



2021

Path & Purpose



School's Out™
Washington

2021 Annual Report



School's Out Washington supports the people and organizations who empower youth through expanded learning. Through advocacy, professional learning, and grants, we provide a foundation of support and expertise that enables and enriches the critical work of youth-serving organizations.

Dear Community,



None of us will come through these past two years the same. We certainly see this for our youth, our youth development programs, and for us at School's Out Washington.

It has been the greatest honor to lean in to support young people by bolstering the work of youth programs across Washington state in this critical moment. As young people, schools, and their communities have struggled with the effects of this pandemic, youth development programs have stepped up. Across the state, we've seen new organizations form and programs expand to meet the growing needs of the youth in their communities. This is especially true in communities of color and in high-poverty rural and underserved areas of our state. We've also seen growing collaboration and connection between programs, with families, with schools, and with youth themselves.

What has become abundantly clear is the fundamental role of youth programs in the ecosystem of supports that helps youth stay safe, grow, and thrive. This diverse, dynamic sector is often more reflective of young people's cultures and communities than schools and other youth-serving sectors. They have the flexibility, adaptability, and connections to really meet young people where they are.

At School's Out Washington (SOWA), we've strived to be as adaptive as the programs we serve. We work to expand access to our trainings and supports for youth development programs around equity, program quality, social-emotional learning, and more. This includes listening to what programs need and thoughtfully developing new trainings, greatly expanding our live and virtual trainings, coaching, and assessments, and rolling out a new system for self-paced online learning.

As a co-leader of the Youth Development Strategy Table, we advocated successfully for increased funding for youth programs, as well as the development of a Youth Development Workgroup. The group is charged with putting forth a recommendation for a new state grant program for youth programs. In King County, we championed the renewal of the Best Starts for Kids levy, which was approved by voters with increased funding for youth development and expanded learning programs.

In partnership with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and King County's Best Starts for Kids, we've had the privilege of serving as an intermediary grant maker for expanded learning programs, working to reduce barriers in access to these public funds for BIPOC-led and grassroots organizations, while improving impact and relevance by engaging youth programs to inform the funds' priorities and approach.

This is a dynamic time and for youth development and expanded learning programs across Washington state; it could be a watershed moment. At SOWA and in programs across the state, our path and purpose are becoming clearer. Systems and structures to support this powerful but still-emerging and underinvested-in sector are taking shape. Youth and youth development providers' voices are rising, and policy makers are starting to listen. Through shared vision and purpose, connection, community, and persistence, we are creating equitable pathways for thriving youth across this beautiful state.

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Elizabeth Whitford.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Whitford, CEO

o Better Together

Supporting Young Refugees through Partnerships

Since 2007, SOWA has fostered partnerships between community and schools to support refugee students.

Through the federally funded Refugee School Impact Program, SOWA connects school districts, afterschool programs, and community organizations to serve young refugees and their families. We provide funding to every partnership to support their refugee programs, in addition to technical assistance, training, program development support, and much more.

What we've seen time and time again is encapsulated in the idea of "better together." By working together, schools and community programs have more resources to pull from—including invaluable staff expertise, experiences, and knowledge. This includes streamlined

processes that create a more welcoming path into a new country and school system. They build long-term relationships with a foundation of trust that extends to school staff, parents and, of course, the students.

While the focus of the program is academic and English language learning support, the true impact is much more holistic. One example is when a family from Eritrea was evicted and had to move to a homeless shelter. Teachers and the afterschool staff continued to provide academic and emotional support to the students during and after school, including visiting them at the shelter. They worked together with the family to keep the students in the district.

"We all came from different countries, and the paths that lead the way here was different. And when we discover that we can come after school to learn and these lessons were for us, we were very happy. This program was Refugee School Impact. We are thankful for this RSI Funding because it gave us future."

