

CITIZENS LEAGUE

YOUR 2020 IMPACT REPORT

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MOVING FORWARD, TOGETHER

2020 proved to be a year of change – of changing our perspective, being adaptable, checking our assumptions, and revisiting how we approach our work.

It was a year of significant challenges for our community due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was also a year that brought increased attention to long-standing issues of racial injustice, catalyzed by the murder of George Floyd.

2020 was a year of change for me, as I stepped into the role of Executive Director at Citizens League.

When I accepted this role, I knew I was joining a strong organization with a dedicated network of supporters like you.

This work has never been more important. As we report on the past year, and look to the future, we continue to focus on our responsibility to connect people, bridge differences, and lift voices that might otherwise go unheard.

I'm excited to share this impact report, which details some of the work you have made possible over the past year — including a new celebration of civic leaders, a few of whom are pictured on our cover. **We are so grateful for your continued support and trust as we move forward, together.**

Kate Cimino

Kate Cimino
Executive Director



2020

BY THE NUMBERS

This was a year of challenge and change. With your help, Citizens League was able to continue engaging more people in the important work of effective public policy. This work was only possible with your support, and we are so grateful.

100%

OF CAPITOL PATHWAYS STUDENTS
REPORTED AN INCREASED KNOWLEDGE
OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

150

PEOPLE ENGAGED FROM ACROSS THE
STATE THROUGH A NEW INITIATIVE,
#MNCIVICLEADER, HIGHLIGHTING
EVERYDAY CIVIC LEADERS WHO
ARE CREATING AN IMPACT IN THEIR
COMMUNITIES

426%

INCREASE IN PARTICIPATION AT MIND
OPENER EVENTS OVER 2019

164

BIPOC STUDENTS HAVE COMPLETED THE
CAPITOL PATHWAYS PROGRAM SINCE ITS
INCEPTION IN 2016

\$14,000

IN COVID-19 MICROGRANTS AWARDED TO
EMERGING POLICY LEADERS THROUGH
PARTNERSHIP

BETTER POLICYMAKING WITH COMMUNITY EXPERTS

CENSUS PROJECT WITH THE MINNESOTA STATE DEMOGRAPHIC CENTER

The federal census is a vital tool for allocating federal funds, guiding state resource allocation, and determining

our number of federal representatives. Yet, many communities continue to be undercounted, leading to fewer resources for the people who need them most.

In 2020 we partnered with the MN State Demographic Center to grow awareness of the importance of the 2020 Census in historically undercounted populations.

Together with the Hmong American Partnership (HAP), Hmong American Census Network, Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES), and leaders from the Twin Cities Somali community, we produced informational events and FAQs in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish languages.

“The Citizens League has been very involved in community engagement and providing spaces where the community can meet, voice their thoughts, and exchange knowledge. This partnership enabled us to do more than we could do by ourselves.”

– Camila Mercado-Michelli, Advocacy & Community Building Project Manager at CLUES

This collaboration extended each organization’s reach, and sought to ensure communities had access to critical information that encouraged civic participation. The events and materials were shared in trusted, culturally-specific media, including Somali TV.

Growth in awareness and participation helped ensure that more people participated in the 2020 census, and Minnesota retained all congressional seats.

SANDWICH CAREGIVING

According to a recent Pew survey, nearly half of adults in their 40’s and 50’s are shouldering responsibilities for both aging parents and their own children. Dubbed “sandwich caregivers”, this growing group has had little research and understanding around their unique policy needs.

With funding from the Bush Foundation, and in partnership with the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, the Culture of Health by Design, and the Institute of Community Integration, we focused on understanding and building capacity around these policy challenges, led by people who are directly impacted by this issue.

“Rather than focusing on providing specific products or resources, could we trust that people know how to take care of each other? And also build capacity around that authentic form of care?”

– Alejandra Diaz, Project Collaborator and Caregiver

EXPANDING ACCESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC POLICY

#MNCIVICLEADER

In 2020, Citizens League moved all events online, and created a new annual event, #MNCivicLeader. This revealed an unexpected benefit: we reached more people through our events, increasing access to public policy education across Minnesota.

Through #MNCivicLeader, we invited you to shine a spotlight of appreciation on your neighbors and fellow community members. We asked, who do you know who has gone above and beyond to lead for a better Minnesota? Who do you know who takes action, and puts the needs of their community above their own? And who do you know who is volunteering their time and energy to make a difference, but has not been widely recognized?

