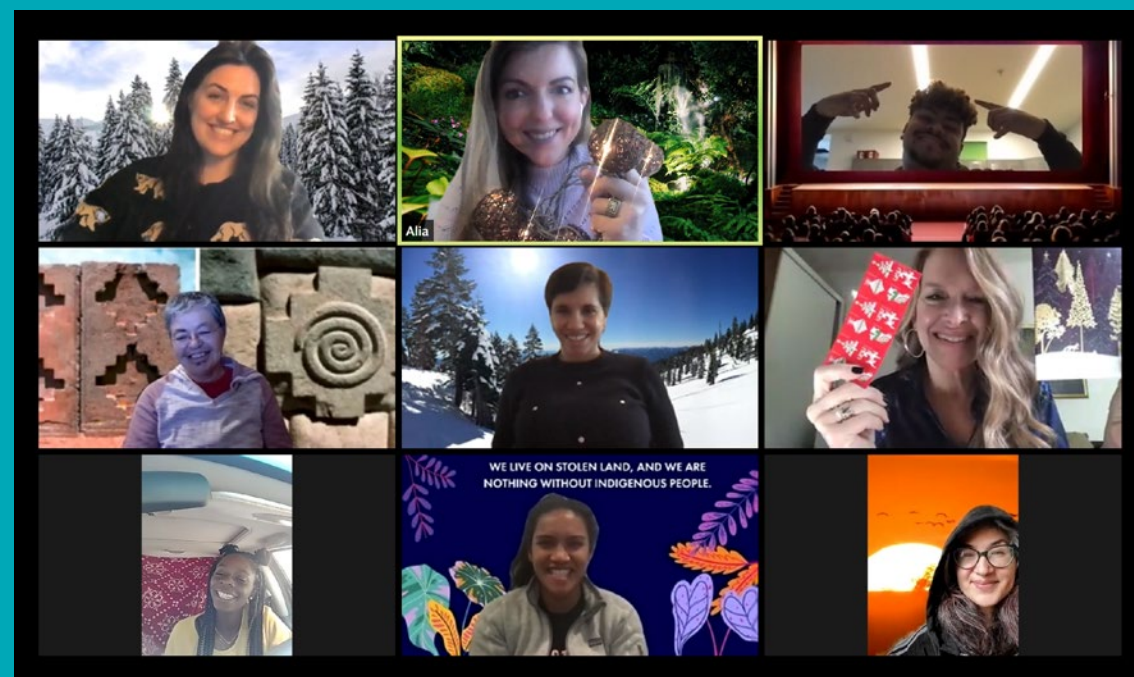


FREEDOM  FORWARD



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



www.freedom-forward.org

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Executive Director **5**

Transforming systems **7**

Our primary initiatives **8**

Guiding principles **9**

2020 by the numbers **10**

HYPE Center **12**

FAM **18**

Launchpads **24**

Jasmine **30**

Forward Fellowship **34**

Our antiracist commitment **36**

Financials **40**

Board and team **42**

Advisors and partners **43**



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

In 2020, thanks to your support, we adapted to new challenges, grew our team, launched major services in all three of our primary initiatives, and brought sorely needed resources to nearly 200 youth. We continued to listen to and honor the wisdom of those most impacted by our work. We looked closely at our practices and pledged to operate with greater equity, accountability, and commitment to antiracism—knowing that we must continue growing indefinitely.

Not surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of the forces that perpetuate commercial sexual exploitation, from economic despair to social isolation to a broken foster care system. At the same time, our society has been increasingly energized to confront the many instantiations of racism in our midst, the living legacy of a painful history. Our work feels especially vital today—and we are optimistic that our community’s renewed drive for change will help us transform the systems that keep youth in cycles of exploitation.

Freedom Forward has entered its fifth year with great excitement for all that lies on the horizon. In 2021, we anticipate even greater development in our primary initiatives, including:

1. Launching the HYPE Center app with virtual services in early 2021, and fully opening the HYPE Center for services onsite by mid-2021;
2. Training and approving FAM foster care homes for youth, and welcoming youth into those homes by mid-to-late 2021;
3. Launching our Launchpads app to match young adults with hosts by early 2021 and helping them thrive in their new homes throughout the year.

The following pages detail our organization’s mission and approach, our work throughout 2020, and our continuing organizational development.

We did not do this work alone. A brilliant set of youth, caregivers, community and government leaders, providers, and funders partnered with us bring our work to life. Our pilots, and all that we are learning, are their stories as well. To them, we will be forever grateful.

In community,

Alia Whitney-Johnson

CO-FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Systems that hold power over us (from the education system to the criminal justice system) are connected. They are built on each other and need each other to thrive. But the people that are the most affected do not have a say. Rules are being designed by those who aren’t experiencing the trauma they cause.”



