Form 5500

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Department of Labor
Employee Benefits Security Administration

Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation

Annual Return/Report of Employee Benefit Plan

This form is required to be filed for employee benefit plans under sections 104 and 4065 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and sections 6057(b) and 6058(a) of the Internal Revenue Code (the Code).

▶ **Complete all entries in accordance with the instructions to the Form 5500.**

OMB Nos. 1210-0110
1210-0089

2023

This Form is Open to Public Inspection

Part I Annual Report Identification Information

For calendar plan year 2023 or fiscal plan year beginning 01/01/2023 and ending 12/31/2023

A This return/report is for:
- [ ] a multiemployer plan
- [ ] a multiple-employer plan (Filers checking this box must provide participating employer information in accordance with the form instructions.)
- [X] a single-employer plan
- [ ] a DFE (specify) ____

B This return/report is:
- [ ] the first return/report
- [ ] the final return/report
- [ ] an amended return/report
- [ ] a short plan year return/report (less than 12 months)

C If the plan is a collectively-bargained plan, check here. . . . . ▶ [ ]

D Check box if filing under:
- [X] Form 5558
- [ ] automatic extension
- [ ] the DFVC program
- [ ] special extension (enter description)

E If this is a retroactively adopted plan permitted by SECURE Act section 201, check here. . . . . ▶ [ ]

Part II Basic Plan Information—enter all requested information

1a Name of plan
ARETE ASSOCIATES EMPLOYEE STOCK OWNERSHIP PLAN

1b Three-digit plan number (PN) ▶ 003

1c Effective date of plan 12/01/2003

2a Plan sponsor's name (employer, if for a single-employer plan)
Mailing address (include room, apt., suite no. and street, or P.O. Box)
City or town, state or province, country, and ZIP or foreign postal code (if foreign, see instructions)
ARETE ASSOCIATES, INC.

9301 CORBIN AVENUE, SUITE 2000
NORTHRIDGE, CA 91324

2b Employer Identification Number (EIN) 95-2954108

2c Plan Sponsor's telephone number 818-885-2236

2d Business code (see instructions) 541700

Caution: A penalty for the late or incomplete filing of this return/report will be assessed unless reasonable cause is established.

Under penalties of perjury and other penalties set forth in the instructions, I declare that I have examined this return/report, including accompanying schedules, statements and attachments, as well as the electronic version of this return/report, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true, correct, and complete.

SIGN HERE	Filed with authorized/valid electronic signature.	07/29/2024	BHAVYANK RAJANI
	Signature of plan administrator	Date	Enter name of individual signing as plan administrator
SIGN HERE			
	Signature of employer/plan sponsor	Date	Enter name of individual signing as employer or plan sponsor
SIGN HERE			
	Signature of DFE	Date	Enter name of individual signing as DFE

3a Plan administrator's name and address ☐ Same as Plan Sponsor

ARETE ASSOCIATES, INC.

9301 CORBIN AVENUE, SUITE 2000
NORTHRIDGE, CA 91324

3b Administrator's EIN: 95-2954108

3c Administrator's telephone number: 818-885-2200

4 If the name and/or EIN of the plan sponsor or the plan name has changed since the last return/report filed for this plan, enter the plan sponsor's name, EIN, the plan name and the plan number from the last return/report:

a Sponsor's name

4b EIN

c Plan Name

4d PN

5	Total number of participants at the beginning of the plan year	**5**	433
6	Number of participants as of the end of the plan year unless otherwise stated (welfare plans complete only lines **6a(1), 6a(2), 6b, 6c,** and **6d**).		
a(1)	Total number of active participants at the beginning of the plan year	**6a(1)**	378
a(2)	Total number of active participants at the end of the plan year	**6a(2)**	387
b	Retired or separated participants receiving benefits	**6b**	2
c	Other retired or separated participants entitled to future benefits	**6c**	40
d	Subtotal. Add lines **6a(2)**, **6b**, and **6c**.	**6d**	429
e	Deceased participants whose beneficiaries are receiving or are entitled to receive benefits.	**6e**	0
f	Total. Add lines **6d** and **6e**.	**6f**	429
g(1)	Number of participants with account balances as of the beginning of the plan year (only defined contribution plans complete this item)	**6g(1)**	427
g(2)	Number of participants with account balances as of the end of the plan year (only defined contribution plans complete this item)	**6g(2)**	0
h	Number of participants who terminated employment during the plan year with accrued benefits that were less than 100% vested	**6h**	30
7	Enter the total number of employers obligated to contribute to the plan (only multiemployer plans complete this item)	**7**	

8a If the plan provides pension benefits, enter the applicable pension feature codes from the List of Plan Characteristics Codes in the instructions:

2I 2P 3I

b If the plan provides welfare benefits, enter the applicable welfare feature codes from the List of Plan Characteristics Codes in the instructions:

9a Plan funding arrangement (check all that apply)

- **(1)** ☐ Insurance
- **(2)** ☐ Code section 412(e)(3) insurance contracts
- **(3)** ☒ Trust
- **(4)** ☐ General assets of the sponsor

9b Plan benefit arrangement (check all that apply)

- **(1)** ☐ Insurance
- **(2)** ☐ Code section 412(e)(3) insurance contracts
- **(3)** ☒ Trust
- **(4)** ☐ General assets of the sponsor

10 Check all applicable boxes in 10a and 10b to indicate which schedules are attached, and, where indicated, enter the number attached. (See instructions)

a Pension Schedules

- **(1)** ☒ **R** (Retirement Plan Information)
- **(2)** ☐ **MB** (Multiemployer Defined Benefit Plan and Certain Money Purchase Plan Actuarial Information) - signed by the plan actuary
- **(3)** ☐ **SB** (Single-Employer Defined Benefit Plan Actuarial Information) - signed by the plan actuary
- **(4)** ☐ **DCG** (Individual Plan Information) – Number Attached _____
- **(5)** ☐ **MEP** (Multiple-Employer Retirement Plan Information)

b General Schedules

- **(1)** ☒ **H** (Financial Information)
- **(2)** ☐ **I** (Financial Information – Small Plan)
- **(3)** ☐ **A** (Insurance Information) – Number Attached 0
- **(4)** ☐ **C** (Service Provider Information)
- **(5)** ☐ **D** (DFE/Participating Plan Information)
- **(6)** ☐ **G** (Financial Transaction Schedules)

Part III Form M-1 Compliance Information (to be completed by welfare benefit plans)

11a If the plan provides welfare benefits, was the plan subject to the Form M-1 filing requirements during the plan year? (See instructions and 29 CFR 2520.101-2.) ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes" is checked, complete lines 11b and 11c.

