



# Accelerating Change



**TWO YEAR UPDATE**  
SEPTEMBER 2021





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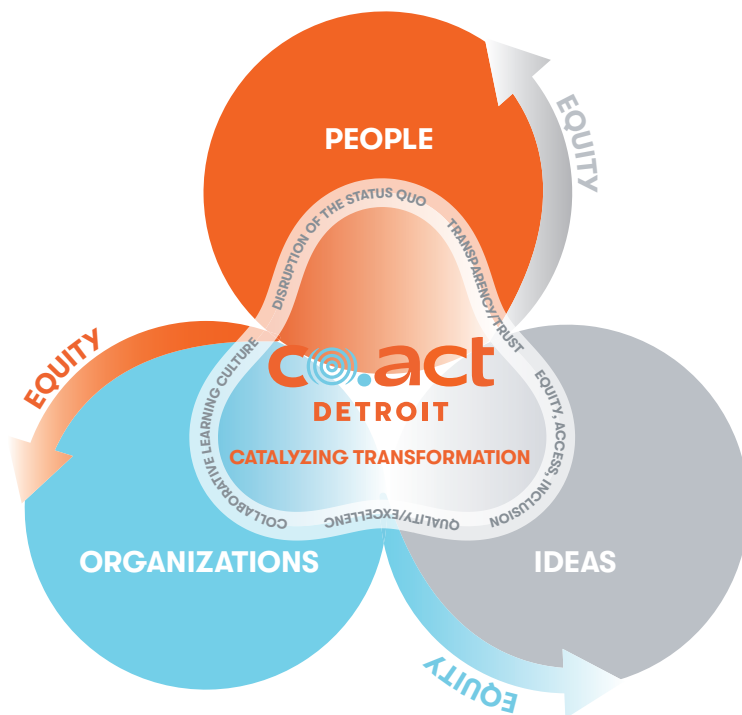




Co.act Detroit exists to push against the systemic barriers that limit the growth, evolution and sustainability of nonprofits and other mission driven organizations.

As a catalyst and connector, Co.act is uniquely positioned to transcend sector and power dynamics by bringing together funders, investors, practitioners, nonprofits and community leaders to build a more equitable future.

By activating the intersection of people, organizations and ideas, Co.act strives to accelerate transformation toward long-term, systemic change.



***“Co.act is a way of thinking and working. We build trust-driven partnerships and leverage diverse perspectives to advance equity in everything we do.”***

Allandra Bulger  
Executive Director

## MISSION

Co.act accelerates transformational impact within nonprofits and across sectors in Southeast Michigan to advance equity through collaborative idea generation, cross-sector resources and access to tailored programming and learning opportunities.

## VISION

Co.act is building toward a future in which systemic barriers that undermine community power and success are overcome through a culture of collaborative action and access to priority resources.

## CORE VALUES

### Equity, Access and Inclusion

We act to close racial gaps in leadership, funding and governance by amplifying perspectives and recommendations from people closest to these longstanding issues. We increase access to resources and opportunities for those who are traditionally excluded.

### Transparency/Trust

We build trust by ‘meeting people where they are’ and working transparently with diverse participants to set goals, align priorities and remove barriers to resources.

### Quality/Excellence

We provide equitable access to best-in-class programs, service providers and resources to catalyze nonprofits’ ability to meet mission.

### Collaborative Learning Culture

We collaborate with nonprofits and a broad network of partners to share learning, explore best practices and solve complex problems.

### Disruption of the Status Quo

We explore ideas, pilot new programs and hold courageous convenings to accelerate lasting change.

# From the Executive Director

## DEAR CO.ACTIVISTS,

This report is an opportunity to look back on two very busy years: from Co.act's launch to today. I joined Co.act because I believed in the vision that the nonprofit sector was the seat of transformative change. I believe that impact is accelerated when all of us within the nonprofit sphere are better connected to each other and able to navigate the constellation of resources that fuel us.

Since our launch experience in Summer 2019, much has changed in our world. Co.act opened its doors to in-person programming and collaboration in June 2019. In March 2020, we paused and shut our building, out of caution and safety because of COVID-19. While our building may have been closed to visitors, our work continued ... and even grew. We quickly pivoted from a place where people could be dynamic and collaborate in person to a space online and across multiple platforms where on any given week, there was something to build a nonprofit's strength, a person available to listen and offer encouragement, a targeted program offering that prioritized wellness or a group of other nonprofits working collectively to make big change happen in communities.

The heightened awareness around racial violence and the global pandemic galvanized us. Racial equity is central to our work and we connected with four intermediary organizations that shared that value and wanted to work in solidarity to ensure nonprofits and their leaders felt connected and supported. We tried new things and we doubled down. We launched an earned revenue accelerator and we became a grant maker. We launched a community development mini-grants program and we grew a network of service providers dedicated to partnering with nonprofits in our region.