Anareli Bedolla

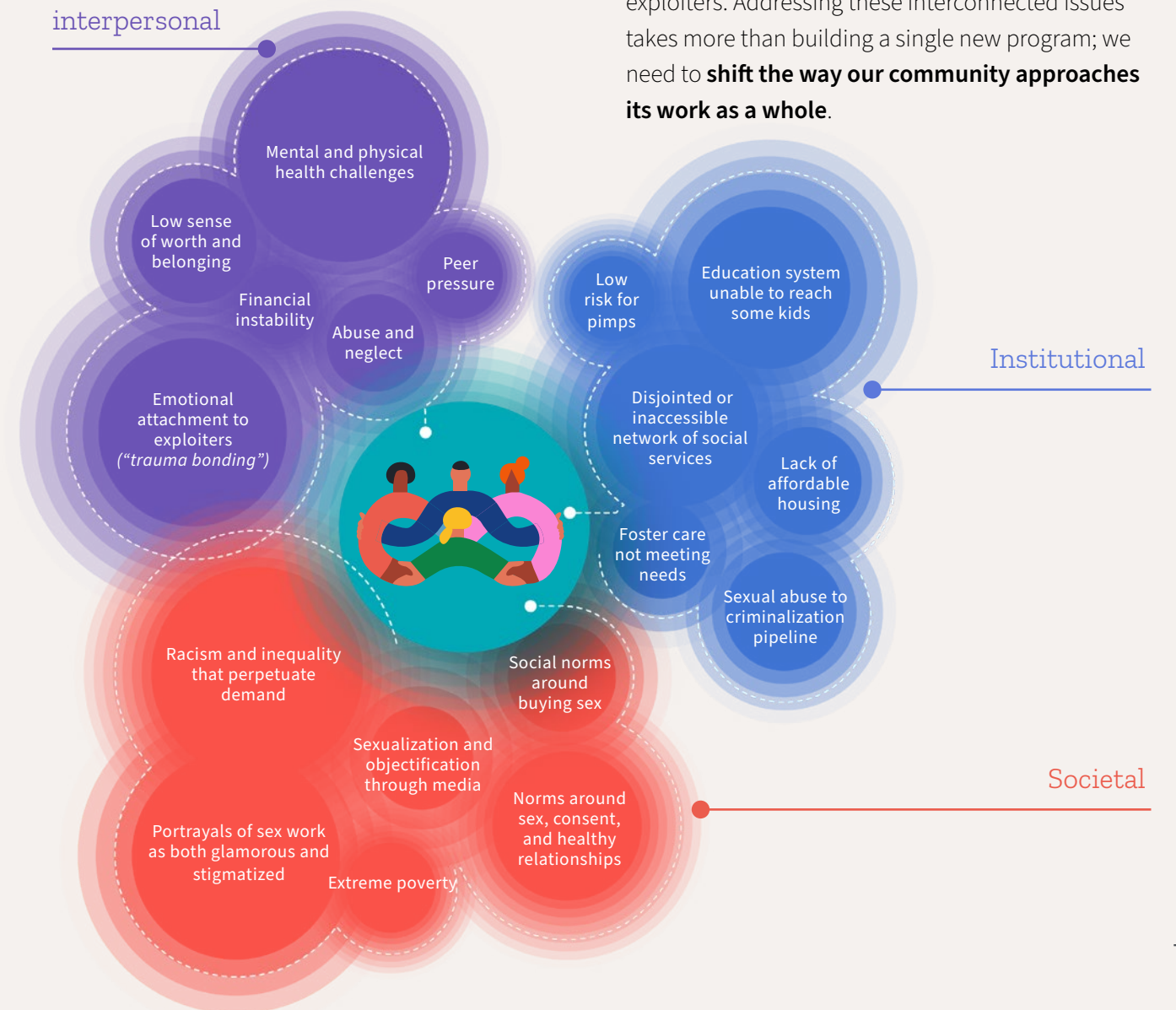
AGE 21
FAM YOUTH ADVISORY
BOARD MEMBER

Transforming Systems

Founded in 2016, Freedom Forward is working to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of youth in San Francisco by transforming the systems that too often contribute to their exploitation. Guided by the voices of youth, Freedom Forward pilots collaborative and replicable approaches to address these systemic failures.

We don’t believe that there is a single silver bullet or program that will end the commercial sexual exploitation of youth in our city or anywhere in America. Instead, we see **exploitation as a result of a dynamic and interconnected web of forces and systemic failures** – things like a broken foster care system, a network of services that remains hard for youth to navigate, and a housing crisis within San Francisco that often leaves youth vulnerable to exploiters. Addressing these interconnected issues takes more than building a single new program; we need to **shift the way our community approaches its work as a whole.**

Personal & interpersonal



OUR PRIMARY INITIATIVES



The Helping Young People Elevate (HYPE) Center

A youth-designed, one-stop drop-in center for youth with services from multiple providers on site and virtually.



Listening to youth
Inviting youth to play a central role in our work.



