

FORWARD TOGETHER



SOCIAL
INNOVATION
FORUM

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



THIS YEAR GREATER
BOSTON'S SOCIAL CHANGE
COMMUNITY SHOWED UP,
DUG DEEP, AND MOVED
FORWARD, TOGETHER.

Dear Friends,

Change is underway across Greater Boston. Real, deep, necessary change.

In the midst of another tremendously difficult year, the Social Innovation Forum (SIF)'s network of nonprofit leaders came together to sustain critical work and move our collective commitments to the next level. Our social change marketplace served as an important hub for leaders and supporters. We're proud of the degree to which leaders showed up for one another, even as they contend with the ongoing pandemic and the persistent intersecting crises of racism, health inequities, and economic inequality.

Moving forward together means constantly reflecting, acknowledging, and addressing inequitable—often racist—patterns of resource distribution so that philanthropy can participate more equitably in community change. We deem this work necessary as a facilitator in Greater Boston's social change sector and have continued to hold ourselves accountable for this in 2021, in accordance with our three-year strategic plan.

Here, we showcase stories of the hard, deliberate work from across our social change marketplace—the nonprofits who kept charging forward even as they faced new challenges and built up new capacities, the funders who looked inward to acknowledge and revise old paradigms, and the large network of alumni organizations that leaned on one another through a period of ongoing struggle and uncertainty.

We're proud of the ways our community continued to embrace change throughout this difficult year. We're proud of the trust we've been building and the courageous work our partners have undertaken—their willingness to look within, rethink, recenter, and live up to a more inclusive vision for our communities.

We thank you for continuing to show up and support our critical work. Together means all of us. Together includes you.

With sincere gratitude,

Susan Musinsky
Executive Director

Weston (Tony) Howland III
Chair, Board of Directors

5,116
INDIVIDUALS

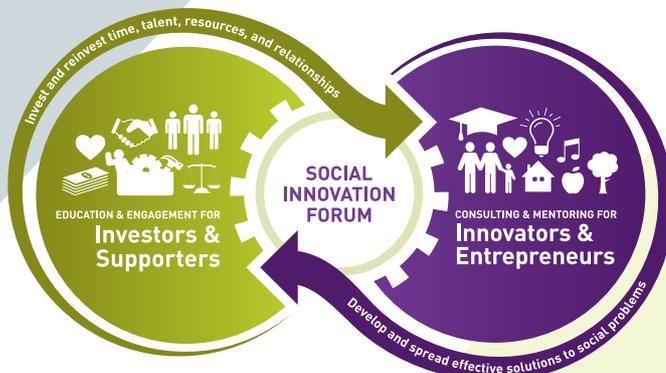
ENGAGED
IN 2021

\$520
THOUSAND

CHANNELED VIA
IN-KIND SERVICES
IN 2021

\$46
MILLION

DIRECTED OVER
18 YEARS



The Social Innovation Forum catalyzes Greater Boston's social change community

by investing in our collective capacity and connecting the region's most innovative grassroots nonprofits with supporters who can help drive impact.



IGNITING CHANGE, TOGETHER

The Social Innovation Forum (SIF) strengthens the relationships between leaders of grassroots nonprofits that are tackling our region's most critical social issues and individuals and institutions with the resources and social capital to amplify their impact.

We've designed a marketplace approach to social change where funders and supporters **learn** about urgent social issues, the root causes of inequities, and effective change strategies; **unlearn** individual and systemic biases that inform traditional practices; **imagine** better models and a more equitable future; and **create** more powerful ways of working together to sustain and accelerate change.

2021 MARKETPLACE

197

NONPROFITS

190

FUNDERS

150

SKILLED
VOLUNTEERS

51

WORKSHOPS
AND EVENTS

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

› Social Innovator Accelerator

Selected nonprofits participate in the 24-month flagship program.

› Capacity Camps

Additional nonprofits participate in customized training series lasting up to 12 months.

