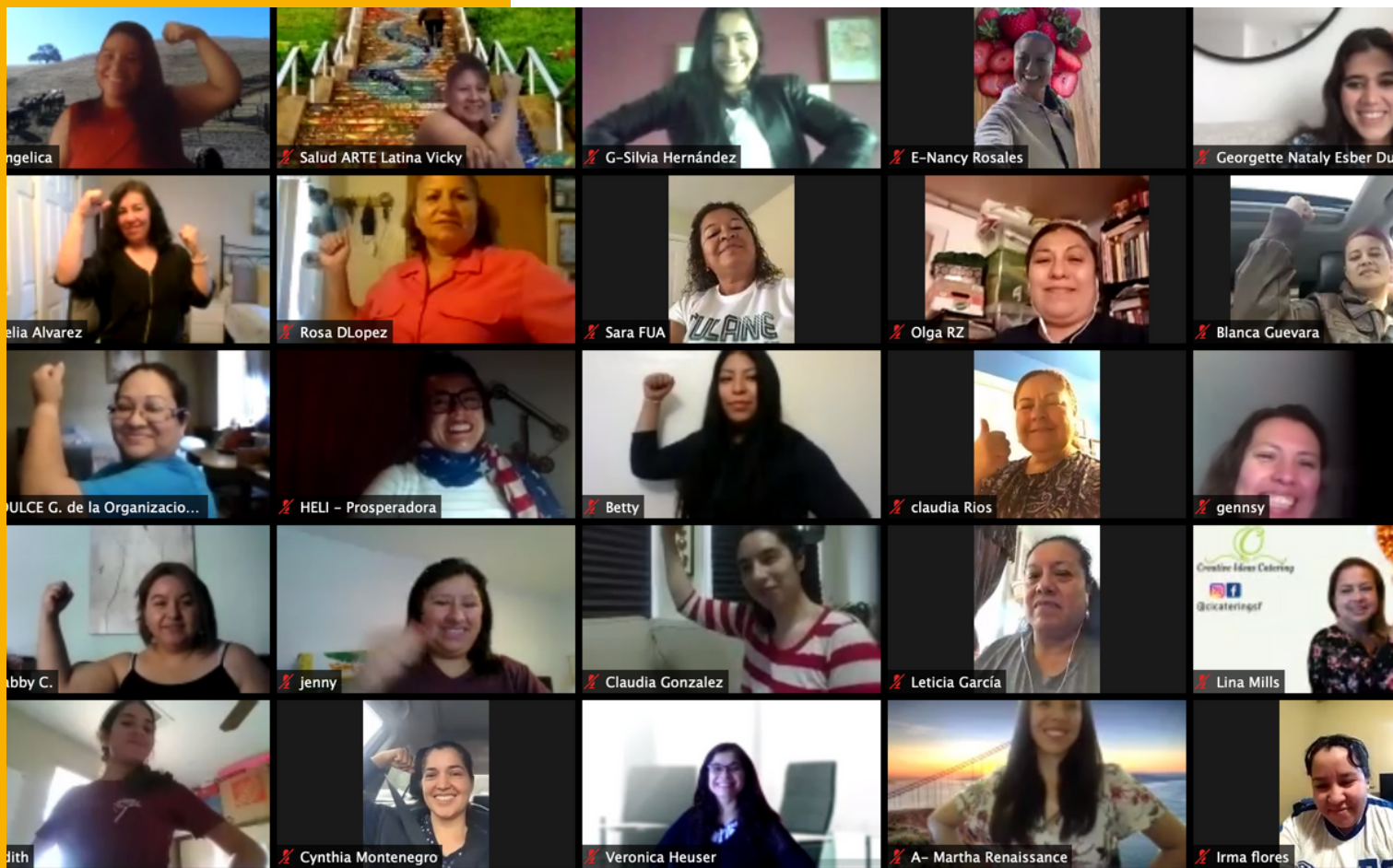


# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

A YEAR OF RESILIENCY,  
COMMUNITY, CHALLENGES  
AND GROWTH.