Approaching our work with humility but not fear

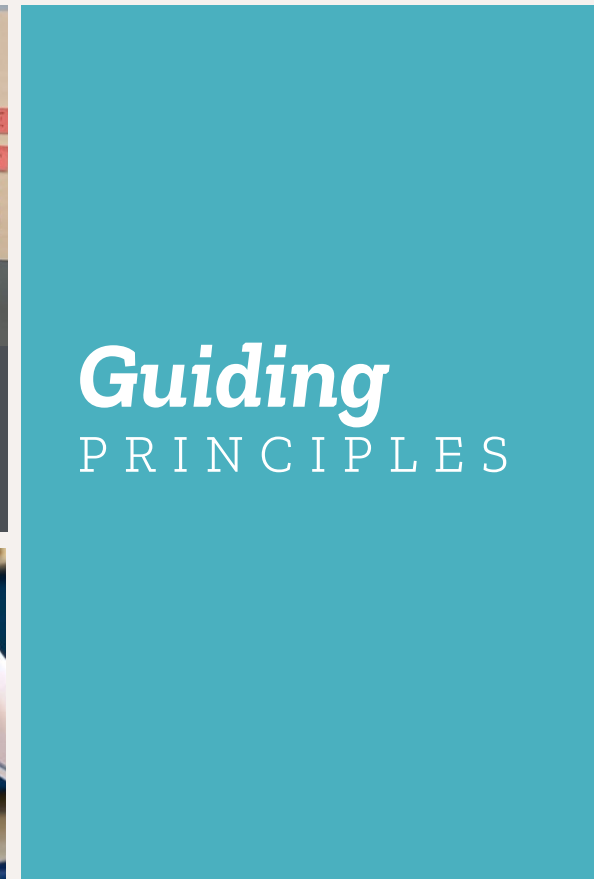


Family and Me (FAM)

A new model of foster care designed to meet the needs of youth impacted by commercial sexual exploitation.



Embracing complexity
Recognizing that the people we care about, the systems that affect them, and the changes we seek are multifaceted.



Fostering thoughtful innovation
Researching and developing promising new ideas and sharing learnings openly.



Nourishing strengths and wellbeing
Adopting a healing-centered approach not only for youth but also for our team and our professional community.



Weaving a connected ecosystem
Collaborating with a diverse set of partners across disciplines, minimizing the duplication of efforts.



Launchpads

An online housing rental platform that connects youth in “extended foster care” (ages 18-21) with hosts in the community.

2020

by THE NUMBERS

5

youth began receiving support from the **FAM foster care pilot**.

5

prospective **foster caregivers** attended their first orientation.

5

young people

graduated from the second cohort of **Forward Fellows**.

7

hosts committed

to renting living space to young adults in San Francisco “extended foster care” through **Launchpads**.

187

youth served

by the **HYPE Center**,

which brought care packages of basic necessities to youth when and where they needed them, and connected them to resources in the community.

6

new

staff members

joined the small but mighty **Freedom Forward team**, more than doubling our size.

Over

46,000 viewers

had seen our **Jasmine Strong** educational video by the end of 2020.



“Thank you for getting me the resources I needed. A lot of places make youth feel like we don’t deserve to be anything but the experiences we’ve had or the mistakes we have made. The HYPE Center really listened to what I said I needed and y’all were even willing to deliver it to me when other places haven’t. The services that are being offered are really needed too, like therapy, coding classes, and laundry. I think it’s a space that both youth and the community need.”

 **Ana-Licia**
AGE 21

HYPE Center

“Helping Young People Elevate”



We’ve heard from youth that it’s hard to navigate the many resources and services available to them in San Francisco (each with their own eligibility criteria), compounding the challenges that lead them to seek resources in the first place.

what

Throughout the fall of 2019, the HYPE Center was co-designed with our Youth Founders as a one-stop shop where youth can access the services and activities they want from multiple providers. Our role is to facilitate and coordinate the services and resources youth have identified as critical to their self-determination, remaining responsive to youth needs over time. For example, during the pandemic, the HYPE Center has delivered individual care packages with resources to youth wherever they are in the community.

where

The HYPE Center has both a physical and virtual presence. Physically, it is located in a newly-renovated, 4,991-square-foot space located in a gang-neutral zone in San Francisco. Virtually, it also operates an app for resource appointments and connections to services.

how

HYPE collaborates with volunteers and donors to bring its work to life, and collaborates with providers from AnnieCannons, Huckleberry Youth Programs, WestCoast Children’s Clinic, Justice At Last, Five Keys Programs and Schools, IMPACT Bay Area, Family Builders by Adoption, and more. In addition to provider services, onsite resources include a clothing closet, computer lab, laundry, and showers. As COVID-19 restrictions loosen, HYPE will also have hot meals on site that are donated through food donation programs that connect Bay Area company cafeterias to nonprofits.



In 2020

What we did

- Launched the HYPE website (HYPECenterSF.com) and created our HYPE Center app.
- Secured \$13,000 of in-kind donations from the Grateful Garment Project, Parade Underwear, Green Standard, and the San Francisco Human Rights Commission.
- Began working on training modules for providers and volunteers.
- Finalized agreements with partnering service providers.
- Developed a suite of policies and procedures, including a process for youth orientation to the HYPE Center.
- Set up the physical HYPE Center space, including transforming the garage into a base station for care package assembly and distribution.

Results

187 youth served

by getting them the resources they told us they needed (school supplies, diapers, hygiene supplies, condoms and sanitary supplies, food, and more) and connecting them to resources in the community.

Published a survey

100 youth

aged 14-26 spoke to the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing us to be responsive and deliver requested resources, better understand COVID's impact, and share with the broader community.

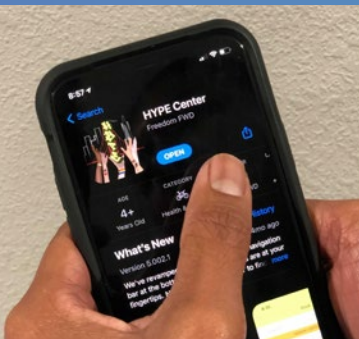
See: tinyurl.com/hype-covid-survey



Looking ahead to 2021

Launching **virtual services via app** in January 2021.

Phased on-site reopening culminating in full, socially distanced onsite services by summer 2021.



