



Nourishing Our Ecosystem

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



School's Out™
Washington



TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Table of Contents
3	From Our CEO
4	SOWA By the Numbers
5	<i>Youth Voices Belong at the Table</i>
6	<i>The Critical Value of the People Behind the Programs</i>
7	<i>The Power of Convening the Youth Development Sector</i>
8	<i>How Long-Term Investments Help Youth Programs Thrive</i>
9	Bridge By the Numbers
10	Financials
11	Staff
12	Connect With Us

From Our CEO

Dear Community,

In the face of turmoil and uncertainty, moving forward with intention is not easy, but necessary. Over the past two years, the youth development ecosystem has faced hardship. Budget cuts, funding losses, and mounting pressure on the organizations that serve young people across Washington have made this work harder.

Jeff Duncan-Andrade spoke of critical hope. The idea that hope is grounded in honesty and reality. We acknowledge the barriers we must face, and act anyway. We continue to advocate for more access, more funding, and deeper collaboration, not in spite of what we're facing, but because of it.

School's Out Washington made an intentional decision and commitment to focus on reinforcing our roots back in 2024. We carried that momentum forward and made significant strides.

Through the **Best Starts for Kids Expanded Learning Initiative** expansion, we deepened our partnerships with organizations throughout King County. Sustainable funding during a time of economic uncertainty meant our coaches could show up consistently. We met with youth development professionals, supported their growth, and helped them deliver high-quality experiences to young people.

We launched the first **Youth Advocacy Subcommittee** to bring in youth voices to advance our advocacy goals. Subcommittee members joined us at Bridge Conference to speak to our advocacy goals and the importance of collective action.

Through our **Quality Improvement** cohort program, coaches created space to discuss and support workforce development and pathways for providers looking to find a way to continue their passion for supporting young people in a way that is sustainable.

We are proud of these accomplishments.
And our work is not done.

There are young people who still don't have access to services in their communities. Youth development programs across the state are sunseting because of lack of funding or running full programming without adequate staff support.

These things must change. Our role as an intermediary positions us to provide the supports needed to move the field forward.



Elizabeth Whitford
School's Out Washington CEO



School's Out Washington By the Numbers

7,414 total training attendees
across workshops

3,270 individuals attended at
least one SOWA training

421 youth-serving organizations
engaged in SOWA trainings

853 providers completed SOWA's
School Age Basics training

5 symposiums

held across the state, offering
95 in-person workshops



1,723.5 hours

of coaching provided
by SOWA coaches



32
out of 39

counties in Washington
had providers attend
SOWA trainings



231

program sites participated in
quality improvement cohorts
and received coaching

\$5.4M

*Best Starts for Kids Expanded Learning Initiative funds distributed to **29** BIPOC-led organizations and **9** place-based collaboratives, serving **nearly 9,000 youth** in King County*

\$5.1M

*Refugee School Impact Program funds awarded to **13** district-community partnerships and **15** community-based organizations, serving **over 2,000 refugee students** across the state*



Youth Voices Belong at the Table

Oftentimes youth development programs that work to support and uplift young people don't include them in the decision-making process. Youth voices belong at the table when their future is at stake. As the adults in the room, we must step aside and make space.

"People seem to believe that young people don't care about [advocacy], but that's just simply not true," shared Daija, a high school senior. "[Young] people just feel powerless. We're like, okay, well, there's nothing we can really do."

While School's Out Washington (SOWA) has included youth voice over the years, our goal is to make this a consistent practice. In the summer of 2025, SOWA created the Youth Advocacy Subcommittee (YAS) to offer more opportunities for young people to participate in our coalition, the Youth Development Strategy Table, and to provide direction to our advocacy efforts.

The first YAS cohort comprised ten young people from across Washington. From July 2025 through October 2025, they learned about the youth development sector, researched their own elected officials, and in small groups reached out to legislators to advocate for issues that matter to them, including more access for young people to engage in youth development programming.

"[Legislators] all listened very intently, like they really wanted to hear our thoughts," Daija said, reflecting on her experience as a YAS member last year. "It was really cool. They cared about everything we had to say."

