



A FORCE FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Letter from Dr. Karen A. Stout, President and CEO of Achieving the Dream

America's 1,000-plus community colleges are engines of opportunity and economic mobility in communities nationwide. They play a central role in providing millions of Americans affordable access to higher education. Community colleges enroll nearly half of all students in higher education including the largest percentage of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students. About three in 10 (29 percent) community college students are first-generation and one-third are economically marginalized who otherwise would not have a pathway to postsecondary education.¹

Achieving the Dream (ATD), a reform network of more than 300 community colleges in 45 states and the District of Columbia, provides a nexus for improvement in these colleges to support student success and create more equitable communities. That work is more important than ever as current circumstances require us to think more boldly beyond the reasonable strategies of the pre-COVID era to address the unprecedented challenges at our door. This includes working with our Network colleges to develop new approaches to:

- put students on solid financial ground with sound emotional health and well being;
- tear down inequitable structures and advance policies, practices, student services, and teaching approaches that more directly address the root causes of inequitable outcomes;
- address unemployment, underemployment, and job displacement in communities; and
- respond to enrollment shortfalls by making equity, not meeting recruitment targets, the guiding force to address enrollment declines.

¹ American Association of Community Colleges, 2021 Fast Facts: https://www.aacc.nche.edu/research-trends/fast-facts/



To address these challenges, ATD has led the way with new strategies, new coaching, new resources for colleges, and new expertise and internal capacity for leadership. This year the organization secured the largest investment in our history. The \$20 million gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott will allow us to secure our future, expand our focus on equity, and bring support to new regions and institutions that have lacked the resources to benefit from ATD's approach to student support and institutional transformation.

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Most importantly, we are committed to using these resources and strategic support from other donors to invest in our Network colleges more deeply and help them become accessible hubs of learning, credentialing, and economic mobility that eliminate inequities in educational and workforce outcomes and lead the way forward in catalyzing equitable and economically vibrant communities.

This document synthesizes what ATD and its Network colleges and strategic partnerships have achieved and been working on during a historic moment that called for a major shift in course. We invite other funders and partners to ioin us in these efforts.

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STRENGTHENING THE NATION'S **COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

In good economic times and bad, community colleges have held fast to their commitment to prepare students of all ages and backgrounds for future learning and everchanging workforce demands. Community colleges more than any other institutions — form the core of the nation's adaptable workforce development system, helping transition young people into the labor market and serving current workers who need skills that are aligned with the needs of local and regional commerce.

ATD network colleges in 45 states and the District of Columbia

Students are served by ATD Network colleges

Students that have graduated from high school with some college credit through ATD's Gateway to College program since the program's inception

These dynamic institutions change the life course for students by meeting them where they are and putting them on track for credentials and degrees — the ticket to good jobs that pay a living wage. They prepare the nation's workforce by developing talent for local businesses and growth industries and play a significant role in revitalizing communities.

ATD was formed to strengthen the sector's commitment to equity and access and specifically to improve student success rates for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and economically marginalized students. That work has been even more important in 2021, as the impact of the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn is being felt in every community.

Enrollments at community colleges have dropped nearly 15 percent between 2019 and 2021, including about 18 percent for Black, 16 percent for Latinx, and 21 percent for Indigenous students.²

Millions of workers are still jobless or require retraining, creating a greater need for postsecondary education and training. Recent estimates show that as many as 17 million workers may need to transition to new jobs post-pandemic.3

² National Student Clearinghouse, Fall 2021 Enrollment Update: https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/

³ McKinsey & Company, The future of work after COVID-19: https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-after-covid-19#

Community colleges historically enroll larger numbers of students during economic downturns as students seek new skills and training to reenter the workforce, but the pandemic created a different reality. Our institutions have seen a nearly 15 percent two-year enrollment decline, part of the largest overall drop in 50 years.4 The biggest declines are coming from first-generation, economically marginalized, and racially minoritized students. The dynamic is creating additional concerns about growing economic inequality and lack of social mobility within communities.

