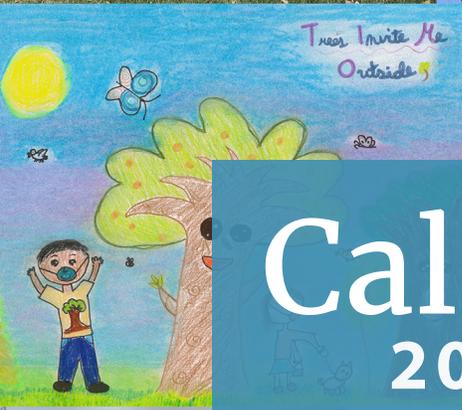




# California ReLeaf 2021 ANNUAL REPORT





Urban Corps of San Diego County

## Dear Friends of ReLeaf,

Thank you so much for all your generous support of California ReLeaf and our work helping community groups plant trees all over the state – and especially in underserved neighborhoods that most need trees.

Fiscal year 2021 was the first full year of coping with COVID. It was a bit rocky at first as we moved into the fall planting season. In October ReLeaf held a webinar on tree planting and care during COVID to share resources and recommendations with support from Network members Tree Fresno and Canopy as well as the LA Office of Forest Management. Sharing ideas and supporting each other (and urban forests) is why California ReLeaf was created back in 1989.

As we’ve all seen, the unexpected silver lining of COVID has been the fast adaptation to virtual platforms – which is especially helpful for a statewide network of community nonprofits. Being able to meet “face to face” virtually in ReLeaf’s monthly Learn Over Lunches has become a wonderful opportunity for the Network to connect and share insights, experiences, best practices. While we look forward to being able to meet in person again for our annual Network Retreat someday, these virtual meetings will remain an excellent way of staying in closer contact throughout the year.

During the LOLs, we’ve heard from our ReLeaf Network member organizations

about their signature programs as well as how they’ve nimbly shifted gears to adjust to the new normal of much smaller tree planting events and different ways of organizing volunteers. We applaud the creativity and resilience of our urban forestry community organizations as they thoughtfully adapted to an ever-changing reality.

While it was a tumultuous year socially, politically, emotionally, and even technologically, it has been heartening and affirming to hear how parks and greenspace were recognized by the Centers for Disease Control as helping people cope with stress. Many health care professionals are encouraging everyone to get outside and enjoy nature in parks and their backyards for their mental and physical well-being – and as we know, trees are the overarching champions of nature.

In this report you will find information about our work in three different priority areas, stories from the grants we closed in March 2021, and highlights from the Network.

Thank you again for your belief in our mission and support of our work.

Tree cheers,

Cindy Blain  
Executive Director



*Empowering grassroots efforts and building strategic partnerships that preserve, protect, and enhance California’s urban and community forests.*

### OUR PROGRAMS



#### NETWORK

Convening a Network of urban forest nonprofits and CBOs for collaboration and peer-to-peer learning.



#### OUTREACH & ED

Sharing resources and research to support healthy urban forests through local activism.



#### GRANTS ADMIN

Seeking and providing grants to local groups to plant and care for trees in their communities.



#### ADVOCACY

Speaking for trees in state legislation and providing resources for community groups to find their voices.



# Strengthening Nonprofits and Community Groups

2021 Network Retreat; Canopy

The heart of California ReLeaf is our Network of nonprofits and community groups who are on the ground creating change in their neighborhoods. California ReLeaf was founded to connect and strengthen these groups, and this remains central to our mission. In some ways, remote working has brought us closer together as the Network met virtually throughout 2021 and continued to help one another navigate the pandemic.

When we survey the Network about the issues affecting their capacity, funding regularly shows up at the top of this list. In response, we continue to advocate for State programs to include funding for Urban Forestry and Urban Greening and seek out private foundations to sponsor grants, as well as offer education opportunities for our Network to strengthen their own fundraising skills.

## 2021 RELEAF HIGHLIGHTS



Hosted a **two-day virtual Network Retreat**, with 103 participants joining us from 46 different organizations.