YAS represents a meaningful cultural shift for SOWA, and we are committed to making it permanent. We are working to establish an ongoing YAS that will meet in annual cohorts and have opportunities for past members to take on leadership roles. Like many worthwhile efforts, this work requires financial resources. We will continue to pursue funding to sustain this program because we understand the impact of youth voice.

"When it comes to working with young people from the [first] Youth Advocacy Subcommittee, I want to encourage them to continue telling their story," said Radu Smintina, SOWA's policy and advocacy director.

Daija plans to do exactly that. Now that her time with YAS has concluded, she continues to advocate for youth development and other issues that are important to her.

And she has one thing to say to the adults in the room:

"Don't just assume we don't know what we want. We want to be respected."



Youth Advocacy Subcommittee members (left to right): Daija, Michelle, Isaac, and Angelo.

The Critical Value of the People Behind the Programs

The youth development professionals directly supporting young people are one essential component for youth to be healthy, happy, and thriving. And yet, they do so while navigating systemic barriers like low wages and benefits, limited career pathways, and inconsistent access to professional development.

Peggy Kwok, Youth Development Manager at CISC, knows this firsthand. She has more than 20 years in the youth development field with no plans to leave despite the challenges. “It’s not about a paycheck. It’s about my passion,” Peggy said. “I have so many treasured, memorable moments watching young people grow. I’ve made a big impact on their lives.”

Learning outside the school day is essential to young people’s social, emotional, and academic development. Systematically, we struggle to invest in this workforce, which continues to limit the quality and consistency of youth experiences.

School’s Out Washington (SOWA) is working to change that. Through our quality improvement work, which includes professional development supports like coaching, training, and peer-to-peer support, we strengthen the youth development workforce and support the conditions needed for high-quality, impactful programming.

Youth development programs that participate in SOWA’s quality improvement cohorts receive a tailored experience to strengthen staff practice. Each cohort meets regularly for training and peer learning while a coach supports providers as they move through their individual assess-plan-improve

journey. SOWA coaches facilitate this process by building trust, centering the strengths and expertise providers bring, and creating space for meaningful growth.

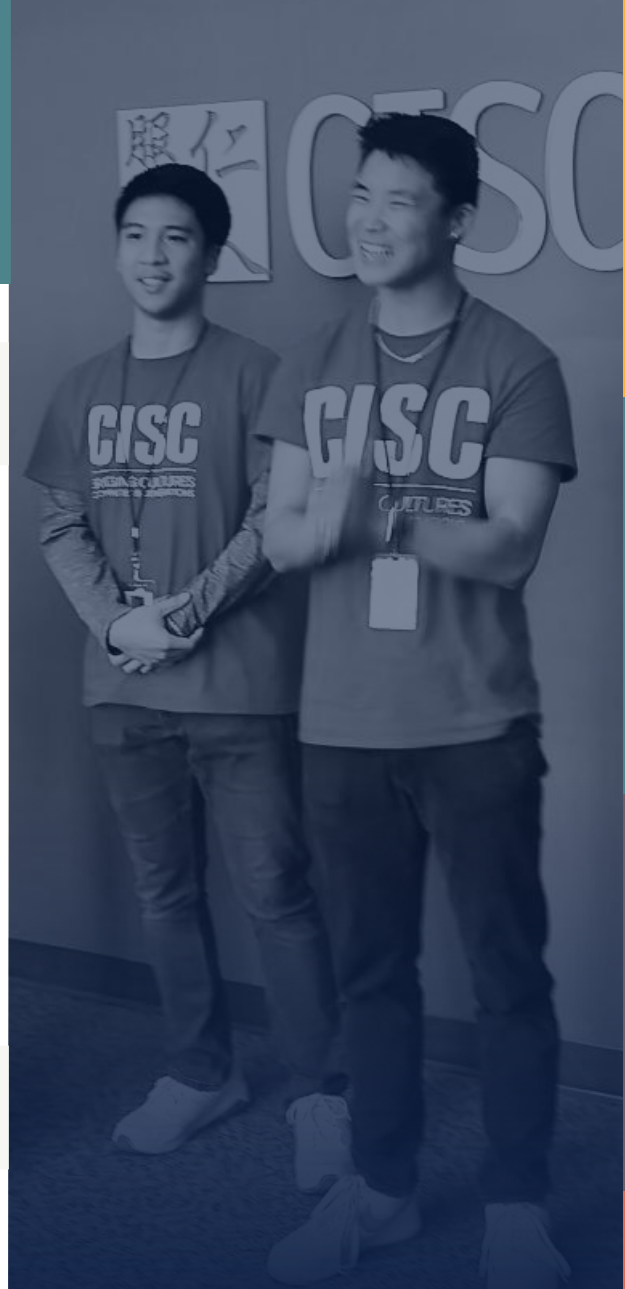
“Our [coach] is absolutely wonderful! She works with us around topics that are most important to us and doesn’t shy away from letting us know how we can be even better at supporting our kiddos,” one City of Seattle school age childcare provider said in a survey about the impact of the quality improvement process.