Through an open nomination process, we lifted up the efforts of 33 civic leaders taking action in their communities. With an online campaign and virtual event, we recognized nominees from different backgrounds, sectors, and demographics from all across Minnesota who are making an impact through passion and commitment.

One of our goals at the Citizens League is to empower people to be leaders in their communities. Too often, people think public policy only happens at the Capitol and in government chambers, but we know there are leaders all around us, leading through their businesses, nonprofits, communities, congregations, and families.

Civic engagement doesn't mean just having a special title. It means dedicating time and energy to help our communities thrive.

MIND OPENER EVENT SERIES

We decided to make our popular Mind Opener events free with a suggested donation in order to remove barriers to participation. We also broadened our reach through an accessible virtual format.

Due to these changes, our average Mind Opener registration increased by more than 420% from 2019, with a record high registration of 275 people for our event on early childhood education at the beginning of the pandemic. At that event, 100% of survey respondents indicated that they would consider taking action as a result of the event, such as learning more about the topic (45.5%), advocating for policies related to this issue (68%), and having a conversation about what they learned with a colleague or family member (64%).

This change also reduced geographic barriers, resulting in higher attendance from Greater MN, as well as a younger demographic than our in-person Mind Openers in 2019.

“Creativity is not a light bulb moment reserved for individual genius, it is the ability to bring together diverse perspectives and find unique connections. That’s where the unexpected will emerge.”
– Jess Roberts,
Culture of Health by
Design

SUPPORTING EMERGING POLICY LEADERS

CAPITOL PATHWAYS 2020

Our Capitol Pathways leadership program pairs college students who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in paid public-policy-focused internships at different host organizations throughout Minnesota.

Students showed amazing resilience during a difficult year, as we quickly pivoted the program to a virtual format in 2020.

Students gathered via Zoom to support each other. They engaged in virtual legislative, career readiness, and race and equity trainings; and used online platforms to build relationships with policy leaders throughout their internship experiences.

At the end of the 2020 program, 100% of students reported an increase in knowledge of the legislative process and 97% said they expanded their network at the State Capitol.

As of 2020, 164 students have completed the program since its inception in 2016.

“There are so many different roles in public policy and so many different ways to tap into policy. The public policy world has been absolutely expanded for me through the Capitol Pathways program.”

**– Metadel Lee,
Capitol Pathways
Alumna**

BUILDING STRENGTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

As a group underrepresented in public offices and governing bodies, it is essential for BIPOC leaders engaged in public policy to have a network of support in order to navigate the complex challenges and unique joys of advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement work.

Together, a collaborative of Citizens League’s Capitol Pathways Program, Nexus Community Partners’ Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute, and Wilder Foundation’s Community Equity Program created a joint program alumni network to continue to build leadership and provide professional development training and support for their alumni in the public policy space. In 2020, the collaborative served 373 alumni between the joint partners.

Our collective goal is to expand equitable outcomes for communities that have been historically excluded from the public policymaking space. We equip leaders in these communities with the training, knowledge, and networks needed to empower them to advance equitable and just outcomes.

Together, we amplify each other’s work, empower leaders to be agents of change in their communities, and provide them the necessary support and resources to continue making long-term positive impact.

With the support of the Mcknight Foundation, we created an emergency grant program and awarded \$14,000 to our alumni to help alleviate financial hardships they experienced due to the pandemic and civil unrest.

Throughout this time, our joint partners continued to work in collaboration, sharing information and learnings as we navigated the new world of virtual programming.