2021 COHORT OF NEW ATD NETWORK COLLEGES

- Southeast Arkansas College (AR)
- Middlesex Community College (MA)
- East Mississippi Community College (MS)
- Central Ohio Technical College (OH)
- Madison College (WI)

In the face of these circumstances, ATD is helping community colleges address their biggest challenges — removing the barriers for access, equity, and success for racially and economically marginalized populations; accelerating student success work; and helping to transform community colleges to become hubs of economic growth and workforce development in their communities.



⁴ NPR, More than 1 million fewer students are in college. Here's how that impacts the economy: https://www.npr.org/2022/01/13/1072529477/more-than-1-million-fewer-students-are-in-collegethe-lowest-enrollment-numbers-2021

ATD'S COMMITMENT TO TRANSFORMING WHOLE **COLLEGES**

ATD's focus on institutional transformation — the core work of the organization involves deep and customized engagement with each Network college to improve student success and eliminate equity gaps. Over 50 ATD coaches and our program staff work with colleges to strengthen every aspect of their college's operations from developing more student-centered teaching and learning practices and student support services to increasing data capacity and supporting leadership development. Our unique approach to supporting community colleges has resulted in significant improvement in student success outcomes across the Network.

This work is complemented with multiple grant-funded initiatives that allow ATD and participating colleges to focus on innovative approaches to strengthen their student success work and to inform the ongoing services and supports that ATD provides Network colleges.

NORTHEAST WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

2021 Leah Meyer Austin Award Winner

Achieving the Dream's Leah Meyer Austin Award is the highest honor awarded to colleges in the ATD National Network.

In 2009, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) began asking itself: Who are we missing? Who are we not being successful with? Where do we need to go? And how do we get there? The college joined the ATD Network in 2010 and developed tools to answer those questions.

The keys to answering those questions were data and a commitment to shift focus from helping students become "college-ready" to making the college "student-ready." Working with ATD coaches and staff, NWTC has implemented a system of improvements to promote student success, including early intervention, expanding the college's institutional research team, transitioning from 15-week to eight-week courses, providing NWTC staff with supportive skills and mandatory trainings, and improving communication with students about their pathway to success.

Not only has the college substantively increased student persistence, credit completion, and the proportion of students who successfully transfer and earn a baccalaureate degree, they have also narrowed equity gaps for students receiving Pell Grants, part-time students, and student parents. Specifically, the college has:

- increased fall-to-fall persistence rates from 57 percent to 62 percent over four years, a five percentage point increase;
- decreased persistence rate gaps for Pell recipients compared to non-Pell recipients by five percentage points and for students with children by five percentage points over four years;
- increased successful credit completion ratio from 71 percent to 75 percent, a four percentage point increase; and
- increased bachelor's degree attainment within six years for students starting at NWTC from 27 percent to 34 percent in a three-year period.

2021 DREAM SCHOLARS

Students are at the center of ATD's work. Our Network improves outcomes for more than 4 million students as we partner with institutions to strengthen their capacity as profoundly accessible hubs of equitable learning, credentialing, and economic opportunity. The DREAM Student Scholars program is an experiential learning opportunity for community college students designed to enhance leadership, critical thinking, and networking skills.



Jasminh Au Gateway to College at Laney College (CA)



Sarah Cuevas Triton College (|L|)



Bheri Hallam Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (ND)



Nikita Johnson Lorain County Community College (OH)



Pedro Moranchel Hudson County Community College (NJ)



Estefany Palencia Westchester Community College (NY)



Ethan Rossier Middlesex Community College (CT)



Clifton Traywick Western Technical College (WI)

CREATING EQUITABLE, ANTIRACIST INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITIES

Achieving the Dream was established with a vision of addressing inequities in student outcomes by using data-informed decision-making to identify and close equity gaps in educational access, persistence, and attainment. As the country continues to struggle with the systemic racism that still pervades our institutions and belief systems, colleges are looking to ATD to help them strengthen and broaden their equity focus to better serve students.