# LETTER FROM CLAUDIA ARROYO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Querida Prospera Community,

**It has been a whirlwind of a year!** When everything shut down last March, we were so focused on addressing the immediate needs of our entrepreneurs, we had no idea how much our values would be put to the test over the coming months. **When I look back now on 2020—a year of disruption, monumental change, and rich discovery—I realize we made a kind of magic happen. We learned to live our values in the truest sense.**

**Resilience** has long been a trademark of our community. As immigrants, we are a people well-practiced in overcoming adversity, but COVID further reaffirmed our strength and sense of resolve. From bringing all our communications online to helping businesses stay afloat, we conquered more challenges than we'd previously thought possible!

**Acompañamiento** (accompaniment) has been crucial to Prospera's ethos since our founding. The idea of listening to and standing by one another is embodied in the unique development of our programs, how our team collaborates, and our way of being in community. And yet, we never imagined how much we'd rely on this model to overcome the isolation of lockdown.

Approaching our work with a sense of **abundance**, rather than scarcity, has been a hard-won lesson. Rather than focus on what we lack, COVID has shown us how to focus on all that we do have, the resources available to us, and what we can make when we combine a little of our own ingredients with our neighbor's.

And lastly, in these moments of crisis, we have witnessed the rebirth of **community care**. We have organized to support one another when we needed it most. Whether it was raising emergency funds or simply making that call to someone we hadn't been in touch with for a while to check in. There has been an awakening of consciousness that we need one another. It is our collective power that has changed the course of history and as the pandemic comes to an end we can refuse to return to "normal." We can dedicate ourselves to creating a new reality that supports the dignity we all deserve!

**Below you'll find the principal highlights of Prospera's work in 2020.** We hope that you find it compelling and that all the labor, love, and passion that we invested this past year shines through. **Meanwhile, as we take on 2021, these values continue to guide us as we move forward toward the unknown.**

Thank you for accompanying us on the journey! Abrazos

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

In the **COVID era, reinvention is a necessity.** Since the start of the pandemic, Prospera has stepped into a leadership role in supporting our community to adapt and stabilize their businesses, building collective power with other organizations, and creating desperately-needed holistic development spaces for Latina entrepreneurs.

- **Mobilization.** The first thing we did was mobilize. We started by identifying the most urgent challenges our entrepreneurs were facing in our new reality by conducting in-depth surveys and interviews. Then, based on what we learned, we adapted our programs and garnered different forms of support. Throughout it all, our primary objective remained to stand by our entrepreneurs, to pick up the phone and listen, and above all, to let them know they were not alone.
- **Strategic alliances.** In partnership with the **Latino Community Foundation**, we formed the Levantando Nuestras Voces/Raising our voices coalition, made up of allied community organizations with the aim of amplifying the voices of Latina entrepreneurs and exposing the huge gaps in access to culturally and linguistically appropriate resources.
- **Resiliency Fund.** We launched our Resiliency Fund, which is governed by a committee of our program participants. The Fund covered the basic and COVID-related emergency needs of our entrepreneurs. It also opened up leadership opportunities and incentivized a new practice of giving and receiving.
- **National Expansion of Explora.** We took a big digital leap by bringing our programming online and across the nation. Explora, our foundational course on the fundamentals of cooperative business ownership, is delivered by a facilitation team made up of program participants, all of whom were trained to facilitate using popular education techniques, bringing the experience of their respective businesses to the sessions.



STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS 2020

# OUR IMPACT

+150

LATINA IMMIGRANT  
ENTREPRENEURS SERVED  
PER YEAR.

+400

WOMEN HAVE ATTENDED  
WORKSHOPS ABOUT  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND  
COOPERATION

241

WOMEN HAVE GRADUATED  
FROM OUR CORE COOPERATIVE  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

12-14

LATINA-OWNED  
BUSINESSES ARE IN  
INCUBATION

4

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS HAVE  
ADVANCED TO OUR  
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

## OUR PARTICIPANTS

The demographic breakdown of participants in our 2020 cooperative education and incubation programs is as follows:



92% WOMEN



96% IDENTIFY AS  
LATINX OR HISPANIC



91% BORN  
OUTSIDE THE US



94% FIRST  
LANGUAGE NOT  
ENGLISH



80% LOW  
HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME (HUD)

## OTHER HIGHLIGHTS, IN NUMBERS:

The number of graduates of our Explora course **increased by 97% from 2019 to 2020!**

Taking Explora online expanded our reach to **13 states across the US!**

Our three 2019-2021 Fellows presented at **20 speaking engagements**, facilitated workshops inside Prospera and externally, and engaged their activism in more than 10 civic and political events during their first year as Fellows!