“It’s been cool to be a part of opening the HYPE Center. I wanted to see a space that was run by youth. A lot of adults assume what youth need, instead of actually asking them. Many organizations don’t even really do outreach directly to youth—they do more with partners and adults. But youth know better than anyone what they need.”



Augstin Pizano

YOUTH FOUNDER AND HYPE CENTER COORDINATOR



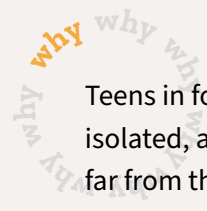
“For so long, youth who have experienced exploitation were thought to have required a congregate care setting to best “manage” and meet their needs. Their trauma was seen as so significant that this level of care was felt to be the best possible solution. But family is just as, if not more, important to a youth’s healing. FAM is serving as a bridge between the two settings- coupling high level support with caring committed families, creating an environment that continues to honor the whole youth, not just their victimization. The California Department of Social Services is excited to learn how the innovation of the FAM model shapes the way youth who have experienced exploitation can be supported and cared for now and in the future.”



Kelley Hartman Barr
ANALYST,
CHILD TRAFFICKING
RESPONSE UNIT, CHILD
WELFARE POLICY &
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU,
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT
OF SOCIAL SERVICES

FAM

"Family and Me"



Teens in foster care are too often moved around, isolated, and surrounded only by professionals, far from their loved ones. That instability and disconnection from community creates an environment ripe for exploitation. Youth who have been exploited are disproportionately put into professionalized group care, with poor outcomes.

what

FAM is a new model of foster care for San Francisco teens that keeps youth in stable family homes, promotes permanent relationships with loved ones, and wraps everyone with professional support. FAM also builds in additional caregivers, who provide what grandmas and extended family often do outside the system, building a whole village of care for youth and everyone supporting them.

how

We've assembled a collaborative of service providers who bring deep expertise in working with youth who have experienced exploitation, with a focus on harm reduction, trauma-informed care, and prioritizing youths' self-named needs Family Builders (placement and permanency), WestCoast Children's Clinic (therapy), Huckleberry (case management), and UC Berkeley Human Rights Center (evaluation).



In 2020

What we did

Completed a 24-hour Train-the-Trainer program from experts at the Citrus Helping Adolescents Negatively impacted by Commercial Exploitation (CHANCE) Program in Florida.

Designed a new Intensive Services Foster Care curriculum for caregivers of youth vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.

Convened regular meetings of FAM's Youth and Caregiver Advisory Boards, who advise on all key aspects of the model and its execution.

"I really like how things get done. [In my other work,] sometimes it's a slow-moving ship. I really like that when we make decisions, the next month we hear that it's been implemented. Our drafts are finalized and our ideas are implemented. It's really cool to see that happen."



Michele

FAM CAREGIVER
ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

"I always learn so much from other experienced young people. #fosterpower... We all deserve homes and families, period."



Kat

FAM YOUTH
ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

Began evaluation of FAM in an ongoing, rigorous study by the UC Berkeley Human Rights Center.

Began a digital advertising campaign to recruit FAM caregivers from the community.

Results

5 youth began receiving support from FAM

5 prospective caregivers attended their first orientation

1 began the process to get approved as a foster caregiver



Looking ahead to 2021

Anticipate **1-3 youth in FAM homes** by Summer 2021 and more by Fall 2021.

Expanding eligibility to include **youth in extended foster care (18-21)**.

“What most excites me about FAM is creating a larger circle of support that’s very intentional. I think that having a youth focus is sometimes missing from models of foster care. FAM makes me feel better about the direction the system is going.”



Carley

FAM CAREGIVER
ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER



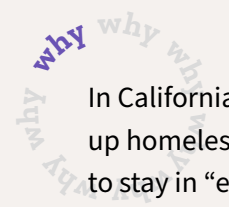


“Working in partnership with Freedom Forward to launch an innovative platform to connect Foster Non Minor Dependents to much needed housing resources has been an exciting experience. This new collaboration funded by Tipping Point is a unique opportunity to leverage the best of expertise from those who are committed to enhancing housing options and promoting independent living of San Francisco’s transition age (18-21) young adults. Depending on how this pilot goes, this platform could be the future of how we think about matching for other foster placements.”



Robin Love
PROGRAM MANAGER,
SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN
SERVICES AGENCY FAMILY &
CHILDREN’S SERVICES

Launchpads



In California, 1 in 4 youth exiting foster care end up homeless within two years. Youth can choose to stay in “extended foster care” until their 21st birthday, but it’s often hard to find a stable, affordable place to live, especially within the Bay Area’s punishing housing market. And until youth find a place and have it approved by their social worker, they cannot tap into the extended foster care funding to pay for their housing.

what

Launchpads is an online rental platform that connects extended foster youth seeking housing with individuals who have extra space in their homes, for rentals significantly below market rate. Launchpads hosts are all vetted, trained, and approved by Freedom Forward.

how

Launchpads is made possible by generous support from Tipping Point, and partnership with Community Boards, xFive, and the San Francisco Human Services Agency.



In 2020

What we did

Partnered with City and County of San Francisco to utilize Launchpads for youth in San Francisco extended foster care.

Surveyed 26 host home programs nationwide on their practices, successes, and challenges.

Built all program infrastructure: developed the Launchpads app, designed all vetting and training policies, conducted thorough risk analyses, developed partnership with Community Boards for mediation services, and more.