In the following pages you'll get a front row seat and a bird's eye view of our impact to date. I hope that this information and our story emboldens you to think dynamically about what might be possible — for you and for the nonprofit sector in Southeast Michigan.

In partnership,



Allandra Bulger  
Executive Director, Co.act Detroit



# From Then to Now


Co.act Detroit has sparked change, inspired collaboration, and launched ideas for more than 13,000 people across Southeast Michigan since our public launch in summer 2019. A place for experimentation — by design, and leading with equity. We've been busy since we officially opened our doors. Below is an abbreviated version of highlights from the past two years.






*“I have so many Co.act memories but my favorite Co.act Detroit memory is from our grand opening. We had a ‘meet the team’ lunch. Our team got to connect with the community that we serve. We were able to sit and connect on another level. It was so intriguing to me listening to all the stories of the organizations that we serve.”*

**– JACLYNN LOUDEN, CO.ACT DETROIT**




*“The launch activities were my favorite. I loved seeing the space filled with nonprofit leaders, speakers and it was great that we were encouraged to get out and see the local businesses that are in and around Co.act Detroit. There was really a great vibe going on the whole time.”*

**– KELLEY KUHN, MICHIGAN NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION**



*“My favorite times at Co.act Detroit are the moments when I look up at all the faces around me and realize I don’t know at least 50% of the people I’m seeing. The nonprofit sector in our region can sometimes feel like such a tiny village, and being around Co.act is both a great reminder that this isn’t the case and a wonderful opportunity to interact with people I’ve never met before in meaningful ways.”*

**– ERICA RALEIGH, DATA DRIVEN DETROIT**

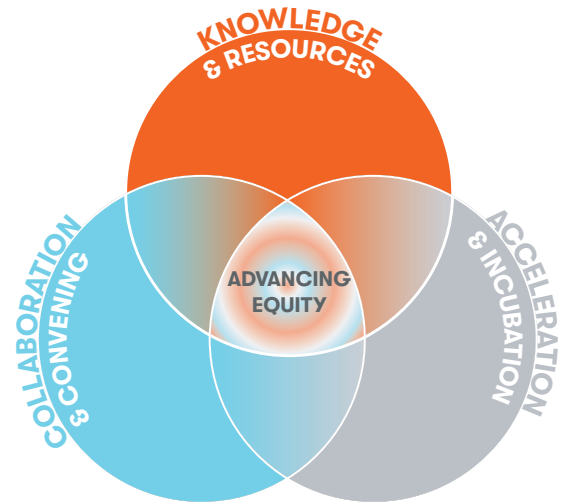


*“I really loved going to one of Cornetta Lane’s last Dinner with 30 events at Co.act. The thought of sharing a meal and stories with a large group of mostly strangers is something I miss. Another favorite is the open working hours where I got to test drive working remotely and run into new and old friends in the nonprofit sector.”*

**– ADAM DESJARDINS, CULTURESOURCE**

# Big Picture: Impact

Co.act exists to push against convention and to accelerate toward new ways of doing things within the nonprofit sector. We believe our actions create impact. Our work centers the collective advancement of equity in our communities. We collaborate with partners to equip nonprofits to meet missions by narrowing gaps in racial leadership, removing barriers to resources, and catalyzing systems level change across sectors. Here are some of the ways we've pushed against the status quo to enable the sector to become more resilient and racially equitable.



- **Knowledge and Resources with Racial Equity at the Center** — Nonprofits contend with racial equity issues ranging from funding disparities and representation gaps. Co.act considers racial and social equity first when making decisions, and we are constantly learning and seeking to understand how to close racial gaps. This looks like a yearlong conversation series with **Urban Consulate** about racial justice. It also looks like a partnership with the **Knight Foundation, Data Driven Detroit** and **Michigan Nonprofit Association** on a first-ever leadership census to get a clear picture of nonprofit leader racial representation and funding disparities in our area. Our drive for equity is within each of our activities and you'll read more about how that manifests in the following pages. We believe information is powerful and with data, dialogue, and a demand for equity, change is possible.
- **Collaboration and Convening** — We assembled diverse perspectives to build a connected nonprofit community in Southeast Michigan by demonstrating and promoting collaboration's value in collective problem solving. This included co-convening the **Transforming Solidarity Collective**, which you'll read more about in the following pages. Even before COVID-19, our organizations worked together but the pandemic gave us an opportunity to serve more nonprofits, at scale, during a crisis. Working together, we provided specific technical assistance for PPP loan applications, prepared documents for the Employee Retention Credit and extended ongoing support and updates around government-funded programs for 542 nonprofits. Our collective offered direct legal pro bono referrals and counseling for longer term nonprofit legal challenges exacerbated by issues arising from COVID-19 for 77 nonprofits. With our partners we supported 200 nonprofit board members with training and consulting. Co.act co-hosted a virtual engagement