The Latina Entrepreneur Resiliency fund distributed **\$119,200 in cash and technology assistance** to our Crece members and their partners and employees, **benefitting 36 women in 13 businesses.**



# ADAPTING TO COVID-19

**Prior to the COVID-19 threat, many Latina immigrant women already faced roadblocks to success, from language barriers to anti-immigrant policies and attacks, making transition to a new home isolating and disempowering.** Most of Prospera's entrepreneurs are part of the one million Latina-headed households that live in poverty in the U.S., often working two or more unstable jobs to make ends meet. We knew these existing inequalities would only be exacerbated by the pandemic, which is why we quickly shifted our priorities toward assessing and responding to the immediate needs of our participants and their businesses.

**Community Needs Assessment.** Prospera's staff, fellows and volunteers carried out a listening campaign and survey to understand the needs of the women in our community, as well as how they wanted to help each other. Among the biggest barriers identified by our participants in the listening campaign were: lack of information and clarity about requirements for financial resources, language barriers, gaps in financial assistance programs, and limited access and experience with technology. For a snapshot of the survey results, click [here](#).

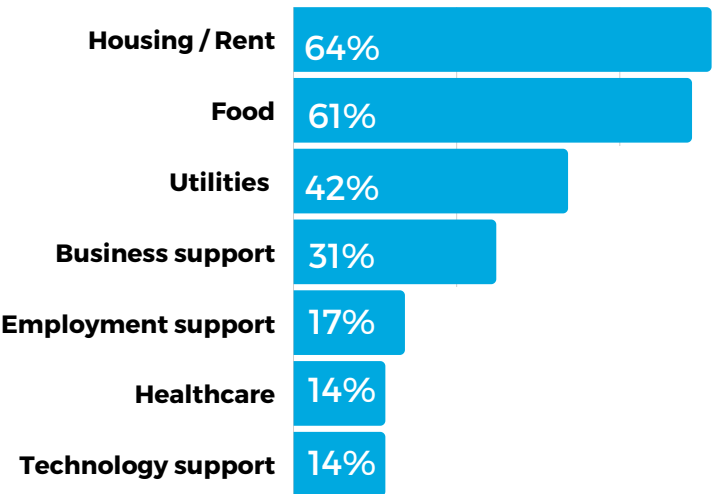
**[Levantando Nuestras Voces/Raising our Voices Coalition](#).** As the COVID crisis developed, Prospera recognized a need for partners, funders, and government to hear the voices of Latina entrepreneurs. In April we put on the virtual forum Levantando Nuestras Voces/Lifting our Voices in partnership with Latino Community Foundation, where stakeholders learned about the entrepreneurs' challenges and resilience firsthand. Building upon information gathered during that event, we formed an active and ongoing coalition with key partners including **Centro Community Partners, Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center, Small Business Majority, CAMEO, Small Business Development Center, Start Small Think Big and Volumen Digital and Latina small business** owners to advocate for the needs of Latina entrepreneurs, build community, and connect them to resources. Our second LNV event took place in July, with 92 participants on Zoom and reaching almost 4,000 on Facebook!



**Latina Entrepreneur Resiliency Fund.** Prospera launched the Latina Entrepreneur Resiliency Fund to cover basic needs that had been compromised as a result of loss of regular business income due to COVID-19. **Funds provide cash assistance that can be used to cover a range of emergency expenses, including childcare, eldercare, rent, and utility bills among others.**

The Fund is being stewarded and governed by Prospera’s own community of Latina entrepreneurs. The committee is responsible for creating the criteria for the distribution of the rapid response component of the fund, as well as for designing the governance process, which is nearly completed and will go into effect soon with input from our network. Find out more about this fund in this [report](#).