11b Is the plan currently in compliance with the Form M-1 filing requirements? (See instructions and 29 CFR 2520.101-2.) ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

11c Enter the Receipt Confirmation Code for the 2023 Form M-1 annual report. If the plan was not required to file the 2023 Form M-1 annual report, enter the Receipt Confirmation Code for the most recent Form M-1 that was required to be filed under the Form M-1 filing requirements. (Failure to enter a valid Receipt Confirmation Code will subject the Form 5500 filing to rejection as incomplete.)

Receipt Confirmation Code_____

SCHEDULE H (Form 5500)

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Department of Labor
Employee Benefits Security Administration

Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation

Financial Information

This schedule is required to be filed under section 104 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), and section 6058(a) of the Internal Revenue Code (the Code).

▶ **File as an attachment to Form 5500.**

OMB No. 1210-0110

2023

This Form is Open to Public Inspection

For calendar plan year 2023 or fiscal plan year beginning 01/01/2023 and ending 12/31/2023

A Name of plan
ARETE ASSOCIATES EMPLOYEE STOCK OWNERSHIP PLAN

B Three-digit plan number (PN) ▶ 003

C Plan sponsor's name as shown on line 2a of Form 5500
ARETE ASSOCIATES, INC.

D Employer Identification Number (EIN)
95-2954108

Part I Asset and Liability Statement

1 Current value of plan assets and liabilities at the beginning and end of the plan year. Combine the value of plan assets held in more than one trust. Report the value of the plan's interest in a commingled fund containing the assets of more than one plan on a line-by-line basis unless the value is reported on lines 1c(9) through 1c(14). Do not enter the value of that portion of an insurance contract which guarantees, during this plan year, to pay a specific dollar benefit at a future date. **Round off amounts to the nearest dollar.** MTIAs, CCTs, PSAs, and 103-12 IEs do not complete lines 1b(1), 1b(2), 1c(8), 1g, 1h, and 1i. CCTs, PSAs, and 103-12 IEs also do not complete lines 1d and 1e. See instructions.

Assets		(a) Beginning of Year	(b) End of Year
a Total noninterest-bearing cash	1a	112	619
b Receivables (less allowance for doubtful accounts):			
(1) Employer contributions	1b(1)		
(2) Participant contributions	1b(2)		
(3) Other	1b(3)		
c General investments:			
(1) Interest-bearing cash (include money market accounts & certificates of deposit)	1c(1)		
(2) U.S. Government securities	1c(2)		
(3) Corporate debt instruments (other than employer securities):			
(A) Preferred	1c(3)(A)		
(B) All other	1c(3)(B)		
(4) Corporate stocks (other than employer securities):			
(A) Preferred	1c(4)(A)		
(B) Common	1c(4)(B)		
(5) Partnership/joint venture interests	1c(5)		
(6) Real estate (other than employer real property)	1c(6)		
(7) Loans (other than to participants)	1c(7)		
(8) Participant loans	1c(8)		
(9) Value of interest in common/collective trusts	1c(9)		
(10) Value of interest in pooled separate accounts	1c(10)		
(11) Value of interest in master trust investment accounts	1c(11)		
(12) Value of interest in 103-12 investment entities	1c(12)		
(13) Value of interest in registered investment companies (e.g., mutual funds)	1c(13)		
(14) Value of funds held in insurance company general account (unallocated contracts)	1c(14)		
(15) Other	1c(15)		

			(a) Beginning of Year	(b) End of Year
1d	Employer-related investments:			
	(1) Employer securities	1d(1)	62513708	69340557
	(2) Employer real property	1d(2)		
e	Buildings and other property used in plan operation	1e		
f	Total assets (add all amounts in lines 1a through 1e)	1f	62513820	69341176
	Liabilities			
g	Benefit claims payable	1g		
h	Operating payables	1h		
i	Acquisition indebtedness	1i		
j	Other liabilities	1j	4695573	11940731
k	Total liabilities (add all amounts in lines 1g through1j)	1k	4695573	11940731
	Net Assets			
l	Net assets (subtract line 1k from line 1f)	1l	57818247	57400445

Part II Income and Expense Statement

2 Plan income, expenses, and changes in net assets for the year. Include all income and expenses of the plan, including any trust(s) or separately maintained fund(s) and any payments/receipts to/from insurance carriers. Round off amounts to the nearest dollar. MTIAs, CCTs, PSAs, and 103-12 IEs do not complete lines 2a, 2b(1)(E), 2e, 2f, and 2g.

			(a) Amount	(b) Total
	Income			
a	**Contributions:**			
	(1) Received or receivable in cash from: **(A)** Employers	2a(1)(A)	1656149	
	(B) Participants	2a(1)(B)		
	(C) Others (including rollovers)	2a(1)(C)		
	(2) Noncash contributions	2a(2)		
	(3) Total contributions. Add lines **2a(1)(A), (B), (C),** and line **2a(2)**	2a(3)		1656149
b	**Earnings on investments:**			
	(1) Interest:			
	(A) Interest-bearing cash (including money market accounts and certificates of deposit)	2b(1)(A)		
	(B) U.S. Government securities	2b(1)(B)		
	(C) Corporate debt instruments	2b(1)(C)		
	(D) Loans (other than to participants)	2b(1)(D)		
	(E) Participant loans	2b(1)(E)		
	(F) Other	2b(1)(F)		
	(G) Total interest. Add lines **2b(1)(A)** through **(F)**	2b(1)(G)		0
	(2) Dividends: **(A)** Preferred stock	2b(2)(A)		
	(B) Common stock	2b(2)(B)		
	(C) Registered investment company shares (e.g. mutual funds)	2b(2)(C)		
	(D) Total dividends. Add lines **2b(2)(A)**, **(B)**, and **(C)**	2b(2)(D)		0
	(3) Rents	2b(3)		
	(4) Net gain (loss) on sale of assets: **(A)** Aggregate proceeds	2b(4)(A)		
	(B) Aggregate carrying amount (see instructions)	2b(4)(B)		
	(C) Subtract line **2b(4)(B)** from line **2b(4)(A)** and enter result	2b(4)(C)		0
	(5) Unrealized appreciation (depreciation) of assets: **(A)** Real estate	2b(5)(A)	2972660	
	(B) Other	2b(5)(B)		
	(C) Total unrealized appreciation of assets. Add lines **2b(5)(A)** and **(B)**	2b(5)(C)		2972660

