



RESOLUTION SYSTEMS INSTITUTE



2025 Annual Report

Three Decades
of Strengthening
Access to Justice

A few words from

RSI Leadership



Dear Friends of RSI,

Thirty years ago, Resolution Systems Institute was founded on a powerful idea: We could create a reliable resource whose research and expertise would lead to more dispute resolution systems that are fair, accessible and effective.

The celebration of RSI's 30th anniversary leads us to reflect not only on how the field of alternative dispute resolution has grown in those years, but also on the remarkable consistency of our mission. As technology, court processes and public expectations have changed dramatically over the past three decades, the fundamental challenge remains the same: ensuring that people facing conflict can access processes that help them resolve disputes with dignity, understanding and confidence.

Throughout 2025, RSI explored a question at the heart of our work:

How do we ensure dispute resolution systems fully serve the people who rely on them?

The answer requires us to look beyond efficiency alone. Effective systems must be designed around real users. They must be informed by data and evaluation. And they must adapt thoughtfully to changing circumstances, emerging technologies and evolving community needs. These themes guided our research, our writing and our direct work with courts this year.

In 2025, RSI continued to support courts and ADR programs across the country; shared practical resources to improve public engagement with dispute resolution processes; enhanced mediation services for vulnerable populations; and contributed to important conversations about technology, online dispute resolution and artificial intelligence. We were also deeply honored to receive the American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Section's 2025 Lawyer as Problem Solver Award, recognition that reflects the dedication of our staff, board members, partners and supporters.

It has become increasingly clear over our 30-year journey that access to justice requires intentional design, ongoing evaluation, and a commitment to understanding the experiences of the people these systems are meant to serve. The work is complex, and it is essential.

Today, RSI stands at an exciting moment. Courts are embracing new tools and new approaches. Researchers are uncovering important insights about what parties need. At the same time, significant challenges remain. Questions about accessibility, trust and well-informed participation continue to demand thoughtful answers. RSI is uniquely positioned to help provide those answers because our work sits at the intersection of research, practice and system design.

As we celebrate this milestone year, we invite you to invest in RSI's bright future.

Much of our most impactful work — developing practical resources for courts, conducting independent research, sharing knowledge with the field and improving access to justice for people who might otherwise struggle to navigate the legal system — is made possible through the generosity of donors who believe in our mission.

Your support allows RSI to remain an independent, trusted resource for courts and communities seeking improved ways to resolve conflict. A gift today helps us continue developing evidence-based solutions, expanding access to dispute resolution, and ensuring that our systems work better for everyone. Please give now at aboutRSI.org/donate.

As we look toward the next 30 years, we are committed to building on what we have learned while continuing to ask hard questions, test new ideas and share what works. With your partnership, we can help create dispute resolution systems that are not only available, but fully accessible, effective and fair.

Thank you for your support, your confidence and your commitment to strengthening access to justice.

With gratitude,

Heather V. Fogg, Chief Executive Officer
Brian Roche, President, Board of Directors





A Milestone and a Moment

In 2025, Resolution Systems Institute marked 30 years of work focused on a single goal: improving how courts help people resolve conflict.

This milestone comes at a time when courts and communities are continuing to adapt — to changing needs, new technologies and persistent gaps in access to justice.

Throughout the year, our work — and our writing — reflected a central concern:

How do we ensure dispute resolution systems truly serve the people who rely on them?

30 Years in Context: From Foundation to Forefront

Many of the questions RSI is asking today are rooted in lessons learned over three decades of working with courts, researchers and practitioners.

The Field in Motion

Over the past 30 years, alternative dispute resolution has moved from the margins of the legal system to a central role in how disputes are resolved. ADR is now widely seen as a core component of effective dispute resolution, and a routine part of legal practice — not simply an “alternative.”

- ✓ Courts increasingly integrate ADR into case processing
- ✓ Attorneys rely on mediation and other processes as standard tools
- ✓ Many disputes are resolved without reaching trial



The evolution of the field reflects broader changes in courts, technology and society — and has shaped, and been shaped by, RSI’s work.

RSI’s Role

From its founding, RSI has worked to help courts move beyond experimentation — supporting the design, evaluation and improvement of programs that are now embedded in court systems nationwide.

30 Years in Context

2025 Themes

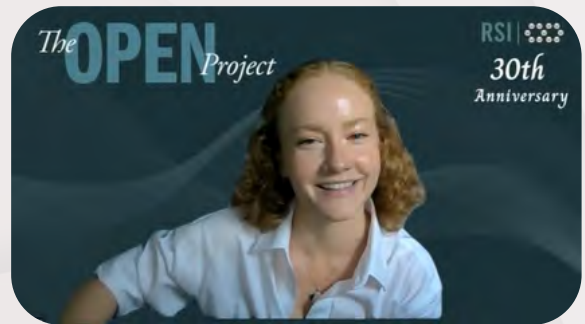
Theme 1: Designing for Real Users

A consistent thread throughout RSI's work is the need to design systems that reflect the realities of the people who use them.