Through SOWA’s professional learning supports, providers’ skills and confidence grow and programs become more intentional, engaging, and impactful, leading to stronger outcomes for young people.

“I see the growth in the kids in our program. We help them discover the strength they may not be aware of,” Peggy said, reflecting on the impact of working with SOWA. “One kid was afraid to speak and now they participate because of the love and support we provide.”

SOWA’s quality improvement work reflects a larger vision of a fully supported youth development workforce, so that the people who show up every day for young people are developed and recognized as the changemakers they are.

“We need to elevate the professional recognition of our afterschool program workers,” Peggy said. “If we can have a stable workforce, then I think the quality can be maintained.”



Youth providers engage in an activity at CISC.

The Power of Convening the Youth Development Sector

We teach young people that relationships are the foundation of trust, belonging, and growth—yet adults teaching this philosophy all too often do their work alone. When youth development providers work together to share best practices and resources, something phenomenal happens: **youth, communities, and organizations create the conditions to thrive.**

“I appreciated the opportunity to share my experience with my peers and to hear their experiences in order to find common instances and share potential solutions,” a youth development provider said after taking a School’s Out Washington (SOWA) training.

Youth development providers often work in siloes competing for the same dollars that serve similar populations. Collaboration between youth program providers can feel difficult during economic uncertainty and increased stress and pressure. While providers have been conditioned to operate with a scarcity and competitive mindset, it is also what keeps the youth development sector fragmented. Convening is a necessary strategy to think and act collectively for the well-being of youth, communities, and for the youth program providers themselves.

SOWA convenes youth providers across the state of Washington for professional development opportunities, coalition meetings, and collective action with an approach that fosters relationship building, connection, and collaboration—ultimately strengthening the youth development ecosystem. Our Bridge Conference is the largest convening SOWA hosts, welcoming over 500 attendees who come

together to learn and provide a high-quality experience for the young people in their programs.

“I most appreciated the people here at the conference,” one Bridge attendee shared. “I got the chance to network and meet so many new people with similar dreams and ideas.” Another reflected, “I appreciate how SOWA provides a space for youth workers from a variety of backgrounds and organizations to share their experience and knowledge.”

Those connections are not accidental. Through intentional professional development opportunities and shared learning spaces, SOWA creates an environment where organizations can build capacity, exchange ideas, and see themselves as part of something larger than their individual programs.

“Being able to talk to other organizations about the successes and problems that they are seeing in their programming [was most valuable],” one program provider mentioned in a survey. “A lot of us are seeing some of the same problems but having the community of people to talk to about it and help each other find a solution is helpful.”

Another provider responded to the same survey and said, “Being able to meet other organizations in person has allowed us to expand our network of collaborations, as well as work together to cross-collaborate through sharing resources and practices used in each other’s programs.”



2025 Bridge Conference attendees share in pairs during a workshop activity.

How Long-Term Investments Help Youth Programs Thrive

In an increasingly competitive funding landscape, supports like the King County Best Starts for Kids (BSK) Expanded Learning Initiative are a vital lifeline for youth development programs.

Throughout the initiative's 2022-2025 grant cycle, School's Out Washington (SOWA) and BSK **invested \$16.1 million** in funding for **56 expanded learning organizations** serving youth who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and/or living in poverty in King County. During this time, the initiative reached **13,958 youth** through nearly **90,000 hours** of expanded learning programming, serving an average of **2,000 youth per day**.