› Alumni Programs

Former program participants access continued support via workshops, cohort-based learning, and pro bono services.

› Funder Education

Investors deepen understanding of social issues, examine and shift to more equitable grant-making practices, and connect with community-led nonprofits.

› Co-Working Supports

Small nonprofits access office amenities and support through collaborative co-location with SIF.

› Network Events

All members of our growing social change community have access to educational programs and other network events.



SKILLED
VOLUNTEERS

GRASSROOTS FOCUS

SIF prioritizes investment in nonprofits that are led by, responsive to, and reflect the voices of those most affected by the issues being addressed.



FOUNDATIONS



FAMILY
FOUNDATIONS



FRIENDS



CONSULTANTS



IN-KIND
PARTNERS



INDIVIDUAL
DONORS

TRUST-BASED PHILANTHROPY

We aim to address the inherent imbalance between funders and nonprofits and redistributes power—systematically, organizationally, and interpersonally—in service of a healthier and more equitable nonprofit sector.

Source: The Trust-based Philanthropy Project



NONPROFITS



CORPORATIONS



NONPROFITS >>>

BUILDING CAPACITY, TOGETHER

Our flagship Social Innovator Accelerator looked a bit different in 2021. Remote programming did not change the depth of our commitment to our nonprofits, though, even as we adjusted our work to meet challenging situations, we recognized that building relationships virtually takes time.

This year, our newest cohort of Social Innovators dove into online workshops and consultancies that culminated in persuasive pitches to funders and volunteers at our virtual Spring Showcase. Meanwhile, the previous cohort continued strengthening organizational capacity through virtual workshops, executive coaching, and pro bono consultancies. In a year that tested every nonprofit, these dedicated leaders found the guidance, resources, and camaraderie they needed to move their missions forward, together.

SOCIAL INNOVATOR ACCELERATOR

Outreach to **394** nonprofits

6 selected, **24** months

All receive:

- ✓ Cohort-based learning
- ✓ Focused consulting
- ✓ Executive coaching
- ✓ In-kind services
- ✓ Evaluation support
- ✓ Preparation of pitch and prospectus
- ✓ Multiple opportunities to present to investors

CAPACITY CAMPS

13 nonprofits

Customized, multi-month training programs

All receive:

- ✓ Cohort-based learning
- ✓ Executive coaching
- ✓ In-kind services

2022 ACCELERATOR TRACKS

Our next cohort of Innovators—to be announced in December 2021—will be nonprofits at work in the following areas:

Community Approaches to Advancing Racial Justice

Building and Sustaining Social Capital

Women and Girls: Addressing Health and Wellness Inequities

Promoting Career Exploration for Youth through Civic Engagement

Pathways to Intergenerational Wealth in BIPOC Communities

Comprehensive and Innovative Approaches to Supporting Communities Affected by HIV and AIDS

Anything Goes: Innovative, Effective, and Sustainable Approaches to Our Region's Toughest Social Issues

Work-Based Learning and Mentorship Opportunities for Youth and Young Adults



Keeping the Lights On and a Mission Moving

Musau Dibinga, Executive Director, OrigiNation Cultural Arts Center, 2020 Social Innovator

After nearly three decades providing dynamic, transformative dance programs to Boston-area youth, OrigiNation, like most nonprofits, faced many challenges as a result of the pandemic. Musau Dibinga, who founded the performing arts organization with her sisters in 1994, says, “We were really on a great trajectory ... and all of a sudden it came crashing down.” COVID put a pause on a full slate of performances that would have paid the majority of OrigiNation’s operating costs into 2021. “If we had not been part of SIF,” Musau says, “I think we would have closed our doors.”

Two funders who had already formed a relationship with OrigiNation through SIF stepped forward with a combined \$50,000 to help OrigiNation get through the year. “It was huge,” Musau says. “We were able to pay the teachers for the summer and pay our rent.”