ATD is helping community colleges center equity in all of their student success work by emphasizing the crucial importance of moving from simple notions of diversity and inclusion to identifying and dismantling institutional policies and practices that replicate racial and other barriers to student success and intentionally invest in equity-minded policies, practices, and behaviors.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP FOR RACIAL EQUITY

Project: Racial Equity Leadership Academy (RELA)

Purpose: ATD is working with teams of leaders, faculty, and staff from 10 community colleges in a year-long, intensive program designed to develop bold strategic plans and actions to create equitable outcomes for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students across their institutions.

Partners: RELA is funded by The Kresge Foundation and Greater Texas Foundation and developed and implemented in partnership with the University of Southern California Race and Equity Center.

This work requires well-designed and supported professional learning opportunities for community college leaders, faculty, and staff to better understand the lives their students live, to listen with intentionality, and to examine how their own biases and incorrect assumptions may influence teaching and student interactions and impede student progress.

Through professional learning opportunities such as this year's inaugural Equity in Teaching and Leaning Institute, our new webinar series "Operationalizing Equity, Social Justice, and Inclusion to Transform Teaching and Learning," and our equity-oriented coaching services, ATD works with colleges on a broad range of strategies and practices designed to dismantle structural barriers to equity. Examples of that work include facilitating courageous conversations on equity with broad groups of stakeholders; using data to identify opportunity gaps and develop equity insight metrics; developing culturally validating pedagogies and student services that affirm student cultures, identities, and experiences; and connecting pedagogy to equity and justice by fostering critical analysis, reflective processes, and critical consciousness.

BOLSTERING STUDENT SUCCESS AT 33 TRIBAL COLLEGES

ATD's equity-centered work includes our multiyear effort to bolster student outcomes at 33 Tribal Colleges and Universities, part of Project Success, which offers services and supports to help Minority Serving Institutions improve student persistence, retention, and financial literacy skills. Working with ATD through coaching, learning sessions, and a community of practice focused on key issues at tribal institutions, the colleges have built evidence-based and student-focused cultures to improve student persistence and completion. Partnering with the American Indian College Fund and American Indian Higher Education Consortium, ATD has helped the colleges build data capacity and supported a growing number who have joined the Postsecondary Data Partnership run by the National Student Clearinghouse. Ascendium Education Group administers the project on behalf of its partners and the U.S. Department of Education.

REINVENTING STUDENT ACCESS AND **SUCCESS**

With the increase in poverty in our communities and pervasive challenges for students to enter and complete college, the boundaries of the community college campus must become permeable and extend to where our students and their families live, work, and learn. To serve students and make good on the promise of college as a vehicle to upward mobility and community well-being, our institutions must reach ever deeper into the lives of students and the workings of their communities.

Providing Comprehensive Academic and Nonacademic Services to Support Student Success

Community colleges serve many students who face out-of-school socioeconomic challenges including financial instability, food and housing insecurity, dependent care, healthcare and mental health needs, and others. The pandemic exacerbated these issues: Many current students significantly reduced their course load or dropped out completely, and one-quarter of 2020 high school graduates delayed going to college. These enrollment and persistence challenges at community colleges disproportionately impact Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, as well as those who are first-generation and economically marginalized.

ATD also is helping institutions build capacity to connect students with holistic student supports, from academic advising to services that address out-of-school challenges to mental health counseling. Research tells us that more holistic and integrated services can improve student success, but community colleges often lack the resources to address the breadth of student needs. ATD helps meet that need through coaching, a host of tools and resources, and learning events like the Holistic Student Supports Institute and Student Mental Health and Well-Being Summit which were attended by hundreds of community college professionals from around the country. Fundamentally, this work is grounded in developing a deeper understanding of our students and then developing dynamic services to meet those diverse needs.

HELPING COMMUNITY COLLEGES DEVELOP CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR STUDENTS

Project: Advising Success Network (ASN)

Purpose: ASN provides technical assistance for colleges seeking to establish a holistic, equitable approach to academic advising for low-income and Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander students. As part of the network, ATD designed service tracks for the technical assistance support and synthesized strategies to advance a deeper understanding of students by community colleges. In May 2021, ATD released Knowing Our Students: Understanding & Designing for Success, a comprehensive guidebook that includes tips, tools, guidelines, and resources for effective implementation.

