

2019

ANNUAL REPORT

CommunityGrows

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communitygrows.org

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We are so grateful to our partners, supporters, and friends who help make CG a success!



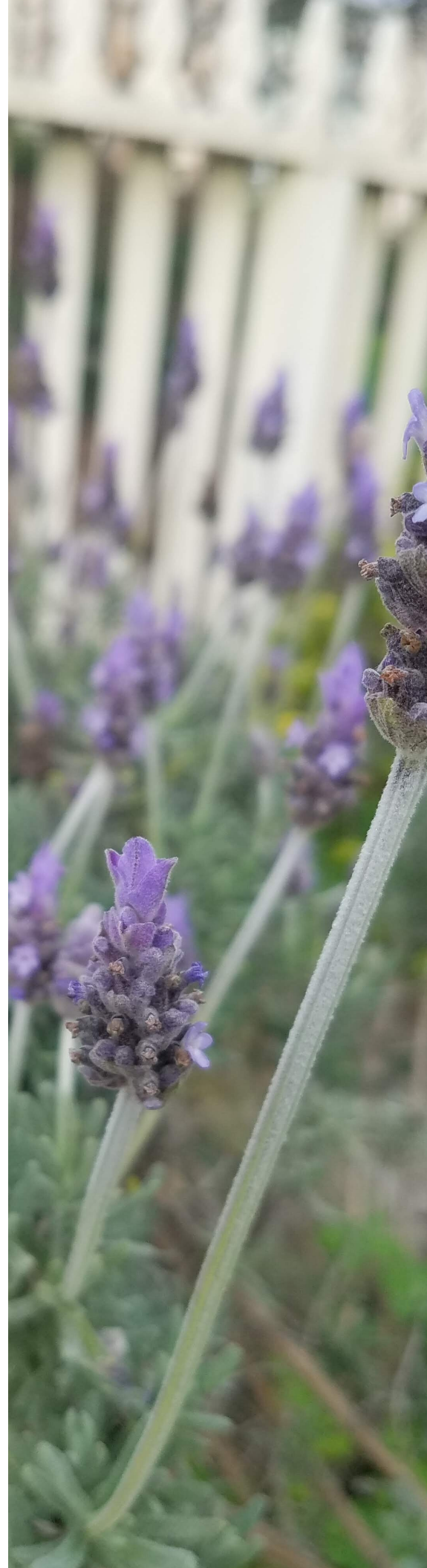
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

This report is a little behind. As I am writing, we are in the middle of week seven of Shelter in Place, the official mandate to help flatten the curve and reduce deaths related to Covid-19. We had hoped to get our 2019 report out in February, but then I made the announcement that after almost 6 years I would be leaving CommunityGrows (more on that below). And then in March, SFUSD closed schools and we were encouraged to socially distance and then stay home altogether, save for essential needs. As our team rode the various waves of change, it put us a bit behind. So while this letter is coming from the spring of 2020, this report covers the calendar year of 2019. Which now feels quite far away!

2019 was great in many ways- we continued to build our government revenue and secured a three year grant to support the BEETS, a goal I'd held for the past five years! In addition, we received funding to support bringing in a program development consultant, to make sure we are growing our BEETs program in the most sustainable and community-focused way.

In 2019 we worked as a team to create our new three year strategic plan. We had what I'm sure will go down in the history books as THE best staff retreat of all time. Together we created a new vision statement, set our goals and strategies and I discovered my new favorite game, Codenames.

But then in February of 2019, with a grateful but bittersweet heart, I announced that in the late spring I would be leaving my position as Director of CommunityGrows this summer. It was a difficult decision- I love the Western Addition/Fillmore community, the staff, the board, the young people, more than I will ever be able to express. While there have been challenges, as there are with all nonprofits, there have been innumerable joys and gifts in the last six years. I will forever be thankful for the wonderful opportunity to lead, learn, love and grow.





But where there is change, there is opening. And I am so very excited to announce that our new Executive Director, Nolizwe Nondabula, will be joining the CG family in June. We have worked with them in various endeavors in the Western Addition over the last three years, from participating in Mind, Body and Soul Pop-Ups, to collaborating for Mo'Magics Annual Health and Wellness retreat each winter. They are an inspirational leader and community builder dedicated to "moving at the speed of trust." Nolizwe was who I dreamed about for this role, and I am so excited to see not only how they shine, but how they support all those around them to live their lives in the sun.