SOWA also provided grantees with coaching, assessment, training, and peer learning supports to strengthen program quality. The impact of the initiative was evident in positive outcomes reported by grantees in 2025, including:

- **90%** of youth strengthened social emotional skills
- **91%** of youth built supportive relationships with adults and/or peers
- **94%** of youth and **96%** of families were satisfied with programming offered

But concerns about sustainability loomed overhead. Funded by a levy that wouldn't be voted on again until 2027, grantees were left uncertain about the approaching 2.5-year gap and its inevitable impact on the youth benefitting from these programs.

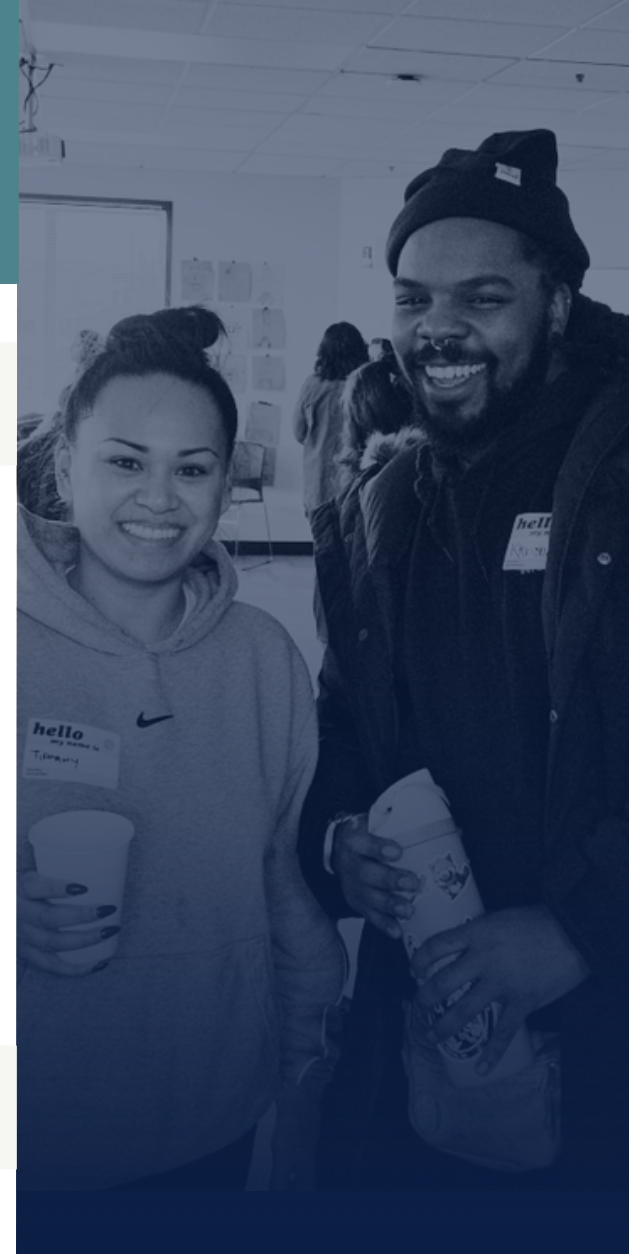
"The growth in our community because of the [BSK] grant is only the beginning of our full potential," Abubakr Islamic

Center of Washington shared in 2025. "Without this funding opportunity, it would be very likely that these opportunities would be discontinued because of budget constraints."

To support continuity for grantees, who were providing strong programming and in good standing, SOWA advocated for a contract extension—and the county listened. After an internal application and feedback process, SOWA awarded contract extensions to BSK grantees through 2027, investing an **additional \$14 million** and giving programs the opportunity to continue increasing access, deepening connections, and measuring impact over time.

The positive impacts of long-term investments in youth programs can be felt across entire communities. For the Yesler Collaborative, which operates in an area where expanded learning opportunities are "highly requested by residents as a key component of community safety," the grant extension was "a critical aspect of remaining present and responsive to community."

And for the Diaspora Family Healing Network, the extension reflects a larger commitment to long-term investments in young people. *"For many youth, stable relationships with their peers, coaches/mentors, and positive adults require consistency," shared staff. "Sustaining gains made over the last three years [highlights] our commitment to the future of the youth we all care about."*



BSK grantees Tiffany Victory of Atlantic Street Center and Khushar Williams of Geeking Out Kids of Color attend a BSK grantee event.

