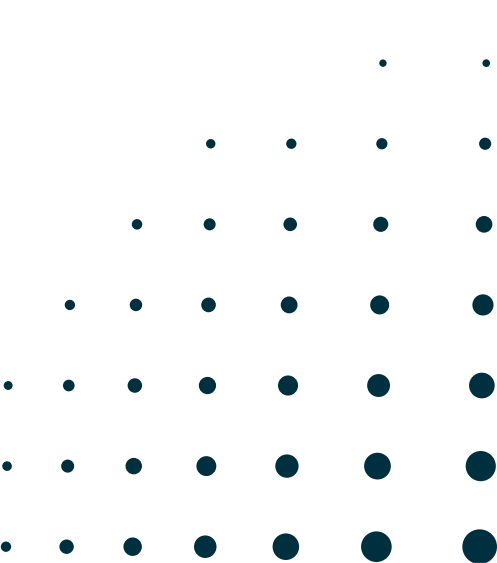
"Generous November" in Collaboration with Yandex

One of the highlights for us was participating in the "Generous November" campaign by Yandex. By ordering services through Yandex Go and Yandex.Eda every Friday in November, people were able to support our project as well as other charitable foundations.

This initiative allowed us to raise awareness and receive valuable support from the community, and we are deeply grateful to Yandex for organizing this opportunity to contribute to meaningful causes.

The results of the initiative were published on the Blue Screen news portal, and as a result of the campaign, our foundation received a donation of 2,300,000 tenge. This was a significant achievement for us in our new partnership with Yandex.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to Yandex for supporting us and our initiatives. This contribution will help us continue our work and make a positive impact on the community.





Timofeeva Maria, Head of Social Projects at Yandex Kazakhstan

1. Tell us about your field of activity. How long have you been with the company?

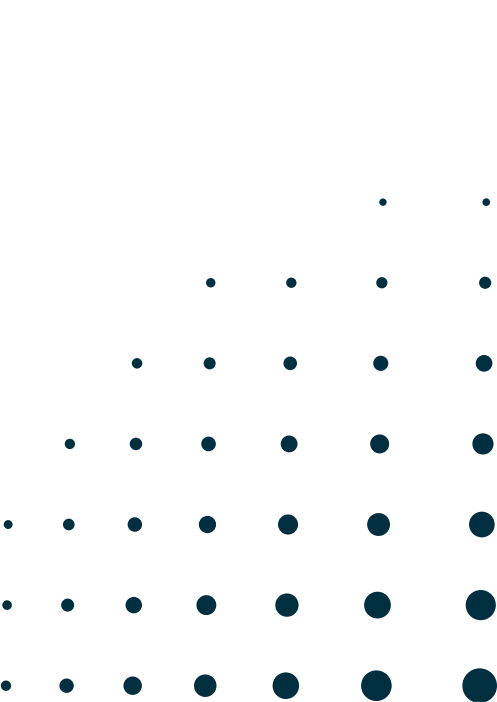
At Yandex, I am responsible for social projects in the areas of charity, inclusion, and ecology, which we implement across Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and Eastern Europe. I have been with Yandex for 4 years and have been working in social projects for more than 15 years.

2. How did you learn about our foundation?

Experts told me about your foundation.

3. Why did you decide to support us, and how does it align with your mission?

For our projects in Kazakhstan, we focus on three key areas: Education, Inclusion, and Charity. We saw that our values and goals align with the work Connect-Ed is doing.



4. What criteria are used to select projects for participation in Yandex initiatives, such as the "Generous November" campaign?

"Generous November" has been held in Kazakhstan for the third year, and each time we try to support new NGOs that have been vetted and align with our key strategic areas.

"Generous November" allows users of Yandex services to easily participate in a good initiative. Each order on Yandex Eda or 10 km in Delivery and Taxi turns into a donation. The funds raised can be used by charitable organizations for what is most pressing in their work, including staff salaries and administrative costs.

5. What would you recommend to our foundation?

I believe every foundation should have a big dream. So, I wish you never stop dreaming big and inspiring us, the philanthropists, with your ambitions.

6. What was your 2024 like? What were the most memorable events of the year?

This year, we released the first ESG report for Yandex Kazakhstan, which a large team worked on for several months. I am very proud of the result and all the projects we shared. You can read the report here:

<https://sustainability.yandex.com/yandexqazaqstan/ru>.

7. What are your plans for the upcoming year?

The plan is simple—don't stop and continue creating projects that combine technology and charity.