In addition to having a fantastic new leader, the CG team is the strongest it has ever been. It has been my pleasure and honor to work with these amazing educators- their skills, creativity, innovation, dedication, and heart are what gave me the confidence to make my next move. Each one has unique skills and talents that have only gotten stronger as they collaborate together.

This next phase of CommunityGrows will be something to see. Whether it's pivoting to providing online classes, joining zoom calls with teachers to teach kids how to make healthy snacks, or creating brand new curriculum that engages youth around the connections between pandemics, environmental injustice and racism while still focusing on hope and change... the CommunityGrows team will continue work towards our vision. A vision of a world in which all youth are able to benefit from the joy and healing of nature-based outdoor education and develop the tools, confidence and resources to navigate and challenge structural injustices.

I hope you will join me in celebrating this exciting next phase of CommunityGrows!

Warmly,

Kelly ErnstFriedman
Executive Director
CommunityGrows



PROGRAMS





Our Mission

CommunityGrows' mission is to cultivate healthy youth through growing gardens in low-income, diverse communities.

Our Vision

CommunityGrows' vision is that all youth are able to benefit from the joy and healing of nature-based outdoor education, and develop the tools, confidence and resources to navigate and challenge structural injustices.



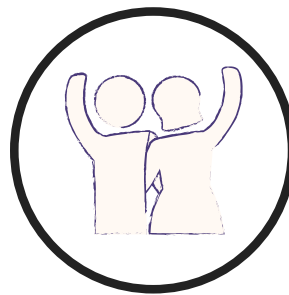
**Environmental
Education Garden
Classes**



**BEETS Paid
Employment &
Youth Development
Program**



**Seed to Mouth
Cooking Classes**



**Community
Workdays and
Events**

IMPACT



A Snapshot of some successes from 2019! In last year's annual report, our goals were to expand our in-school education classes and raise our BEETS stipend rates to minimum wage; we're happy to say we were able to meet both of those goals, in addition to drafting a strategic plan for the next 3 years!



NEW SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

In 2019, in addition to continuing our long-term partnerships with John Muir and Rosa Parks ES, we expanded our programming to two new schools: Malcolm X Academy and Leonard R. Flynn ES. We are excited to have them join the CommunityGrows community, as well as educators Vanessa and Cristina, who teach at those schools respectively.



HIGHER PAY

We are so excited that this year we were able to match San Francisco's minimum wage for new BEETs (\$15.59) and \$16.69 an hour for Leadership Crew members. The Leadership Crew, a multi-level leadership opportunity, encourages teens to return to the program and continue building their skills by offering more money, more responsibility, and additional learning opportunities. Each year, teens complete either a 7-month session from October-May or a 6-week summer intensive.



STRENGTHENING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

In November, the CommunityGrows team went on a retreat to draft an updated strategic plan for the next 3 years. Goals were set to increase staff capacity and retention, maintain our financial stability, update our processes and procedures, support board engagement, and flush out our marketing goals.

- See the full strategic plan [here](#).

Food Reviews

Before eating the salad they made, the 3rd grade class did a call and response group thank you led by one of the students (Jyahr). He said: "It's Salad Day! Thank you to the volunteers to came out to help us... thank you to all of us who made the salad... and thank you to whoever invented salad in the first place!"

-Jyahr, first grade

"The high school students at Ella Hill Hutch were extremely suspicious when I told them we were going to make buffalo cauliflower. Despite seeing their hesitation, I encouraged a few brave students to just try a small bite. After a few of them decided it was 'actually' good, the word got out to the whole group that it was worth a try. By the end of class, they had eaten the whole tray and asked for more!"

-B, BEETs Program Manager



1300

Youth Served

411

Garden and
Cooking Classes

15

BEETS Teens/TAY

Looking Foward

2019 was a big year full of many learned lessons for CommunityGrows. Moving into 2020, we want to deepen our new and lasting partnerships, support the growth of our BEETs program, and continue to center an equity and justice framework for doing our work to thrive as a team. Due to the resulting impacts of COVID-19, CG staff and partners will continue to diligently work in providing ways to safely engage youth in outdoor spaces. We will work with our partners and follow the leads of local recommendations from the Department of Public Health and the City and County of San Francisco for creating guidelines and safety measures around what in-person programming will look like for the remainder of the year.



