The Fiscal Year began with so much hope.

Our collaborations with colleges, high schools, and middle schools were developing in exciting ways. New long-term partnerships were just getting off the ground. We planned to launch the new EP website in January 2020. And our 30th Anniversary Gala was scheduled for April 2020.

But no. The pandemic arrived in March, shuttering entire nations, taking hundreds of thousands of lives, fraying communities, and forcing people into isolation.

In this upheaval, our practitioners did what they do best: they innovated, making a seamless transition to virtual work. Immediately, this allowed us to support schools, colleges, nonprofits, foundations, and frontline medical workers as they held life-and-death conversations about how to live and work together, safely. After the death of George Floyd, we fostered dialogues about race in schools and in communities. And in preparation for the election, we taught the next generation of young leaders to explore and discuss political differences in new, healthier ways.

It has been a year of crisis, but we are incredibly proud of what our global community has accomplished together. And hope, which seemed lost at times, is something we found in one another.

With gratitude,

Katie Hyten & John Sarrouf
Co-Executive Directors
FOR THE 2020 FISCAL YEAR

In a year of unprecedented challenges, Essential Partners ended the 2020 Fiscal Year in strong, stable financial health.

Direct program revenue surpassed individual donations in FY20 for the first time in the organization’s history. This is the result of more efficient practices, innovations by our capable and dedicated staff, as well as growing demand for EP’s unique approach as communities manage the compounding stresses of the global pandemic, the US election, and the racial justice protests.

EP added a full-time programming staff member at the start of FY20 as well, and despite all the challenges 2020 presented, EP has been able to keep 100% of its staff employed without interruption since the start of the pandemic.
“I was awestruck by how dialogue allowed both middle and high schoolers to engage in challenging topics and be so self reflective. My classes moved and flowed so easily and students engaged in a way I didn't think possible.”

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

67
Community and institutional partners

2,320
Facilitators trained in Reflective Structured Dialogue

19
Expert practitioners working in the field
Essential Partners has collaborated with middle and secondary schools in Massachusetts, California, Texas, and North Carolina to give students, teachers, and administrators the skills to create a culture of open, inclusive, civil discourse.

In Newburyport, MA, students facilitated discussions about the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 Election as well as school culture and academic honors. EP practices have been incorporated by instructors into classroom teaching and used in extracurricular programs as well.

“The value of these dialogues is unparalleled. Thank you for encouraging me to take a step out of my comfort zone.”

NEWBURYPORyPORT HIGH STUDENT
MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING
93% of program participants report feeling more understood by the “other side” after an Essential Partners engagement.
Since March, Essential Partners has invested thousands of hours to support communities holding life-and-death conversations about how to live and work together, safely.

EP held free virtual dialogues in which hundreds of people could grieve, share, and listen to renew their sense of connection and agency. EP has also led dialogues for frontline healthcare workers, educators, nonprofit groups, and faith communities to help them find a path forward together.

All the while, free resources and expert coaching have empowered EP’s global Community of Practice, the alumni who tend to the health of their communities.

“This dialogue made me think about how I want to help others—and what I’m capable of doing to help.”

COVID DIALOGUE PARTICIPANT
SOCIAL COHESION
77.4% of participants report that their community, campus, or workplace is more cohesive because of their work with EP.

LASTING IMPACT
60% of participants see connections across differences forming as long as a year after an EP engagement.
Impact Snapshot

Race in American Life

For years before the most recent protests for racial justice, EP has helped communities have difficult conversations about race, diversity, and inclusion. These conversations took on new meaning in 2020.

In high schools and colleges, among people of different faiths, between law enforcement and the black community, EP’s approach has transformed the way people engage with differences of identity. It has empowered people to explore their own values and histories, to listen more deeply and connect on a fundamentally human level. That work continues in 2021 and beyond.

“To be able to facilitate a conversation about accountability and harm, to listen with a nurturing ear, to hold space for these difficult and complicated topics—this is so important to the work of restorative justice.”

Onyeka Obiocha, EP Alum
Yale University
TRUST ACROSS DIFFERENCES
93.8% of all program participants report greater trust in people with different beliefs, values, and/or identities because of an Essential Partners engagement.
Our Leadership
EXECUTIVES & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Katie Hyten
Co-Executive Director

John Sarrouf
Co-Executive Director

Christine Spadafor
Chair of the Board of Directors

Jeanne Emanuel
Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors

Brendan Abel
Board of Directors

John Lloyd
Board of Directors

David March
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Nicole Morris
Board of Directors

Robert O'Hara
Board of Directors

Julien L. Pham
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Gary Sandhu
Board of Directors
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EXPERT PRACTITIONERS

Active Associates

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Associate

Nadiya Brock
Associate & Program Development Coordinator

Cara Cargill
Associate

Meenakshi Chakraverti, MPA, PhD
Senior Associate

Kathy Eckles
Associate

Meg Griffiths
Associate & Assistant Director of Programs

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Senior Associate

Tierra Marshall
Associate

Adam Motenko, MBA
Associate

Eliza O’Neill
Associate

Raye Rawls, JD
Senior Associate

Eric Roberts
Associate

Kimberly Shaw
Associate

Phoebe Sinclair
Associate

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