Partners: ASN is funded by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Other partners include Educause, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the National Academic Advising Association, and the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Expanding Student Access

ATD and its Network colleges are leading efforts to profoundly expand access to college and design programs that allow students to persist and progress more quickly. Rather than focus on standard marketing and recruitment approaches to maximize yield, ATD Network colleges are working to meet students where they are — in the heart of their neighborhoods and communities — with early, extensive, and continuing engagement. This includes opportunity youth, students who have stopped out short of a credential, and particularly adult learners, many of whom will need to seek out education and training to reskill for the digital economy.

BOLSTERING ENROLLMENT OF ADULT LEARNERS

Project: Prioritizing Adult Community College Enrollment (PACCE)

Purpose: The PACCE initiative supports 20 community colleges across the nation to scale up promising efforts to enroll and re-enroll adult learners aged 25 and older to expand the number of adult learners at community colleges, particularly Black and Latinx students.

Partners: PACCE is funded by Lumina Foundation and is being implemented and supported in partnership with ideas42, rpk GROUP, Equal Measure, and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Closing Gaps in School/Community-to-College Pathways

Community colleges once had a ready supply of local students seeking to take advantage of their commitment to help any and all comers enter and complete certificates and degrees. But today, though the percentages of students completing high school are increasing, their numbers are declining due to demographic shifts, and in recent years as a result of the pandemic, community colleges are seeing fewer Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students enroll.

To promote equity and establish more powerful pathways to college and work that lead to long-term careers, community colleges must leverage their localness and systematically create stronger partnerships with K–12 education and myriad community partners to better identify and support those who are not on a pathway to college. To help community colleges identify and strengthen those partnerships, ATD is helping cities, counties, states, and regions identify, plan, advance, and implement best practices in reconnecting youth, dual enrollment, early college high school, and school and community partnerships. For example, ATD is working with local coalitions funded by philanthropy, business, and states to establish stronger connections between college and schools beyond guidance counselors to include teachers and



college faculty and establish more effective pathways to employment, school, employment opportunities, and college.

ATD is working with its network of community colleges nationwide to make intentional commitments to establish effective partnerships among postsecondary institutions, public schools, community-serving organizations, employers, and workforce agencies to help young people find their pathway to gain the education and skills for lifelong careers. This effort is placing a conscious focus on reaching out to racially minoritized young people and young people who want to stay in the community for college and careers.

With support from the Barr Foundation, ATD has developed a K-12 partnership landscape analysis that helps colleges and their partners identify equity gaps in dual enrollment, early college, other bridge programs, and the school-tocollege pathway in general, and then identify partnerships that could be built to help address those gaps.

BUILDING SCHOOL-TO-COLLEGE-TO-CAREER PATHWAYS

Project: Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Purpose: The PLC initiative aims to close gaps in local education pipelines that prevent economically marginalized young people from achieving economic mobility. It brings together high school educators, community college faculty, workforce development professionals, community-based organizations, and employers to establish new career pathways in local communities in Florida, Michigan, Ohio, and Texas.

Partners: The PLC initiative is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

MOBILIZING WORKFORCE **DEVELOPMENT**

Unemployment, underemployment, and a rapidly changing economy have increased the need for community colleges — already a major force in upskilling and retraining — to work innovatively to meet local workforce development needs and help more students find a career with economic mobility.

ATD is working with Network colleges to both meet short-term workforce development needs and look into the future to support job growth and economic development in the digital economy as a central part of our equity work. Partnering with employers and community groups to understand and create good career pathways for students is key not only to our students' success but also to promoting economically vibrant communities.

Several current initiatives such as the Professional Learning Communities initiative discussed on the previous page focus on both assessing local workforce needs and how colleges will need to transform and leverage local partnerships to help students get the education and training they need to secure good local jobs. As demonstrated by our recently released Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms guide, ATD is also working with

INCREASING WORKFORCE SUCCESS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Project: Building Resiliency in Rural Communities for the Future of Work Initiative

Purpose: Operating in some of the nation's most economically challenged rural communities, this initiative seeks to increase the capacity of rural colleges in seven states to provide students with skills needed for tomorrow's workforce and connect students with careers in the digital economy that pay family-sustaining wages. The initiative will help build a deeper understanding across higher education and among policy and funding communities about how rural colleges and their partners can promote the economic mobility of students and the vitality of their communities.