		(a) Amount	(b) Total
(6) Net investment gain (loss) from common/collective trusts	2b(6)		
(7) Net investment gain (loss) from pooled separate accounts	2b(7)		
(8) Net investment gain (loss) from master trust investment accounts	2b(8)		
(9) Net investment gain (loss) from 103-12 investment entities	2b(9)		
(10) Net investment gain (loss) from registered investment companies (e.g., mutual funds)	2b(10)		
c Other income	2c		
d Total income. Add all **income** amounts in column (b) and enter total	2d		4628809
Expenses			
e Benefit payment and payments to provide benefits:			
(1) Directly to participants or beneficiaries, including direct rollovers	2e(1)	4588138	
(2) To insurance carriers for the provision of benefits	2e(2)		
(3) Other	2e(3)		
(4) Total benefit payments. Add lines **2e(1)** through **(3)**	2e(4)		4588138
f Corrective distributions (see instructions)	2f		
g Certain deemed distributions of participant loans (see instructions)	2g		
h Interest expense	2h		458473
i Administrative expenses:			
(1) Salaries and allowances	2i(1)		
(2) Contract administrator fees	2i(2)		
(3) Recordkeeping fees	2i(3)		
(4) IQPA audit fees	2i(4)		
(5) Investment advisory and investment management fees	2i(5)		
(6) Bank or trust company trustee/custodial fees	2i(6)		
(7) Actuarial fees	2i(7)		
(8) Legal fees	2i(8)		
(9) Valuation/appraisal fees	2i(9)		
(10) Other trustee fees and expenses	2i(10)		
(11) Other expenses	2i(11)		
(12) Total administrative expenses. Add lines **2i(1)** through **(11)**	2i(12)		0
j Total expenses. Add all **expense** amounts in column (b) and enter total	2j		5046611
Net Income and Reconciliation			
k Net income (loss). Subtract line **2j** from line **2d**	2k		-417802
l Transfers of assets:			
(1) To this plan	2l(1)		
(2) From this plan	2l(2)		

Part III Accountant's Opinion

3 Complete lines 3a through 3c if the opinion of an independent qualified public accountant is attached to this Form 5500. Complete line 3d if an opinion is not attached.

a The attached opinion of an independent qualified public accountant for this plan is (see instructions):

(1) [X] Unmodified **(2)** [ ] Qualified **(3)** [ ] Disclaimer **(4)** [ ] Adverse

b Check the appropriate box(es) to indicate whether the IQPA performed an ERISA section 103(a)(3)(C) audit. Check both boxes (1) and (2) if the audit was performed pursuant to both 29 CFR 2520.103-8 and 29 CFR 2520.103-12(d). Check box (3) if pursuant to neither.

(1) [ ] DOL Regulation 2520.103-8 **(2)** [ ] DOL Regulation 2520.103-12(d) **(3)** [X] neither DOL Regulation 2520.103-8 nor DOL Regulation 2520.103-12(d).

c Enter the name and EIN of the accountant (or accounting firm) below:

(1) Name: BEESON, HOFFMAN & SIDDALL, INC. **(2)** EIN: 95-3654092

d The opinion of an independent qualified public accountant is **not attached** as part of Schedule H because:

(1) [ ] This form is filed for a CCT, PSA, DCG or MTIA. **(2)** [ ] It will be attached to the next Form 5500 pursuant to 29 CFR 2520.104-50.

Part IV Compliance Questions

4 CCTs and PSAs do not complete Part IV. MTIAs, 103-12 IEs, and GIAs do not complete lines 4a, 4e, 4f, 4g, 4h, 4k, 4m, 4n, or 5. 103-12 IEs also do not complete lines 4j and 4l. MTIAs also do not complete line 4l. DCGs do not complete lines 4e, 4f, 4k, 4l, and 5, and DCGs generally complete the rest of Part IV collectively for all plans in the DCG, except as otherwise provided (see instructions).

During the plan year:

		Yes	No	Amount
a Was there a failure to transmit to the plan any participant contributions within the time period described in 29 CFR 2510.3-102? Continue to answer "Yes" for any prior year failures until fully corrected. (See instructions and DOL's Voluntary Fiduciary Correction Program.)	**4a**		X	
b Were any loans by the plan or fixed income obligations due the plan in default as of the close of the plan year or classified during the year as uncollectible? Disregard participant loans secured by participant's account balance. (Attach Schedule G (Form 5500) Part I if "Yes" is checked.)	**4b**		X	
c Were any leases to which the plan was a party in default or classified during the year as uncollectible? (Attach Schedule G (Form 5500) Part II if "Yes" is checked.)	**4c**		X	
d Were there any nonexempt transactions with any party-in-interest? (Do not include transactions reported on line 4a. Attach Schedule G (Form 5500) Part III if "Yes" is checked.)	**4d**		X	
e Was this plan covered by a fidelity bond?	**4e**	X		1500000
f Did the plan have a loss, whether or not reimbursed by the plan's fidelity bond, that was caused by fraud or dishonesty?	**4f**		X	
g Did the plan hold any assets whose current value was neither readily determinable on an established market nor set by an independent third party appraiser?	**4g**		X	
h Did the plan receive any noncash contributions whose value was neither readily determinable on an established market nor set by an independent third party appraiser?	**4h**		X	
i Did the plan have assets held for investment? (Attach schedule(s) of assets if "Yes" is checked, and see instructions for format requirements.)	**4i**	X		
j Were any plan transactions or series of transactions in excess of 5% of the current value of plan assets? (Attach schedule of transactions if "Yes" is checked and see instructions for format requirements.)	**4j**		X	
k Were all the plan assets either distributed to participants or beneficiaries, transferred to another plan, or brought under the control of the PBGC?	**4k**		X	
l Has the plan failed to provide any benefit when due under the plan?	**4l**		X	
m If this is an individual account plan, was there a blackout period? (See instructions and 29 CFR 2520.101-3.)	**4m**		X	
n If 4m was answered "Yes," check the "Yes" box if you either provided the required notice or one of the exceptions to providing the notice applied under 29 CFR 2520.101-3.	**4n**			

