



essential
PARTNERS

Bold Explorations in Community

Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR 2019

Sept 2018–Aug 2019

Thirty Years of Connection, Community, and Citizenship

OUR NEW MISSION STATEMENT

Essential Partners equips people to live and work better together in community by building trust and understanding across differences.

FOR THIRTY YEARS, ESSENTIAL PARTNERS HAS HELPED PEOPLE in the most challenging situations rediscover their mutual humanity and hope for the future.

With our time-tested approach, we teach people to foster new, deeper relationships across differences. We show them how to rebuild trust where it has been broken. We help them understand each other in truer, more complex ways so they can thrive in community. We set the stage for them to find a new path forward, together. And we do this without asking anyone to compromise their values, beliefs, or identities.

Relationships, trust, and understanding—it sounds simple. But polarization is possible wherever there's a difference of values, beliefs, or identities. It isn't just a partisan problem, it's a dynamic of human relationships. It takes courage, determination, and skill to repair the fraying bonds of a community.

Essential Partners was founded as the Public Conversations Project in December 1989 by Laura R. Chasin and a close-knit team of family therapists. They recognized the rising polarization in public discourse as a danger to a pluralist, nonviolent civil society. Our founders were innovators and visionaries. They developed our trademark model, Reflective Structured Dialogue, put it into practice around the globe, and taught others how to apply it in their own communities, campuses, and congregations.

Today, we follow in their footsteps, envisioning a world of thriving communities strengthened by difference, connected by trust. We train local leaders, provide support for their bridge-building efforts, and serve as a vibrant hub of innovation and exploration.

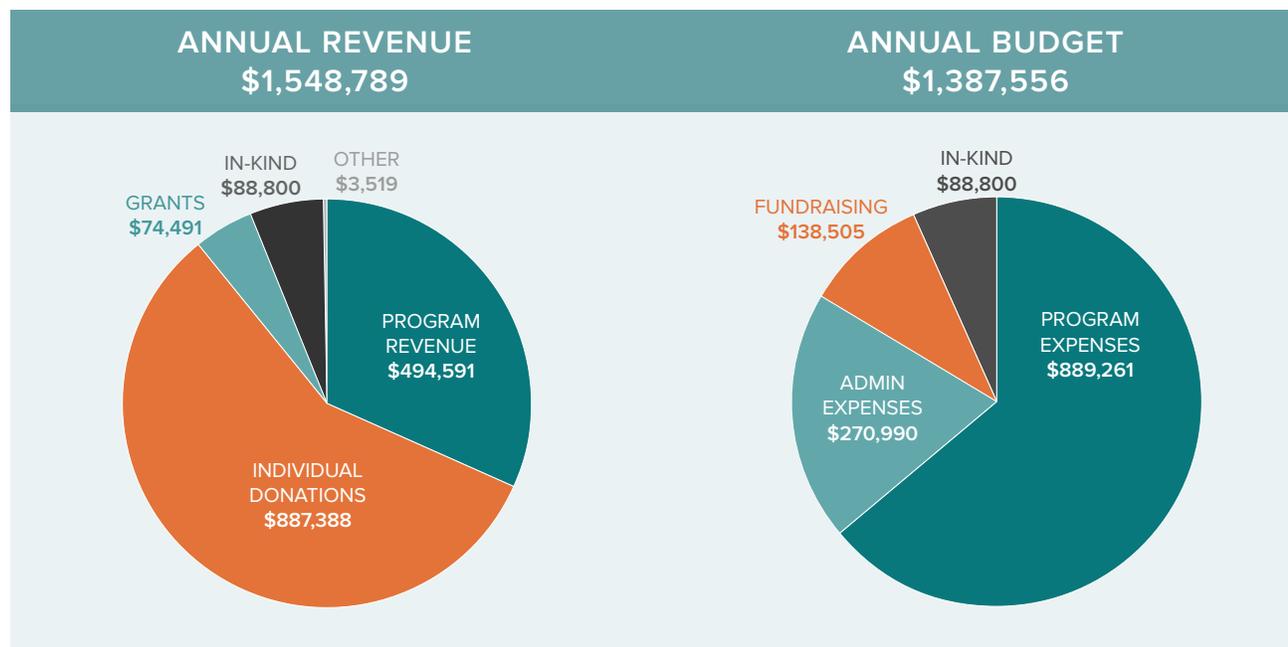
On April 2, 2020 we will gather in Cambridge, MA, to celebrate our 30th Anniversary. We hope you will join us to honor our founders, highlight the work of our affiliates, and help launch Essential Partners into its next three decades.