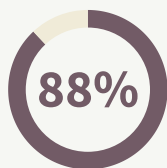
Bridge By the Numbers

568 total attendees

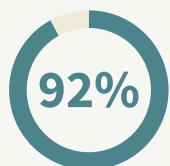
50% of presenters identified as Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color



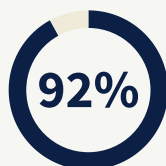
reported that 2025 Bridge was a good use of their time



increased professional knowledge/skills as a result of attending 2025 Bridge



felt that the overall conference environment was welcoming and inclusive



felt they had meaningful opportunities to engage with other attendees

This is the first time I have attended and by far one of the best conferences I've ever been to in my life. Thank you for all the hard work that it takes putting it all together.

[I appreciated] when a current presenter approached me and said they were in the workshop I facilitated last year and that they took what they learned and changed their curriculum. They also said that I “rocked.” It made me feel like I made a difference.

Thank you for posting the menu ahead of time!!! That was incredible and so inclusive for my dietary needs. Thanks for not beating around the bush at the current state we are in politically. Always appreciate how raw and authentic this conference is!



 **School's Out™
Washington**

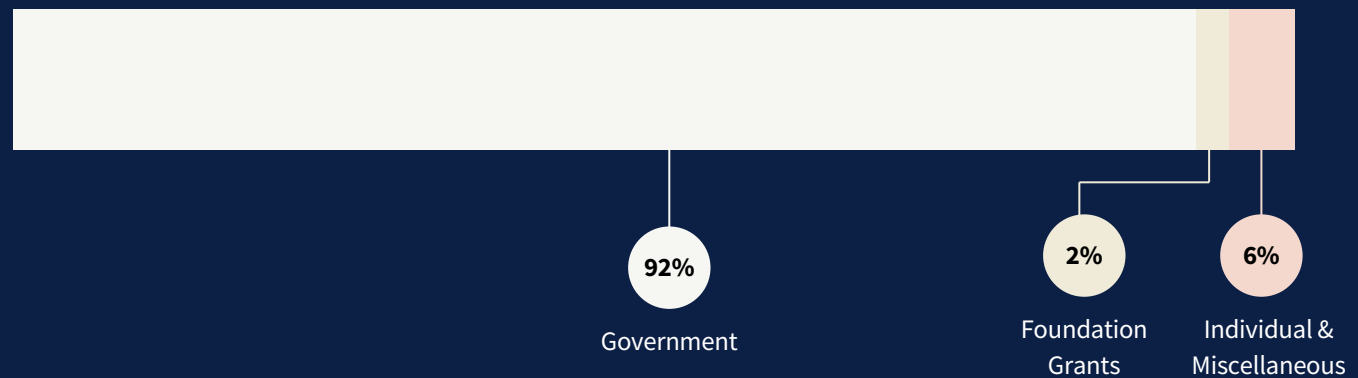
A 2025 Bridge Conference presenter leads a workshop during the conference.

Financials

Total 2025 Expenditures = **\$14,897,721**



Total 2025 Income = **\$14,750,134**





Staff

Oscar Alvarez
Benjamin Baird
Sevan Bussell
Pang Chang
Latima Charbonneau
Samone Coleman
Liz Director
RJ Dumo

Mehateme Emiru
Matt Fadich
Rocio Franco
Jo Hamer
Jarrod Hamerly
Bill Hanawalt
Nicole Ichinaga
Omana Imani

Lisle Betsche Kehr
Angel Lai
Lynda Llavore
Shirley Lu
Kintasha Martinez-Jackson
Katherine McCall
April Miller
Nat Neville

Kimmy Nguyen
Adriel Rivera
Malea Sary
Sala Sataraka
Sheona Sauna
Luca Savotsky
Leandra Shelton
Radu Smintina

Justin Tidwell-Davis
Rey Ward
Marcus Warlick
Elizabeth Whitford
Jessica Winston
Ka'ohe Wong

