



URBAN PEAK

2020

IMPACT REPORT

SOSO



REFLECTING ON 2020

May 2021

Dear Urban Peak supporter,

I remember when the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic hit me. I was headed home from Washington, D.C., where I had been at a youth homelessness conference. Though I felt invigorated by the learning, networking and opportunity to meet with elected officials, it hit me as I stepped off the plane: our lives were about to be disrupted. But I couldn't have predicted the sudden and drastic changes to our everyday lives caused by the rapid spread of COVID-19.

The following week was a chaotic blur. Stay-at-home orders swept our nation; information about preventing transmission and the impacts of the virus flowed at a dizzying pace. I remember sitting at my desk and wondering what a stay-at-home order meant for Urban Peak, our youth and our staff.

I realized quickly that, **for Urban Peak, a stay-at-home order meant business as usual, but in a shifting landscape that felt a bit like quicksand.** Of course, it *never* crossed our minds to stop providing street outreach, shelter, housing, case management, meals, laundry, showers, medical care or any of the essential services throughout our programs. I was then, as I am now, stunned by the fortitude that **our team has shown throughout this global crisis. Every day, our team has shown up, at great risk to their own safety. They are the most dedicated, mission-driven group with whom I've ever had the privilege of working.**

Today, Urban Peak continues to be a safe harbor from this storm for all our youth.

Our youth and staff do hard work. We dig in, we give grace and we find hope. The challenges we have faced over the last year have been significant. However, the hope that permeates our programs is contagious. **For me, hope comes from the resiliency I see in the rearview mirror and, more importantly, the opportunities on the road ahead of us.**

The 1,000 youth who found their way to us in 2020 had a safe place to arrive because of the dedication of the Urban Peak family. Our youth, our staff, our board and you make up this family. Not once has anyone lost track of the youth who need us because they deserve so much better than a life on the streets.

Thank you for taking the time to look at the year behind us, to celebrate the success of our youth and staff and to look forward to a brighter future for youth who are experiencing homelessness across the metro area. I hope you find the hope I see every day at Urban Peak in this report.

Gratefully,



Christina Carlson
CEO, Urban Peak



Isis

"I was scared."

Isis first came to Urban Peak when she was still in foster care. "I was in the system, but I ran," she explained.

Because she was under 18 at the time, her foster care case worker had to be notified that she was staying at the Shelter. She feared being put back in the same negative environment, so she left the Shelter on her own terms, eventually moving in with her Grandmother.

But that living situation, too, was unstable. Five adults in a two-bedroom home. Substance abuse, arguments. "A lot of drama, a lot of fighting." Isis bounced around, stayed in Colorado Springs, went to Wyoming and then became pregnant.

"Once I was pregnant, I couldn't go home. I couldn't go back to my family. So I ended up going to the Shelter and staying there. I had no choice. I was playing it by ear. I was a couple weeks along."

Urban Peak's medical clinic kept Isis connected to health care throughout the time she bounced around living situations and during her pregnancy. She credits Stephanie, Urban Peak's Medical Assistant, with keeping her motivated to move into Housing and Molly, her Housing Case Manager, for helping her to navigate pregnancy and motherhood.

Pregnancy during a pandemic was very challenging. Past trauma made it hard for Isis to tolerate medical exams. The uncertainty of when she would go into labor was hard to bear. "I was so scared. I didn't know what was happening to my body. There's pain in the body, but there's also pain emotionally." Urban Peak referred her to a physician who was understanding of her experiences and respectful of her wishes.

Ultimately, she was scheduled for an induction and felt relief at knowing when her baby would arrive. Mason was born on a warm day in September. Isis's grandmother was able to come with her to the hospital and be with her when Mason was born.

Molly explained that Isis had to overcome mental health challenges as she navigated her pregnancy. She dealt with significant depression, but she has made huge strides and has embraced her new role as a mother.

"There were times we were really worried about Isis when she was pregnant," Molly said. "But then she had this baby, and he is 100% safe, the way she takes care of him. The way she dotes on him. She doesn't let him out of her sight."

"With anything, Molly would understand," Isis responded. "She has her own kid. She would give me feedback, and sometimes I don't like it...but that's ok. With Molly, I felt safe." ■

The photographs throughout are by John Johnston Photography.
We are very grateful for his generous work for Urban Peak.





Josh

“No one is ever going to love you.”

Josh remembers the last words his birth mother said to him.