Katie Hyten & John Sarrouf
Co-Executive Directors

The Organization at a Glance

Essential Partners has dramatically increased its proportion of earned revenue and grants over the past 5 years while welcoming a new generation of practitioners and innovating our approach for new communities. Over the next 3 years, our goals are to diversify our major funding sources, expand our market reach, and build long-term strategic partnerships.

FY19 Financial Snapshot



66

Projects completed

198

Individual donors

7

New grants awarded

20

Expert field practitioners

Major FY19 Supporters

AMERICAN ARBITRATION ASSOCIATION & INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION FOUNDATION

THE CHARLES KOCH FOUNDATION

COMMUNITIES IN MIND

THE FOREST FOUNDATION

ISLAMIC RELIEF USA

THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

LAURANCE S. ROCKEFELLER FUND

STAND TOGETHER FOUNDATION

THE STATEN ISLAND COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

ANONYMOUS DONORS

Essential Partners, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, offers a range of giving options, including gifts in memory of co-founder Laura R. Chasin, bequest or planned gifts, donor advised funds (DAFs), and gifts of stock. All gifts are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. EIN 22-3432160.

Impact Report

Our global network of alum are not just participants of a single dialogue or training, they are change-makers and community builders who employ our approach to create cultures of pluralism, inclusion, and trust across differences. **In terms of lasting impact, we have no peers.**

Our program evaluations find that...

92%

of participants report greater trust in people who hold different beliefs, values, and/or identities.

+50%

change in participants reporting they feel more understood by the “other side.”

85%

of participants see that their community, campus, or workplace is more cohesive.

80%

of participants see connections across differences forming as long as a year after an EP engagement.

“As a black mom, I want to save my son. I feared for our safety. I now feel that my community is stronger, and there are honest police officers who care about us.”

PARTICIPANT, NORTH CAROLINA POLICE-COMMUNITY PROJECT

Let's Talk Scale

3,193

Community builders were trained in EP's approach in Fiscal Year 2019, and EVERY SINGLE YEAR they will engage with

111,755

neighbors, coworkers, students, and community members in projects that will bring about a large-scale transformation in their communities.

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS we reached nearly one million people in communities all across the globe by training fewer than 20,000 local leaders in our approach.

That's scale.

Community Members Engaged by EP Alum

Individuals Trained by EP

Key Initiatives

OUR WORK

TRAINING
COACHING

CONSULTATION
FACILITATION

Secondary School Innovation

Innovation for secondary schools is supported by a major grant, Communities in Mind. This initiative includes public schools in **Massachusetts** and **Wyoming**, religious schools in **New York** and **New Jersey**, as well as a collaboration with the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate in **Boston**. We are equipping the next generation to make healthier, more open, more democratic civic discourse possible.

Civic Health, Cohesion, and Resilience

We consult with partners across the globe to help them foster a healthier civic life. In **Jordan** and **Turkey**, our partners are nourishing bonds among refugees and residents. In **Northern Ireland**, they lead public engagements about green energy developments. In the **United States**, EP alum have made local governments more responsive, advanced new school building projects, and resolved longstanding religious tensions.

Culture Change in Higher Ed

We help colleges and universities build diverse, inclusive, open communities around intellectual values—both in the classroom and in campus life. Partner institutions range from private Middlebury College in **Vermont** to Miami Dade Community College in urban **Florida**; from Shenandoah University in **Virginia** to Southern Methodist University in **Texas**.

Faith Leaders of the Future

Whether working with an interfaith community coalition in **Maryland**, evangelical congregations in **Michigan**, **Minnesota**, and **Wisconsin**, the Wexner Foundation for Jewish leadership in the **United States** and **Israel**, or with congregations, synagogues, and mosques across the globe, EP is training the next generation of faith leaders to foster vibrant, inclusive communities centered on shared values.



PHOTOS FROM TOP

Conference panel on EP higher ed innovations (CO)
Courageous Conversations community dialogue (MD)

Religious secondary school teacher training (NY)
Shenandoah University faculty training (VA)

Refugee dialogues (Amman, Jordan)
Training for high school parents & community (WY)

Leadership

Co-Executive Directors



KATIE HYTEN

Formerly director of program operations, Katie holds a MA from the Tufts Fletcher School, where her research in religious conflicts focused on the need for effective communication in complex political issues. She has led EP's evaluation program as well as innovations for digital engagement.



JOHN SARROUF

John serves as co-Executive Director as well as the Director of Program Development. He focuses on program innovation, impact, and quality. John attended the graduate program in dispute resolution at U-MASS Boston and has taught at Clark University as well as Gordon College.

Board of Directors



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