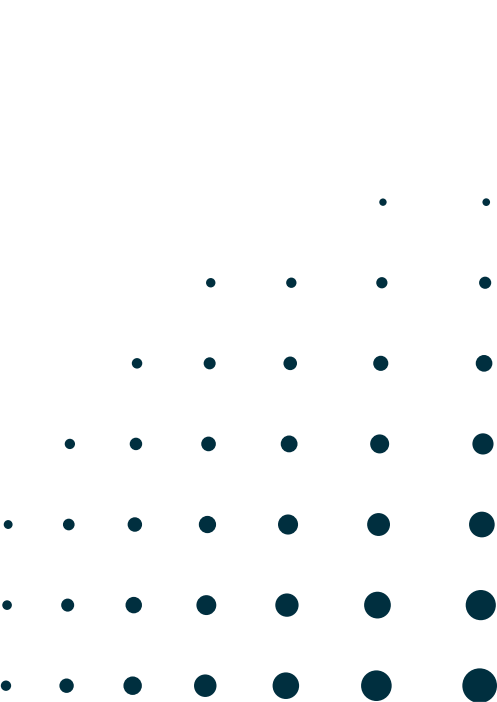
More about Connect-Ed



Connect-Ed Included in the USAID Report

This year, we are especially proud that the Connect-Ed Foundation was included in the USAID report on achievements in digital inclusion in Kazakhstan. This is a tremendous recognition of our efforts in the fight for digital equality and educational accessibility.

We thank USAID for the recognition and support, and express our gratitude to all our partners and supporters for believing in our mission!



Connect-Ed Featured in “Trailblazers of the Steppe: Inspiring Narratives of Women Entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan”

We are deeply honored that the story of Connect-Ed’s founder, Gulnaz Kordanova, has been included in the book “Trailblazers of the Steppe: Inspiring Narratives of Women Entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan” (“Новаторы степных просторов: вдохновляющие истории казахстанских женщин-предпринимательниц”).

The book was published by the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Business (NU GSB) and the Nazarbayev University Research Centre for Entrepreneurship (NURCE). It features 50 stories of Kazakhstani women entrepreneurs who have challenged stereotypes and achieved success in various fields. The book presents these stories as a source of inspiration for other women, showcasing how they have overcome obstacles and made a significant impact in their industries.

We are honored that Gulnaz Kordanova’s story is part of this important collection, highlighting the inspiring journeys of women who are shaping the future of entrepreneurship in Kazakhstan.



Section 8

GULNAZ KORDANOVA AND INCLUSIVITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE Author: Zhansaule Kimel Photographer: Lendell Marshall

Gulnaz Kordanova, a native of the city of Shymkent, is a passionate advocate for equal access to quality education in the digital age. After completing her early education, Gulnaz’s thirst for knowledge led her to pursue higher studies in Almaty at Abay pedagogical University. It was during her time at the university that she became acutely aware of the disparities in educational resources and opportunities between students from major cities and those from smaller towns and villages. This realization sparked a passion within her to address this inequality and provide every child with access to a high-quality education.

Gulnaz Kordanova’s journey towards transforming education in Kazakhstan is grounded in her strong educational background. She continued her academic path at Nazarbayev University, a prestigious institution known for its focus on innovation and global standards of education. Further, with a strong desire to learn from the best, she pursued her graduate studies at Harvard University, renowned worldwide for its

Connect-Ed's Participation in Forums

EdHeroes

EdHeroes is a global forum that brings together communities and organizations from around the world to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #4 – quality education. EdHeroes helps foster connections, improve communication, and accelerate educational processes and projects. On July 11, Connect-Ed was represented at the forum by our Operations Manager, Madina Nurzhanova. Madina served as the moderator of the discussion [*“The Role of Languages and Culture in Achieving Digital Literacy.”*](#) This participation allowed Connect-Ed to contribute to important conversations around digital literacy and the cultural aspects that play a crucial role in its development and accessibility.