Hosted **9 “Learn Over Lunch”** Zoom sessions with Network members sharing about their programs, trials, successes and strategies with one another. This included 15 different speakers and 120 attendees representing 65 different organizations, coming together to talk about **nurseries, planting programs, tricks of the trade, strategies for resilience, indigenous sciences, and more.**



Provided educational opportunities aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Network and increasing the skills of their team, including a **“Tree Planting During COVID”** Webinar and Network Retreat sessions focused on **fee-for-service models, tips for working with schools, and Environmental Justice.**



Launched **Treecovery Grant Program Cycle 1**, which focuses on “capacity rebuilding” by allowing increased personnel expenditures and overhead rates, as well as continuing to offer support during the application process.



Joined partners in **advocating for ambitious investments for natural resources** and climate resilience in the budget, helping secure a multi-year appropriation of over \$200M for urban forestry and urban greening, among other grant programs.



Supported legislation to establish a **California Community and Neighborhood Tree Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund** to provide CAL FIRE with a revenue stream for tree planting and other urban forestry grants, which passed and was signed by the Governor.



**Amplified the voice of California ReLeaf Network members** in social media efforts to support advocacy efforts at the Capitol.

**67%** of the Network surveyed collaborated with another Network group in FY2021.

**\$473,000** of state & private funding was accessed by nonprofits statewide through our grant programs. And 37% of Network groups received funding directly from a state program we advocated for.

**95%** of Network members surveyed say **being part of the ReLeaf Network has helped them in their role at their organization.**

**83%** of Network members said their organization, and urban forests, had **a voice at the Capitol in Fiscal Year 2021 through California ReLeaf**

# Tree Pledge

## LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

**With over 10 million residents that play and relax at roughly 80 county parks,** Los Angeles needs all the help it could get in providing green spaces that offer plenty of shade, especially in the heat of summer. With its enormous population of people driving and living together, it's imperative that the county reduce air pollutants and increase the coverage of its urban canopy to capture carbon. Disadvantaged neighborhoods in LA suffer from some of the absolute worst air quality in the world and it is people

Disadvantaged neighborhoods in LA suffer from some of the absolute worst air quality in the world and it is people who bear the costly health consequences.

who bear the costly health consequences. Planting shade trees can be a simple solution to offsetting both environmental and human health risks.

Tree Pledge is a social movement that invigorates communities to plant and protect trees

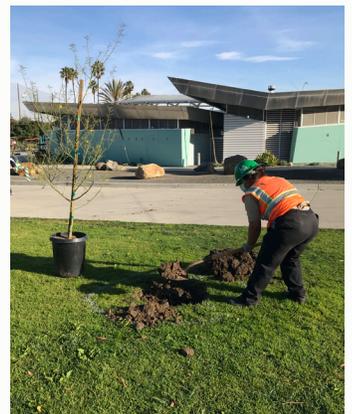
while addressing environmental justice issues to improve the physical, emotional, social, and economic health of residents in disadvantaged communities in Los Angeles County. In collaboration with Los Angeles County Parks and Rec, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, and The Radical Resilience Lab, they embarked on a pilot project—the Good Shade Program—to reforest Alondra Park with 50 new trees as a long overdue upgrade to its tree canopy.

The Alondra Park community was chosen for its close proximity to the 405 freeway and trucking routes. Toxic air pollutants often contribute to respiratory illnesses and lower-income residents often pay a hefty emotional and economical price to mitigate the damage. Alondra Park in particular, and the surrounding census tract, yield an EnviroScreen score of 86-100% pollution burden. The Good Shade Program hopes that by planting shade trees it will empower residents to get outside, commune with nature, and reap the multitude of health benefits of being outdoors because the parks will be comfortable for recreation or relaxation.

As a new environmental coalition, Tree Pledge's pilot program was a success despite the challenges that came

with the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the Conservation Corps were trained to properly plant and care for the trees during several carefully planned planting days to account for safety protocols. The team was able to wear special masks and practice social distancing. Norma E. García-González, Director of Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, was integral to the project, sharing data maps and other urban forestry data and tools to best determine where to improve the canopy.