series and toolkit for reimagining the nonprofit workplace and reentering safely for 826 organizations. As a group, we launched a COVID-19 microsite with resources for nonprofits, with content that addresses the greatest needs identified by a COVID impact study (more than 10,000 visits have been made). Beyond these programs, we've collaborated to help stabilize nonprofits in the short-term and long-term. We also centered racial equity in our approach, supporting each other, too, as five women of color leading nonprofit intermediaries.

- **Accelerated Earned Revenue Models and Incubated New Ways of Funding** — We leveraged peer learning communities, action-oriented cohorts and participatory grantmaking to connect nonprofits to the resources they needed, while seeding new ideas and implementing practices that advance equity.

We redefined how nonprofits receive funding. We recognized that earned revenue was an important topic but one that came with risk for many nonprofits in that there needed to be a proven model. So, with **Erb Foundation's** support in 2020, we held a workshop and invited nonprofits to join us in learning about new ways to meet budget. Due to the overwhelming response, in 2021 we launched the Earned Revenue Accelerator with six nonprofits. These innovators learned together and then developed ideas for their own earned revenue strategy. A culminating public "pitch" gave the nonprofits an audience for sharing their ideas.

We launched the Activate Fund with \$1.5 million earmarked for grant making that would shift the dynamic between funder and grantee to be more reciprocal and less hierarchical. Activate Fund was inspired by Michigan Community Resources and others via the Building a Network report that lifted up the importance of strengthening connectivity within the nonprofit sector. Also important and noted in the report was the recognition of the racial, social, and economic barriers nonprofits face in achieving their missions. Partnering across four counties in Southeast Michigan, we held open houses and cast a wide net to share the opportunity for nonprofits and service providers to connect through the Activate Fund. The Activate Fund started with the belief that listening to nonprofits and addressing operational and capacity gaps would lead to a stronger sector. Each grantee received wraparound support from our partners at **Michigan Community Resources and Michigan Nonprofit Association**, and we developed a network of service providers ranging from marketing and fundraising experts to finance and operations consultants. Another key component of the Activate Fund is cohorts, peer learning and network strengthening. We believe when these areas are strong, social change is possible.



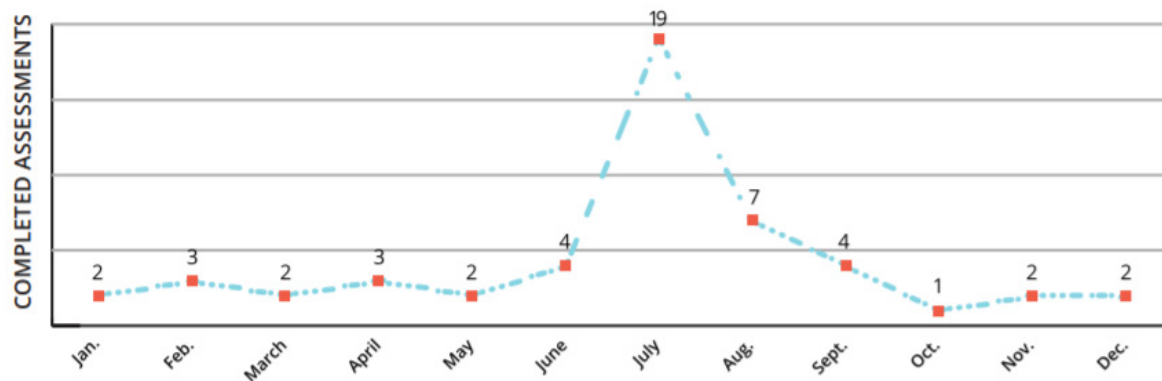
(equity)