Musau found additional layers of support among the fellow executive directors in her cohort and the ongoing workshops and executive coaching that helped solidify her organization’s strategy and transform her personal sense of leadership. Now, OrigiNation is welcoming youth back into its studios and planning future programs that will reignite their purpose, power, and passion for life. As Musau plans for the road ahead, she’s drawing on new tools, a wealth of contacts she never knew existed, and a savvy peer group she can turn to in a pinch.

Photo credit: Pamela Green



2021 INNOVATORS

- Breaktime
- Comprehensive Reentry Program, a model of Project Place
- Everyday Boston
- Immigrant Family Services Institute (IFSI)
- Neighbor to Neighbor MA Education Fund
- The Loop Lab

“

All of us are going through the same things, just at different levels. Now, we have other people we can call and ask for advice. It’s good to just text Renee [from Vital Village Networks] and say, ‘Did you have a problem with this too?’ That makes a big difference.

— MUSAU DIBINGA, ORIGINATION

”



FUNDERS >>>

SHIFTING POWER, TOGETHER

Creating true social change requires funders to rethink how they operate. A core part of the SIF mission, therefore, is to build the capacity of Greater Boston’s philanthropic community through programs that educate, connect, and promote more equitable grantmaking practices. We ask funders to acknowledge inequities in traditional philanthropy and make thoughtful shifts in how they learn from communities, build relationships, and allocate resources. We ask the same of ourselves.

This year, we pushed our efforts further with a new participatory grantmaking process that moves decision-making power from funders to community leaders. We also integrated more community expertise into all of our 2021 and 2022 Accelerator track partnerships and introduced a workshop series that asks funders to reflect on and address the dynamics of wealth, race, and power in their grantee relationships. It is critical work that we will continue to learn from and advance in the years ahead.

92%

of foundation CEOs are white (also 85% of board members)

Source: D5 Coalition’s 2016 Report, State of the Work

9%

of foundation grantmaking in the US goes to communities of color

Source: Philanthropic Initiative on Racial Equity



SIF IS PUSHING FOR GREATER EQUITY IN HOW AND WHERE PHILANTHROPIC DOLLARS ARE GIVEN.

A DEEPER DIVE INTO DEI



In 2021, SIF took a closer look inward. Building on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work begun more than four years ago and our core values adopted in 2020, we brought the entire staff into the process for regular dialogue sessions and action-focused subgroups to examine our own practices with an equity lens. Our board simultaneously held its own series of facilitated conversations on racial equity.

Staff subgroups, still underway, are diving deep in three areas:

Pushing Toward Equity in Philanthropy

SIF's Participatory Selection Process

The conversations unfolding in SIF's participatory Accelerator track sound very different from those of a typical selection process. That's the point. This pilot initiative is an outgrowth of SIF's ongoing effort to bring community voices directly into our most important decisions.

"Traditionally, the funders have the money and make the decisions," SIF fellow Aditi Dholakia explains. "This is a huge shift for us all to see how centering nonprofits benefits everyone."

The track, titled Community Approaches to Advancing Racial Justice, brings together four funders, whose primary role is to listen and learn, and six SIF nonprofit Accelerator alumni who bring lived experience and learned expertise to the grantee selection process as well as first-hand knowledge of what the SIF Accelerator offers to and requires of nonprofits. These paid consultants shaped the track, are leading the application review, and will select the final Innovator.

"There are so many assumptions we make about what the community needs," says SIF's Director of Network Engagement, Carolyn Shaughnessy. "Our goal is to raise up the expertise of the people who actually have it."

Sheri Gurock, one of the participating funders, agrees: "It's important for funders to practice letting go—to see that you can step away from your decision-making power and still feel incredibly proud of the outcome."

The consultants have already introduced concrete changes to the design of this pilot. And the goal is much bigger than one evaluation cycle: SIF intends to embed lessons from the process across its sector-building work and use this example to push our larger funder network toward more equitable and community-driven grantmaking practices.

SIF alum and consultant Cherie Craft says, "I'm eager to see what changes funders will make. I'm committed to being a part of this process because I think this is really where innovation happens for folks in the community."