She said, “We are proud to partner with Tree Pledge to bring ‘Good Shade’ to Alondra Park and very-high park need communities in South Los Angeles, where parks are often the only access to nature, fresh air and physical activity that many households need, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is vital that we invest in disadvantaged communities that are at higher risk of respiratory illness due to lack of trees and shade equity.” *Story continues...*



EXCERPT: FOREST IMPROVEMENT GRANT STORIES

Read more at <https://californiareleaf.org/updates/forest-improvement-grants/>



# Creating Climate Resilient Communities

North East Trees; Regional Parks Foundation

Climate resilient communities depend on both mitigating further climate change as well as beginning to adapt to its effects that have already arrived. Urban trees play an important role in both mitigation and adaptation efforts: trees capture the greenhouse gases that exacerbate climate change, while also helping communities guard against extreme heat, flash flooding, and pollution.

The majority of our grants are funded by the California Climate Investments program and thus have targets to meet for greenhouse gas capture. We meet these targets while also maximizing co-benefits to the communities where the trees are planted.

## 2021 RELEAF HIGHLIGHTS



Published [Trees for the 21st Century](#) (pictured right), a comprehensive guide of 8 steps to a thriving urban tree canopy, including tree selection, planting, and care.



Expanded the “Relief through ReLeaf” grant program – funded by Prop 68 revenue – into **Oroville, Olivehurst, Paradise, Lake County, and Santa Rosa**. This program targets areas affected by extreme weather events where resources are strapped. Projects help communities adapt and become more resilient through urban reforestation, and have opportunities for healing.



Awarded **13 Treecover** grants to projects that maximize co-benefits to their communities, including shading under-canopied neighborhoods (adaptation) and selecting species that will capture high amounts of carbon in their lifetimes (mitigation).



Coordinated sign-on letters from California ReLeaf Network members in specific districts to their legislator, urging action on extreme heat in response to the devastating heat waves, and **arranged and facilitated meetings for Network members to speak to representatives from the respective legislator’s office**.



Encouraged legislators to **prioritize urban greening and urban forestry as an extreme heat mitigation measure** in budget conversations.



Advocated for **investments to programs that support communities in building climate resilience**, emphasizing programs that prioritize the most underserved communities in the state.



Introduced ACR 109 (Gonzalez), an **Assembly Concurrent Resolution that elevates the growing threat that extreme heat events pose** to the state’s residents and economy, and calls upon California’s agencies and departments to take actions to prepare for it.

**1. Think Big**

Bigger trees mean more benefits. Larger trunks capture more GHGs. Broader canopies collect more pollutants, provide more shade, and intercept more stormwater. This adds up to cleaner air, cooler buildings, and clearer waterways for our communities, just by selecting a tree that grows bigger. Whenever possible, plant the largest species a space can handle.

**One mature oak tree (60 ft) provides the same environmental benefits as 10-20 mature crape myrtles (25 feet).**

Large trees are usually the best choice for parks, schoolyards, and many street tree situations. However, not every site can support a big tree. Sites near power lines may call for a shorter species. Perhaps your project focus involves food forests or understory reforestation and not large trees. In these cases, it is still worth considering whether some large trees can be incorporated in the design to boost the benefits and create a more robust and multi-faceted project.

GHG SEQUESTRATION POWER		
<b>Not so good:</b>	<b>Moderate:</b>	<b>Best:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruit trees, in general</li> <li>Most small ornamental flowering trees</li> <li>Species that are described as “small tree or shrub”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trees with mature heights of 20-40 ft</li> <li>Trees with mature trunk diameters of ~12-18 inches</li> <li>Trees with delicate trunks and branches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trees with mature heights of 60+ ft</li> <li>Trees with mature trunk diameters of 24+ inches</li> <li>Trees with a lot of wood in the trunk and/or branches</li> <li>Trees traditionally used for lumber</li> </ul>

2,766 trees were planted by the grants we closed in FY21. These trees will provide the following benefits in the next 40 years:

**6,328 METRIC TONS OF CO<sub>2</sub> CAPTURED**

**170 ACRE-FT OF STORMWATER INTERCEPTED**

*That’s over 1 million bathtubs of water!*

**96,600 LBS OF AIR POLLUTANTS REDUCED**

*including O<sub>3</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, VOC, & PM<sub>2.5</sub>.*

**2,600,000 kWh OF ENERGY CONSERVED**

*That’s enough energy to power 240 households for a year.*

# Network Highlights

The California ReLeaf Network was hard at work in FY21, planting trees, engaging communities, providing jobs, and caring for their community forests throughout the pandemic. Here are some of their accomplishments and highlights!