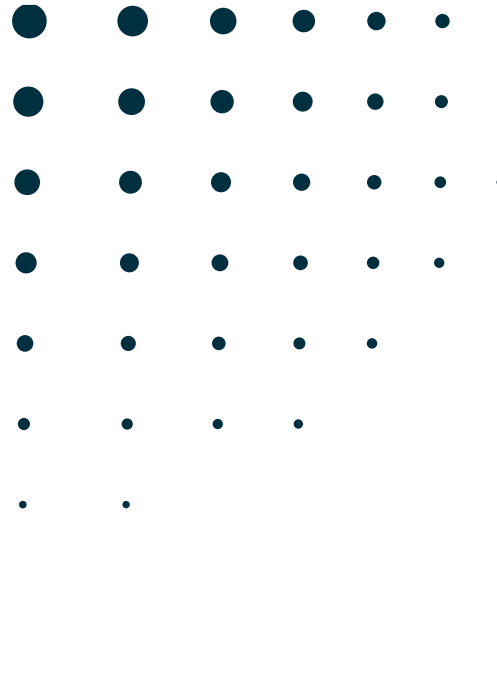
**Go Viral Festival Central Asia, Bla Bla fest,
TEDxArgynbekov Street, Digital Inclusion Week
2024**

The Connect-Ed team also participated in several key forums such as the Go Viral Festival Central Asia, Bla Bla Fest, TEDxArgynbekov Street, and Digital Inclusion Week 2024. These events provided an excellent opportunity to discuss pressing issues like digital inequality, the importance of partnerships, and to exchange valuable insights and experiences with other organizations and experts in the field.

By engaging in these forums, Connect-Ed was able to broaden its impact, contribute to important discussions, and further strengthen its mission to foster digital inclusion and literacy in Kazakhstan and beyond. These platforms allow us to stay at the forefront of global efforts to bridge the digital divide and continue making strides in achieving our goals.



Results of Our First Crowdfunding Campaign

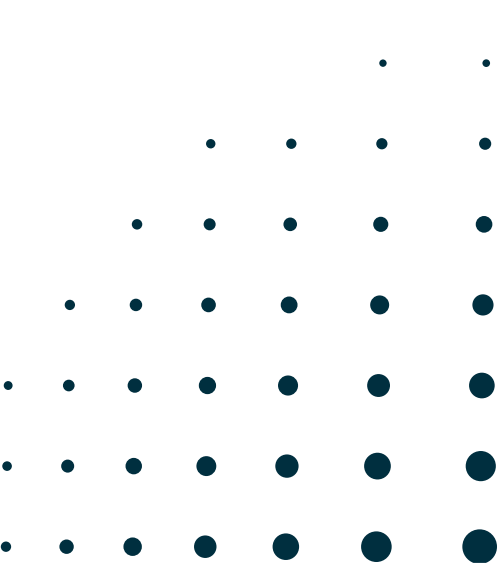


On March 15, 2024, we launched our crowdfunding campaign with the goal of raising 5 million tenge to provide essential resources and training to children from low-income families, children with special educational needs, and those from rural areas. Our goal is not only to raise funds but to create a sustainable support system, which includes the collection and distribution of equipment as well as conducting digital literacy courses. As of now, we have raised **940,010 tenge**, which has been allocated to the following initiatives:

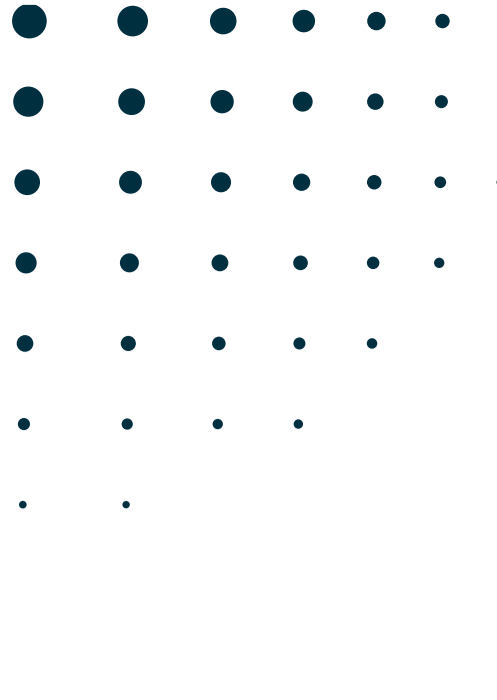
- Creation of animated videos on digital literacy (funded through NU SDF with a contribution of 2 million tenge and additional donations of **330,000 tenge**)
- Launch of an online course for schoolchildren (**230,000 tenge**)
- Distribution of laptops and computers to families in Taldykorgan and Almaty (**130,000 tenge**)
- Conducting offline courses for pensioners (**250,000 tenge**)

We are still accepting donations, and you can support us by sending contributions through the Kaspi or Halyk apps.