5a Has a resolution to terminate the plan been adopted during the plan year or any prior plan year? [ ] Yes [X] No

If "Yes," enter the amount of any plan assets that reverted to the employer this year _____.

5b If, during this plan year, any assets or liabilities were transferred from this plan to another plan(s), identify the plan(s) to which assets or liabilities were transferred. (See instructions.)

5b(1) Name of plan(s)	**5b(2)** EIN(s)	**5b(3)** PN(s)

5c Was the plan a defined benefit plan covered under the PBGC insurance program at any time during this plan year? (See ERISA section 4021 and instructions.) ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not determined

If "Yes" is checked, enter the My PAA confirmation number from the PBGC premium filing for this plan year _____.

SCHEDULE R (Form 5500)

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Department of Labor
Employee Benefits Security Administration

Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation

Retirement Plan Information

This schedule is required to be filed under sections 104 and 4065 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and section 6058(a) of the Internal Revenue Code (the Code).

▶ **File as an attachment to Form 5500.**

OMB No. 1210-0110

2023

This Form is Open to Public Inspection.

For calendar plan year 2023 or fiscal plan year beginning 01/01/2023 and ending 12/31/2023

A Name of plan
ARETE ASSOCIATES EMPLOYEE STOCK OWNERSHIP PLAN

B Three-digit plan number (PN) ▶ 003

C Plan sponsor's name as shown on line 2a of Form 5500
ARETE ASSOCIATES, INC.

D Employer Identification Number (EIN)
95-2954108

Part I Distributions

All references to distributions relate only to payments of benefits during the plan year.

1 Total value of distributions paid in property other than in cash or the forms of property specified in the instructions **1** 4310463

2 Enter the EIN(s) of payor(s) who paid benefits on behalf of the plan to participants or beneficiaries during the year (if more than two, enter EINs of the two payors who paid the greatest dollar amounts of benefits):

EIN(s): 20-0464157

Profit-sharing plans, ESOPs, and stock bonus plans, skip line 3.

3 Number of participants (living or deceased) whose benefits were distributed in a single sum, during the plan year **3**

Part II Funding Information (If the plan is not subject to the minimum funding requirements of section 412 of the Internal Revenue Code or ERISA section 302, skip this Part.)

4 Is the plan administrator making an election under Code section 412(d)(2) or ERISA section 302(d)(2)? ..... ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**

If the plan is a defined benefit plan, go to line 8.

5 If a waiver of the minimum funding standard for a prior year is being amortized in this plan year, see instructions and enter the date of the ruling letter granting the waiver. **Date:** Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

If you completed line 5, complete lines 3, 9, and 10 of Schedule MB and do not complete the remainder of this schedule.

6 a Enter the minimum required contribution for this plan year (include any prior year accumulated funding deficiency not waived) **6a**

b Enter the amount contributed by the employer to the plan for this plan year **6b**

c Subtract the amount in line 6b from the amount in line 6a. Enter the result (enter a minus sign to the left of a negative amount) **6c**

If you completed line 6c, skip lines 8 and 9.

7 Will the minimum funding amount reported on line 6c be met by the funding deadline? ..... ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**

8 If a change in actuarial cost method was made for this plan year pursuant to a revenue procedure or other authority providing automatic approval for the change or a class ruling letter, does the plan sponsor or plan administrator agree with the change? ..... ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **N/A**

Part III Amendments

9 If this is a defined benefit pension plan, were any amendments adopted during this plan year that increased or decreased the value of benefits? If yes, check the appropriate box. If no, check the "No" box. ..... ☐ **Increase** ☐ **Decrease** ☐ **Both** ☐ **No**

Part IV ESOPs (see instructions). If this is not a plan described under section 409(a) or 4975(e)(7) of the Internal Revenue Code, skip this Part.

10 Were unallocated employer securities or proceeds from the sale of unallocated securities used to repay any exempt loan? ..... ☐ **Yes** ☒ **No**

11 a Does the ESOP hold any preferred stock? ..... ☐ **Yes** ☒ **No**

b If the ESOP has an outstanding exempt loan with the employer as lender, is such loan part of a "back-to-back" loan? (See instructions for definition of "back-to-back" loan.) ..... ☐ **Yes** ☒ **No**

12 Does the ESOP hold any stock that is not readily tradable on an established securities market? ..... ☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Part V Additional Information for Multiemployer Defined Benefit Pension Plans

13 Enter the following information for each employer that (1) contributed more than 5% of total contributions to the plan during the plan year or (2) was one of the top-ten highest contributors (measured in dollars). See instructions. *Complete as many entries as needed to report all applicable employers.*

a Name of contributing employer

b EIN **c** Dollar amount contributed by employer

d Date collective bargaining agreement expires *(If employer contributes under more than one collective bargaining agreement, check box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, enter the applicable date.)* Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

e Contribution rate information *(If more than one rate applies, check this box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, complete lines 13e(1) and 13e(2).)*
(1) Contribution rate (in dollars and cents) _____
(2) Base unit measure: ☐ Hourly ☐ Weekly ☐ Unit of production ☐ Other (specify):

