Understanding the AOPA Foundation 2025 Form 990 Filing

Questions? Please email 990@aopa.org

The AOPA Foundation is structured differently than AOPA and must meet different IRS requirements. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity, which means donations are generally tax deductible.

While AOPA's main source of revenue is member dues, much of the Foundation's revenue comes from generous donors who contributed $11.5 million in 2025 to support the AOPA Foundation's work.

		Prior Year	Current Year
8	Contributions and grants (Part VIII, line 1h)	12,871,038.	11,512,895.
9	Program service revenue (Part VIII, line 2g)	885,044.	536,408.
10	Investment income (Part VIII, column (A), lines 3, 4, and 7d)	3,764,082.	4,671,027.
11	Other revenue (Part VIII, column (A), lines 5, 6d, 8c, 9c, 10c, and 11e)	0.	0.
12	Total revenue - add lines 8 through 11 (must equal Part VIII, column (A), line 12)	17,520,164.	16,720,330.

The Foundation also earned a little more than $500,000 from sponsorships and registration fees, and $4.7 million in investment income. Much of the sponsorship and registration revenue came from events like teacher professional development workshops and the High School Aviation Education Symposium, a three-day gathering that brings together hundreds of teachers and aviation experts from across the country.

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In 2025, the AOPA Foundation spent a total of $11.9 million to operate programs and support mission-aligned work carried out by AOPA and the AOPA Air Safety Institute.

			Prior Year	Current Year
13	Grants and similar amounts paid (Part IX, column (A), lines 1-3)		2,817,974.	3,243,838.
14	Benefits paid to or for members (Part IX, column (A), line 4)		0.	0.
15	Salaries, other compensation, employee benefits (Part IX, column (A), lines 5-10)		3,341,797.	3,754,007.
16a	Professional fundraising fees (Part IX, column (A), line 11e)		0.	0.
b	Total fundraising expenses (Part IX, column (D), line 25)	430,942.		
17	Other expenses (Part IX, column (A), lines 11a-11d, 11f-24e)		5,118,877.	4,897,531.
18	Total expenses. Add lines 13-17 (must equal Part IX, column (A), line 25)		11,278,648.	11,895,376.
19	Revenue less expenses. Subtract line 18 from line 12		6,241,516.	4,824,954.

The Foundation also provided $3.2 million in grants. That number included $1.7 million in scholarships to help individuals pursue flight training, maintenance training, and other aviation education, and $1.5 million to AOPA to help the AOPA Air Safety Institute develop

and deliver safety content, support the work of 2,300 AOPA Airport Support Network volunteers, and conduct outreach aimed at growing the pilot population.

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The AOPA Foundation shares certain services with AOPA to reduce duplication and control costs. Legal, marketing, accounting, and design services, for example, are housed within AOPA, and the Foundation reimburses AOPA for the services it uses. The Foundation also occupies office space provided by AOPA. The cost of shared services, $2.6 million in 2025, is calculated using a consistent formula that considers factors such as the number of employees and the level of service provided.

Although the AOPA Foundation is a separate organization, it is affiliated with AOPA. For that reason, Schedule J of the Foundation's Form 990 includes AOPA's officers, directors, trustees, and highest-compensated employees, including retired AOPA President and CEO Mark Baker. The AOPA Foundation does not pay this compensation.

Nevertheless, salaries and benefits for the Foundation's 34 employees were a significant part of expenses in 2025. Team members included flight instructors, high school teachers, curriculum developers, fundraisers, researchers, and other specialists. Together, the programs they served reached tens of thousands of current and future aviators in 2025.

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For the 2025-2026 school year, more than 32,000 students in all 50 states used the AOPA Foundation's high school aviation curriculum. By the close of 2025, the Rusty Pilots program had helped more than 14,000 lapsed pilots complete a flight review and get back to active flying status, the Flying Clubs program had helped form more than 275 flying clubs, and the Flight Training program evaluated thousands of entries in its Flight Training Experience Awards, recognizing dozens of flight schools and CFIs that delivered excellent training experiences.

It’s important for the Foundation to have a safety net to make sure programs aren’t disrupted, even when the unexpected happens. That’s where reserves come into play.

At the end of 2025, the AOPA Foundation reported $70 million in net assets. Of that money, nearly $44.5 million came with restrictions imposed by the donors that limit how it can be used and how much can be spent in any given year.

Net Assets or Fund Balances						
		Organizations that follow FASB ASC 958, check here [X] **and complete lines 27, 28, 32, and 33.**				
	27	Net assets without donor restrictions	21,196,362.	27	25,590,395.	
	28	Net assets with donor restrictions	39,329,619.	28	44,454,112.	
		Organizations that do not follow FASB ASC 958, check here [ ] **and complete lines 29 through 33.**				
	29	Capital stock or trust principal, or current funds		29		
	30	Paid-in or capital surplus, or land, building, or equipment fund		30		
	31	Retained earnings, endowment, accumulated income, or other funds		31		
	32	Total net assets or fund balances	60,525,981.	32	70,044,507.	
	33	Total liabilities and net assets/fund balances	61,600,705.	33	71,333,328.	

Approximately $30 million of the Foundation’s net assets are endowed. An endowment is designed to support a program or mission for the long term. The original gift is invested, and the earnings may be used only for the purpose the donor specified. This is often referred to as permanently restricted funding. To protect these funds over time, organizations establish spending policies as part of their agreements with donors. The AOPA Foundation’s endowment spending rate is determined using a three-year trailing average of endowment fair values, subject to the 2% minimum and 4% maximum. Strong investment performance in recent years has increased the value of these endowments and strengthened support for the mission over the long term.

In addition to endowments, the AOPA Foundation held $14.5 million in temporarily restricted funds in 2025. Donors gave this money for specific purposes, so it can be spent only when the conditions the donors established are met. Although a large donation might be made in a single year, it may take multiple years to complete the work the donation was intended to fund. As a result, only some of the money will be spent in the first year and the rest will be invested until it is needed for the next phase of the work.

The remaining $25.6 million in funds are unrestricted. They can be used for emerging needs, new programs, and operations. Unrestricted funds are essential because they give the AOPA Foundation the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and new technologies while continuing to serve its mission.

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For example, when the AOPA Foundation High School Aviation STEM Curriculum was first created, lessons were delivered to teachers in the form of downloadable PDFs. Today, teachers and students use learning management systems to access class materials, communicate, take tests, and submit homework assignments. Transitioning to this new way of delivering materials means recreating every single presentation, worksheet, and lesson plan—tens of thousands of pages of lesson plans, class presentations, tests, and worksheets—to comply with the new technology standards. Having access to restricted and unrestricted funds enables us to get the expert support we need to modernize our delivery systems to meet school and teacher expectations.

We hope that the information and context provided here helps make the AOPA Foundation 990 for 2025 easier to interpret and demonstrates how the organization is using its resources to help high school students discover opportunities in aviation, provide scholarships to help aspiring aviators live their dreams, make flying more accessible, and grow a strong, safer general aviation community.

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