Results

12,000

visits to Launchpads
Eventbrite page

for info sessions, **168 session sign-ups** with 48 attendees over 20 sessions, **13** of whom began the process to become **hosts**.

Confirmed

7

 hosts

to open their homes — during a pandemic!



Looking ahead to 2021

- Formal launch of **Launchpads app** in January 2021.
- Publication of our nationwide **host home program research report**.
- Continued **host recruitment**.
- **Matches and moves** into new homes!



Jasmine

why We heard from youth that they wanted more educational materials on preventing trafficking, that they wanted to be able to access those materials through social media and their phones, and that the way providers and campaigns traditionally talk about these issues feels disempowering and disconnected from their experiences.

what

www.IAmJasmineStrong.com is a youth-to-youth website, animation, and social media presence that support youth in learning about sexual exploitation and connecting with resources.

how

We hired seven youth consultants with lived experience to inform this project in 2018 and have continued sharing it since.



In 2020

What we did

Presented Jasmine at the annual press conference to kick-off Human Trafficking Prevention Month, hosted by the San Francisco Collaborative Against Human Trafficking

Continued to promote Jasmine through our social channels

The **three tips most commonly searched** for on the website in 2020:

What to do if...

- This guy who you met online really wants you to text him sexy photos of you.
- Your boyfriend gets you high and takes sexual photos of you and threatens to show them to your dad if you don't have sex with his friend.
- Your friend says her boyfriend is pressuring her into having sex with other people.

Results

46,428

Jasmine video views

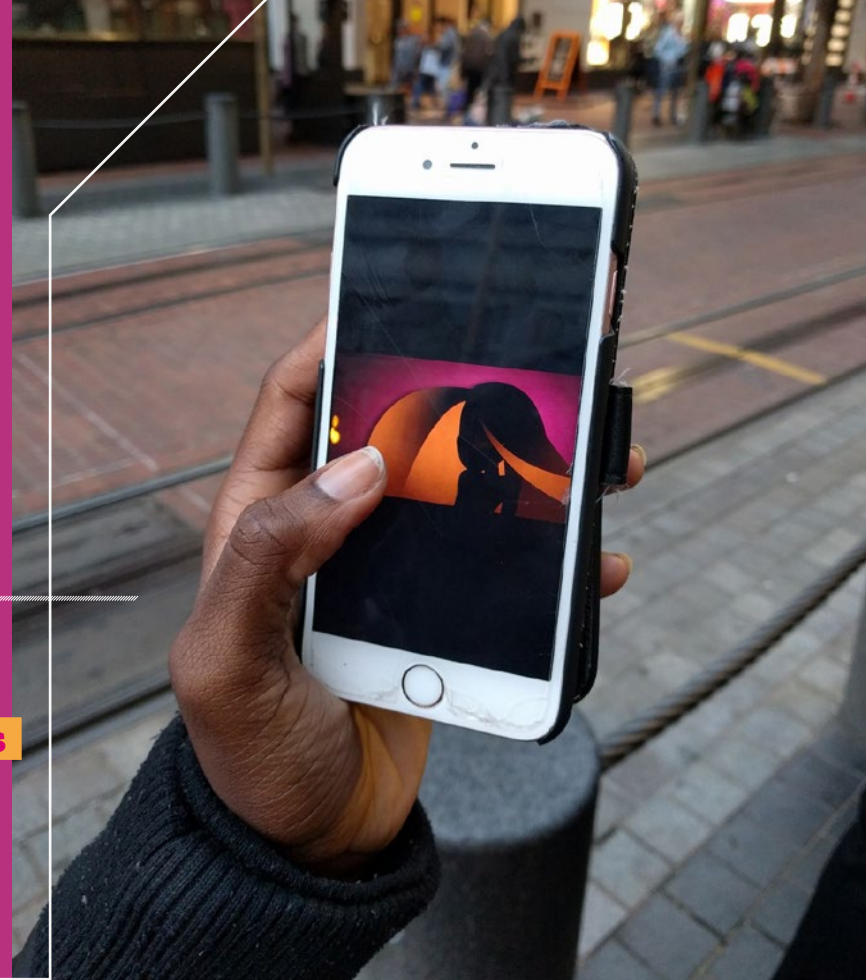
by end of 2020.

Viewers spent

4 minutes and 44 seconds

viewing the top 3 tips

(typical view time for web pages across the internet is more like 10-20 seconds!)



“Where I come from, a lot of people don’t find their inner power and aren’t able to leave what they’re used to. They become a product of their own environment. Jasmine sees the chance to leave and claims her power. Jasmine reminds us that we are powerful.”



JASMINE YOUTH
CONSULTANT



Forward Fellows

San Francisco's Mayor's Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking had a Youth Committee, but there were no youth on it. This conflicted with our core value of listening to youth and engaging them in systems reform.

what

We launched Forward Fellows, a fellowship for young leaders, focused on shifting narratives and systems that affect the lives of youth impacted by trafficking and/or the underground street economy in San Francisco.

how

Supported by Freedom Forward and the Young Women's Freedom Center, Fellows pursued a year of healing-centered leadership workshops, served as the Youth Advisory Board for the Task Force, and developed projects to effect their visions of change.

In 2020

What we did

Worked with and learned from 5 brilliant, committed Forward Fellows.



Results

5

Forward Fellows

graduated in August 2020.