---

a Name of contributing employer

b EIN **c** Dollar amount contributed by employer

d Date collective bargaining agreement expires *(If employer contributes under more than one collective bargaining agreement, check box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, enter the applicable date.)* Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

e Contribution rate information *(If more than one rate applies, check this box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, complete lines 13e(1) and 13e(2).)*
(1) Contribution rate (in dollars and cents) _____
(2) Base unit measure: ☐ Hourly ☐ Weekly ☐ Unit of production ☐ Other (specify): _____

---

a Name of contributing employer

b EIN **c** Dollar amount contributed by employer

d Date collective bargaining agreement expires *(If employer contributes under more than one collective bargaining agreement, check box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, enter the applicable date.)* Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

e Contribution rate information *(If more than one rate applies, check this box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, complete lines 13e(1) and 13e(2).)*
(1) Contribution rate (in dollars and cents) _____
(2) Base unit measure: ☐ Hourly ☐ Weekly ☐ Unit of production ☐ Other (specify): _____

---

a Name of contributing employer

b EIN **c** Dollar amount contributed by employer

d Date collective bargaining agreement expires *(If employer contributes under more than one collective bargaining agreement, check box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, enter the applicable date.)* Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

e Contribution rate information *(If more than one rate applies, check this box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, complete lines 13e(1) and 13e(2).)*
(1) Contribution rate (in dollars and cents) _____
(2) Base unit measure: ☐ Hourly ☐ Weekly ☐ Unit of production ☐ Other (specify): _____

---

a Name of contributing employer

b EIN **c** Dollar amount contributed by employer

d Date collective bargaining agreement expires *(If employer contributes under more than one collective bargaining agreement, check box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, enter the applicable date.)* Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

e Contribution rate information *(If more than one rate applies, check this box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, complete lines 13e(1) and 13e(2).)*
(1) Contribution rate (in dollars and cents) _____
(2) Base unit measure: ☐ Hourly ☐ Weekly ☐ Unit of production ☐ Other (specify): _____

---

a Name of contributing employer

b EIN **c** Dollar amount contributed by employer

d Date collective bargaining agreement expires *(If employer contributes under more than one collective bargaining agreement, check box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, enter the applicable date.)* Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

e Contribution rate information *(If more than one rate applies, check this box* ☐ *and see instructions regarding required attachment. Otherwise, complete lines 13e(1) and 13e(2).)*
(1) Contribution rate (in dollars and cents) _____
(2) Base unit measure: ☐ Hourly ☐ Weekly ☐ Unit of production ☐ Other (specify): _____

14 Enter the number of deferred vested and retired participants (inactive participants), as of the beginning of the plan year, whose contributing employer is no longer making contributions to the plan for:

a The current plan year. Check the box to indicate the counting method used to determine the number of inactive participants: ☐ last contributing employer ☐ alternative ☐ reasonable approximation (see instructions for required attachment)	**14a**	
b The plan year immediately preceding the current plan year. ☐ Check the box if the number reported is a change from what was previously reported (see instructions for required attachment)	**14b**	
c The second preceding plan year. ☐ Check the box if the number reported is a change from what was previously reported (see instructions for required attachment)	**14c**	

15 Enter the ratio of the number of participants under the plan on whose behalf no employer had an obligation to make an employer contribution during the current plan year to:

a The corresponding number for the plan year immediately preceding the current plan year	**15a**	
b The corresponding number for the second preceding plan year	**15b**	

16 Information with respect to any employers who withdrew from the plan during the preceding plan year:

a Enter the number of employers who withdrew during the preceding plan year	**16a**	
b If line 16a is greater than 0, enter the aggregate amount of withdrawal liability assessed or estimated to be assessed against such withdrawn employers	**16b**	

17 If assets and liabilities from another plan have been transferred to or merged with this plan during the plan year, check box and see instructions regarding supplemental information to be included as an attachment ☐

Part VI Additional Information for Single-Employer and Multiemployer Defined Benefit Pension Plans

18 If any liabilities to participants or their beneficiaries under the plan as of the end of the plan year consist (in whole or in part) of liabilities to such participants and beneficiaries under two or more pension plans as of immediately before such plan year, check box and see instructions regarding supplemental information to be included as an attachment ☐

19 If the total number of participants is 1,000 or more, complete lines (a) and (b):

a Enter the percentage of plan assets held as:
Public Equity: _____% Private Equity: _____% Investment-Grade Debt and Interest Rate Hedging Assets: _____%
High-Yield Debt: _____% Real Assets: _____% Cash or Cash Equivalents: _____% Other: _____%

b Provide the average duration of the Investment-Grade Debt and Interest Rate Hedging Assets:
☐ 0-5 years ☐ 5-10 years ☐ 10-15 years ☐ 15 years or more

20 **PBGC missed contribution reporting requirements.** If this is a multiemployer plan or a single-employer plan that is not covered by PBGC, skip line 20.

a Is the amount of unpaid minimum required contributions for all years from Schedule SB (Form 5500) line 40 greater than zero? ☐ Yes ☐ No

b If line 20a is "Yes," has PBGC been notified as required by ERISA sections 4043(c)(5) and/or 303(k)(4)? Check the applicable box:

☐ Yes.

☐ No. Reporting was waived under 29 CFR 4043.25(c)(2) because contributions equal to or exceeding the unpaid minimum required contribution were made by the 30th day after the due date.

☐ No. The 30-day period referenced in 29 CFR 4043.25(c)(2) has not yet ended, and the sponsor intends to make a contribution equal to or exceeding the unpaid minimum required contribution by the 30th day after the due date.

☐ No. Other. Provide explanation._____

Part VII IRS Compliance Questions

21a Does the plan satisfy the coverage and nondiscrimination tests of Code sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4) by combining this plan with any other plans under the permissive aggregation rules? ☐ Yes ☒ No

21b If this is a Code section 401(k) plan, check all boxes that apply to indicate how the plan is intended to satisfy the nondiscrimination requirements for employee deferrals and employer matching contributions (as applicable) under Code sections 401(k)(3) and 401(m)(2).

☐ Design-based safe harbor method

☐ "Prior year" ADP test

☐ "Current year" ADP test

☒ N/A

22 If the plan sponsor is an adopter of a pre-approved plan that received a favorable IRS Opinion Letter, enter the date of the Opinion Letter ___/___/_____ (MM/DD/YYYY) and the Opinion Letter serial number_____.