Your continued support is vital to helping us reach more people and provide valuable digital tools and knowledge to those who need them most. Thank you for being a part of our mission!

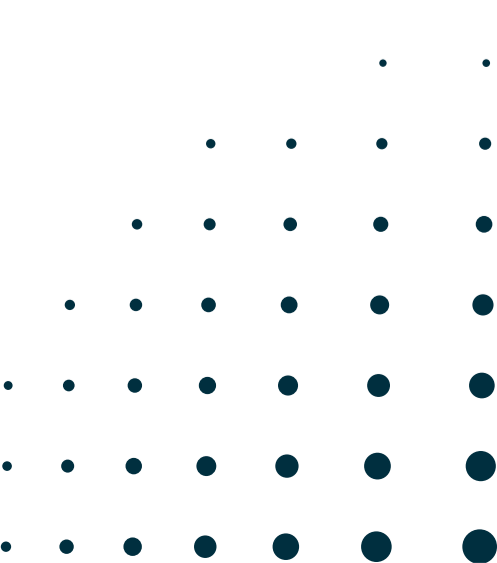


Connect-Ed Team is Growing



We are thrilled to share that Connect-Ed was selected to participate in the ACCELERATE program, organized by [Girlspower Fund](#). Over the course of a month, we had the opportunity to learn alongside women entrepreneurs from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The program focused on developing key skills in business scaling, marketing, financial management, and leadership.

This valuable experience will help us strengthen our mission, refine our strategies, and take Connect-Ed to the next level. We are deeply grateful to Girlspower Fund and USAID for their support in providing this incredible opportunity. We are excited to apply the knowledge gained and continue to grow as an organization, making a lasting impact on digital inclusion and literacy in the region.



What Our Friends Say About Us



Our collaboration with DOS Community has become one of the most inspiring and valuable aspects of our work. Over the years of working together, we have not only joined forces to implement social initiatives but have also become true friends, united by shared values and aspirations.

We are deeply grateful to DOS Community for the partnership and friendship built on mutual goals and a shared vision. Together, we continue to make meaningful strides toward creating positive social impact and fostering inclusivity. Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to our common cause!



Our collaboration with Connect-Ed began in 2023, and during this time, we successfully conducted a fundraising campaign in support of the foundation, which became an example of effective partnership. The Connect-Ed team demonstrated high professionalism, organization, and sincere involvement, ensuring the achievement of significant goals. We are happy to recommend Connect-Ed as a reliable partner for organizations that share their mission. We especially value their efforts in reducing digital inequality and expanding access to technology for those in need. We look forward to future joint projects!