Their final projects included research on youth who had experienced the sex trade, a focus group exploring decriminalization of sex work, a personal video advocating against the trafficking of other youth, a proposal for 24/7 wraparound services, and a song and music video about life on the streets.

“My journey through Forward Fellows was hugely about my healing, rekindling my initiative in being a part of a community, and recognizing how we heal together.”



Angélica Cabral

FORWARD FELLOW

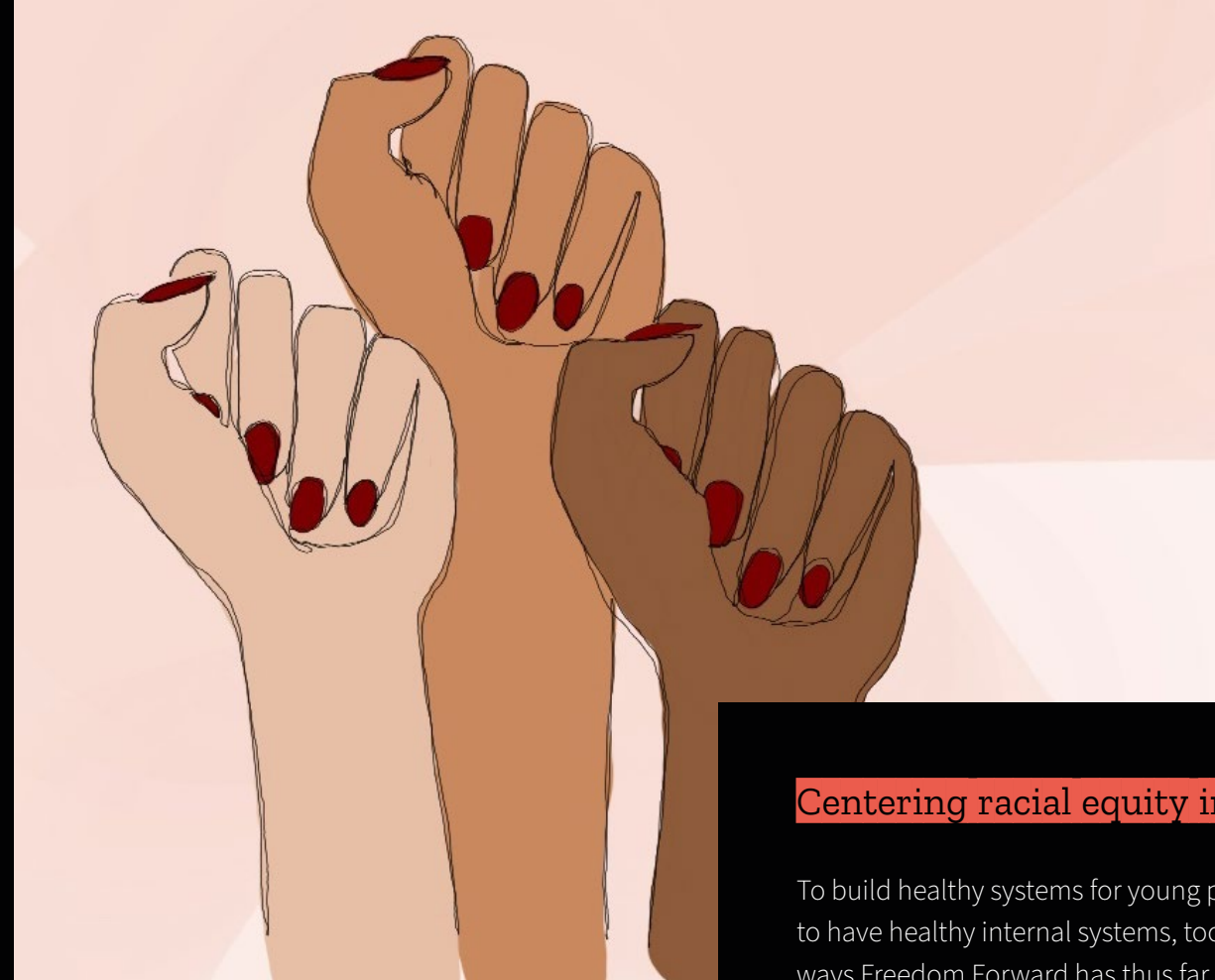
Our antiracist commitment

In 2020, like many organizations around the world, we took stock of how we were centering racial equity in our work, and where we needed to push further. Our work will never be “complete.” In addition to our constant practice, we will continue to explicitly revisit our approach regularly and plan to update our website regularly with our evolving commitments. Here’s a summary of where we were by the end of 2020:

Ensuring the systems and programs we build center racial equity

The majority of youth we have engaged to date and anticipate serving are youth of color. This is because people of color are disproportionately likely to experience exploitation and to interact with the systems Freedom Forward seeks to transform. These initiatives are being built to meet the particular needs of these youth. So far, this has included:

- Asking youth with relevant lived experience to help us build our services, with program design and oversight by youth advisory boards and other mechanisms for input;
- Paying youth when we rely on their expertise;
- Putting resources directly in the pockets of youth, with minimal barriers to access;
- Allowing youth to dictate what they need for their own healing;
- Lifting up models of care such as shared caregiving and permanent, nurturing relationships besides that of the “parent” role;
- Acknowledging the impacts of oppression and systemic racism as contributing to trauma;
- Prioritizing offerings—including housing and placement options—that are comfortable and (where relevant) affordable for youth, and whenever possible within their known communities; and
- Collecting relevant demographic data of who participates in our programs, and remaining accountable for ensuring that our program demographics match the larger population we are built to serve.