ARETÉ ASSOCIATES
EMPLOYEE STOCK OWNERSHIP PLAN

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
AND SUPPLEMENTAL SCHEDULE

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023
AND AT DECEMBER 31, 2022

BEESON, HOFFMAN & SIDDALL, INC.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

ARETÉ ASSOCIATES
EMPLOYEE STOCK OWNERSHIP PLAN

INDEX OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Year ended December 31, 2023
and at December 31, 2022

Report of Independent Auditors ..... 1 – 3

Financial Statements:

Statements of Net Assets Available for Benefits 4

Statement of Changes in Net Assets Available for Benefits 5

Notes to Financial Statements ..... 6 – 13

Supplemental Schedule:

Schedule of Assets (Held at End of Year) 14

BEESON, HOFFMAN & SIDDALL, INC.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

Harry C. Beeson, CPA
Gordon P. Hoffman, CPA
Mark S. Siddall, CPA
Jonathan D. DeSpain, CPA
John J. Bolyard, CPA

500 North Central Avenue
Suite 325
Glendale, California 91203
(818) 240-8322
Fax (818) 240-0520
www.bhscpa.com

REPORT OF INDEPENDENT AUDITORS

July 23, 2024

To the Trustee and Administrative Committee
Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan, an employee benefit plan subject to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), which comprise the statements of net assets available for benefits as of December 31, 2023 and 2022, and the related statement of changes in net assets available for benefits for the year ended December 31, 2023, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the net assets available for benefits of Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan as of December 31, 2023 and 2022, and the changes in its net assets available for benefits for the year ended December 31, 2023, in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audits. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan's ability to continue as a going concern for one year after the date the financial statements are available to be issued.

Management is also responsible for maintaining a current plan instrument, including all plan amendments, administering the plan, and determining that the plan's transactions that are presented and disclosed in the financial statements are in conformity with the plan's provisions, including maintaining sufficient records with respect to each of the participants, to determine the benefits due or which may become due to such participants.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Supplemental Schedules Required by ERISA

Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements as a whole. The supplemental schedule of Schedule of Assets (Held at End of Year) is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the financial statements but is supplementary information required by the Department of Labor's Rules and Regulations for Reporting and Disclosure under ERISA. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying

accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

In forming our opinion on the supplemental schedules, we evaluated whether the supplemental schedules, including their form and content, are presented in conformity with the Department of Labor's Rules and Regulations for Reporting and Disclosure under ERISA.

In our opinion, the information in the accompanying schedules is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the financial statements as a whole, and the form and content are presented in conformity with the Department of Labor's Rules and Regulations for Reporting and Disclosure under ERISA.

Beeson, Hoffman & Siddall, Inc.

ARETÉ ASSOCIATES
EMPLOYEE STOCK OWNERSHIP PLAN
STATEMENTS OF NET ASSETS AVAILABLE FOR BENEFITS
DECEMBER 31, 2023 AND 2022

	December 31, 2023			December 31, 2022		
	Allocated	Unallocated	Total	Allocated	Unallocated	Total
Assets						
Investments at fair value:						
Areté Associates common stock	$ 52,053,520	$ 17,287,037	$ 69,340,557	$ 51,515,834	$ 10,997,874	$ 62,513,708
Cash	619	-	619	112	-	112
Total Assets	52,054,139	17,287,037	69,341,176	51,515,946	10,997,874	62,513,820
Liabilities						
Other payables	$ 619	$ -	$ 619	$ 112	$ -	$ 112
Note payable	-	11,940,112	11,940,112	-	4,695,461	4,695,461
Total Liabilities	619	11,940,112	11,940,731	112	4,695,461	4,695,573
Net assets available for benefits	$ 52,053,520	$ 5,346,925	$ 57,400,445	$ 51,515,834	$ 6,302,413	$ 57,818,247

- See Accompanying Notes -

ARETÉ ASSOCIATES
EMPLOYEE STOCK OWNERSHIP PLAN
STATEMENTS OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS AVAILABLE FOR BENEFITS
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

	Allocated	Unallocated	Total
Additions to net assets attributed to:			
Employer contributions	$ 277,676	$ 1,378,473	$ 1,656,149
Unrealized gain	2,114,359	858,301	2,972,660
Allocation of company stock at fair value	2,733,789	(2,733,789)	-
Total additions	5,125,824	(497,015)	4,628,809
Deductions from net assets attributed to:			
Distributions	4,588,138	-	4,588,138
Interest expense	-	458,473	458,473
Total deductions	4,588,138	458,473	5,046,611
Net increase (decrease)	537,686	(955,488)	(417,802)
Net assets available for benefits:			
Beginning of year	51,515,834	6,302,413	57,818,247
End of year	$ 52,053,520	$ 5,346,925	$ 57,400,445

- See Accompanying Notes -

1. Plan Description

The following description of the Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan provides general information. Participants should refer to the Plan agreement for complete information.

General

Areté Associates (Company) established the Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan (Plan) effective December 1, 2003. The Plan operates as a leveraged employee stock ownership plan (ESOP), and is designed to comply with Section 4975(e)(7) and the regulations thereunder of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (Code) and is subject to the applicable provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended (ERISA). The Plan is administered by the administrative committee, with an independent third-party trustee serving as the Plan's trustee.

The Plan purchased Company common stock using the proceeds of a borrowing from the Company, and holds the common stock in a trust established under the Plan. The borrowing is to be repaid over a period of seven years by Company contributions to the trust fund. As the Plan makes each payment, an appropriate percentage of stock will be allocated to eligible employees' accounts in accordance with applicable regulations under the Code.

The borrowing is collateralized by the unallocated shares of common stock and is guaranteed by the Company. The financial statements of the Plan as of December 31, 2023 and 2022, and for the year ended December 31, 2023, present separately the assets and liabilities and changes therein pertaining to:

1. the accounts of employees with vested rights in allocated common stock (Allocated), and
2. common stock not yet allocated to employees (Unallocated).