SIF offers really rich pathways to engage with other funders and community experts. This is the community that I want to surround myself with. These are the hard, honest questions I want to be asking.

— SHERI GUROCK,
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR,
THE BEKER
FOUNDATION



- **DEI Audit:** After conversations with several vendors, we hired YW Boston to conduct a racial equity audit and guide our team through an internal learning process that launched in April 2021.
- **Pathways to Leadership:** We're crafting a comprehensive strategy to build racially diverse leadership within SIF that includes a focus on equitable hiring practices.
- **Learning in Public:** We've committed to intentionally sharing our DEI learning journey with our stakeholders and are developing plans for regular communication.



ALUMNI >>>

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

- 94** organizations
- 180** unique participants
- 3** learning cohorts
- 11** workshops and roundtables
- 47** in-kind engagements



SUSTAINING PROGRESS, TOGETHER

After a rapid roll out of new alumni programs at the start of the pandemic, SIF held steady in 2021 with a full slate of services to help alumni nonprofits address emergent challenges, learn from one another, and access pro bono support.

Guided by our Alumni Council, we've developed a robust program to meet the needs of the 100 nonprofits in our portfolio. Across all programs, a major priority has been on cultivating connections and ensuring nonprofit leaders learn from not just experts but one another. The response has been strong, and we've seen a new kind of energy growing across our network as alumni share ideas, exchange phone numbers, and build the relationships they need to move forward in difficult times.

ALUMNI PROGRAM OFFERINGS



Workshops

Interactive learning on high-demand topics, like board engagement, individual giving, nonprofit storytelling, and more



Learning Cohorts

Focused, multi-part trainings for deeper learning and peer connection, combined with individualized support



Roundtables and Executive Director Circles

Dialogue, idea-sharing, and network-building among nonprofit leaders



“

For so many of us in the fundraising industry, you get thrown in and there’s never someone to train you as you move up. This group helps you navigate that career ladder by pulling together people of various backgrounds who are going through something similar.

— NICK KANE,
WAYSIDE YOUTH &
FAMILY SUPPORT
NETWORK

”



From Fundraising in Isolation to “Something Like Family”

Nick Kane, Development Manager,
Wayside Youth & Family Support Network,
2012 Social Innovator

As the sole development professional among his staff, Nick Kane was eager to connect with peers from smaller nonprofits who could discuss how to prioritize fundraising practices. SIF’s fundraising learning cohort—launched in February—sounded perfect.

The six cohort members began by talking about how the pandemic had multiplied their isolation. For Nick, the initial takeaway was, “Wow, I’m not in this alone.”

The group then dove into topics of mutual interest, like database management and planning virtual events in a time of Zoom exhaustion. Between sessions, participants worked with coaches on individualized projects. “We spent part of one session talking about our mental health,” Nick says. “It was amazing to feel like we’d built a sense of community over Zoom.”

The cohort added two extra sessions and ultimately decided to continue independently. When the Delta variant threatened fall fundraising plans, members reached out to one another by email. “We felt that we really had each other’s back,” Nick says.

The mutual investment has been exactly what Nick needed. “If there’s a step between cohort and family,” he says, “I think that’s where this is trending.”



Advising and In-Kind Projects

Sharing of pro bono expertise, including legal, marketing, and technology, by dedicated volunteers and professionals



Executive Coaching

Individualized support to enhance leadership capabilities and achieve professional goals



Alumni Council

Nonprofit leaders inform and plan programming to support SIF’s alumni community



MOVING FORWARD, TOGETHER



The Social Innovation Forum's change community has grown stronger, bolder, and more connected during a difficult time for non-profits and communities. In 2021, network members turned to one another for critical support, engaged in ground-shifting conversations, and practiced new ways of learning and leading together.