In 2025, we highlighted:

- ✓ The importance of making mediation accessible for all who use it
- ✓ How low literacy and lack of trust can prevent potential users from understanding ADR and ODR communications
- ✓ That good design can turn skeptics of ODR into enthusiastic supporters

BIG PICTURE: Effective systems are not just efficient — they are understandable, fair and responsive.



The Field in Motion

A Shift Toward User-Centered Justice

As ADR expanded, attention turned to who these systems serve — and how well they work for users.

- ✓ Increased focus on self-represented litigants
- ✓ Recognition of barriers to participation
- ✓ Growing emphasis on fairness, accessibility and user experience

This reflects a broader understanding that access to justice depends not just on availability, but on usability.

RSI's Role

RSI has been a leader in examining how ADR programs function in practice — particularly for people without lawyers — and in helping courts design more accessible processes.

30 Years in Context

2025 Themes

Theme 2: The Role of Data and Evaluation

Throughout our history, RSI has consistently emphasized the importance of reliable information. In 2025, that focus remained central.

We explored:

- ✓ The importance of ongoing evaluation to assess program success across a variety of real-world scenarios
- ✓ Gaps in our knowledge about what creates trust in a mediation space
- ✓ How courts can use data to improve access to justice

BIG PICTURE: Programs that are not intentionally reviewed cannot be meaningfully improved.



The Field in Motion

The Rise of Data, Evaluation and Evidence-Based Practice

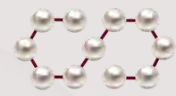
Early ADR programs often operated with limited data. Over time, the field has moved toward greater emphasis on measurement and evaluation.

- ✓ Demand for program evaluation and outcome data
- ✓ Use of research to guide policy and program design
- ✓ Increased accountability for program effectiveness

This shift reflects a growing consensus that ADR programs must be continuously assessed and improved.

RSI's Role

Evaluation has been central to RSI's work for 30 years — providing courts with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions and strengthen program quality.



2025 Themes

Theme 3: Adapting to a Changing Environment

Courts and ADR programs continue to navigate evolving expectations and constraints. In 2025, we examined:

- ✓ Ways to improve the safety of mediation for people with a history of domestic violence and people in crisis
- ✓ How to reduce barriers to would-be volunteer community mediators without reducing program rigor
- ✓ Reporting on the ability of large language models to accurately identify human emotions and change the trajectory of a dispute in text-based dispute resolution

BIG PICTURE: Flexibility must be paired with intentional design.

The Field in Motion

Tech and the Transformation of Process

Technology has reshaped how dispute resolution is delivered.

- ✓ Expansion of online dispute resolution
- ✓ Widespread adoption of remote and hybrid mediation
- ✓ Emerging use of AI and digital tools

Technology has increased efficiency and access, while raising important questions about quality, equity and the role of human judgment.

RSI's Role

RSI has engaged with these changes through research, program design and thought leadership — examining how technology can expand access while maintaining fairness and effectiveness.



A Shared Journey

RSI's work is not disconnected from the ADR field's broader trends; in fact, these things are deeply interconnected.

For 30 years, RSI has not only responded to changes in the



field, but helped to shape them, ensuring that as ADR



evolves, it continues to improve access to justice.



2025 in Action: From Insight to Practice



The American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Section presented RSI its 2025 Lawyer as Problem Solver Award.

The ideas explored in our writing are directly connected to our work with courts and partners. In 2025, RSI:

- ✓ **Supported ADR programs**

We released free, adaptable model materials from our ODR Party Engagement (OPEN) Project, including prototypes of a webpage, a notice document and an informational video, as well as a toolkit for using the models. We also held two free webinars that provided specific advice on making court materials more user-friendly.



- ✓ **Tested new approaches**

Our Kane County Eviction Mediation Program implemented new screening for domestic violence, then revised the process based on our experience of what was most helpful to parties.

- ✓ **Shared knowledge with the field**

We discussed our research and talked about ADR at virtual and in-person conferences, and before organizations for ADR professionals and college classes.

This integration of **research, practice and reflection** is central to RSI's approach.