Here is a **breakdown of the diverse array of needs covered by this fund**, reflecting the percent of participants who reported using the fund for each area.



The impact of COVID did not end in 2020. **There are still many challenges that the participants of the fund are facing right now:**



28% - RISK OF EVICTION



25% - SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ISSUES



25% - RISK OF LOSING YOUR THEIR JOB OR SEEING REDUCED WORKING HOURS

**Technological Support.** We learned early on that lack of access to technology was a common obstacle facing our community and an increasingly critical one as the pandemic developed. Thanks to support from the **Latino Community Foundation’s Latinos in Tech giving circle**, we were able to assess needs and distribute **\$11,000 worth of software and hardware** to Latina entrepreneurs struggling to adapt their businesses.

“Without the Resiliency Fund I would not have been able to buy a quality laptop that helps me provide services through my cooperative business, as well as basic technology workshops to other members of my community. Because my business has work, I have work, and this brings prosperity to my family. My son can complete his college applications; we can support my daughter who is in college and my mother in Mexico. It is an enormous opportunity and blessing to have access to a more sustainable economy.” - Prospera participant

# OUR CORE PROGRAMS

**Explora Online:** Our foundational course on the fundamentals of cooperative business ownership, Explora tu Cooperativa, prepares Latina entrepreneurs to start, grow or join a cooperative business. **Due to the pandemic, we transformed this 36-hour signature course (12 sessions) into online format available to Latina entrepreneurs across the country.** The course is led by Prospera's team of trained facilitators, who are also Prospera program participants and experienced cooperative business owners. Delivered with support from Centro Community Partners and Sustainable Economies Law Center, Explora teaches cooperative governance and business planning as well as modules on power and privilege, conflict transformation, and effective communication. **During 2020, our two cohorts included 77 entrepreneurs from 13 different states! A major increase from the 39 participants from the previous year. [Read our blog post](#) for more about the spring session.**

“As a woman, an immigrant, and someone hungry to get ahead, the Explora course has prompted me to believe more in my dreams and to continue fighting to leave a legacy in my community for generations to come.” Explora Graduate, 2020

**Crece:** Crece tu Cooperativa (Grow your Coop) is our in-house incubation program for Latina owned businesses. **Crece currently has between 12 and 20 participants attending our monthly meetings, representing 12-14 businesses.** Counting the business partners and employees of the Crece members, **the program benefits approximately 50-55 women.** Crece members are connected with business development and industry-specific training programs outside of Prospera, as well as attend and lead workshops and participate in peer coaching at monthly Crece meetings.

When shelter-in-place began last March, we moved to online meetings via Zoom and quickly developed a comprehensive needs assessment to monitor the impact of COVID on our members. Though we feared a drop in attendance due to the switch to a **virtual format, participation has, in fact, been higher than ever, and members have expressed their desire to remain in touch with one another as they navigate their new reality.** Our virtual meetings have incorporated workshops with practice opportunities for the entrepreneurs, such as elevator pitch videos, and tutorials on using Canva to design professional-looking marketing materials. We are doing our best to continue sharing important and updated resources with the group.

**We developed and implemented a needs assessment model to capture where the new businesses joining Crece are at currently, where they want to go, and how we can accompany them to get there.** Now we're working on a system for regular follow-up with members to monitor how their needs evolve over time.

“What motivates me is the ability to create future opportunities, both for my colleagues and for myself. That is the power of cooperatives!” Crece Participant

# OUR FELLOWSHIP - THE POWER OF A DREAM

In 2019, we launched a brand-new two-year **Cooperative Entrepreneur Fellowship** called **"The Power of a Dream,"** which provides fellows with access to seed funding as well as increased industry-specific support to grow their leadership capacity and business ventures.