In celebrating our past year, it's important we highlight our BEETS teens and TAY, who work hard to keep the community spaces looking beautiful while also participating in a year long program that focuses on cooking and nutrition, environmental and social justice, and community leadership. This year specifically, we are excited to introduce and give a shout out to our BEETS Leadership Crew (LCrew).

Leadership Crew is a position open to BEETS members who are returning for a second (or third!) year who want to take on a little extra responsibility. This year, 3 members stepped into the role of LCrew: Tiana, Ahlaya, and Hannah. We talked with them to learn more about their experiences with the BEETS and LCrew.

When asked to explain what they do, Tiana replied they kind of "take over B and Vanessa's role." In addition to taking part in the normal BEETS programming, LCrew meets once a week to help plan the end of the month sessions, keep up with and send out reminders about upcoming events and sessions (esp. field trips), and learn about and take part in lesson planning. Earlier this year, the LCrew also planned and taught one of the cooking lessons to the rest of the BEETS team. When asked about how they like LCrew, they said that they really enjoy having more opportunities to help plan and influence the program, and that they like seeing what goes on behind-the-scenes.

As far as their favorite or most memorable experience in the program? All agreed that it was the camping trip the previous year. As it turns out, it was raining pretty much the whole time. They were challenged to set up the tent together, with hilarious results, and had a funny experience cooking burgers over the camp stove when everything became stuck and crumbly. The hike they went on was a little steep, but pretty, and the car ride back involved one person (who will remain unnamed) to laugh so hard that water came out of their nose. Despite what could have been a hard trip, especially with the weather, it ended up being their most funny and memorable moment of the year.

We asked them what they would tell potential teens who might be thinking of joining the BEETS. Hannah and Tiana replied at the same - "do it!" They said there's a lot of different aspects to the program - learning, cooking, gardening, etc. which keeps things interesting. (And Tiana mentions that there's a new study that shows that people who garden with bare hands are happier!)

If you're interested in learning more about the BEETS or Leadership Crew, check out our website or reach out to b@communitygrows.org.

MEET THE BEETS LEADERSHIP CREW 2019

"It's not that we're necessarily all going to become environmental lawyers, but that we are going to take the values that we learn here and apply it to whatever career we choose."