Together, our work continues. Looking ahead, SIF will continue to push, deepen, and evolve our efforts to cultivate Greater Boston's social change sector. We're especially energized about four areas of new and evolving work:



Amplifying DEI

Guided by YW Boston, we've begun a 16-month diversity, equity, and inclusion process with our staff and board that includes thoughtful dialogue sessions exploring issues of race and racial identity, focused action planning to design unique solutions to our own DEI challenges, and check-ins and accountability as we build internal capacity, revise organizational structures, and create a cultural shift.



Learning from our network

Based on survey feedback from our nonprofit alumni, we will evolve our Executive Director Roundtables to create more time for building relationships and learning from one another and introduce alumni-funder dialogues where nonprofit leaders can engage in discussions with funders on a variety of topics. We will also continue our core alumni services, guided by input from alumni organizations.



Moving philanthropy forward

Building on innovations in 2021, our funder education program will continue to dismantle old paradigms and bring local funders along the path toward more equitable and trust-based approaches to philanthropy. Upcoming events will explore how funders can engage in more meaningful social advocacy and shift power and control through participatory grantmaking. In early 2022, our own participatory grantmaking pilot will share its lessons with the broader community.

Taking our learning national

SIF received a two-year, \$175,000 grant from the Fidelity Charitable Trustees' Initiative to convene a national cohort of place-based, "marketplace-making" organizations. SIF will thus be at the table with a group of like-minded organizations from around the country as we learn alongside one another and share practices for building more inclusive and radical change networks that center grassroots voices.



WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

In 2021, we brought exciting talent into several new roles on our team and our board. These individuals bring a wealth of experience in community engagement, entrepreneurship, partnership-building, and grassroots leadership. If you haven't met them already, we hope you'll find time to connect soon.

STAFF

Amaka Maduegbunam,
Development Manager,
she/her/hers

Pavel Payano, *Director*
of Community Mobilization,
he/him/his

BOARD

Emily Fish, *Assistant Director*
of Roca, she/her/hers

Amanda Hahnel, *Director*
of Emerging Products, Fidelity
Investments, she/her/hers

Andrea Perry, *Associate Director*
of Pilot Projects, Harvard
Radcliffe Institute, she/her/hers

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

We thank our community members who sustain our work with generous gifts of time, talent, and resources. We invite you to expand your commitment to social change in 2022, as we move forward together.

- **GIVE:** Provide direct gifts to the Social Innovation Forum to help us sustain, connect, energize, and strengthen Greater Boston's change community.
- **CONNECT:** Meet us at our Boston office or online. We are always ready to connect with new and long-term partners.
- **LEARN:** Attend a virtual workshop or event to learn about pressing social issues, explore power dynamics, and become a more thoughtful agent of change.
- **INVEST:** Explore our Social Impact Investment Guide (available online) to find impactful nonprofits working on issues that matter to you.
- **SUPPORT:** Call us if you are a business or organization ready to invest time and expertise in creating significant social change. We are actively seeking several new in-kind partners.

STAY CONNECTED!

To stay up to date and learn with us, subscribe to our newsletter:
socialinnovationforum.org/mailling-list

GET IN TOUCH!

To learn more about SIF, please reach out to Pavel Payano:
ppayano@socialinnovationforum.org



SOCIAL INNOVATORS

- › Breaktime
- › Comprehensive Reentry Program, a model of Project Place
- › Everyday Boston
- › Immigrant Family Services Institute (IFSI)
- › Neighbor to Neighbor MA Education Fund
- › The Loop Lab

2021

SOCIAL INNOVATOR ALUMNI

2020 1647 | Adaptive Sports New England | Boston Higher Education Resource Center (HERC) | Elevated Thought | OrigiNation Cultural Arts Center | Police Assisted Addiction & Recovery Initiative (PAARI) | Vital Village Network | Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE)

2019 Beat the Streets New England | Disability Policy Consortium | Dream Out Loud Center, Inc. | English for New Bostonians | LEAP for Education | Paige Academy | The Urban Farming Institute | Y2Y Network