**72,200**  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

**CITY PLANTS** created a "Tree Ambassador/Promotor Forestal" community organizing program, and created an LA Urban Forest Equity Info graphic ([English](#), [Spanish](#)).



**14,314**  
TREES PLANTED IN  
DISADVANTAGED  
COMMUNITIES  
BY 18 NETWORK GROUPS



**URBAN CORPS OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY**



**ROSEVILLE URBAN FOREST FOUNDATION**

hosted a volunteer day surveying the health of trees. Participants learned how to spot common tree health problems such as fungal diseases, signs of drought, surface roots, and sunburn.



**62,000+**  
TREES CARED FOR

**INLAND URBAN FOREST COUNCIL**

produced a publication about pruning in Spanish, and also helped Claremont College students create a podcast in Spanish.



## Key

2021 California ReLeaf Network Members

Active Publicly-Funded ReLeaf Grantees

Treecovery ('21-'23)

Relief through ReLeaf ('19-'22)

Urban Forest Management ('18-'22)

Forest Improvement ('17-'20)

2021 Arbor Week Grantees Sponsored by Edison International & SDGE

FY21 Network Presenter



**SUSTAINABLE CLAREMONT**



**BENICIA TREE FOUNDATION**

became an Adopt a Highway sponsor to plant and maintain 22 trees at a 3-acre freeway offramp in Benicia, and participated in the [Benicia Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan project](#).



**COMMON VISION**



**16**  
NETWORK GROUPS  
PRESENTED  
AT RELEAF WEBINARS,  
RETREAT, OR LOLS



**HUNTINGTON BEACH TREE SOCIETY**

"branched out" their programming in FY21, with the help of 12,000 volunteer hours! Volunteers (left) planted this Norfolk Pine, and other trees, on the hillside portion of the Shipley to Shore Trail in Huntington Central Park West.



**KOREATOWN YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTER**



**3,371**  
VIRTUAL OUTREACH  
EVENTS HELD  
BY 12 NETWORK GROUPS



As part of their Tree House Program, Stanford University donated 108 trees to **CITYTREES**. All of the trees were planted within Redwood City



**RELEAF PETALUMA**, a start up in 2020, organized itself with logo, website, fiscal sponsor and mission, applied for three grants, planted 30 buckeye seedlings at their first major site, published three guides about trees for homeowners, and developed approved plans for extensive tree planting at five city parks.



**ST. VINCENT'S HILL NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION** planted three trees in City Park in Vallejo.



**SISTERSWE**



**TREE PEOPLE**



**TREE FRESNO**



**106,821**  
HOURS OF JOB  
TRAINING PROVIDED  
BY 3 NETWORK GROUPS

**186**  
INTERNSHIPS PROVIDED  
BY 13 NETWORK GROUPS

**NORTH EAST TREES** hired and trained 20 young adults and planted nearly 1500 trees in Watts.



**A CLEANER GREENER EAST LA** partnered with its home city of Whittier to plant trees along areas where residents are thriving and active.



**SACRAMENTO TREE FOUNDATION** planted trees with Asian Resources Inc. and United Latinos Green Team at ARI's new resource center in March. Planting leaders tied ribbons into a memorial tree for all eight of the victims of the shooting in Atlanta.



**CANOPY** created [Wishing Trees](#) in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto during the pandemic, and collected over 200 wishes from the community.



**SAN BERNARDINO FATHERHOOD** received grant funding this year to support their project, "Fathers and Families Creating Urban Forestry." They're working to bring fathers, children and families together to educate them on the importance of planting trees in disadvantaged communities for better health, environment, and wildlife preservation.



**5380**  
SQ FT OF CONCRETE  
REMOVED  
BY 2 NETWORK ORGANIZATIONS

**TRI-CITY URBAN FOREST ALLIANCE** grew 350 oak seedlings from acorns which are now moved into 1-5 gal pots in a tree nursery they started, and visited Our City Forest to observe their programming.