After a competitive process, requiring a business plan, letters of recommendation, and a pitch to staff and the entire cohort of applicants, three high-quality applicants were selected for this two-year pilot project: **Anahi Rojas, Founder of Professional Eco-cleaning, a green house cleaning cooperative in the East Bay; Nancy Rosales, Founder of Pepito's Paletas, catering organic and authentic Mexican popsicles in the Bay Area; and Ana Castaño, founder of Luna y Sol Nanny Collective, an online childcare platform that will connect families with nannies in the Bay Area.**

In the first six months of the program, Nancy of Pepito's Paletas doubled her sales, while Anahi of Professional Eco Cleaning grew her sales by 77%. **All three fellows made strides in growing their businesses, including interviewing prospective partners, setting up new and improved operating systems, accessing \$50,000 in loans, and developing branding. The onset of the COVID crisis brought intense challenges to our fellows.** For the two fellows with established businesses, sales came to a halt. Income dropped for Ana as well, who lost her job as a nanny due to the pandemic. **Our three fellows found themselves with employees and families to care for, loans to pay, and no income - except for their monthly \$1,500 stipend from the Fellowship.**

**We are pleased to report that our three fellows have maintained their businesses during these difficult months, thanks in large part to their participation in the Fellowship program.** In addition, they have further advanced their cooperative values and flexed their leadership to support other women in numerous ways, including speaking on panels, conducting a COVID needs assessment among the Prospera community, and playing a key role in the governance committee of our Latina Entrepreneur Resiliency Fund. In response to the unprecedented challenges they are facing, Prospera has extended the stipend period of the Fellowship by six months in order to continue to support the fellows in a more intensive way through December 2020.

We also welcomed one new Fellow this **past October, Celia Alvarez, Co-founder of De Colores Consulting.** In just a few months, Celia has been able to launch her Professional Development Plan; complete a comprehensive needs assessment for her business; work on her professional [website](#), which will launch this year; and develop the ABC's of Finance workshop in collaboration with her peers, which they now offer as part of Explora! Find out more about the Prospera fellows' resilience, adaptation, and leadership in our **2020 Fellowship Report.**





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*“This Fellowship is the reason why I still have this business - they inspire me to inspire other people.*

*I feel strong and I’m not alone.”*

**Anahi Rojas , founder of Professional Eco Cleaning  
Fellow 2019-2020**



*“COVID, with all its difficulties, brought me enormous lessons in resilience. I have realized that the needs that we have as cooperative immigrants and entrepreneurs in the U.S. can be met, thanks to programs like Prospera’s Fellowship. It has also been important to me to have the motivation, exchange of ideas, and accompaniment of the rest of the entrepreneurs in Prospera’s programs, including Crece, and my business partner.”*

**Ana Castaño, founder of Luna y Sol Nanny Collective  
Fellow 2019-2021**



*“The fellowship gives me a lot of answers - when I don’t have a clear vision, they help me plan out a checklist of what to execute, just to make sure that I continue on my path toward my dreams. Especially since we’ve lost business [due to COVID], we must reinvent ourselves to be selling during these hard times.*

*It’s been very very helpful to have them during COVID.”*

**Nancy Rosales, founder of Pepitos Paletas  
Fellow 2019-2021**



*“Having been chosen as a Fellow in the Prospera program, I seek to take my cooperative to the next level of clientele, capacity and income. With an openness and eagerness to learn what is necessary for my business, I feel excited (and a little nervous, too) about making the commitment to represent De Colores, but I am determined to do whatever it takes to achieve my growth goals.”*

**Celia Alvarez, Co-Founder De Colores Consulting  
Fellow 2020-2022**

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### Launch of Our Train the Trainer Program.

**The Train the Trainer facilitation training was offered to five Explora graduates and experienced cooperative business owners from the Prospera community.**

Bringing Explora online gave us the opportunity to debut the new Prospera Facilitation Team, **made up of Ana Castaño, Daniella Preisler, Guadalupe Gómez and Herlinda Lazo, all cooperative entrepreneurs, community leaders, and Explora graduates.** As women who have actively participated in the world of cooperative entrepreneurship, their experiences enrich and deepen each of the sessions.