-Decatur High School students

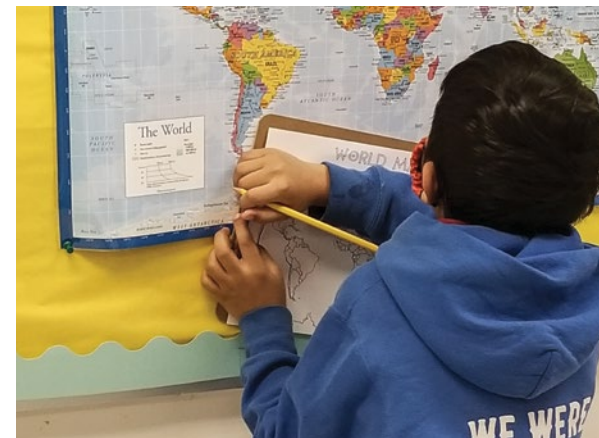


Photo: Students participate in a lesson through the Refugee School Impact Program in Tukwila.

International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is a long-standing partner of the Refugee School Impact Program. IRC helps refugees "rebuild their lives and regain control of their future in their new home community." Their Youth and Education Program "provides educational and developmental opportunities that build the essential academic, personal and social skills needed to succeed." The program supports five school districts, from Auburn to Everett, in their efforts to make newcomer families feel welcome and flourish.

Hear from Rachel Kurz, Youth and Education program manager at IRC.



What can you tell us about your partnerships and ongoing work with school districts? Are there any goals or milestones that have been met in the last year?

"The work is not possible without really strong and collaborative partnerships. One big milestone we achieved in 2021 was with the Tukwila School District, one of our longest partners, (which) started as a newcomer summer school program and evolved into an integrated part of their summer school program. Because of the pandemic and everyone's heightened awareness for the need for social-emotional learning (SEL), (Tukwila) asked us to provide SEL lessons and curriculum in their entire elementary summer school program. They were able to use the expertise that we have in trauma informed practices and SEL and we were able to broaden our reach."

"How has your path and purpose changed in the last year?"

"Our path changed to emergency response mode. We have established programs, but we basically had to drop everything since there is this urgent need. We provided remote learning kits to all our families and figured out how to do our afterschool program virtually. It fits within the larger purpose to continue providing educational support and helping families connect.

Before the pandemic, our time with families was limited. With the pandemic, there was a greater need for us to have more in-depth and more frequent communication with families. Now we have a whole family engagement and education access program that we didn't before.

In 2021, that department did a project with 37 families from all five school districts that we work with, speaking seven different languages to get a better understanding of what their experience has been connecting with schools and supports from IRC.

The results identified huge gaps. Around 72 percent of families did not receive communications from schools in a language they could understand. A very high number of parents talked to teachers less than two times in an academic year... We have a whole new focus now on bringing awareness to these inequities and really advocating at the schools. Because we have really good partners, they are willing to hear this and prioritize these things. This includes trainings, using interpreter services, and school orientations with newcomer families.

This has helped us broaden and deepen our purpose... (and in) recognizing how critical family engagement is for the success of the children."

SUMMER FUND

Building Community in the Sun

In spring 2021, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) chose SOWA to administer over \$5.5 million in American Rescue Plan funding to summer programs for young people aged 4-21 in Washington state.

SOWA worked to deliver an equitable and accessible process that dispersed funds across the state. The overarching goals were to strengthen diverse organizations to deliver high-quality summer programs and expand access in underserved communities with a focus on:

- Social connections among young people
- Engaging young people in physical and outdoor activities
- Programs serving youth furthest from educational justice
- In-person programming

Funded organizations received between \$5,000-\$45,000. Peer reviewers were recruited based on geographic representation and lived experience with the priority youth populations—BIPOC, LGBTQ, migrant/immigrant, youth experiencing homelessness, youth in poverty—and participated in anti-bias training.

Summer Fund

Organization Spotlights

The mission of the **Salish School of Spokane** (SSOS) is “dynamic Salish language revitalization powering cultural renewal and building a stronger, healthier community.”

Of the 29 Salish languages of the Pacific Northwest, 16 no longer have surviving first-language speakers. SSOS offers invaluable Salish language immersion childcare and elementary school for Native American families in the greater Spokane area, working to preserve and revitalize the Southern Interior Salish languages of the region.

Since their beginning, Salish School of Spokane has been directed and led by the community they serve. Their work is immediate and personal, and the impact is felt intimately. They’ve learned over the years that re-establishing intergenerational and cultural connections is key.