Ahlaya, BEETS Leadership Crew



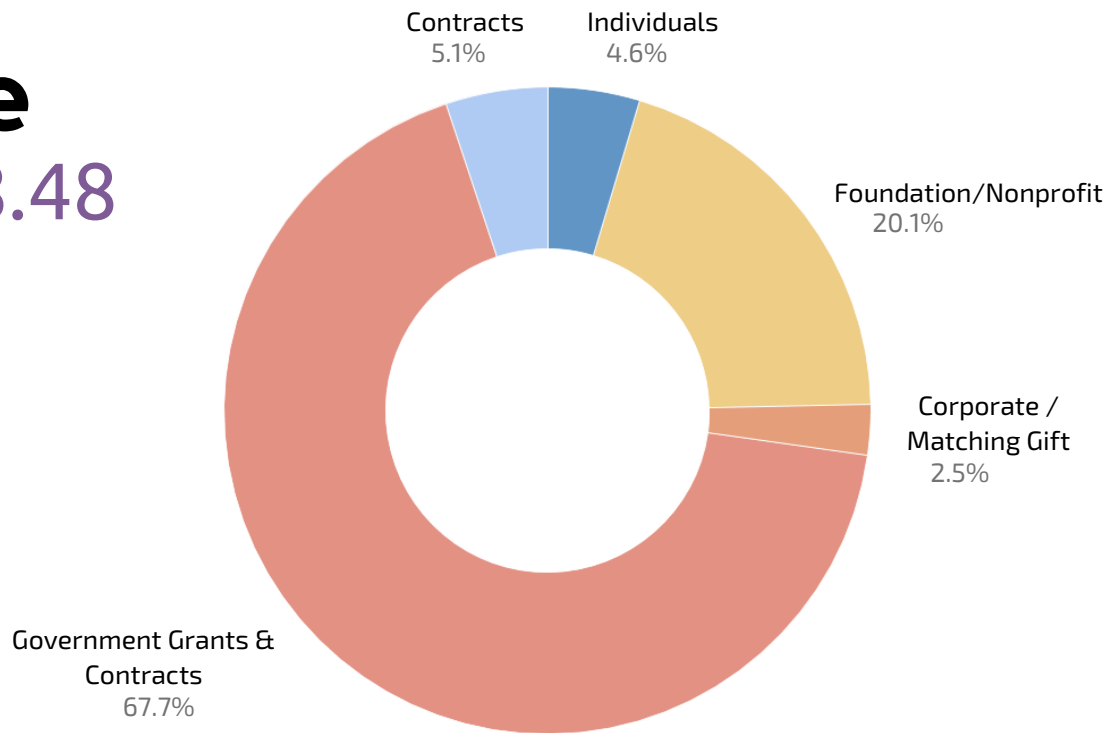


FINANCIALS



Revenue

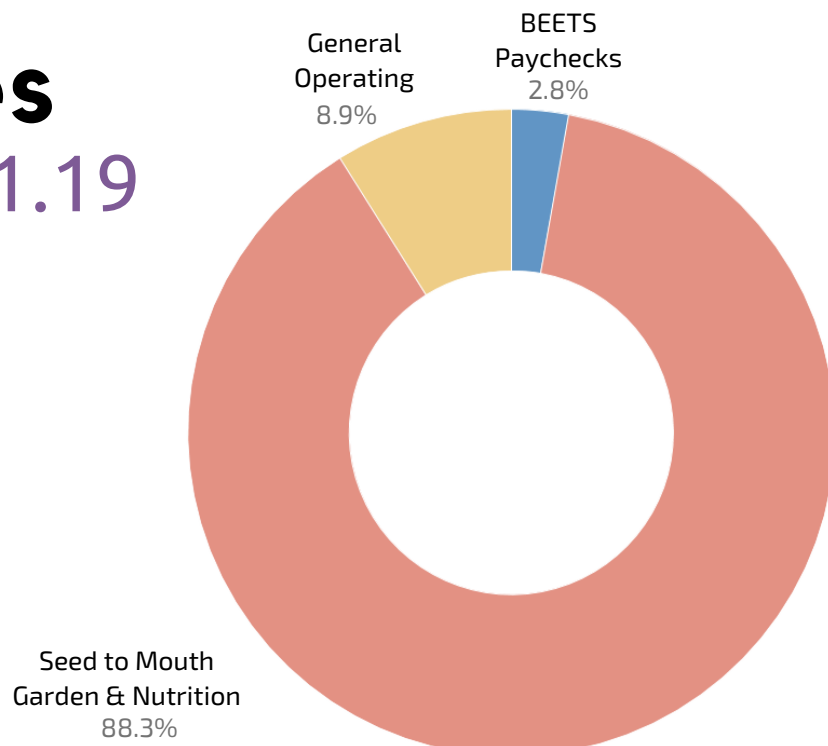
\$534,678.48



The financial hardship realities of COVID-19 have reinforced the need to continue strengthening our financial stability in 2020 by building our 3-month reserves and to continue creating both short-term and long-term financial strategies to support staff so that youth is still able to receive quality nutrition programming. Additionally, seeking out funding that supports capacity building is another priority so that we can increase staff salary and maintain staff retention. We have built a strong culture at CommunityGrows, with a talented and supportive staff, and we want to have the financials to back up the culture.

Expenses

\$474,761.19



OUR TEAM



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



Kelly ErnstFriedman

Executive Director

My highlight for the year was the staff retreat in November. We created our vision and goals for the next 3 years, and I also found my new favorite games (Codenames/Pictionary Telephone) and enjoyed spending time with the team.