“I wish I could go back to when it was just me and her.” Back to before she had a string of bad boyfriends. “The last one, he was rock bottom. I was six, maybe seven years old.”

Foster care. Adoption. Boarding school. Broken relationships. Homelessness.

After being kicked out of a boarding school for vaping, Josh spent a few months in Florida with friends. His adopted family had disowned him years earlier. Then, after a long bus ride from Florida to Colorado, Josh found himself at Union Station, hoping to reconnect with a girlfriend. But he quickly realized that wasn’t going to work out. Soon after, he was mugged. His wallet and ID were stolen.

Without any money, work or identification, he bounced between an adult male shelter near downtown and sleeping on the 16th Street Mall. The shelter served meals and offered a bed under a roof, but it didn’t feel safe, where the youngest person in the room was an easy target. After a few weeks sleeping around the streets of Denver, he finally got directions to Urban Peak.

Josh arrived at the Shelter on a snowy night in December. “I was freezing,” he explained. “I’d been crying. A police officer took me to Broadway, but that was as far as he could go. I just remember him telling me, when you see 7-11, turn at that corner and it will be right there.”

“I was on the brink of suicide. When I got to the Shelter, I felt warm inside for once. Like I was wanted. Like someone wanted to help, even though I was just a bum off the street.”

With the safety and security that the Shelter offers, Josh has started to think about what might come next. He is “somewhat” in touch with his parents, but not welcome to stay with them.

But he is encouraged by the progress that he has seen for other Urban Peak youth. Getting his ID is a top priority now – a frustrating process that has already taken months as he works to track down documents from multiple states. He is also working to get enrolled at Metro State.

“God says don’t worry about tomorrow; I’ll let God determine what’s next. You have to get through what you can in the moment, and right now for me it’s getting enrolled in college and living out my Christian life.”

As he’s beginning to think about his next steps, Josh is also thinking about what the Shelter could offer to others who find themselves in the same circumstances.

“I want people to come here and think it’s a safe space for everyone. It’s a safe and friendly environment where they support you.”

His own story shows that, for many youth, the acceptance and safety they encounter at the Shelter is a stark contrast to their past experiences, but the value of the Shelter goes beyond just meeting individual needs. He is beginning to build positive relationships, not just with staff but with his peers as well.

“It’s a community here. People have so many backgrounds but we all have the same goal. I’m a Christian and my friend is a Muslim – I never thought we’d be friends. There’s a rags to riches story here.” ■

Daniel

“I don’t know who you are, but I know that I love you and I know that I care about you.”

Now a Shelter Assistant Supervisor at Urban Peak, Daniel still remembers those words he heard when he was 17 and at a personal low point.

Two staff people from ACE Community Challenge School had arrived at his home to meet with him and his mother. “I had just changed schools,” Daniel explained. “I had a lot of mental health issues and I didn’t feel heard or understood. I made a lot of bad decisions, but Frank and Mary came to my house to meet me.” That day marked a turning point for Daniel. With the support of Frank, Mary and others, he began to feel like he belonged at the new school and he eventually became a peer mentor. That role set him on a path toward working with high-risk students at Denver Public Schools and ultimately at Urban Peak. “Frank’s words resonated with me, and it’s how I feel about the youth here. I don’t know you but I know that I care about you.”

Daniel has been able to reflect on some of the challenging experiences of his own youth – mental health struggles, trauma and violence – to give him perspective on the struggles that he sees in the young people who arrive at the Urban Peak Shelter.


“I grew up on the west side of Denver. Gang violence was rampant. I had family members in a gang and I naturally gravitated to that lifestyle. But I knew my family didn’t want that for me and I figured out I didn’t want that for myself.” But at the same time, Daniel had advantages that many of the youth he works with don’t.

“My mom raised me, I had a really great family. I did feel loved. I did feel cared for. I didn’t always know how to care for me, how to navigate mental health. They loved me, but I didn’t always love myself.” Over time, and with support from his family and people like Frank, Daniel learned how to navigate the resources that were available to help him. “Those experiences have helped me form relationships with our youth at Urban Peak.”

With youth who are new to the Shelter, Daniel focuses on helping them feel comfortable. To start, “we meet youth where they’re at, with very little expectation besides just following the rules.” The hope is that turns into, “them applying themselves; putting that investment into themselves.” Daniel understands that that the youth who walk through the doors of the Shelter have experienced loss, violence and trauma. Most of them have had very little guidance about how to care for themselves or what it means to be an adult. “I’m a man of color from the city. I had a tough adolescence. I know it seems like a very daunting task to take responsibility for yourself.”