Partners: The Building Resiliency initiative is funded by Cognizant U.S. Foundation, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, The Community Focus Fund at the Chicago Community Foundation, Walmart, and Ascendium Education Group.



colleges to create more flexible educational programing to help students progress through programs more efficiently and move more easily between work and college. Central to this work is rethinking how we measure the success of our programs and our institutions.

As an organizational partner of the National Student Clearinghouse's Postsecondary Data Partnership, ATD is working with other partner organizations — including the Community College Resource Center and the Aspen Institute — to develop next-generation metrics for community college success based on equitable social mobility. The effort — funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation — will look to incorporate economic indicators such as employment of community college graduates, unemployment and labor participation rates, and measures of college mobility. Partners are also exploring metrics that demonstrate community vitality such as adult literacy, educational attainment levels, intergenerational mobility, the percent of disconnected youth who complete high school, and other possible success indicators that require institutions to be more deeply embedded in their local communities.

ATD Network colleges that have received the Leah Meyer Austin Award, ATD's highest recognition. Colleges receiving this award demonstrate a holistic approach to institutional strength, aligned policies and procedures, a student-focused culture, notable increases in student outcomes, and the narrowing of equity gaps.

Leader Colleges of Distinction that have achieved new, higher student outcomes and narrowed equity gaps

Leader Colleges that have demonstrated concrete progress toward building a studentcentered culture that drives gains in student success

4,000+

Attendees at ATD's DREAM conference and learning events throughout the year

434

institutions and allied organizations represented at DREAM 2021, including 226 in-Network colleges

3,000+

Coaching hours provided to ATD Network colleges

ATD 2021: YEAR IN REVIEW

- 1 February 16-18: DREAM 2021
- 2 March 25: ATD Presidents Symposium
- 3 April 15: New Regional Professional Learning Communities Project Announced
- 4 May 6: Research Agenda for Community College Women Succeed Initiative Released
- 5 May 6-7: Equity in Teaching and Learning Institute
- 6 May 11: Teaching and Learning with Open Educational Resources Study Colleges Selected
- 7 May 13: Knowing Your Students Guidebook Released
- 8 May 24: Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms Guidebook Released
- 9 June 15: ATD Receives MacKenzie Scott Gift
- June 17: First of 12 ATD / Every Learner Everywhere Case Studies on Using Adaptive Learning in Gateway Courses Released
- July 14–15: Building Resiliency in Rural Communities for the Future of Work 2021 Summer Convening
- 12 July 20–21: Gateway to College Directors Convening
- July 26–29: ATD and USC Race and Equity Center Racial Equity Leadership Academy
- 14 August 3-4: ATD Kickoff Institute
- 15 September 1: New Network Engagement Webinar Series Launched
- 16 October 18–21: Data and Analytics Summit
- November 4–5: Student Mental Health & Well-Being Summit and Holistic Student Supports Institute
- December 7: Prioritizing Adult Community College Enrollment Initiative Institutions Announced
- December 13: New Webinar Series on Operationalizing Equity, Social Justice, and Inclusion to Transform Teaching and Learning Announced

WHAT'S NEXT?

This year is an important turning point for Achieving the Dream. With the support of our funders and partners we are seeking to broaden and deepen our reach and more aggressively support the centrality of community colleges as drivers of social change and economic mobility. To advance these efforts, we will be implementing a new strategic vision and plan designed to help our Network colleges to catalyze antiracist, equitable, and economically vibrant communities; advance institutional transformation; and make community colleges profoundly accessible hubs of learning, credentialing, and economic mobility. Through these efforts, ATD aims to help our colleges and communities eliminate inequities in students' educational and workforce outcomes.