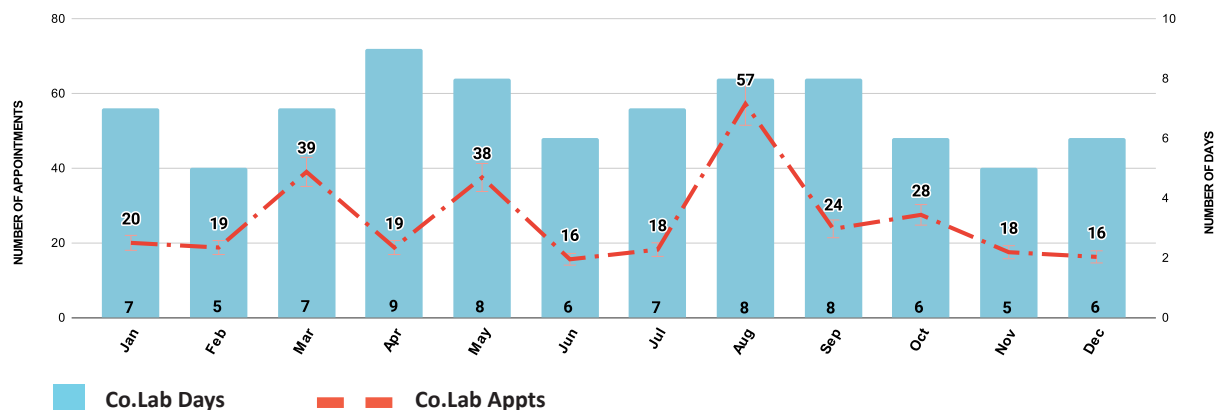
# Knowledge and Resources

## CO.LAB CONNECT

The Co.Lab Connect program invites nonprofits in Southeast Michigan to complete Principles & Practices assessments. These detailed organizational health assessments, developed and administered by Michigan Nonprofit Association, help organizations build capacity and demonstrate accountability and transparency.



The Co.Lab Connect program provides opportunities for consultations and coaching to local organizations in a broad variety of capacity areas. Co.Lab Connect partners provide 1-on-1 coaching, leveraging cross-sector partnerships to provide no cost, high-quality service to nonprofits. Our shift to virtual programming allowed us to remain consistent in providing Co.Lab Connect appointments every week, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, 310 appointments were held during 82 Co.Lab days in 2020.



## WORKSHOPS

Co.act hosts numerous workshops. Until March 2020, these were largely in-person sessions.

March 2020 served as a transition point to a virtual delivery model for Co.act Detroit. With this shift, we were still able to provide opportunities for professional growth and networking, and continued to hold the nonprofits we serve and our values at the center of our works.

- In total, we hosted 111 programs in 2020, serving 4,106 attendees
- 45 Co.act Detroit program events were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19, as well as 37 space reservations
- 11 programs originally intended for in-person delivery were moved to virtual



## FUNDRAISING IN A CRISIS CERTIFICATE

In 2021, Co.act offered nonprofit professionals a unique opportunity to gain a certification in fundraising from a leading institution in the field, [the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University](#). Two cohorts have ushered through the Fundraising in a Crisis Certificate program. This program prioritized access for those who traditionally haven't had the same opportunities in the field — like professionals of color and/or folks from organizations with smaller professional development budgets — through reduced fees and scholarships.

- 95% of participants completed the certification
- 68% of participants received scholarships totaling \$16,600

## URBAN CONSULATE

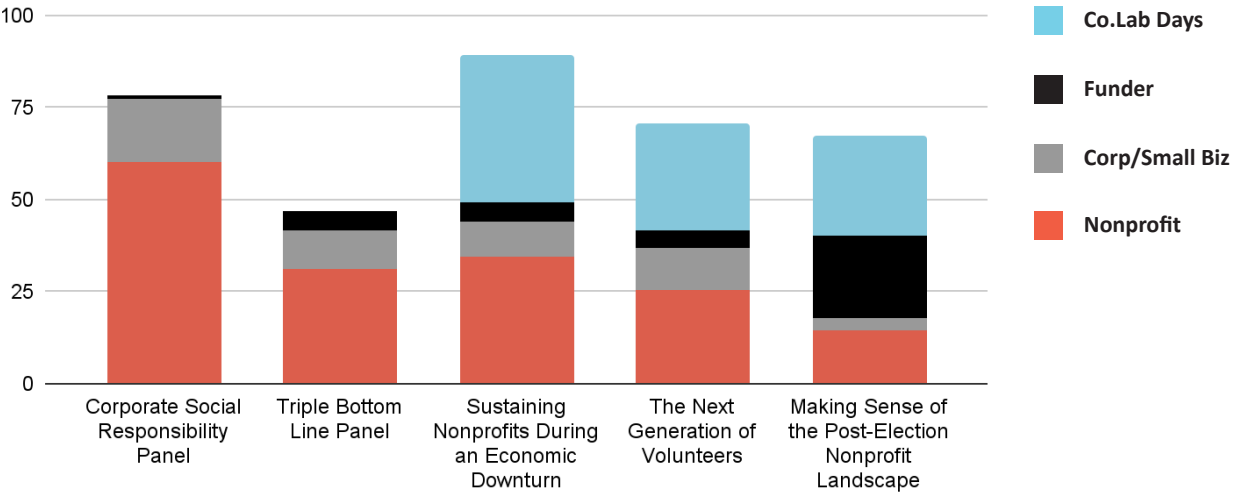


Since launch, Co.act has partnered with Urban Consulate on candid conversations and exchange. In 2020, Co.act partnered with Urban Consulate to host “Candid Conversations: Practicing Racial Equity,” a series of live-streamed conversations. In addition to the live streams, hosted by Orlando Bailey, these conversations are now available for on-demand streaming via YouTube. These dialogues elevated a much-needed conversation about racial justice and nonprofits, with a focus on the context of living and working in Detroit.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY SERIES