Centering racial equity internally

To build healthy systems for young people, we need to have healthy internal systems, too. Some of the ways Freedom Forward has thus far committed to internal equity include:

- Ensuring everyone has time to speak and lead, and building a culture of celebration—including a spirit of bringing one’s “full self” to work;
- Promoting equity in human resources policies, including a transparent and non-negotiable salary scale based solely on level of responsibility, and benefits for full- and part-time employees;
- Patronizing local Black- and Latinx-owned businesses, supporting a diverse city where people of many backgrounds can thrive; and
- Engaging in team trainings on understanding power and privilege, dismantling systems of oppression, and intentionally working to translate our learning into meaningful action.

Areas for further growth

We need to live up to these commitments, and we need to go further. In the spirit of transparency and accountability, here are some of the ways we have more work to do:

- Because our work largely takes place across separate initiatives, we have not developed a strong enough collective vision for what racial equity should look like at Freedom Forward generally.
- Our three initiatives are in varying stages of development, and most of our work centering racial equity within them is necessarily on the front-end, trying to build the programs that will meet the needs of the population we serve. As these projects begin to serve more youth, we will need to reassess where our plans for them fell short, and we will need to incorporate youth outcomes into our racial equity commitments.
- The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately harmed communities of color, and additionally presented unexpected challenges to pursuing our equity goals for youth of color. For example, some funders' lengthy procedures for approving changes to budgets delayed our ability to meet the new, immediate needs of already-marginalized youth. We need to look closely at what we can learn from those challenges and how we can create better conditions post-pandemic than existed pre-pandemic.
- Because much of our work is in collaboration with other organizations, we cannot control everything about how services are ultimately delivered to youth, nor can we control the internal practices of our partner organizations. Yet we must encourage our partners to continue centering racial equity, and we must continue sharing our learnings and practices openly.
- As a team, we need a process to align—and continue realigning—on practices that ensure our culture is inclusive, safe, and evolving. For example, we all want to consistently use language that reflects the dignity of all people, and to uplift historically marginalized voices, but we need to create ways to do so thoughtfully.

“The systems that affect children and families constantly intersect, but never with a strong enough shared purpose, never truly working together to support a youth as an individual, with individual needs. Instead, we have an intersection of cookie-cutter approaches with way too many gaps, causing ongoing system involvement and the exploitation of youth and young adults. These failures ultimately boil down to a lack of engagement, relationship-building, and individualized care. It’s been great working with Freedom Forward to change this.”



Janay Eustace
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CALIFORNIA YOUTH
CONNECTION

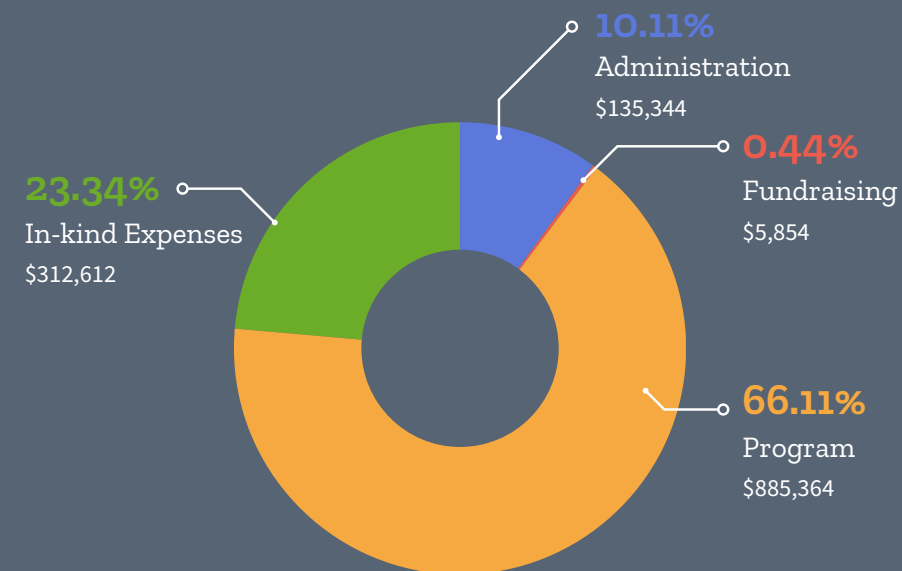
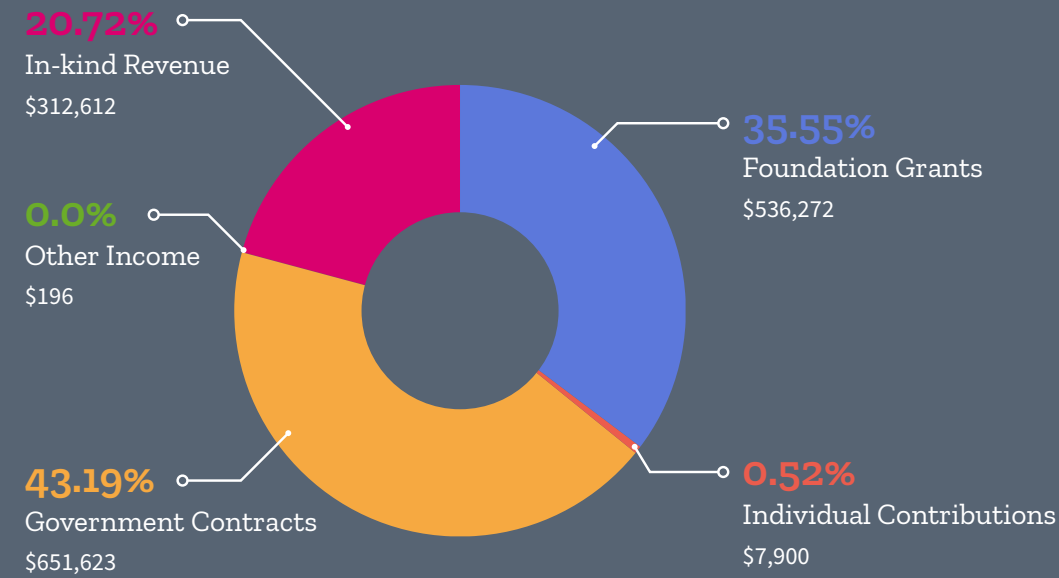
Financials