The Facilitator Team progressed through a process of observing, co-facilitating alongside the trainer, facilitating while being observed, and then finally facilitating on their own. They are now contracted to facilitate Explora Online, and because of this we have been able to expand from two Exploras per year to three. **We are also planning to offer a second round of the Train the Trainer program this spring to grow the facilitation team.**

As Explora continues to expand its reach to cooperative entrepreneurs across the country, we envision having a geographically diverse team of trainers in the coming years, making Explora's culturally specific, cooperative development curriculum available to more Latina entrepreneurs country-wide. **We have begun conversations with organizations and institutions like Border Workers United, Nebraska University, Encuentro in Tucson Arizona, Future Without Violence, Next Door and Vision y Compromiso,** to explore the possibilities of a collaborative effort to export our programs.

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*“Being online with so many people forced me out of my comfort zone and pushed me to plan well, organize my thoughts, and be very intentional about what I shared given that finances are very serious things. I made the commitment to share what I know and I came out of it feeling like I really can teach people something about finances, which has left me feeling more confident overall. Yes, doing it online was challenging, but it was never boring.*

*It was creative and educational.” - Train the trainer Participant*

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# COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Our Fourth Annual Summit for Latina Entrepreneurs, "Innovation, Resilience and Inspiration," ([see complete report here](#)) took place in October with over 100 registered participants and streamed by 1,700 people. The virtual event gave entrepreneurs a moment of pause to confront their fears and blocks, connect and collaborate with other inspiring women, and discover their internal power for transformation.

A highlight of the event was our "Women who Inspire" panel, featuring entrepreneur and artist **Martha Hernández**, medal-winning Paralympic athlete **Teresa Perales**, and community activist and Executive Director of The Women's Building in San Francisco, **Teresa Mejía**—all immigrant women from different countries of origin and professional realms with an abundance of wisdom to share.



*"Remember that as immigrant women we are the motor of this country. This country would not be what it is without women of color and immigrant women. Secondly, life is difficult but let's not forget the joy of the fight.*

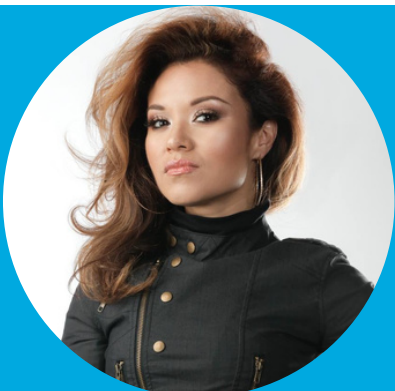
*Let's not let the struggle be something that wears us down. Let's look at the joy that fighting for the things we deserve brings us."*

*Teresa Mejía, Executive Director of The Women's Building in San Francisco*



*"One of the moments I remember the most is when at 19 I was left in the wheelchair. I didn't know how to swim, I didn't like to swim... I just wanted to float and "splash," it made me feel free to be in the water. After the first experience I said to myself: I am going to take swimming classes, and from there I found a trainer that told me I was a diamond in the rough. I beat my fear of the water, and my fear of my new physical situation, my fear of handling the wheelchair, and I made the decision to dare... that led me to be the woman I am now. All of the decisions that we make in our lives have consequences. If we dare to make big decisions, to realize our dreams, we can also expect big surprises. And remember, we are all diamonds in the rough that are ready to shine. All of us!"*

*Teresa Perales, medal-winning Paralympic athlete*



*"The other panelists and I have had this platform to tell our stories and you may think that they are really far from where you are and what you can accomplish, but that is not the case. You can be one of us. You can write a book, you can compete in the arena of your choice, you can be the director of an organization... the decisions that we made along the way shaped who we are today. I invite you to look at yourself as you are; a work in progress, an active project. Work on yourself!"*

*Marta Hernández, entrepreneur and artist*

# INTERNAL UPDATES

## OUR NEW LOGO

Designing our new logo was a participatory process that **included Crece members and Prospera fellows, and we're very proud of the final product.** The circle represents union and cooperation, and the bright colors reflect the vibrancy of our Latin American roots and the community with which we work. **A huge thank you to Design Action Collective for their immense creative power and to the Latino Community Foundation Accelerator Program for investing in our rebrand!**



## LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

**Maria Rogers Pascual signed on as Executive Director of Prospera in 2017, and in 2019, she invited Claudia Arroyo to share the leadership role as Co-Executive Director.** Together, they developed an innovative model of shared leadership that recognized and uplifted their unique strengths and brought the organization to where it is today.