Co.act continually pushes against the status quo. One way of doing this is by exploring how corporations might show up with and for the nonprofit sector. Most people have heard the words “corporate social responsibility,” but few know what that means. Beginning in late 2019, Co.act produced a series of five conversations focused on Corporate Social Responsibility. Three of these workshops were conducted virtually and, as a result, were available for on-demand viewing afterward.

ATTENDEES BY SOURCE



(nimble)  
(ideate)

# Collaboration and Convening

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## TRANSFORMING SOLIDARITY

In 2020, five groups united to form the **Transforming Solidarity Collective** that bolsters sector capacity and unlocks practical solutions that immediately help organizations during uncertain times. The Collective was forged by a core belief in the resilience and indispensability of nonprofits. Together, the five groups offer a variety of essential resources and programming tailored to the needs of southeast Michigan. Co.act co-founded the Transforming Solidarity Collective alongside Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (known as NEW), Michigan Community Resources (known as MCR), Michigan Nonprofit Association (known as MNA), and Community Development Advocates of Detroit (known as CDAD).

*“We are five women of color deeply embedded in the nonprofit ecosystem of Detroit and southeast Michigan. We have five missions, five work styles, and five voices. With mutual intentions and hearts, we have decided to work as a collective that honors the history and resiliency of Black and Indigenous people and communities of color. Together, our work offers nonprofits the critical support needed to advance their missions. Today, we stand in recognition of the privilege and responsibility we have to speak as leaders of nonprofit support organizations.” From [Leading in Solidarity](#), an opinion column published by Philanthropy News Daily in July 2020.*”

In early 2021, the Collective reflected on its impact and found that by promoting information across the networks of the five organizations, individual organizations have seen increased reach, and are now offering services to organizations who were previously unknown or inaccessible. These include:

- Technical assistance at no cost to nonprofits for marketing and fundraising, capacity building, organizational health, finance, data analysis, and legal assistance. Since March 2020, the Collective has provided support to 310 nonprofits.
- Pro bono legal services for organizations affected by COVID; 77 nonprofits used these services.
- The Collective launched a COVID microsite, email newsletter and impact study that reached tens of thousands across the region.





Additionally, the increased familiarity with each other's programming reduced the potential for duplication of programming, reduced competition and focused the group on what is best for the sector. It has also provided space and opportunity for increased partnership among members.

Through their work together, the organizations are strengthening their individual practice as well as providing new and innovative programs and services to the region's nonprofits.

- Together, the Collective conducted a virtual engagement series and toolkit on reimagining the nonprofit workplace and reentering safely. Through the series and the toolkit, the Collective served 826 organizations.
- As organizations across the Collective continue to meet to build shared practices (e.g., in intake or data/evaluation), this is provoking reflection on practices at an organizational level, presenting alternative methodologies and prompting improvements. For example, the explicit commitment to supporting organizations with Black, Indigenous, and people of color leadership is prompting new data collection as organizations register.

(innovate)

## DESIGN STOREFRONT COMPETITION

We partnered with Design Core Detroit on Nonprofits in Action: The 2020 Design Showcase. We recognized that nonprofits are often unable to invest in telling their own story. Through this competition, we provided Southeast Michigan nonprofits with the opportunity to work with a designer to explore design as a vehicle for communicating their social impact by creating a one-of-a-kind installation in Co.act Detroit's historic showcase windows on Woodward Avenue. Nonprofits Just Speak and Alternative for Girls were selected and paired with designers.

### Just Speak + END Studio

[Just Speak](#) is an advocacy for healing-centered education that provides crisis support and resiliency programming for children and youth aged 3 to 17 years. They were paired with [END Studio](#), led by Elise DeChard. Elise and her team created an interactive multi-scalar library of activity and information in the Co.act storefront. Like Just Speak's programming, the library is playful, multi-pronged, and immersive to engage a variety of viewers on multiple levels.

### Alternatives for Girls + Laura Lybeer Hilpert

Over the past 32 years, [Alternatives For Girls \(AFG\)](#) has worked to help homeless and high-risk girls and young women avoid violence, teen pregnancy and exploitation; and helps them to explore and access the support, resources and opportunities necessary to be safe, to grow strong and to make positive choices in their lives. AFG was paired with Laura Lybeer Hilpert. Laura and her team will created a colorful multidimensional display to highlight a message of hope and uplift the girls in the program.