“Native Americans and their culture are not a thing of the past. Often, students read about Native American history, and it just ends, as if Native people are gone, and that’s false. *púti? k“u alá? - We are still here,*” said Salish School of Spokane Principal, Christopher Parkin.

Mending Wings mission is to “empower Native American youth and families to walk together in wholeness and beauty, honor (the) Creator through our cultures and lives...”

The organization serves teens of the 14 Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation where many different dialects of the language are spoken. Most youth participants range in age from 11-18. Mending Wings inspires a rich cultural practice with youth and a sense of belonging.

“It’s more about how we treat each other and that’s beyond the classroom... (For the youth) we are a soft-landing place,” said youth leader Josephine Buck.

“I want people to know that we’re homegrown. This (work) is here and where we’re from. We raise up leadership from within. Most of our staff were once teenagers in the program... (Mending Wings) will be in good hands when I’m done,” said President and Founder, Corey Greaves.



Photo: Youth in the Mending Wings program

Summer Fund

Organization Spotlights Cont.

Greater Trinity Academy's mission is to “provide a high quality innovative academic experience stimulating a child’s enthusiasm for learning throughout their educational career and beyond.” They are working to eliminate the achievement gap that exists in far too many cases. The motto they instill in all their youth is, “I can learn anything.”

The organization has been working with BIPOC youth in the south Everett community for 25 years, using an individualized approach that focuses on social, emotional, and mental health needs. They emphasize a whole child, holistic approach to their teaching, especially with Dr. Terry Metcalf, former NFL player, as the curriculum specialist and kindergarten teacher.

“We want to leave a legacy of excellence. We want to raise up and train students to reach for excellence. They don’t have to be perfect, but find joy in the best they can be,” said Dr. Metcalf. Executive Director

Dr. Paul A. Stoot, Sr. added, **“We’ve helped children and families from their beginnings. George Washington Carver said that ‘education is the key to unlocking a world of freedom’...everybody deserves freedom.”**

The Asian Pacific Cultural Center’s mission is “to bridge communities and generations through art, culture, education and business.” Executive Director Faaluaaina (Lua) Pritchard shares her insight into the work of the organization.

“Teaming up together (with school districts) makes the difference. That’s what’s fantastic about our work. We are making a difference. The Tacoma School District graduation rate was low until they partnered with our organization and now it’s up. In January 2011 we started with 5 kids in our program and even though the school year was already happening, we still helped them graduate. We now work with over 260 students from six school districts in Pierce County.”

“We are a cultural center. We use culture to turn students around. When students fully understand who they are as a person and their cultural background, they become better people and it shows in school too.”



Photo: Greater Trinity Academy students



Photo: Enjoying the playground at the Foundation of Academic Endeavors

Foundation For Youth Resiliency & Engagement (FYRE)’s mission is “to advocate for equitable opportunities that allow all youth to thrive.”

FYRE is located in Omak, a rural and under-resourced community in north-central Washington. Its residents are very diverse due to the local agricultural industry and much of their county being located on the reservation of the Colville Confederated Tribes. Before FYRE opened their doors in 2021, there was not a direct service youth center in the county.

More than just a safe place to do homework and socialize after school, FYRE offers educational advocacy, increasing accessibility to whole-person health services, referrals, and resources to youth experiencing homelessness, support to teen parents, and more.

In the 19 months FYRE has been open, they have served over 600 young people across their entire county, the majority being BIPOC and/or LGBTQIA+. Some young people travel over an hour on the bus to get to FYRE. Staff also offer to pick up youth, so their services are accessible to those who want to participate.

“(We saw the impact of our work) several months ago, when young people started bringing friends. We work fast to make strides and try not to be caseworkers... We’ve been called Aunties. FYRE is where youth turn in times of crisis and it’s an honor to be there (for them) at that time,” said Co-Executive Director Mady Sandoval.

The Foundation for Academic Endeavors (FAE) is located in the Skagit Valley. Many kids in FAE’s programs are from low-income and Latinx families; many are English language learners. The organization offers continuous opportunities for youth and families to participate in their work. Tutoring, summer learning, and much more is available for youth in preschool to 8th grade; older youth are welcomed back as volunteers.