Over time, he’ll work with youth to start thinking beyond just their immediate comfort and more about what it means to care for themselves, to develop integrity and think about what role they might play in their larger community. “This is often the first time they’ve felt they could take responsibility for themselves.”

And now that he’s moved into the Assistant Supervisor position, he’s thinking more about how he can support other staff to build positive systems that will impact Urban Peak youth. “I’m learning how to shift from managing youth to managing people.” Navigating COVID-19 has not been easy as he entered a new role, but Daniel feels optimistic that Urban Peak is turning a corner, that small gatherings will start to happen, and, hopefully, that volunteers will begin to come back. “I know that brighter things are on the horizon.” He feels that same optimism for the youth at the Shelter. “When I see youth doing something good for each other or themselves, or standing up for staff, that’s inspiring.” ■



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Urban Peak Programs

OUTREACH

The Outreach team meets youth where they are – often on the streets they call home. By offering safe conversation, simple food and hygiene materials or clothing to stay warm, the team aims to build trusting relationships with a highly vulnerable population. Referrals to additional resources for shelter, housing, behavioral health and other services help to move youth from the streets to more safe and stable environments.

IN THE MONTHS IMPACTED BY COVID-19, outreach staff made 649 contacts with youth on the street.

DROP-IN CENTER

The Drop-In Center is a refuge and safe haven for youth experiencing homelessness. Hot meals, lockers to keep belongings safe, laundry facilities and showers are coupled with case management and access to community resources to help youth exit life on the street.

IN THE MONTHS IMPACTED BY COVID-19, Urban Peak served 10,748 meals at the Drop-In Center.

SHELTER

Denver's only licensed shelter for homeless youth ages through 15 through 20 provides safety and security to youth when they are in crisis. Open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, the Urban Peak Shelter is a stable environment where the rights and identities of all youth are respected and protected. Case managers develop relationships and support youth with individualized case management plans to move toward stable housing, reunification with family or self-sufficiency. To enhance the safety of youth at the Shelter during COVID-19, beds for youth were reduced and reconfigured, and some vulnerable youth or those with COVID-19 infections were moved to respite settings off site.

IN 2020, 289 youth spent one or more nights at the Urban Peak Shelter, for a total of 11,102 nights of safe sleep provided.

HOUSING

Urban Peak puts its mission into action at each of its three apartment buildings as well as scattered-site housing units. Urban Peak Housing is particularly well suited for young people living on their own, often for the first time. On-site case managers offer positive relationships and look for opportunities to assist youth as they develop self-sufficiency and make progress toward self-determined, fulfilled lives. Behavioral health care, access to education and employment support and training in adaptive living skills set youth on a path of independence and self-sufficiency.

IN THE MONTHS IMPACTED BY COVID-19, 30 youth moved into Urban Peak Housing.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Urban Peak's Education and Employment services help youth experiencing homelessness increase their independence, build positive relationships, make progress to achieve academically and develop employment and career skills. This can mean obtaining a GED, re-enrolling or completing coursework needed to graduate from high school or applying for post-secondary educational opportunities. Job Readiness Training builds hard- and soft-skills such as cover letter and resume development, job search and interview practice, job retention training and time and money management. These critical services support youth as they work to become self-sufficient and maintain safe and stable housing.

THROUGHOUT COVID-19, youth have continued to participate in both education and employment programming, including 44 who participated in COVID-19-modified education services.



PEAK THRIFT

Peak Thrift, Urban Peak's social-enterprise thrift store, offers an opportunity for youth to develop job skills, gain experience through workforce development, interact with the community and contribute to Urban Peak's mission with the guidance and support of specially trained store managers. As a retail service, Peak Thrift was significantly impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, including being closed for three months and converting to a donation reception and distribution center for masks and basic needs to Denver's largest homeless providers. Peak Thrift was able to reopen in June and now serves customers every day except Tuesdays.

CASE MANAGEMENT

Case managers are the backbone of our work, supporting youth throughout their journey at Urban Peak and for many years into the future. Case managers provide trusting, supportive adult relationships that help youth heal from their past trauma. Case management plans begin with security, work toward stable housing and strive to

fulfill the mission of igniting the potential in each youth who comes to Urban Peak. Case managers coordinate access to all other supportive services and work with community partners to provide youth with the resources they need in order to develop independence and stability.

100% OF URBAN PEAK YOUTH received trauma-informed, strengths-based case management throughout 2020.