(accessibility)

# Acceleration and Incubation

## EARNED REVENUE ACCELERATOR

In January 2021, Co.act launched the Earned Revenue Accelerator pilot, connecting six local nonprofits with industry expertise, including our partner Gingras Global, for developing revenue-generating products and services to diversify their business models.

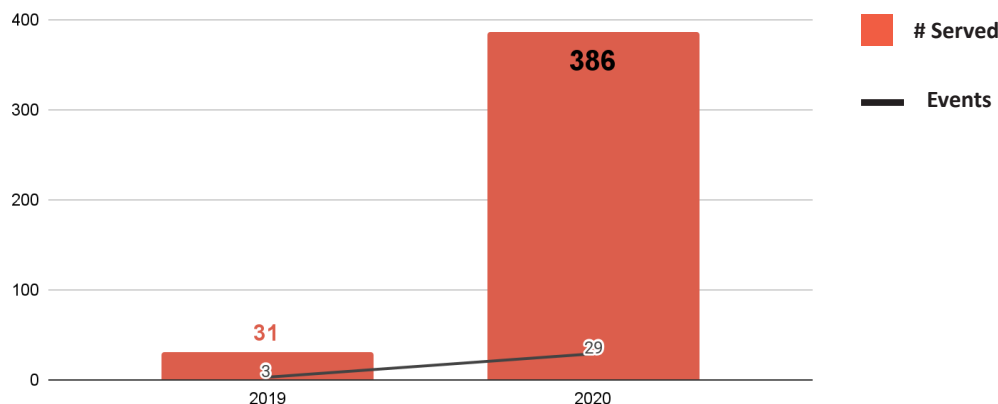
Scaling up from the initial workshop, Co.act and partners assembled best-in-class experts to deliver content during an immersive series of workshops and coaching to develop nonprofits' revenue-generating product / service concepts — paving the way for diversifying their business models.



## NONPROFIT WELLBEING SERIES

One of Co.act's core beliefs is that those providing services in the nonprofit sector must first take care of themselves. Manifesting this belief, we have collaborated with a selection of local providers to host the Nonprofit Wellbeing Series.

We launched this program in 2019 with three events, while 2020's series grew to 29 events. These events range in size (10-200+) and type (self-care happy hours, yoga, meditation, coping with grief, goal-setting) in response to our ecosystem's needs.





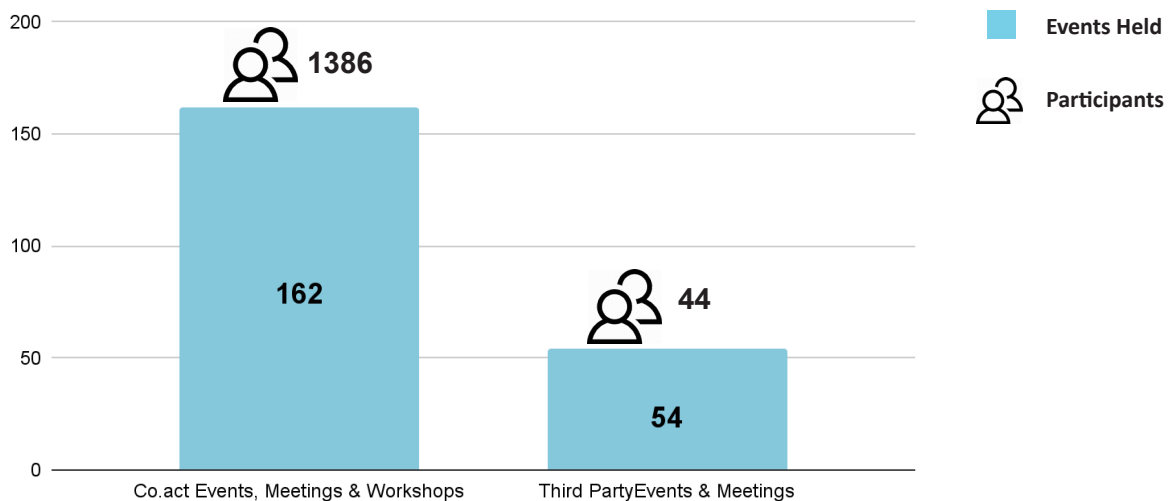
## COVID-19 RESPONSE

Like every organization, 2020 required that Co.act conduct a complete re-think of how (and where) we deliver our services. While the physical space is a key component of who Co.act is, we joined the online revolution, moving as many activities as possible to virtual.