Eligibility

All full-time employees of the Company are eligible to participate in the Plan as of the date of hire or designation as a full-time employee, provided they have attained 18 years of age.

Voting Rights

Company stock held in the Trust is voted by the Trustee on most issues; however, the Plan provides that currently employed participants are entitled to direct the Trustee as to the exercise of voting rights attributable to shares allocated to his or her account. The Trustee is required to vote any unallocated shares, and any allocated shares for which instructions have not been given by a participant, in the proportion of shares voted by participants.

1. Plan Description (continued)

Payment of Benefits

Except for distributions made pursuant to diversification elections (discussed below), distributions on account of death, disability, or retirement are made in a lump sum in the Plan year following the event. Distributions of benefits are paid in substantially equal periodic payments (not less frequently than annually) and generally distributed over a period of five years. The Plan document does not require distribution of any portion of a participant's account which consists of Company stock acquired with the proceeds of an exempt loan prior to the close of the Plan year in which such loan is repaid in full. During the year ended December 31, 2023, the Plan repurchased 83,943 shares from participants at prices determined from the independent appraisal. At December 31, 2023, terminated participants with balances valued at $3,393,069 elected to withdraw from the Plan, with the distribution of their accounts to occur in 2024.

Plan Termination

The Company reserves the right to terminate the Plan at any time, subject to Plan provisions. Upon such termination of the Plan, the interest of each participant in the trust fund will be distributed to the participant or his or her beneficiary at the time prescribed by the Plan terms and the Code.

Participant Accounts

The Plan is a defined contribution plan under which a separate individual account is established for each participant. Each participant's account is credited as of the last day of each plan year with an allocation of shares of the Company's common stock released by the Trustee from the unallocated account, and forfeitures of terminated participants' nonvested accounts. Allocations are made for any participant who was an employee on any day of the plan year, and are based on a participant's eligible compensation, relative to total eligible compensation.

Vesting

Employees earn one year of service for each plan year in which 1,000 or more hours are worked. For participants hired before 2020, benefits become 100% vested after two years of service. For participants hired after 2019, benefits become 100% vested after four years of service. If service terminates due to retirement, death or full disability, benefits become 100% vested regardless of years of service.

Put Option

Under federal income tax regulations, the employer stock that is held by the Plan and its participants and is not readily tradable on an established market, or is subject to trading limitations includes a put option. The put option is a right to demand that the Company buy any shares of its stock distributed to participants for which there is no market. The put price is the fair market value of the stock. The purpose of the put option is to ensure that the participant has the ability to ultimately obtain cash.

1. Plan Description (continued)

Diversification

Diversification is offered to participants close to retirement so that they may have the opportunity to move part of the value of their investment in Company stock into investments which are more diversified. Participants who are at least age 55 with at least 10 years of participation in the Plan may elect to diversify a portion of their account. Diversification is offered to each eligible participant over a six-year period. In each of the first five years, a participant may diversify up to 25% of the number of shares allocated to his or her account, less any shares previously diversified. In the sixth year, the percentage changes to 50%. Participants who elect to diversify receive a distribution in cash or to another qualified account.

Forfeitures

Plan forfeitures are allocated to each participant's account based upon the relation of the participant's compensation to total compensation for the plan year. Forfeitures of terminated nonvested account balances allocated to remaining participants at December 31, 2023 and 2022 totaled $144,191 and $120,220, respectively. Plan earnings are allocated to each participant's account based on the ratio of the participant's beginning of the year account balance to all participants' beginning of the year account balances.

2. Significant Accounting Policies

Nature of Business of Plan Sponsor

Areté Associates is a California corporation that performs applied research as a contractor and subcontractor under primarily fixed price and cost-plus-fee contracts with the U.S. Government.

Basis of Accounting

The financial statements of the Plan are prepared on the accrual basis of accounting.

Use of Estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires the Plan administrator to make estimates and assumptions that affect certain reported amounts and disclosures. Accordingly, actual results could differ from those estimates. The Areté Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan relies significantly on the use of estimates and forecasts in determining the valuation of the Areté Associates common stock.

Allocations

The financial statements of the Plan present separately the assets and liabilities and changes therein pertaining to (a) the accounts of employees with rights in allocated stock ("allocated") and (b) stock not yet allocated to employees ("unallocated"), including shares that are committed to be released. Shares are released from collateral and become allocated generally in the period in which debt service is actually paid.

2. Significant Accounting Policies (continued)

Valuation of Investments

The shares of Areté Associates common stock are valued at estimated fair value as determined by the Trustee with the assistance of an independent appraisal company. See Note 7 for a discussion of fair value measurements.

Administrative Expenses

All significant expenses of maintaining the Plan are paid by the Company.

Benefits

Benefits are recorded when paid.

Date of Management's Review

The plan administrator has evaluated subsequent events through July 23, 2024, which was the date the financial statements were available to be issued, and has determined that there are no subsequent events requiring recognition or disclosure in the financial statements.

3. Administration of Plan Assets

The Plan's assets are held by the Trustee of the Plan. Company contributions are held and managed by the Trustee, which invests cash received, interest and dividend income and makes distributions to participants. Certain administrative functions are performed by officers or employees of the Company. No such officer or employee receives compensation from the Plan. Administrative expenses for the Trustee's fees are paid directly by the Company.

4. Employer Contributions

Annual employer contributions to the Plan are determined by the Company's Board of Directors, up to a maximum of the lesser of 100% of gross compensation or $66,000 from this Plan and any other defined contribution plan of the Company. Employee contributions to the Plan are not permitted. Contributions are made in cash and/or common stock of the Company, in an amount necessary to enable the Plan to make its regularly scheduled payments of principal and interest on its term loan.

5. Income Tax Status

The IRS has determined and informed the plan sponsor by a letter dated September 12, 2014, that the Plan and related trust are designed in accordance with applicable sections of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). Although the Plan has been amended since receiving the determination letter, the Plan administrator and the Plan's tax counsel believe that the Plan is designed, and is currently being operated, in compliance with the applicable requirements of the IRC and, therefore, believe that the Plan is qualified, and the related trust is tax-exempt.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

The Plan investments consist of the Company's common stock, which is exposed to various risks, such as interest rate, market, and credit risks, as well as valuation assumptions based on earnings, cash flows, and other techniques. Due to the level of risk associated with the investment in the common stock and to uncertainties inherent in estimates and assumptions, it is at least reasonably possible that changes in the value of the common stock will occur in the near term and that such changes could materially affect the amounts reported in the statements of net assets available for benefits.