VOLUNTEERS

In-person volunteer opportunities ceased to exist at Urban Peak as a result of safety concerns related to COVID-19 in 2020. But in a drastic shift, our more than 3,000 volunteers showed amazing community support and generosity by sewing masks, donating meals from local restaurants and holding donation drives from their homes for clothing and basic supplies.

WE LOOK FORWARD to welcoming volunteers back to Urban Peak in person in the year ahead and we are grateful for the daily offers of help and continued support. ■

From the Chair of the Board of Directors

It was about this time last year as I was working on my letter for Urban Peak's Impact Report that I started to process the loss I was beginning to experience due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Celebratory fundraisers? Shut down. In-person meetings? Moved online. Visits with my grandchildren? Gone. Hosting dinner for friends? Postponed indefinitely. Board meetings? Re-scheduled online, along with so many of my regular routines. In what felt like just a day's or a few moments' time.

Of course, homelessness didn't stop. Trauma didn't stop. Conflict didn't stop. Our youth didn't stop and our staff couldn't stop.

Urban Peak kept its doors open every day of 2020.

You don't need me to tell you that 2020 wasn't easy for any of us. The complexities of navigating the last year cannot be overstated. The logistical challenges were enormous. Rearranging our Drop-In Center and Shelter to allow for social distancing. Halting volunteers who had been relied upon to cook, serve – and often pay for – meals. Organizing surveillance testing, shifting administrative staff out of the office, moving youth into isolated shelter if they had been exposed to or contracted COVID-19. The list goes on and on.

Our annual Impact Report is a chance to share, reflect on and celebrate the work of Urban Peak in the last year. I've served on the board of Urban Peak for more than 30 years, but having watched our staff respond to these challenges of the last year, I've never been more proud.

Our donors continued to support us as we navigated a new reality, and new supporters reached out to us for the first time. The dedication and resilience of our youth and staff and allies is worth celebrating. But as my time as board chair has come to an end, I'm also excited about the possibilities that are on the horizon.

Even as our staff have been mired in managing the details of our COVID-19 response, even as our case managers have been supporting youth as they work to overcome poverty, trauma and isolation, we have also been dreaming, and now planning, for what will come next for Urban Peak. We are putting plans on paper for how we can serve more youth and make our work even more impactful for the youth we have the privilege to walk alongside.

Though my term as chair has come to an end, I continue to serve on Urban Peak's board, and I'm excited to see how the resilience that all of us have developed over the last year will transform into opportunity and possibility. I hope that you enjoy seeing a few faces and reading a few stories that showcase that resilience, and I hope you too will stay a part of Urban Peak for many years to come.



Dick Thomas
Board Chair



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URBAN PEAK

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Denver, CO 80205
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PEAK THRIFT

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2020 Urban Peak by the Numbers: Programs



STREET OUTREACH

Youth contacted on the streets by outreach workers: **239**
Youth assisted by case managers to connect to systems of care: **246**
Youth assisted in moving from streets to safe housing: **74**



DROP-IN CENTER

Meals served: **15,790**
Youth participated in Life Skills Groups: **175**
Laundry and showers provided to youth: **3,014**



SHELTER

Meals served: **19,121**
Total number of nights spent at the shelter by individual youth: **11,102**
Youth ages 15 through 17 spending one or more nights at the Shelter: **20%**
Bed capacity decrease during COVID-19: **25% (40 to 30 beds)**



HOUSING

Young adults and children served: **163**
Youth maintaining housing for six months or longer: **81%**
Hours of case management provided to youth in Urban Peak Housing: **2,809**



EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Youth engaged in education services: **100**
Youth engaged in employment services: **105**
Youth received professional employment certification: **17**

Community Impact



Over the long term, estimates show that Urban Peak will save the community more than \$20.7 million over the next 10 years by preventing chronic homelessness among the youth who it serves. This includes avoiding law enforcement and health care costs as well as the increased average earnings of the formerly homeless.



In the short term, Urban Peak's work saves the community over \$8.4 million. By providing shelter, housing, case management, programming and paths away from homelessness, Urban Peak diverts spending away from reactionary policies and programs to proactive pathways for unhoused youth. These savings include money that would be spent on incarceration, law enforcement officers, judicial fees and temporary court holdings as well as avoiding emergent and urgent health care costs such as hospital stays, substance abuse detox programs, mental health screenings and dental emergencies.