While virtual program offerings were always in the plan for the future, the pandemic accelerated this part of our programming and the development of a virtual resource library. In 2020 we produced 10 COVID-19 Resources, 14 Webinar & Event recordings and 10 Nonprofit guides for use by our ecosystem.

During the time our doors were open, we welcomed over 13,000 people through our doors for a variety of events, meetings, workshops, both hosted by Co.act and by third parties.

### EVENTS HELD AND PARTICIPANTS



## ACTIVATE FUND

Co.act launched the Activate Fund to strengthen nonprofit capacity and collaboration, recognize peer learning and build cohorts. We operationalized this mission through five components:

- **Nonprofit Fundamentals** — a program designed to build the internal capacity of nonprofits to effect transformative impact in their communities.
- **Collaboration Pilot** — a program designed for nonprofits to work in collaboration to multiply strength, resources, and knowledge.
- **Service Provider Network** — a vetted group of service providers dedicated to working with nonprofits.
- **Earned Revenue Accelerator** — as discussed earlier, an innovative approach to nonprofit sustainability.
- **Apparatus Cares** — support for organizations that applied for but did not receive Nonprofit Fundamentals grants, this program offered a free financial and human resources technical assistance package from Apparatus Solutions.



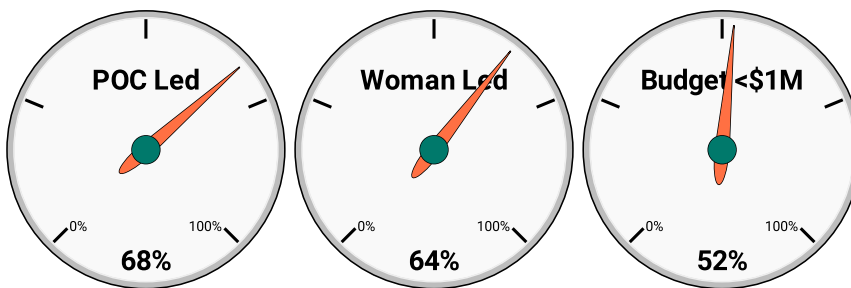
More than 260 nonprofits across the region applied for Nonprofit Fundamentals grants. In a demonstration of nonprofit demand for funding in our ecosystem, these applications represented nearly \$12 million in requests. The Activate Fund advisory committee narrowed the pool of prospective grantees to 50 finalists and ultimately selected 25 awardees whose candidacy was evaluated based on a combination of organizational size, age, location and diversity. These grantees received a total of \$1,180,000 to help facilitate their capacity building projects.

Additionally, more than 25 groups representing 260 nonprofit organizations applied for the Collaboration Pilot award. Co.act awarded seven collaboratives with in-kind services valued at \$210,000 and provided them with additional resources including virtual space, facilitation, and convening support.

The Activate Fund's targeted outcomes included:

- Identify, address and eliminate barriers
- Collaborate, think and invest differently
- Celebrate wins and share best practices
- Create power and change in beneficiary communities
- Strengthen local networks

During post-funding evaluation, 100% of grantees reported that the Activate Fund grant helped further the work and accelerate the mission of their organization!

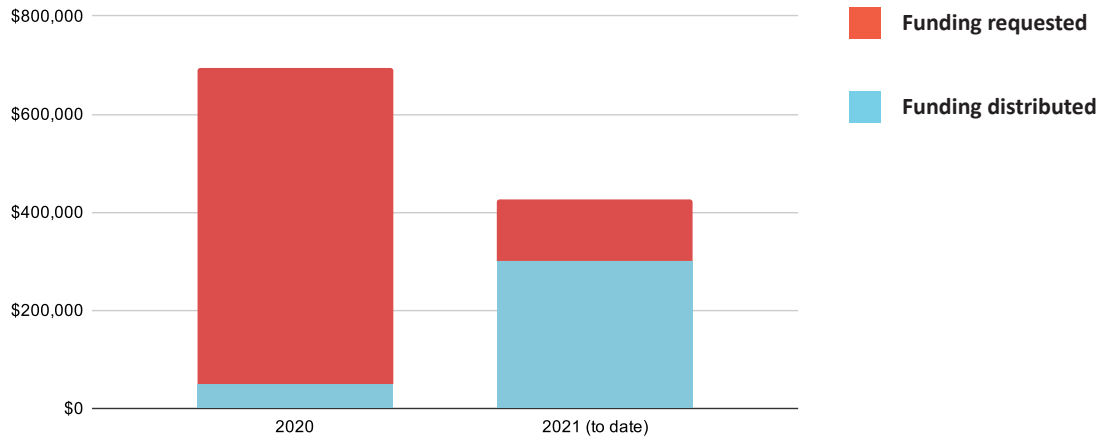


(adaptive)

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MINI-GRANTS

In partnership with Community Development Associates of Detroit (CDAD), two rounds of Community Development mini-grants were hosted in 2020 and 2021, providing the opportunity for nonprofit organizations to apply for up to \$5000 each from a fund total of \$350,000.