2018 ACT Lawrence | Community Boating Center | Fathers' UpLift | GreenRoots | Political Asylum Immigration Representation (PAIR) Project | Partners for Youth with Disabilities | The Renew Collaborative, a program of HomeStart | Strategies for Youth

2017 Boston CASA | Citizens for Juvenile Justice | Community Economic Development Center | Institute for Nonprofit Practice | Julie's Family Learning Program | Project Citizenship | Room to Grow

2016 African Community Education | Budget Buddies | Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association | Dorchester Community Food Co-op | Hale | Louis D. Brown Peace Institute | MassCOSH | SMART Team at Justice Resource Institute

2015 Catie's Closet | Company One Theatre | Courageous Parents Network | Massachusetts Public Health Association | Mystic River Watershed Association | Transformative Culture Project | Waypoint Adventure

2014 Coaching for Change | Doc Wayne Youth Services, Inc. | Mill City Grows | Silver Lining Mentoring | Veterans Legal Services

2013 AgeWell West Roxbury | GRLZRadio | Groundwork Lawrence | Dorchester Youth Collaborative | Shelter Music Boston

2012 Cooking Matters | InnerCity Weightlifting | LGBT Aging Project | Science Club for Girls | Tempo Young Adult Resource Center | WorkExpress

2011 Fiscal Health Vital Signs | Future Chefs | Massachusetts Senior Action Council | MathPOWER | Smart from the Start

2010 Literations | Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance | Medicine Wheel Productions | My Life My Choice | Playworks New England | Project Hope

2009 Bessie Tartt Wilson Initiative for Children | Hearth, Inc. | Maritime Apprenticeship Program | More Than Words | RAW Art Works | uAspire

2008 CitySprouts | Cradles to Crayons | Girls' LEAP | ReVision Urban Farm | The Theater Offensive | UTEC

2007 Boston Urban Youth Foundation | Building Impact | Actors' Shakespeare Project | Strong Women, Strong Girls

2006 Boston Black Women's Health Institute | Roca | Treehouse Foundation | WriteBoston | Zumix, Inc.

2004 Boston Children's Chorus | Boston Health Care and Research Training Institute | Close to Home | Common Impact | Rediscovery House | VietAID

2003 Madison Park Development Corporation | Boston Learning Center | Eagle Eye Institute | Haley House | Social Capital Inc. | Year Up

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\$50,000+

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Andrew and Jodi Wolk*

* SIF donor of two or more consecutive years.

“

It's been a hell of a year... but the reasons we applied [to the Social Innovator Accelerator], the things we wanted to sharpen and learn, still resonated in the pandemic. Having the ability to tell our story, to communicate ourselves online—that became even more important. I'm looking forward to continuing to be a part of the cohort and to deepening the work we're doing right now.”

— ELVIS MÉNDEZ,
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR,
NEIGHBOR TO
NEIGHBOR, 2021
SOCIAL INNOVATOR

”



INVESTORS AND SUPPORTERS

SUPPORTERS

UP TO \$999

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FUNDER EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

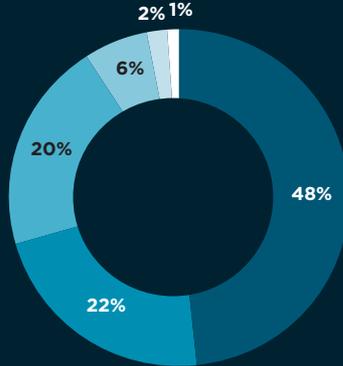
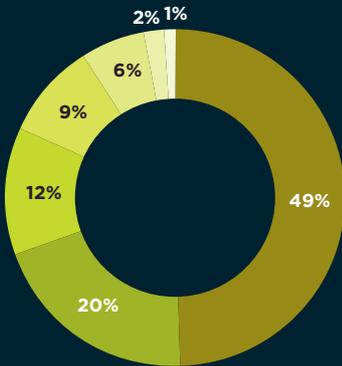
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FINANCIALS