FAE also offers college fellowships to first-generation students interested in social services. They pair the fellow with mentors that support them through their education journey. And parents are supported in continuing and achieving their education goals.

“We are a holistic organization. With us the whole family is served,” said Carol Rodin, co-executive director.

“We try not to homogenize the community that we serve. Everyone carries unique experiences and values. Our work is joyful and welcoming because we center those experiences in decision making from curriculum to workshops. We start with (our community) at the center,” said Dania Jaramillo, co-executive director.

Summer Fund

Geographical Distribution of Funding

Summer Fund at a Glance

\$5,575,000 dispersed

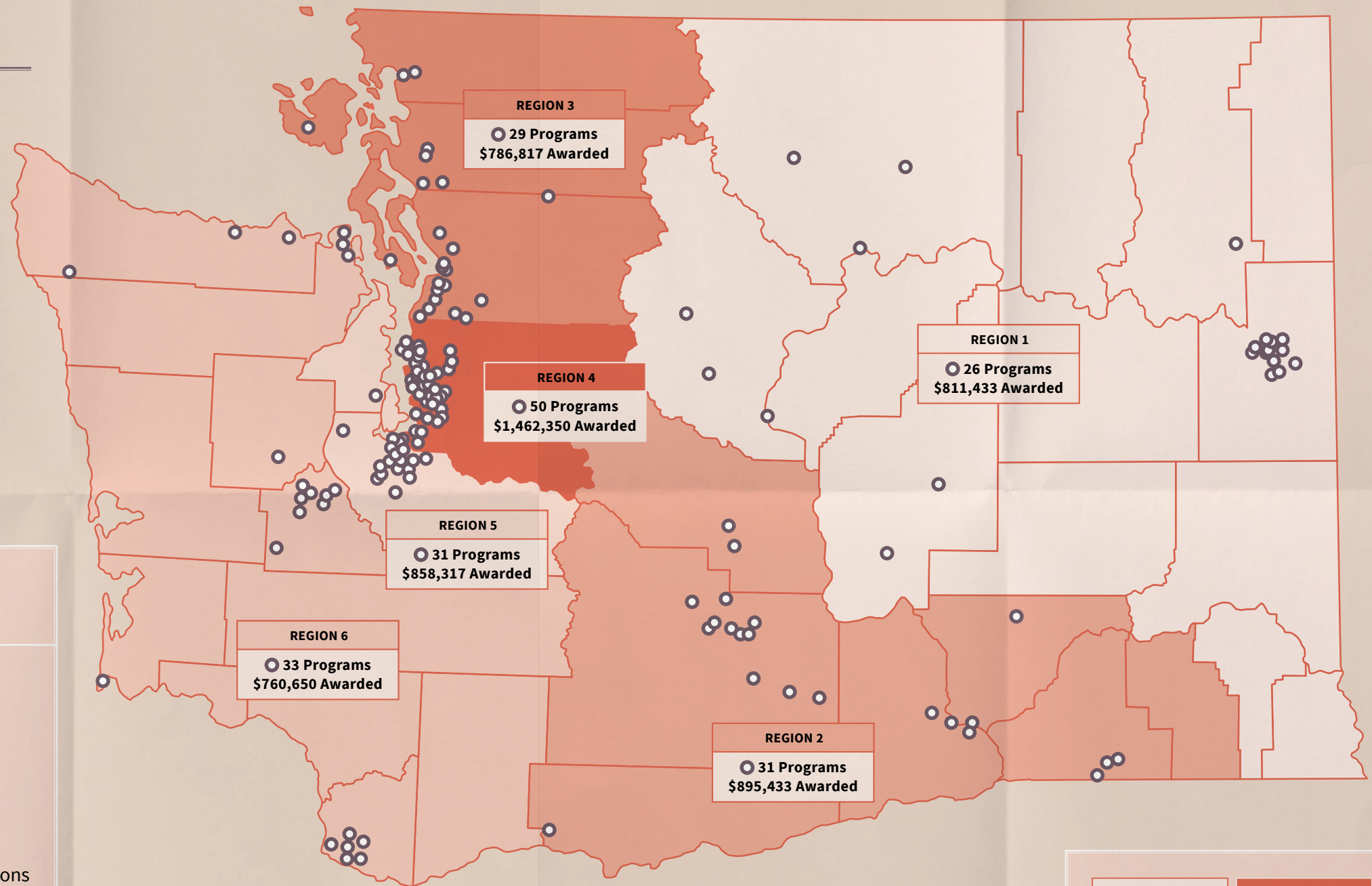
200 organizations funded

Focus on BIPOC, LGBTQ, migrant/immigrant, youth experiencing homelessness, youth in poverty