We received more than 220 applications, representing \$1.1 million in funding requests — a clear demonstration of the funding gaps prevalent in our ecosystem.



## KIP:D

Co.act has been selected with partners to assume responsibility for administering the KIP:D program, A Kresge Foundation program that has deployed over \$11M in neighborhood innovation grants since 2014. Co.act is charged with reimagining the program through a lens of community-centered voice and decision-making, underscoring funders' confidence in Co.act's ability to advocate for community perspectives while handling program delivery.

Since 2014, Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit (KIP:D) has committed \$11 million to catalyze 127 neighborhood-level projects. Because of our experience as a site for inclusive, innovative, community-based grant programs, Kresge Foundation and Michigan Community Resources have invited Co.act Detroit to redesign and administer Round 7 of the KIP:D grant program, which will launch in Fall 2021.

(create)

# Social Media Reach



**4200**  
Newsletter  
Subscribers



**1457**  
Facebook  
Followers



**907**  
Instagram  
Followers



**447**  
Twitter  
Followers



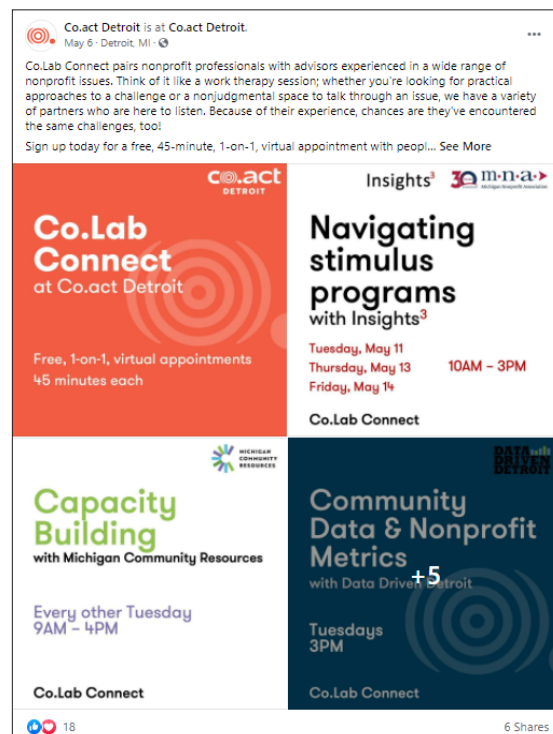
**48**  
LinkedIn  
Followers



**Avg 48**  
Downloads/  
Podcast



**20**  
YouTube  
Subscribers



# Partners and Supporters

Partnerships are essential to our work. We inspire collaborative action and call on organizations to come together to solve our region's most pressing challenges collectively.

Co.act was created to complement existing resources and support for the nonprofit community in southeast Michigan. We work closely with intermediaries and cross-sector partners to drive transformative change. Below are a few of our closest partners.

## CORE PARTNERS

These core partners championed us from the idea of Co.act to today. We are grateful for their partnership and investment.



## FUNDERS AND SPONSORS

Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan  
Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Foundation  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
Kresge Foundation  
McGregor Fund

Hudson Webber Foundation  
JP Morgan Chase Fund  
Microsoft Philanthropies  
Chemical Bank

## PROGRAM PARTNERS

These organizations partner with us to deliver innovative programming and technical support.

Advancing Macomb  
Apparatus Solutions  
313creative  
CCS Fundraising  
Community Development Advocates of Detroit  
Council of Michigan Foundations  
Culture Source  
Data Driven Detroit  
Design Core Detroit  
Dinner for 30 with Cornetta Lane  
Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy  
EarlyWorks, llc.

Gingras Global  
Healing by Choice!  
Insights<sup>3</sup>  
Lilly Family School of Philanthropy  
at Indiana University, IUPUI  
Michigan Community Resources  
Nonprofit Enterprise at Work  
Nonprofit Personnel Network  
Oakland University  
University of Michigan School of Social Work  
Technical Assistance Center  
Urban Consulate



## OUR TEAM

Mobolaji Ayeni, Digital Communications Manager

Allandra Bulger, Executive Director

Kyla Carlsen, Director of Programs

Alexis Farrell, Network Coordinator

Jaclynn Loudon, Community Ambassador

Esteria Rogan, Executive Assistant

Charnae Sanders, Program Coordinator

### Supporting Partner

Lauren Boone, Activate Fund



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