Income

Foundation Grants	\$536,272	35.55%
Individual Contributions	\$7,900	0.52%
Government Contracts	\$651,623	43.19%
Other Income	\$196	0.01%
In-kind Revenue	\$312,612	20.72%
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,508,603	100.00%

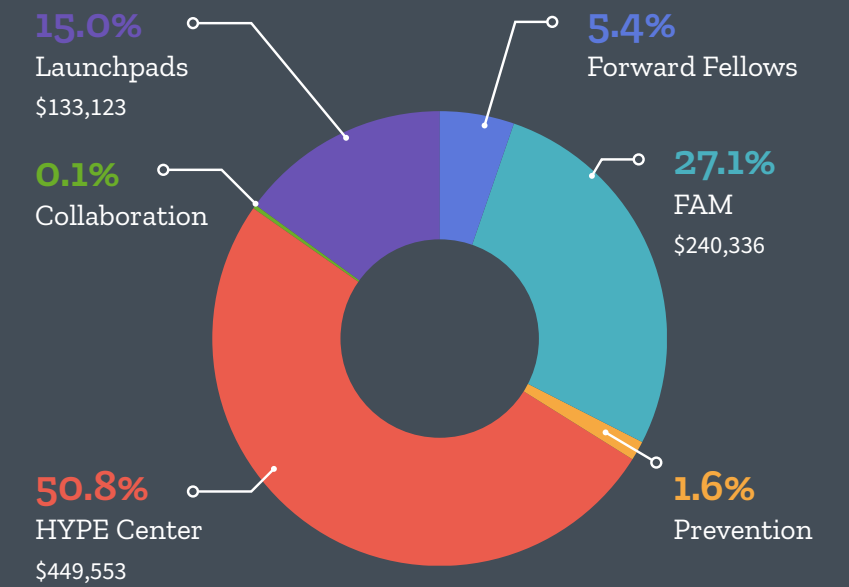
Expenses

Administration	\$135,344	10.11%
Fundraising	\$5,854	0.44%
Program	\$885,364	66.11%
In-kind Expenses	\$312,612	23.34%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,339,173	100.00%



Expenses by Program

* excludes in-kind expenses



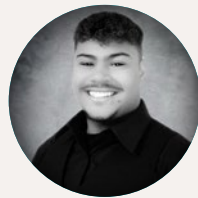
Team and Board



Alia Whitney-Johnson
CO-FOUNDER AND
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Anastasia Mallillin
DIRECTOR,
H.Y.P.E. CENTER



Augstin Pizano
COORDINATOR,
H.Y.P.E. CENTER



Camille Bailey
DIRECTOR,
FAM: FAMILY AND ME



Lucrecia Bermúdez
FINANCE MANAGER



Michelle Sanger
OPERATIONS MANAGER



Monica Balanoff
DIRECTOR,
LAUNCHPADS



Sandra Sandoval
MANAGER,
H.Y.P.E. CENTER



Sheela Ramesh
DIRECTOR OF LEARNING
& COMMUNICATIONS



Janay Eustace
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
CONSULTANT



Da'Sheana Davis
COORDINATOR,
H.Y.P.E. CENTER



Natasha Dolby
CO-FOUNDER AND
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



JaMel Perkins
CO-FOUNDER AND
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Jennifer Rodriguez
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Natasha Singh
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Advisors

Amy Price
Bradley Myles
Cathy Zimmerman

Julie Cordua
Kate Walker Brown
Katie Albright

Lateefah Simon
Lisa Spinali
Minouche Kandel

Mollie Brown
Patrice Martin
Stacey Katz

MEMBERS OF OUR ADVISORY BOARDS
FOR FAM AND THE HYPE CENTER:

Amanda Hickman
Amy Huson
Anareli Bedolla

Augstin Pizano
Carley Flores-Adams
Christopher Carz
Flores-Adams

Da'Sheana Davis
Janel Gonzalez
Manny Montenegro

Michele Foy
Najma Douglas
Patricia Hoskins

Partners



“

“We need to get involved to create healthy solutions. We must take responsibility to step into a role where we are embodying the change we seek.”

”



Anareli Bedolla

AGE 21
FAM YOUTH ADVISORY
BOARD MEMBER





**FREEDOM
FORWARD**

FREEDOM FORWARD
198 POTRERO AVE.
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103

www.freedom-forward.org

(415) 449-7373