At the beginning of 2020, Maria shared with Claudia her plan to pursue new career opportunities. **Together, they thoughtfully designed an 8-month transition plan, which they carried out throughout the year, culminating in two public events for funders and partners to celebrate the accomplishments of the last 5 years and officially introduce Claudia as Executive Director.** If you missed those events, you can read the [official announcement here](#). Finally, in August 2020, Maria left Prospera for another opportunity as Director of the Fair Work Fund through the Haas Leadership Initiatives and Irvine Foundation. **They closed our chapter of co-directorship and collaboration with a beautiful 2-day retreat in the forest. At Prospera we often say: "¡Una vez Prosperadora, siempre Prosperadora!"** meaning that once you are connected to Prospera, you always will be. This is definitely the case with Maria, who remains a strategic advisor and a dear friend.



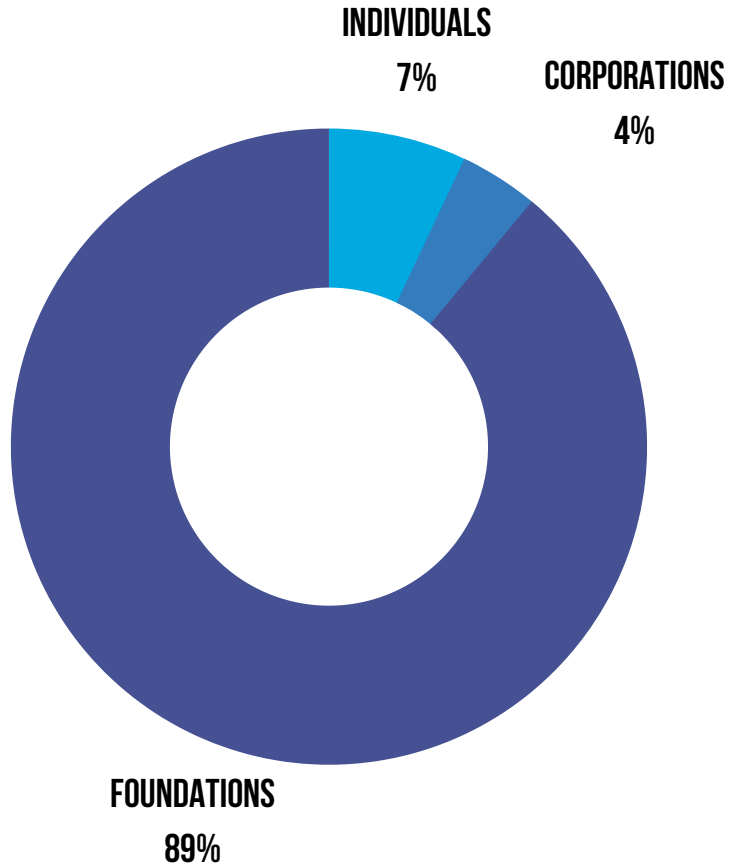
# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