**YOUR CHILDREN'S TREES**, with the help of a ReLeaf Arbor Week grant, helped Isla Vista Elementary School submit an application meeting all the requirements for a Tree Campus K-12 award from the Arbor Day Foundation.





# Engaging New Urban Forest Advocates

Family Health & Support Network Madera Coalition for Community Justice; Your Children's' Trees

We believe everyone can participate in urban forestry, and that a thriving urban forest depends on a community that feels a sense of ownership for their trees. California ReLeaf focuses a portion of our outreach and grants on engaging new groups, and activating the community to plant and care for trees. We are committed to assisting groups in the application, implementation, and reporting phases so that the process itself is a barrier to none.

At the Capitol, we build strategic partnerships, including groups focused on natural resources, resiliency, community health, and more. Urban trees impact many issue areas, so we cultivate new partners inside and outside the legislature, helping them see the value that urban forests have in their sector as well as to their constituents.



ARBOR WEEK POSTER CONTEST WINNERS



## 2021 RELEAF HIGHLIGHTS



Continued outreach across the state to **connect new organizations, or those new to planting trees, to the California ReLeaf Network.**



Welcomed **eight new Network members:** The C.R.E.W., San Diego Regional Forests Council, Rainbow Forest, St. Vincent's Hill Neighborhood Coalition, SistersWe, ReLeaf Petaluma, San Bernardino Fatherhood, and New Education Strategies.



Hosted the annual **Arbor Week Poster Contest**, engaging kids across the state and cultivating tomorrow's tree heroes. Our 2021 theme, "Trees Invite Me Outside," sparked kids 5-12 to think about enjoying their neighborhoods in new ways during the pandemic.



**Distributed funds to 26 Arbor Week grantees in Southern California for tree planting celebrations in their communities.** These beginner grants are small by design with limited, straightforward deliverables for a group new to planting trees.

# 15

## FIRST-TIME GRANTEES

# 754

## SCHOOL CHILDREN ENGAGED IN ARBOR WEEK GRANT PROGRAMS

**57%** of Arbor Week grantees said the project provided an **opportunity to practice tree planting event planning.** 100% say they plan to continue planting trees.

# Grantee Story: Climate Action Now!

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



**The Sunset District in San Francisco** is known for its beautiful sunsets overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Sunset boulevard is a major thoroughfare in the city and with ten lanes of busy traffic it produces poor air quality for residents. For years, San Francisco Public Works and Sunset District's County Supervisor received complaints about the lack of maintenance and care of the atrophied trees along the boulevard. Climate Action Now! decided to get involved and convened multiple stakeholders to give the street--and the environment--a long overdue boost by planting 342 trees that will help mitigate air pollution.

San Francisco Public Works, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, and five schools partnered with Climate Action Now! to support and fund several aspects of the Sunset Boulevard Reforestation Program along with their grant from CAL FIRE and California ReLeaf. Beyond direct planting and irrigation updates, education and youth empowerment were key objectives.

Leveraging the power of their youth internship program, Climate Action Now! created hands-on experiential curricula, in conjunction with an AP Biology teacher, for students to learn about biodiversity, solar design, careers in urban forestry, beekeeping, organic agriculture, and soil building. With field trips and guest speakers, youth became workforce ready to help support the new green infrastructure along eleven blocks, roughly two miles, of the 38 block boulevard. Eleven youth interns earned valuable environmental workforce skills as they learned how to plant and care for a variety of trees and install two biodiversity hubs

Leveraging the power of their youth internship program, Climate Action Now! created hands-on experiential curricula for students to learn about biodiversity, solar design, careers in urban forestry, beekeeping, organic agriculture, and soil building

featuring colorful pollinator plants to attract butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees. Those youth also earned \$1000 each as a stipend for their time and effort.

Traditionally, the Sunset District is not thought of as a disadvantaged community due to high property prices; however, many youth who participated as volunteers or interns are considered at a disadvantage. Many were youth of color from nearby neighborhoods and were seeking ways to engage in their community in meaningful ways. The internship program and planting days were not the sole focus for Climate Action Now! Education and after-school enrichment are an integral part of their mission and overall program.