**Sincerely,
The DOS Community Team**

Statistics for the Year and the First Four Years of the Organization's Activity

Data for 2024

212

Number
of donated
devices

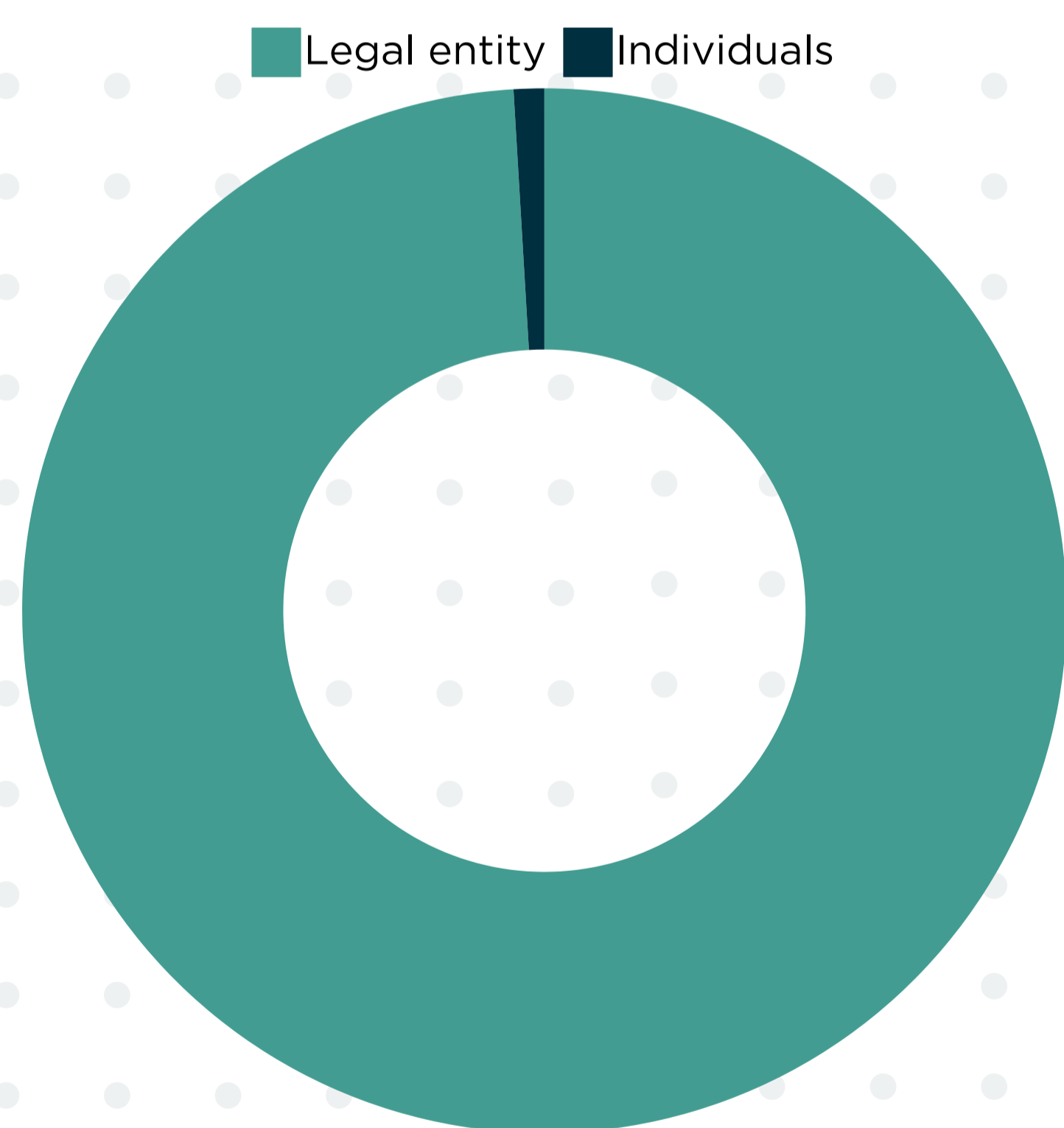
741

Number of
children helped
with devices

10

Average age
of children

Technology Breakdown by Donors:



Legal entities
210

Individuals
2

224 participants in Digital Literacy Courses
in 2024

Data for the entire duration of the organization's activity.