Board of Directors

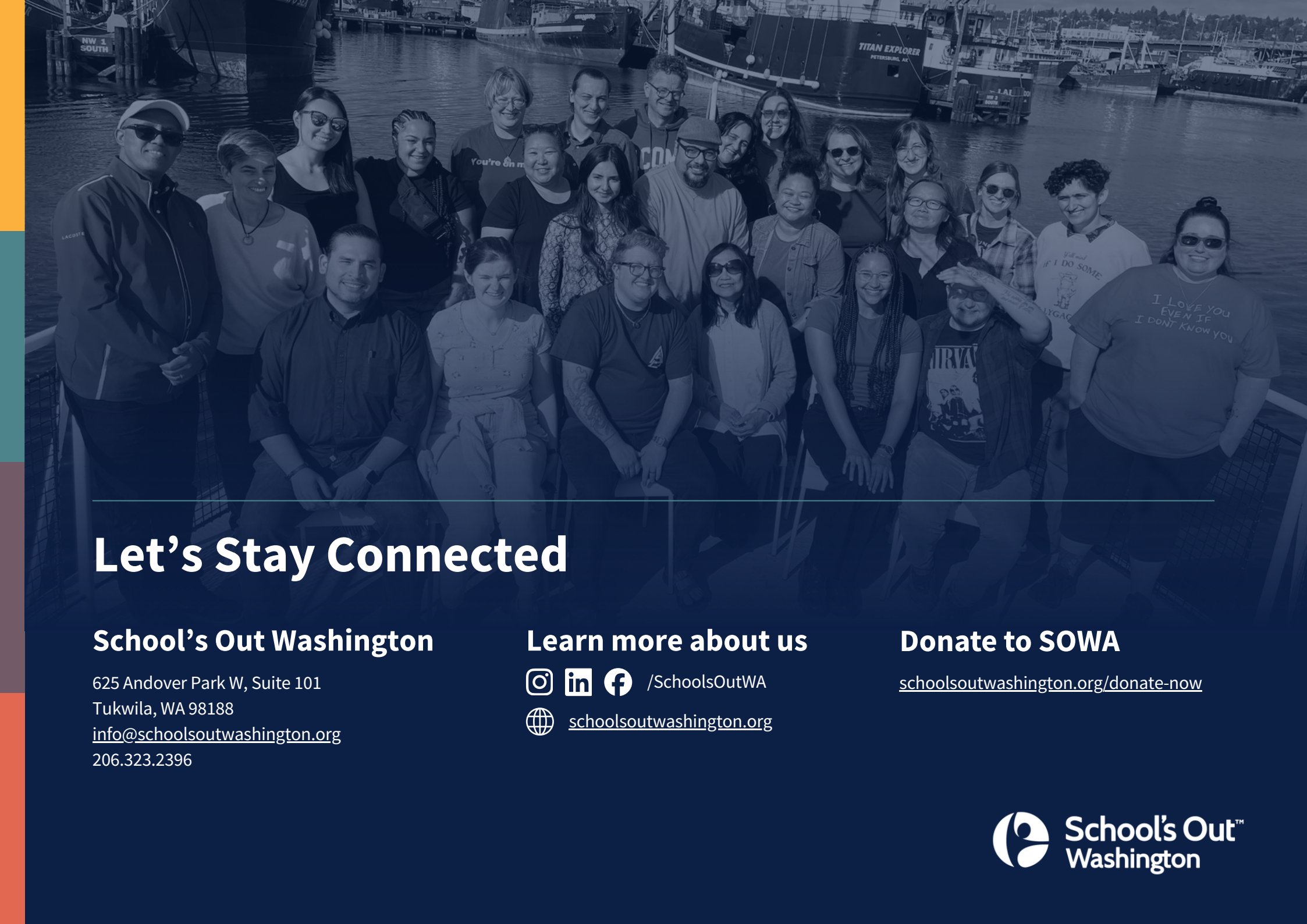
Amber Ortiz-Diaz
President

Corinna Quesada
Vice-President

Rowena Pineda
Secretary

Nicole Yohalem
Treasurer

Gina Anstey
Carlina Brown Banks
Luis Gomez
Luis Ortega
Judy Yasutake
Ashley Byrd
Andrea Carrillo



Let's Stay Connected

School's Out Washington

625 Andover Park W, Suite 101
Tukwila, WA 98188
info@schoolsoutwashington.org
206.323.2396

Learn more about us

   /SchoolsOutWA
 schoolsoutwashington.org

Donate to SOWA

schoolsoutwashington.org/donate-now