FOUNDATIONS: \$1,104,650.56

INDIVIDUALS: \$85,481.31

CORPORATIONS: \$52,888.75

**TOTAL REVENUE: \$1,243,020.62**



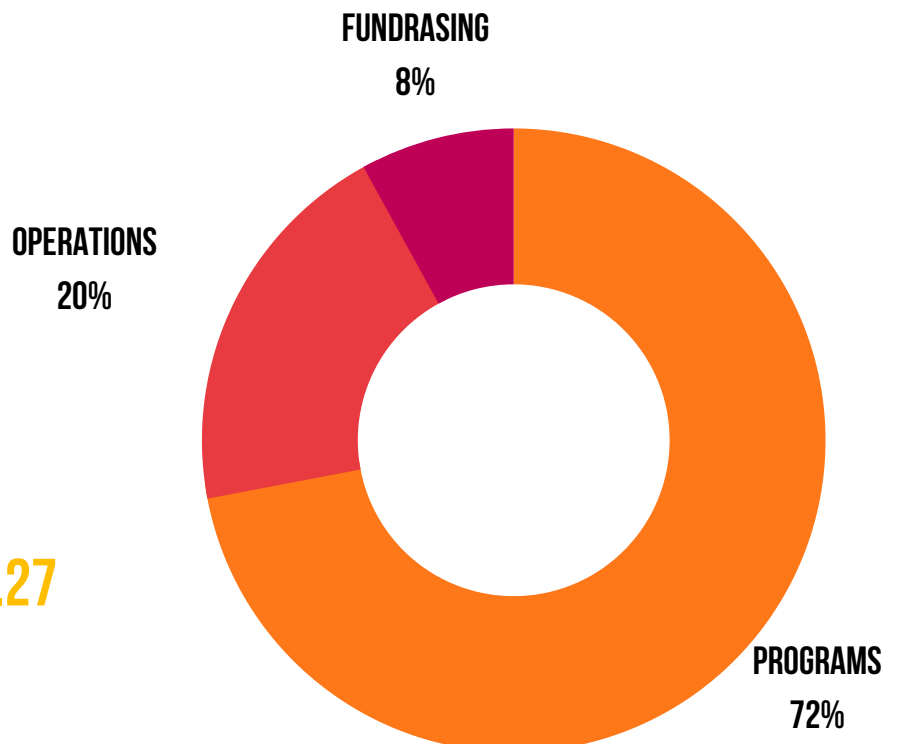
## EXPENSES

PROGRAMS: \$511,627.11

OPERATIONS: \$140,113.09

FUNDRAISING: \$58,900.07

**TOTAL EXPENSES: \$710,640.27**





# THANK YOU. GRACIAS

We are extremely grateful to all our funders, sponsors, partners and individual donors who have made it possible for us to develop our programs and our ability to pursue new opportunities.

AKONADI FOUNDATION

BBVA COMPASS

BENEFICIAL STATE BANK FOUNDATION

CAMEO

CAPITAL ONE

CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (CCHD)

CENTRO COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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CHINESE PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

CLIF BAR FAMILY FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY FOOD BANK OF SOUTHERN ARIZONA

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

CONSULATE GENERAL OF MEXICO, SAN FRANCISCO

COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

EAST BAY COMMUNITY ENERGY

EBAY FOUNDATION

FHL BANK SAN FRANCISCO

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

HEALTH INITIATIVE OF THE AMERICAS

ISABEL ALLENDE FOUNDATION

JENNIFER AND DAVID RISHER

JP MORGAN CHASE FOUNDATION

KAISER PERMANENTE

KATALY FOUNDATION. SPECIAL THANK YOU TO NWAMAKA

AGBO AND JOCELYN WONG

LATINA COALITION OF SILICON VALLEY

LATINO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

MEYER AND FRIEDMAN FUND

MUFG UNION BANK FOUNDATION

RAINBOW GROCERY COOPERATIVE, INC.

RAPIDAN FOUNDATION

RENAISSANCE ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION

SEMANA BINACIONAL DE LA SALUD

SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

SHULER-HEIMBURGER FAMILY FUND AT EAST BAY

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

SISTERS OF SAINT DOMINIC CONGREGATION

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

SMALL BUSINESS MAJORITY

START SMALL THINK BIG

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES LAW CENTER

THE ABE AND KATHRYN SELSKY FOUNDATION, INC

THE CALIFORNIA WELLNESS FOUNDATION

THE CHRYSALIS FUND

THE SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION

THE UNITY COUNCIL

TIDES CENTER

VOLUMEN DIGITAL

WELLS FARGO FOUNDATION

WHOLE FOODS

WOMEN OF COLOR NETWORK

Y&H SODA FOUNDATION

The many tribulations of 2020 have taught us that together, we are unstoppable. **Join us in shaping our new post-COVID reality and dreaming up big possibilities for 2021!**

For more details on the information covered in this report or to stay up to date on our work, contact us:

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