585

Number
of donated
devices

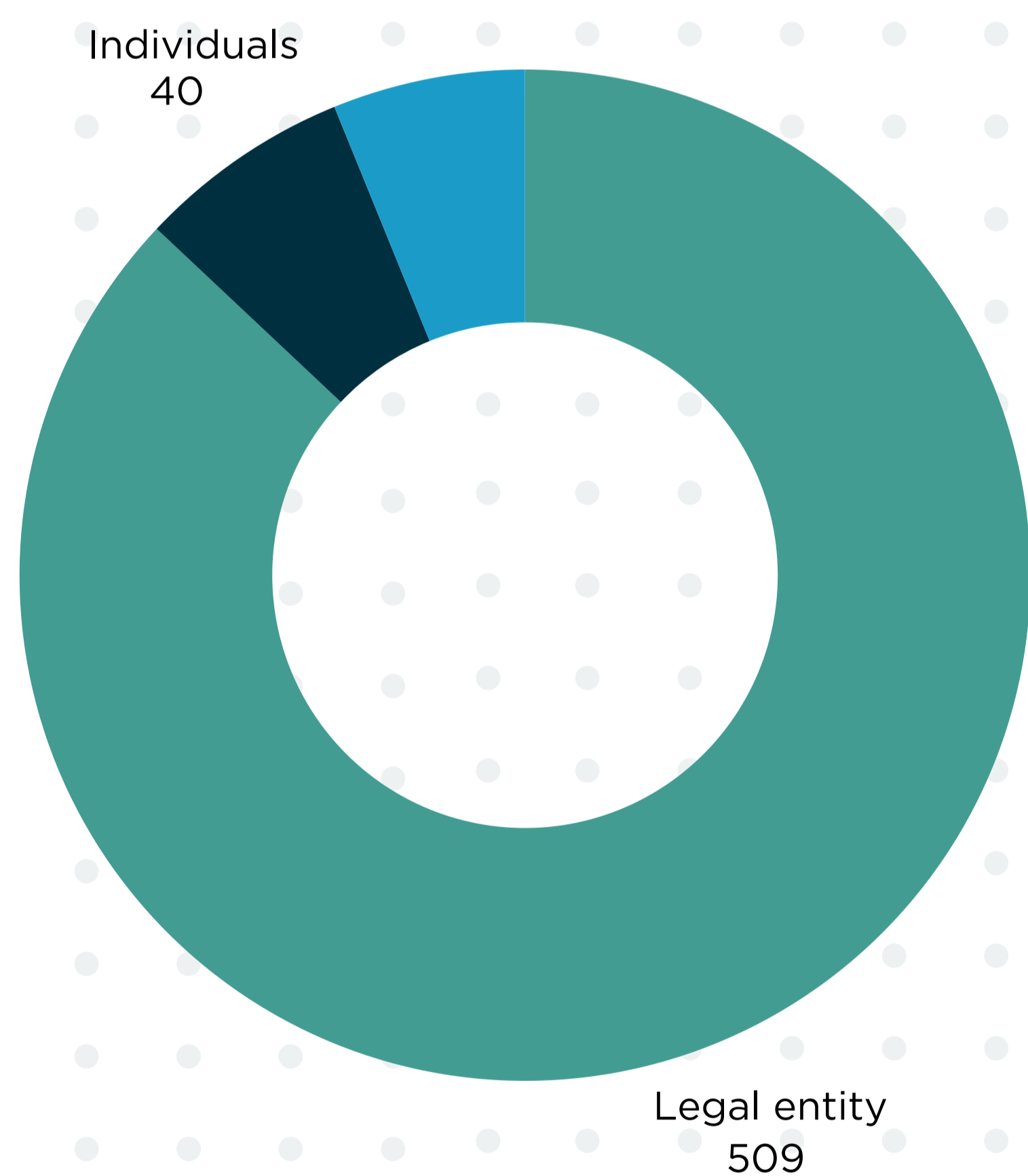
2180

Number of
children helped
with devices

11

Average age
of children

Technology Breakdown by Donors:



Legal entities
509

Individuals
40

Crowdfunding
36

320

participants in Digital Literacy
Courses since May 2020

New Team Members

Our team has grown with the addition of new passionate and dedicated individuals who are helping us further our mission. Their expertise and energy are strengthening our efforts to reduce digital inequality and expand access to technology and digital literacy. More details about the new team members can be shared here.



The digital literacy team has expanded with the arrival of Aida Abdibay and Zhuldiz Salamatova.

Aida is a 4th-year student majoring in "Chemistry-Biology" at SDU University. Her daily motivation comes from the quote: "Stay hungry, stay foolish."



Zhuldiz holds a Master's degree in Multilingual Education (MA in Multilingual Education) from Nazarbayev University.

She has over eight years of experience in teaching, implementing social projects, and creating courses for teachers. Zhuldiz has also conducted research at the National Volunteer Network and Nazarbayev University as a Research Assistant. She currently works as the Research and Development Coordinator at Quantum TECH School.



Amir Muryzakarimov has joined our team as the Corporate Relations Manager. He is a third-year student in Business Administration with a focus on entrepreneurship at KAZGUU M.S. Narikbayeva (BBA). Amir has experience in managing and developing startup products, sales, management, and working in the nonprofit sector, building communications.

His personal motto is: **"Creating something no one else can. Being brave enough to dream big. Take action to achieve it, seeing a dream as a target line, savor the process of achieving them."**

We were supported by



Connect-Ed team

Gulnaz Kordanova

Founder and Director

Aigerim Pazyzbekova

Team Lead for Digital Literacy, Online Learning Designer, and Digital Literacy Course Methodology Designer

Alexandra Krashnina

SMM Manager

Zayida Nasyr

Accountant

Nurtas Tasin

Coordinator for Receiving and Transferring Equipment

Thomas Akynov

IT Specialist

Amir Muryzakarimov

Partnerships and Donor Relations Manager

Aida Abdibay

Digital Literacy team

Madina Nurjanova

Operations Manager

Kuralai Zharqymbaeva

Fundraising Coordinator

Ainur Khaliolla

Graphic Designer and Digital Literacy Course Methodology Designer

Oksana Sakagami

Marketing Coordinator

Madina Makulbekova

Corporate Partnerships and Donor Relations Specialist

Aliya Yerbatyrova

Fundraising Coordinator

Amina Zhemenev

Digital Literacy Course Methodology Designer

Zhuldiz Salamatova

Digital Literacy team

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