OPERATING REVENUE • \$2,604,187

REVENUE BY SOURCE

- 49% Foundations
- 20% In-kind support
- 12% Corporations
- 9% Individuals
- 6% Refundable advance (PPP)
- 2% Coworking fees
- 1% Special events

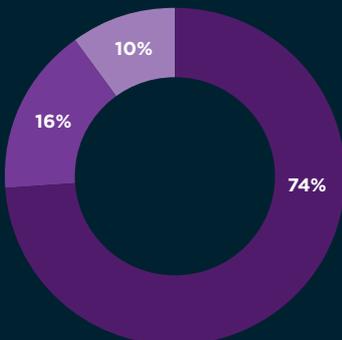
REVENUE BY USE/PURPOSE

- 48% Net assets released from restriction
- 22% Contributions & grants
- 20% Contributed goods & services
- 6% Refundable advance (PPP)
- 2% Coworking fees
- 1% Special events

Social Innovation Forum applied for and was granted a \$156,918 PPP loan in April 2020 (FY20) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This loan was fully forgiven in May of 2021 (FY21), resulting in \$156,918 of additional revenue in FY21.

Additionally, SIF received an unanticipated \$250,000 grant from a single donor in FY21 which resulted in higher than average grants and contributions.

Together these two events were largely responsible for the \$390,153 operating surplus SIF experienced in FY21.



EXPENSES • \$2,214,034

EXPENSES

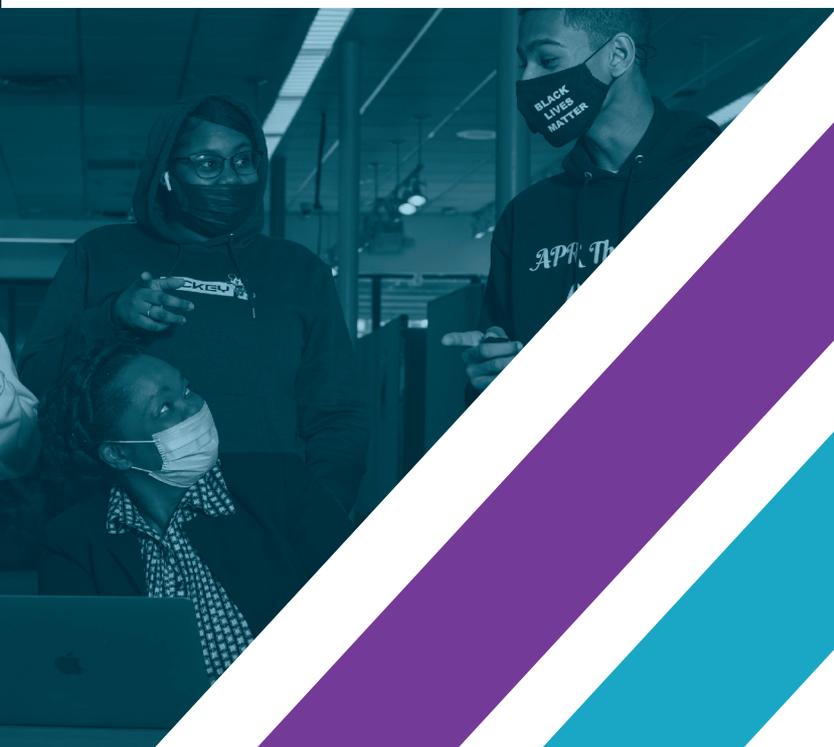
- 74% Program services
- 16% Fundraising
- 10% General & administration





TOGETHER MEANS ALL OF US.
TOGETHER MEANS YOU.

JOIN US AS WE MOVE
FORWARD, TOGETHER.





SOCIAL
INNOVATION
FORUM

617.492.2305 • www.socialinnovationforum.org
2 Oliver Street, Suite 802, Boston, MA 02109

Design: J Sherman Studio | Writing: Katie Bayerl
Photography: Leise Jones Photography,
Keith Patankar Photo Video Design