



RESPONSE, RELIEF, AND RECOVERY FOR NONPROFITS

Propel Nonprofits' (Propel) fiscal year began on April 1, 2020, only a few weeks after the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19) forced strict stay-at-home orders across the United States and the world, including in Minnesota; less than two months later, George Floyd was murdered by police. Through these devastating, profound events, we worked alongside nonprofit leaders and staff as they made difficult decisions, navigated complicated changes, and called upon creativity to find a path forward. Nonprofit leaders were challenged to think differently, reimagine a new world, make change in short order, and serve many community needs — all while keeping their organizations afloat.


Early in the year, Propel experienced a spike in calls for Technical Assistance, specifically around cash flow issues, budget scenario planning, and navigation to accessing relief funds and emergency capital like Paycheck Protection Program loans. Propel pivoted its program delivery to an entirely virtual format, including moving our annual Nonprofit Finance & Sustainability Conference online in a matter of weeks. Through our programs and services, we helped affected organizations weather the storm, achieve financial stability, and chart a plan for sustainability to best serve their mission and benefiting communities.

George Floyd's murder and the uprising that followed impacted Twin Cities nonprofits immediately. For some, especially those from white-led organizations, his murder became a reckoning in which racial equity needed to be centered for the sector to carry out its work. Additionally, many nonprofit organizations responded rapidly to community needs by distributing aid to people experiencing homelessness whose encampments were destroyed, and to neighbors whose access to food and other goods was lost during the uprising; they hosted community conversations to process, organize, and heal; and joined in the efforts to rebuild corridors in both North and South Minneapolis, and along University Avenue in St. Paul — work that continues today.

At Propel, we saw how relief and recovery from the pandemic and the uprising became intertwined. We witnessed and were called to support many of the ways nonprofits were bold and creative in their recovery: during periods of program pause, capital from Propel's loan fund was used to build out new space for arts organizations; our fiscal sponsorship program welcomed new organizations responding to urgent community needs; we got the opportunity to convene conversations re-imagining governance and board activities with consulting and guidance; and supported organizations making the most of an influx of support by imagining and developing new strategic plans and business models for expansion.

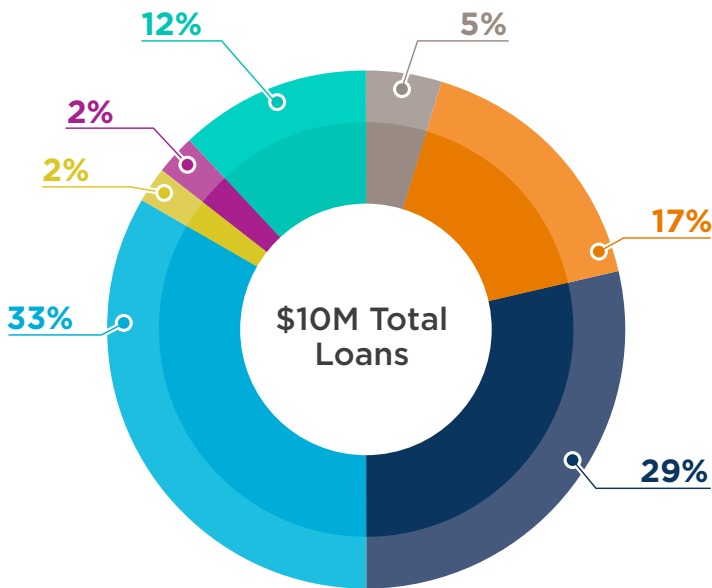
We leaned even further into our organizational commitment to supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)-led, community-led, and small-budget organizations this past year. Moving forward we are structuring our staff capacity and deployment of resources to address these inequities.

Finally, in 2020 Propel undertook an organizational strategic planning process. Propel assessed sector-wide equity gaps, engaged nonprofit leaders in a series of conversations, and from those conversations gleaned learnings to inform our future direction. Out of these efforts came Propel's new Strategic Framework, completed in February 2021. The framework's two guiding priorities: Strengthen Equity Practices Throughout Programs, and Influence and Change Systems and Structures to Build a More Equitable Sector.



OUR IMPACT

LENDING



- Health Care
- Human Services
- Arts & Humanities
- Charter Schools/Education
- Community/Economic Development
- Affordable Housing Development
- Other

RESPONSIVE CAPACITY BUILDING

In response to the hardships caused by the pandemic and unrest, Propel provided responsive capacity building to strengthen nonprofits. Through intermediary regranting and capital access programs, we leveraged a total of more than \$3.4 million in grant funds and forgivable loans to benefit 143 nonprofits.

STRATEGIC SERVICES CONSULTING

With an organizational focus on equity, our consulting work focused on supporting BIPOC-led organizations and small, grassroots organizations. We had 67 Strategic Services client organizations, which were:

52% BIPOC-led

82% Woman-led

56% Orgs served with 5 or fewer employees

FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

We supported 57 projects, of which 16 were new in 2021, emerging out of community needs including racial equity, food insecurity, & more.

ACCOUNTING & FINANCE CONSULTING

We served 17 organizations of which 5 received year-long financial insight services, 8 received QuickBooks Online Setup services, and were:

48% BIPOC-led

90% Woman-led

RESPONSIVE TRAINING/TA

Propel provided a total of 20,000 hours of Training and Technical Assistance in FY21.

TRAINING & COHORT LEARNING

Propel's Training program continued to offer webinars, virtual trainings, and co-hosted the Nonprofit Finance & Sustainability Conference. Additionally, cohort work continued as a vital resource for nonprofit leaders, so they could learn from and be in fellowship with one another through the immense challenges of the past year.

119 Training Events & Cohorts, including:

24 Cohorts

14 Presentations

28 Webinars

53 Workshops & Public Trainings

9,633 People Trained

Propel Nonprofits powers the missions of other nonprofits.

We believe nonprofits and their leaders, boards, staff, and volunteers are the real champions of good; our communities are better because of the work they do. Our programs and services meet nonprofits at various points in their life cycles to enhance their impact by linking strategy, governance, and finance.

OUR NONPROFIT SERVICES

- Accounting & Finance
- Board Governance
- Fiscal Sponsorship
- Lending
- Skills & Knowledge Sharing
- Strategic Consulting
- Training
- Capacity Building



FROM OUR CLIENTS

FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

"I knew Propel had the support we needed when it was time for us to grow. This organization isn't about me; it is about our leaders, and I want us to have the skills and tools we need to grow."

— Monica Bryand, Founder of Urban Bird Collective

STRATEGIC SERVICES

"We received advice for how to effectively partner with the board and offer support through board development, and as an organization we were able to pivot and be responsive when the pandemic began."

— Andrea Myers, Executive Director, Hopewell Music Cooperative North

LENDING

"I felt like Propel was in it for us, the staff was a safe place to take questions – the staff wanted to help us succeed and that is a good feeling."

— Cathy Heying, founder and Executive Director of The Lift Garage

Cover Photos from L to R, Top to Bottom, relationship to Propel is in brackets: A visitor of Franconia Sculpture Park [Board Connector client] reflects on Don Elder's Franconia Tablet (Dedicated to the memory of George Floyd); A youth from The CREW Urban Youth Equestrians [Fiscal Sponsorship client] works with a horse; Members of the Urban Bird Collective [Fiscal Sponsorship client] pose for a photo after a bird-watching walk; youth from The CREW pose for a photo at the farm; Staff and board of The Lift Garage [Loan client] break ground to expand their office space; An instructor from Hopewell Music Cooperative North [Strategic Services client] works with students; Vabianna Santos and Clint McCallum perform at Franconia Sculpture Park in 2021.