7. Fair Value Measurements

The Plan's investments are reported at estimated fair value in the accompanying statements of net assets available for benefits. The methods used to measure fair value may produce an amount that may not be indicative of net realizable value or reflective of future fair values. Furthermore, although the Plan believes its valuation methods are appropriate and consistent with other market participants, the use of different methodologies or assumptions to measure the fair value of certain financial instruments could result in different fair value measurements at the reporting date.

The following table presents fair value measurement information for the Plan's investment in Company common stock.

	Fair Value Measurements at Reporting Date Using:	
	Fair Value	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
December 31, 2023		
Areté Associates common stock	$ 69,340,557	$ 69,340,557
December 31, 2022		
Areté Associates common stock	$ 62,513,708	$ 62,513,708

The fair value measurements accounting literature establishes a fair value hierarchy that prioritizes the inputs to valuation techniques used to measure fair value. The hierarchy consists of three broad levels: Level 1 inputs consist of unadjusted quoted prices in active markets for identical assets and have the highest priority, Level 2 inputs consist of observable inputs other that quoted prices for identical assets, and Level 3 inputs are unobservable and have the lowest priority. The Plan uses appropriate valuation techniques based on the available inputs to measure the fair value of its investments. Level 3 inputs were only used when Level 1 or Level 2 inputs were not available.

7. Fair Value Measurements (continued)

Level 3 Fair Value Measurements

The fair value of the Areté Associates common stock is determined by an annual independent appraisal. This appraisal was based on a combination of the market and income valuation methods consistent with prior years. The appraiser took into account historical and projected cash flow and net earnings, weighted average cost of capital, return on equity, market comparables and the estimated fair value of company assets and liabilities, and applicable discounts and premiums. The following table provides further detail of Level 3 measurements:

Areté Associates common stock at December 31,	2023	2022
Beginning balance	$ 62,513,708	$ 55,761,673
Purchases, Issuances & Settlements	3,854,189	(1,343,703)
Total gains or losses (realized and unrealized) included in changes in net assets available for benefits	2,972,660	8,095,738
Ending balance	$ 69,340,557	$ 62,513,708
Total gains or losses for the year included in changes in net assets available for benefits attributable to the change in unrealized gains or losses relating to investments still held at the reporting date	$ 2,972,660	$ 8,095,738

Gains and losses (realized and unrealized) included in the changes in net assets available for benefits are reported in net unrealized appreciation in fair value of investments.

8. Related Party and Party-in-Interest Transactions

The Plan invests in common stock of the Company, which is a related party. In addition, the Plan has a number of service providers which are parties in interest under ERISA. The Company pays most of the expenses of maintaining the Plan, which are party in interest transactions.

9. Investment in Employer Securities

The Plan's investment in Areté Associates common stock is presented in the following table:

	December 31, 2023		December 31, 2022	
	Allocated	Unallocated	Allocated	Unallocated
Number of shares	970,243	322,219	1,003,229	214,175
Cost	$ 10,422,737	$ 19,462,580	$ 10,422,737	$ 3,713,790
Fair Value	$ 52,053,520	$ 17,287,037	$ 51,515,834	$ 10,997,874

10. Note Payable

The Plan has a note payable to the Company as follows:

	2023	2022
Note payable to the Company, bearing variable interest at the federal reserve rate plus 2.25%, with monthly principal payments ranging from $119,000 to $145,000 beginning January 1, 2024 through September 30, 2031.	$ 11,940,112	$ -
Note payable to the Company, bearing variable interest at the federal reserve rate plus 2.00%, with monthly principal payments raiging from $115,000 to $150,000 beginning January 1, 2022 through April 30, 2026. This note payable was refinanced in September 2023.	$ -	$ 4,695,461
	$ 11,940,112	$ 4,695,461

The scheduled amortization of the note for the next five years is as follows, for the Plan year ending December 31:

2024	$ 1,428,000
2025	1,476,000
2026	1,524,000
2027	1,584,000
2028	1,644,000
Thereafter	4,284,112
	$ 11,940,112

10. Note Payable (continued)

The borrowing is collateralized by the unallocated shares of common stock. Each year, shares are released from the collateral as the note is repaid, according to the following formula: the total number of shares held as collateral (immediately before the release) multiplied by the ratio of total interest and principal payments for the year to total interest and principal payments remaining on the note. For the years ended December 31, 2023 and 2022, 50,956 and 64,580 shares, respectively, were released from the collateral.

SUPPLEMENTAL SCHEDULE

NAME OF PLAN:
ARETÉ ASSOCIATES
EMPLOYEE STOCK OWNERSHIP PLAN

EMPLOYEE ID# 95-2954108
YEAR ENDED 12/31/2023
PLAN # 003

SCHEDULE H, LINE 4i - SCHEDULE OF ASSETS (HELD AT END OF YEAR)

(a)	(b) ISSUER	(c) DESCRIPTION		(d) COST		(e) CURRENT VALUE
*	Areté Associates	1,292,462 shares common stock	$	29,885,317	$	69,340,557
*	Areté Associates	Cash		619		619

* Identifies related party

- See Accompanying Notes -

Schedule H, Line 4i
Schedule of Assets (Held At End of Year)

Name of Plan:

► Arete Associates Employee Stock Ownership Plan

Employer Identification Number:► 95-2954108

For plan year (beginning/ending):► 1/1/2023 - 12/31/2023 Plan number:► 003

(a)	(b) Identity of issue, borrower, lessor, or similar party	(c) Description of investment including maturity date, rate of interest, collateral, par or maturity value	(d) Cost	(e) Current value
*	Arete Associates, Inc.	1,292,461.4586 shares of common stock		69,340,557
*	Party-in-interest			