This shift toward addressing the important equity and economic links between our institutions and the communities we serve marks an important next step in ATD's leadership to promote real change for students and communities. From our 17 years of work and experience focused on building the capacity of Network institutions to transform student support systems, student completion, and certification, we have learned that it isn't enough to make changes in institutional management or to better support individual students through completion. We need to advance social and economic change in these communities where community colleges are anchor institutions that, working in partnership with community-based organizations and government agencies, serve as a local hub for opportunity, workforce development and economic recovery.

This work will permeate both our organization and our Network as we:

- **Build** on our existing capacities and strengths. We will embed principles of equity and access throughout our work and develop new ways for colleges to engage with the Network.
- **Launch** new opportunities for impact and innovation that advance radical access through community and workforce engagement while strengthening our field leadership with a connection to advocacy.



- **Develop** a path to financial resilience that ensures we can maintain stability in the face of unexpected shocks to the field or philanthropic investment.
- Strengthen our core operations to support the evolution of our services. We will ensure not only that our internal operations align with the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion that we are advancing with colleges, but also that we have the tools and technology to deliver on our vision effectively and securely.

In particular, we are strengthening our research and assessment capacity to gather and report deeper and more granular data on the student success work and outcomes of our Network colleges.

A TRUSTED PARTNER FOR IMPLEMENTING AND ASSESSING NEW SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS

ATD's broad reach to a network of high-performing community colleges, its nearly 20-year track record in institutional improvement, and its capacity to spread innovation within states and across the nation makes ATD an ideal partner for funders, government agencies, and nonprofits working to develop new solutions to key challenges in community colleges nationwide.

ATD works with its partners to develop crosssector and institutionally based ecosystems unconstrained by traditional ways of thinking. We have experience in planning, implementing, supporting, and evaluating change efforts in community colleges and communities. ATD's reputation for advancing innovation and its collaborative relationships with research and implementation partners, equity organizations, regional compacts, and other groups has resulted in national and regional foundations looking to ATD to advance solutions across crucial areas of improvement. ATD has managed funded initiatives focused on access, equity, holistic student services, skill development and workforce readiness, transforming teaching and learning, and using technology to strengthen advising, teaching, and student services.

We are a trusted partner that can help introduce new strategies to address longstanding problems and implement — and learn from — new ways of supporting student success and community development. We can help philanthropy, government agencies, and national partners introduce new innovations across the nation or in specific regions to create more equitable outcomes for students and families and reshape economic and social mobility in communities.

ATD ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

- Amelia Peabody Foundation
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Ascendium Education Group
- Barr Foundation
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- The Community Focus Fund at the Chicago Community Foundation
- Cognizant U.S. Foundation
- ECMC Foundation
- The Ford Family Foundation
- Greater Texas Foundation
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation
- The Kresge Foundation
- Lumina Foundation
- Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
- rootEd Alliance
- Walmart
- William & Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Woodward Hines Education Foundation

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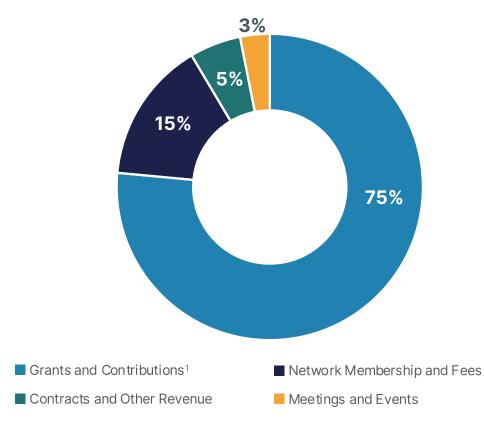
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FINANCIALS

Sources of Funds



Cal	IKO O	of E	iun da
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Grants and Contributions ¹	\$27,344,414
Network Membership and Fees	\$5,357,453
Contracts and Other Revenue	\$1,937,352
Meetings and Events	\$1,114,517
SUBTOTAL	\$35,753,736

^{1 -} Includes one-time \$20M donation received in FY21

Uses of Funds for FY21 Activities

TOTAL	\$13,420,696
Fundraising	\$77,831
Management and General	\$2,852,290
Program Services	\$10,490,575



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