92% of young people in funded programs in priority focus populations

75% of staff, leadership, and boards of funded organizations are in priority focus areas

85% of peer reviewers had lived experience with focus areas



REGION 1 (Eastern WA)	REGION 4 (King County)
REGION 2 (South Central WA)	REGION 5 (Pierce County)
REGION 3 (North Puget Sound)	REGION 6 (Peninsula & SW WA)

200 organizations funded across the state

Lessons Learned

A statewide view of expanded learning

As Washington state's only statewide intermediary focused on expanded learning, we continuously work to strengthen supports and advocacy for youth programs. Partnering with state agencies, SOWA administered \$15 million in CARES Act and ARPA funds (COVID-relief) to 620 youth programs over the past two years. Ninety percent of the youth served by these programs are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), low income, and/or other youth populations furthest from educational justice.

Many grassroots and culturally specific youth programs utilized this funding to grow their services in response to increasing needs in their communities. In administering these grant programs, we were also able to gain unique insights into the strengths and uneven access to youth development opportunities that exist within our state. Here are a few of those insights:

Early in the pandemic, grassroots and BIPOC-led organizations grew quickly to meet the increased need in their communities. This was especially true outside of King County.

In 2020, the expenses of BIPOC-led and other highly representative youth development organizations located outside of King County grew by 141 percent compared to 52 percent for similar organizations in King County and a 16 percent increase for less representative organizations.

Young people in many parts of our state have low and inequitable access to youth development opportunities.

While there are no parts of our state that have adequate funding or availability of high-quality youth development programs, the geographic differences statewide are stark. This was evident in the disproportionately high number of requests for funding we received from Seattle and King County-based organizations when compared to other regions of the state. Fifty percent of applications were from King County for the 2021 Summer Fund, whereas King County is home to only 28 percent of the state's BIPOC youth and youth in poverty.

This disparity is connected to lower availability of local and private funding for youth programs in other areas of the state. To address this, we allocated grant funds across the state based on the population of BIPOC youth and youth in poverty in each region of the state. We will continue to advocate for increased federal and state funding to address these statewide gaps in access.

\$15 million was critically needed support, but it is not nearly enough.

In each grant cycle, we received far more requests from highly qualified applicants than we could fund. For the 2021 Summer Fund, we were only able to fund 22 percent of the applicants. As COVID-related funding opportunities wind down, it will be critical that we both sustain and grow this funding so we can invest in the hundreds of youth programs stepping up to help youth thrive across the state.



2021 Bridge Conference

“The Seeds We Sow” to “From Seedlings to Stardust”

Adapting to and inspiring hope in the new world of youth development.

A year into the pandemic, the world felt more accessible virtually, but also more challenging to navigate when creating an online conference. For SOWA, it meant a second attempt to bring the community together in a meaningful way in such uncertain times. The Bridge Conference planning team wanted to expand on the previous year's theme (“The Seeds We Sow”) in a way that also reflected the ongoing changes the youth development field was experiencing. The seeds were sown; what comes next?

“From Seedlings to Stardust” was developed as a theme to not only inspire hope, but also showcase the continued imagination and adaptability of youth development organizations. The four-day virtual gathering brought together 500 attendees and over 85 workshop presenters from across the country, instilling community and inspiration to all who were involved.



Bridge artwork
by Stacy Nguyen



2021 Elevate Washington

Connecting The Dots With Data

In 2019, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, SOWA launched Elevate Washington, a singular source for statewide data about youth programs.

At its core, Elevate Washington is a community platform that captures and maintains critical information on Washington's youth-serving programs. From youth and staff demographics to funding streams and program content, the data shows us who's being served and where gaps exist.

Big-picture insights, combined with our member reporting tools, help providers improve service delivery and measure impact over time. Elevate Washington also provides a free public directory for families, advocates, and young people to find and evaluate programs for youth (ages 5 to 24).