FINANCIAL REPORT

2020 AUDITED FINANCIALS

2020 REVENUE

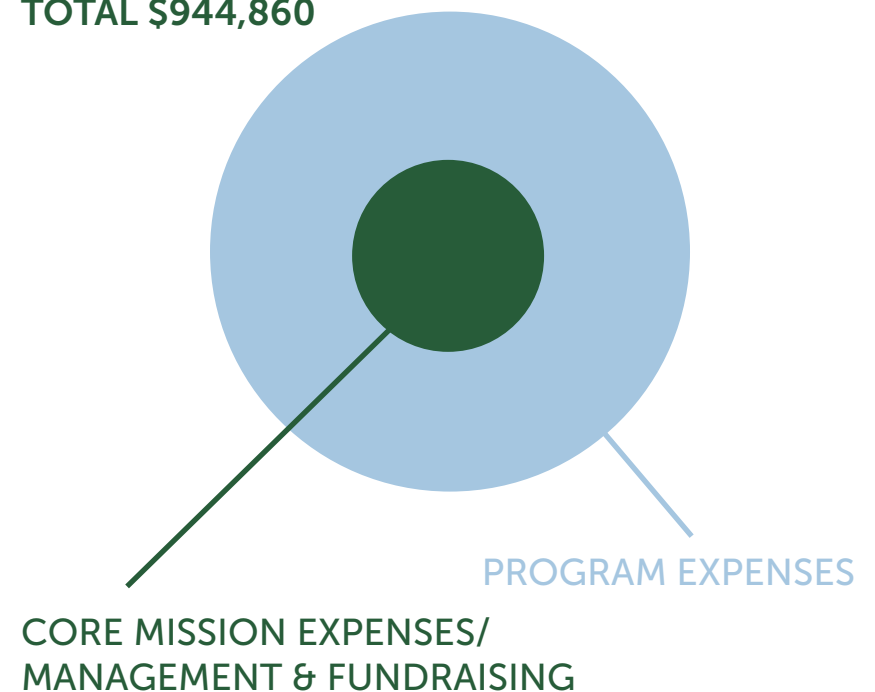


TOTAL \$1,193,507

2020 EXPENSES

PROGRAMS \$648,662
CORE MISSION EXPENSES
(MANAGEMENT & FUNDRAISING) \$296,198

TOTAL \$944,860



The financial information included on this page has been audited by a Certified Public Accounting Firm in accordance with GAAP

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Khadija Ali

Cedrick Baker, *Secretary*

Patrick Born, *Chair*

Elizabeth Campbell

Greg Halagan

Scott Hietpas

John Knapp, *Treasurer*

Cyndi Leshner

Jake Loesch

Laura Monn Ginsburg, *Vice Chair*

Peter Glessing

Fatima Moore

Aaron Pearson, *recent Past Chair*

Eusebio Perez

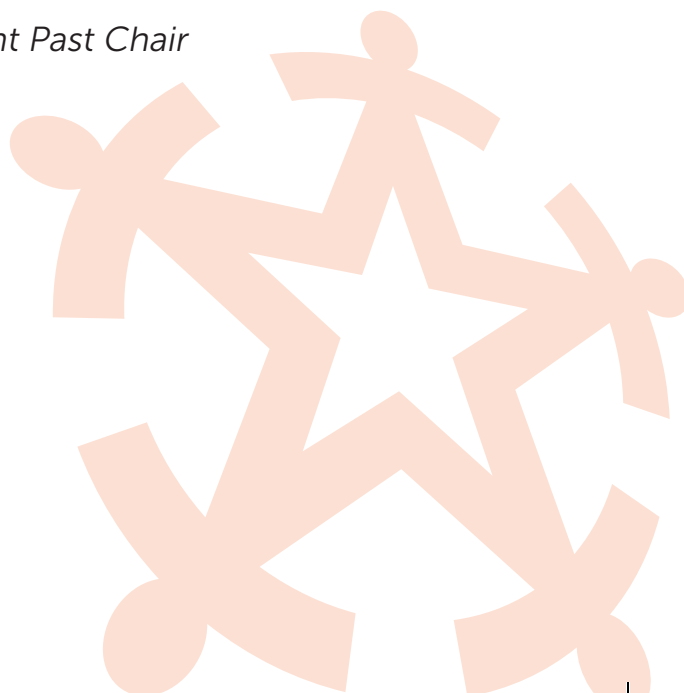
Paula Prahl

Breanna Schafer

Terry Schneider

Damon Shoholm

Kurt Zellers



STAFF

Kate Cimino
Executive Director

Nancy Hegdahl
Operations and Database Administrator

Amanda Koonjbeharry
Director of Public Policy

Sarah Stout Miller
Director of Development

Jacob Taintor
Communications and Marketing Specialist

Kalia Xiong
Capitol Pathways Program Manager

Laura Monn Ginsburg, *Interim Executive Director*

Pahoua Yang Hoffman, *Former Executive Director*

From our cover, L to R:
Amikogaabawikwe (Adrienne Benjamin)
Bukata Hayes
Jen Rosenbaum
Nikki McComb
Nou Yang
Joan Vorderbruggen
Sally Brown
Biiftuu Ibrahim Adam
Thomas Anderson

Visit citizensleague.org/cl-leader-nominations to learn more.

“After all of this, I’m
more committed
than ever to this
work. I feel like it’s
my calling.”

— Mariangel Marino,
Capitol Pathways
Alumna



**Citizens
League**

Common ground. Common good.