Anna Luberoff

Garden Programs Manager

A highlight of this past year has been the mini "garden club" some of my 4th graders started this year on their own. I've had Malak, Arwa, Uta, and Samrawit in class for the past two years, and this year they started coming to help after school. It's been such a joy to follow their lead on what they want to know and to engage with their natural curiosity. We planted chamomile for Malak, who loves herbal tea, and looked up vegetables that might would grow in Yemen for Arwa, who moved to San Francisco from Yemen. I'm honored to be able to provide a space students can learn, grow, and play in.



Vanessa Williams

Garden & Nutrition Educator

Sometimes it's hard for new students to get used to being in the garden, especially if they're older and didn't have a garden at their previous school. I was worried that would be the case with a new 5th grader that started this year. However, as time went on he became more comfortable in the space and would even come to the garden outside of class to just talk and be in the space. Even now that their garden time is over, he still says hello and snags a hug when he can get a chance. Also, literally anytime we make something with vegetables and by the end kids are saying: "I guess it wasn't that bad" or "Can I have some more?"



Yaya Persing

Garden & Nutrition Educator

When a kindergarten class walked by our fig tree, and with all eyes on her the teacher took a moment to stop, look up at the tree, touch one of its branches and say to it just like an old friend "Hello, dear Fig tree". Seeing people demonstrate kindness, compassion and care in front our students in our outdoor classroom makes me feel like we are doing something right.

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



B Freas

BEETs Educator

My highlight of 2019 was starting my work with CommunityGrows!! I loved getting to know the garden, meeting the BEETs, and jumping right into planning the program for the 2019/2020 schoolyear. I've enjoyed figuring out how to make content relevant and engaging for the youth; one of my favorite quotes from a feedback form the summer BEETs filled out was "Fresh food is kinda good".



Cristina Vila Ruiz

Garden & Nutrition Educator

My highlight of 2019 at Flynn has to do with food. There was a lot of cauliflower growing in the garden and my students at the time (Kinder and TK) were curious about it. Most of the students were excited even though they didn't know what it was. They gathered around the cauliflower and each of them have an opportunity to pick and try it. It was a great revelation of flavor and the majority did love it. They kept asking for more cauliflower for three weeks.



Angelique Niyonkuru

Marketing & Communications Coordinator

I had two highlights this year. One of my highlights were getting this job and getting to work with these wonderful people everyday. Also, the SheBuilds day this year was one of my favorites, I got to learn to use power tools, learned how garden beds are made and many other things.



Karen Lally

Operations & Development Manager

One of my highlights from 2019 was partnering with Rebuilding Together SF at Koshland. The energy was great, it was a beautiful 2 days, and Koshland looked so refreshed. It reminded me of how much can get done when we are together. A volunteer that day said, "working in the garden, I forgot we were in SF for a minute," and I really liked the idea of the garden being a little oasis away from everything for people to relax.

ADVISORY BOARD

We are so grateful to our amazing advisory team for all of the time, energy, and care they have put into their work this year. Through fundraising, volunteering, event planning, and strategic planning, the Advisory Board has helped us shape and carry out our mission and vision.



Abigail Blodgett, Deputy Attorney General, California
Department of Justice, Environmental Justice Bureau

Liz Holm, Store Manager, Starbucks

Jessica Jauw, Project Coordinator, JS Sullivan Development, LLC

Casey Johnson, Sr. Associate, RSF Social Finance

Christina Mathis, Vice President, CCS

William Newsom, Associate, Cooley LLP

Sarah Penney, Manager, Bain & Co

Jaromy Schmidt, District Manager, Starbucks

Interested in being part of an Advisory Board? We are actively recruiting for our open positions! If you are interested, please contact us at

info@communitygrows.org!

VOLUNTEERS

Thank you so much to all of our volunteers for supporting our programs and helping us to take care of these amazing outdoor spaces. Thank you from all of us at CommunityGrows!

- Rebuilding Together SF
- Giving Circle crew
- YCore team
- Get Up team
- Make a Mark
- Morgan Stanley
- Hall Capitol
- Bain Co.



- The Green Team at Rosa Parks
- Warrior Build vols. at Malcolm X
- The Weekend Workday and Special Event volunteers



GRATITUDE



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Priya Gupta Pai Household
Renee Patey
Robert Zimmerman
Rosa Parks PTA/Green Team
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Sherry Suisman
Starbucks - matching hours
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