With an unparalleled view of the expanded learning landscape in Washington—including opportunity deserts, racial and socio-economic demographics, innovative programming, etc.—we can target resources to where they're needed most and increase access to quality programs.

2,500+ programs at more than
2,000 sites across Washington

elevatewashington.org

Collective Care

Self-Paced Learning Goes Virtual

In 2021, SOWA's newly formed learning & design team came together to create a learning management system. This growing suite of self-paced workshops is infused with collective care practices and coaching services. Learners can access the library at any time and earn STARS credit.

This new resource adds on to SOWA's professional learning offerings—in-person workshops, online training, coaching, and more—to holistically support the growth and needs of youth development workers and leaders.

The learning & design team shares what inspires them and what comes next.

How would you describe the path to developing the learning management system and its purpose for SOWA moving forward?

Lynda Llavore, lead coach:

"The path was paved by the people, providers and youth development community. It started with feedback and the challenges with participation. Some sites thought that they would like some variety and more use with technology. I think the system is the best practice of wrap-around services."

Maria Pia Johnson Barreto, learning and design manager:

"I envision a platform that serves humans... that includes collective care and reminders that you are part of a community. It is like a library of content that can be used anytime and uses coaching services to implement work."

How do you think the learning management system will improve connections to communities and trainings?

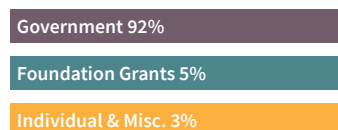
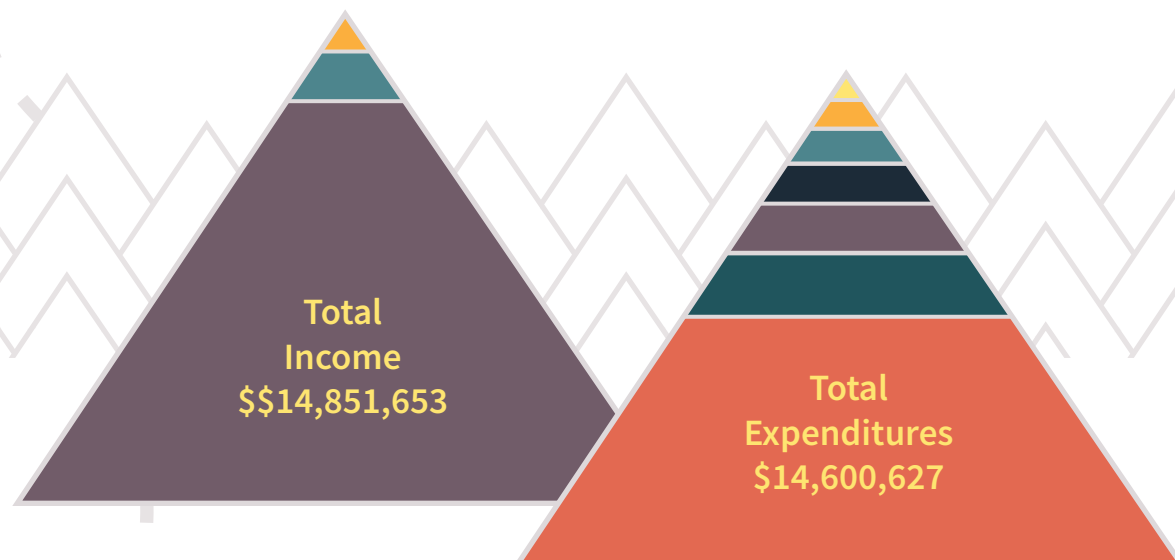
Clara Rosebrock, learning and design coordinator:

"Deepening dialogue around content, challenges, and what they want to learn about. We've been working on how to make the platform more accessible through the language we're using, readability level, and how we are using visuals to enhance learning."

April Miller, lead coach: "The courses are being thoughtfully put together. We recognized that there is not just one way to think or take in info."



2021 Financials



SOWA'S IMPACT

1,167
coaching hours

375
training hours

475
youth programs
strengthened

1,808
adults trained

57,659
youth impacted

\$13,982,000
granted



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