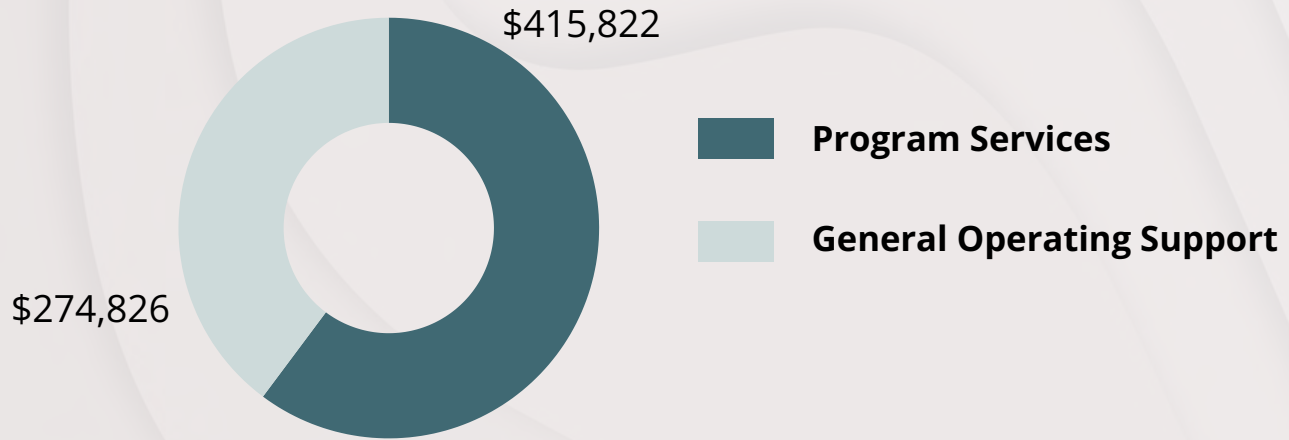


What 30 Years Have Taught Us

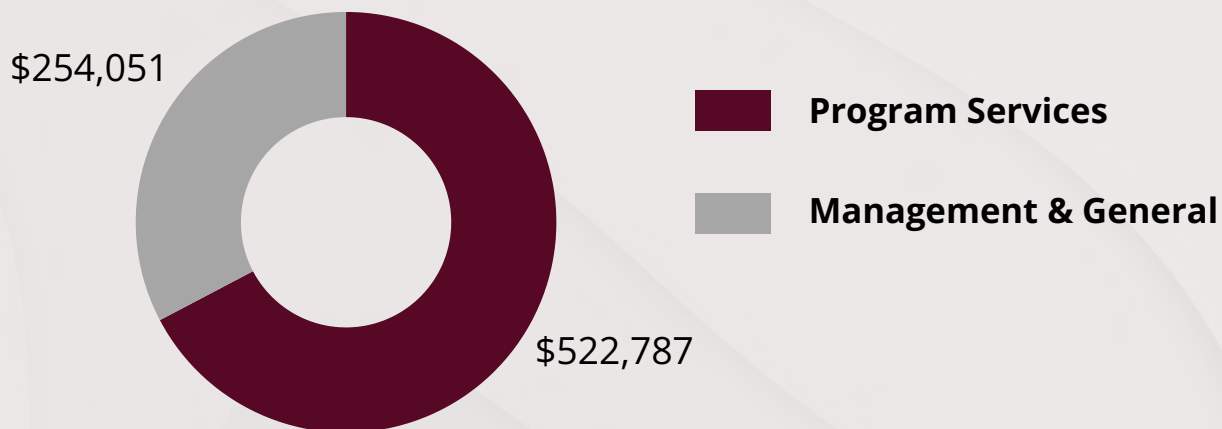
- ✓ Practices once perceived as “alternatives” to the norm, when done well, can eventually become mainstream.
- ✓ Conflict resolution methods and tools will continue to evolve.
- ✓ Regardless of how we use technology to achieve our aims, human relationships and people’s direct experience must remain centered in this work.
- ✓ Evaluation is key to understanding the effects of ADR and to implementing practices that best serve all parties.

2025 Financial Info

Revenue



Expenses



Your Generosity Helped Us Celebrate

RSI's 30th anniversary was a major milestone, and we were fortunate to have generous support that allowed us to celebrate it and connect with colleagues and friends at a special gathering in April. We are extremely grateful for in-kind support from JAMS, as well as continuing assistance from the M.R. Bauer Foundation and our faithful donors. RSI is also grateful for moral support from the American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution, which generously and without hesitation agreed to share its Spring Conference weekend with us.

Building on our Learning

The questions explored in 2025
will continue to shape our work.

In the coming years, RSI will
continue to work at the
intersection of practice,
research and system design to
help answer questions like
these.

How can
courts
intervene
earlier in
disputes?

How can
systems
be designed
around users'
needs?

How can
data be
better used
to guide
decisions?

Looking Ahead

Continuity & Commitment

For 30 years, RSI has worked to
ensure that dispute resolution
systems are not only available —
but effective, fair and grounded in
evidence.

That work continues.



RESOLUTION SYSTEMS INSTITUTE



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to serve courts,
ADR programs and
self-represented litigants.



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