To better support San Francisco's urban canopy, Climate Action Now! organized several community-wide planting days and welcomed over 400 volunteers in their efforts to plant the 342 trees and over 400 plants. Irrigation upgrades were also installed throughout the passageway, too, to ensure proper watering and care. Massive, colorful signage flanked the biodiversity hubs showcasing the work and why it was important to plant the trees and foliage. *Story continues...*

EXCERPT: FOREST IMPROVEMENT GRANT STORIES

Read more at <https://californiareleaf.org/updates/forest-improvement-grants/>

# Sustainable Solano

SOLANO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

**People experiencing homelessness are rarely afforded the opportunity to live in a safe place where they can grow their own produce.** However, through a partnership with Sustainable Solano, residents at Shelter Solano are reaping the benefits of healthy living and more. Volunteers, residents, and staff have rallied together to create an edible and educational landscape with a permaculture garden and mixed canopy urban forest at Shelter Solano. Aptly named “HOPE” this garden serves as a demonstration food forest in the region, helping showcase simple green innovations that contribute to a cleaner and healthier environment. This is just one of the successful projects undertaken by Sustainable Solano to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote ecological regeneration.

For more than 20 years, Sustainable Solano’s mission has been to nurture initiatives that benefit the whole. They are ensuring a sustainable future for Solano County by investing in green infrastructure, supporting the local food system, and offering workforce skill development with youth and other disadvantaged populations. The California Climate Investments grant program allowed Sustainable Solano to provide education classes and a sustainable landscape certification program to Shelter Solano residents. The HOPE garden was improved with pollinator plants, fruit trees, bioswales, and sheet mulching. More importantly, carbon-sequestration trees were planted as a barrier on the campus from neighboring industrial factories and busy railroad tracks. The trees will help to reduce building temperature and clear the air of smelly pollutants that disturb the peace --and health-- of Shelter Solano residents.

The grassroots organization helped teens learn about the carbon cycle and why planting trees matters. Together, they beautified the campus with much-needed shade trees

Sustainable Solano also engaged youth from Armijo High School (a Title 1 School). The grassroots organization helped teens learn about the carbon cycle and why planting trees matters. Together, they beautified the campus with much-needed shade trees where teens eat lunch, hang out, and gather.



When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Sustainable Solano didn’t miss a beat. They quickly learned safety protocols, set up a system to keep engaging their volunteers, and followed proper guidelines, social distancing measures, and provided the necessary protection for its team.

All in all, 127 volunteers gave 390 hours at planting events. Sustainable Solano provided on the spot education with them, spending roughly 15-20 minutes teaching about the role of trees. They also created and disseminated a colorful brochure about “Carbon in the Atmosphere” that explained in simple language the importance of choosing the right trees to capture the most carbon. Pruning and watering classes were offered to the community as a way to help ensure maintenance and care of the new trees and foliage. At the end of the project, volunteers had planted 62 trees, replaced seven trees, and planted another 47 plants between Shelter Solano and Armijo High School. *Story continues...*

EXCERPT: FOREST IMPROVEMENT GRANT STORIES

Read more at <https://californiareleaf.org/updates/forest-improvement-grants/>

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*A Cleaner Greener East LA, Benicia Tree Foundation, Canopy, City Plants, CityTrees, Common Vision, Earth Team, Huntington Beach Tree Society, Koreatown Youth and Community Center, Madera Coalition for Community Justice, North East Trees, ReLeaf Petaluma, Roseville Urban Forest Foundation, Sacramento Tree Foundation San Bernardino Fatherhood, Sustainable Solano, The Watershed Project, Tree Fresno, Urban Corps of San Diego County Watsonville Wetlands Watch, Your Children's Trees.*

**GRANT STORIES WRITTEN BY KATIE MCCLEARY**

**IN MEMORY OF VLADIMIR GOREN (1956-2021), PEOPLE AND TREES**

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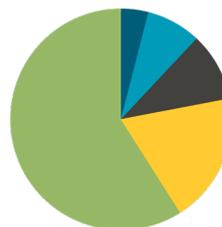
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## FY2021 Expenses:

\$1,057,872



**58% GRANTS**

**19% OUTREACH & ED**

**10% MANAGEMENT**

**9% NETWORK**

**4% ADVOCACY**