Establishing a positive relationship with Urban Peak for three or more months dramatically improves the lives of homeless youth. For youth who spend at least 90 days working with Urban Peak, their chances for (a) positive, sustainable housing, (b) addressing challenges or needs like substance abuse, (c) securing access to healthcare, and (d) making positive connections with adults and community resources increase significantly. Research shows that living in temporary housing with supportive programming for at least two months can reduce the likelihood of chronic homelessness in youth.



For those youth who stay involved with Urban Peak for at least 90 days, by the time they leave, they earn nearly \$150 more each month and live in households with almost \$200 more each month.

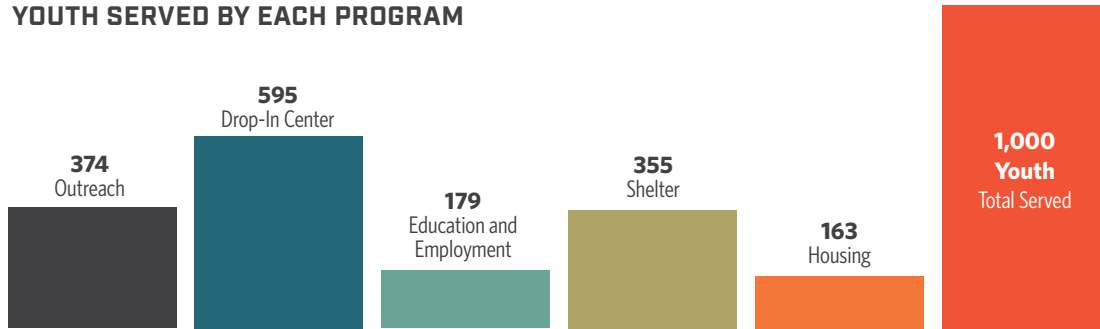


Urban Peak consistently provides for the multiple needs - like addressing substance abuse, finding medical care or dealing with domestic abuse - of the youth they serve. For youth who spend fewer than 7 days with Urban Peak, 10% of their needs are addressed on average. For those who stay fewer than 90 days, 27% of their needs are addressed. And for those who are involved with Urban Peak 90 days or longer, over 32% of their needs are met.

Quantitative Research Evaluation and Measurement. January 2021.

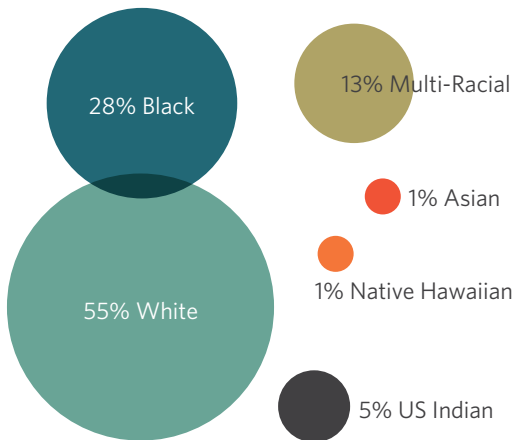
2020 Urban Peak by the Numbers: Demographics

YOUTH SERVED BY EACH PROGRAM

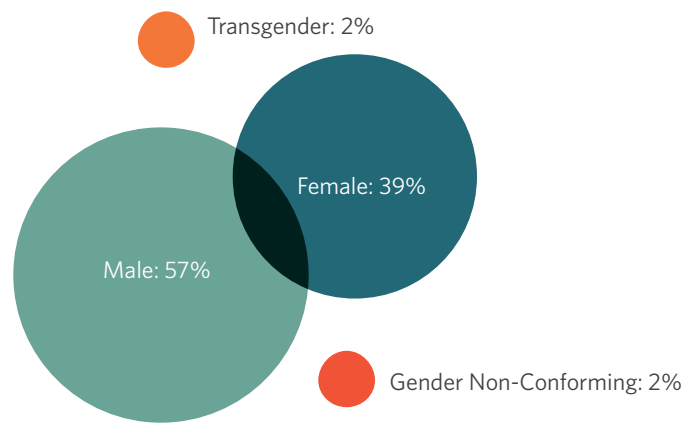


There is an overlap in various programs

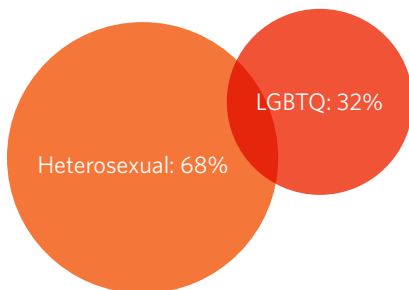
YOUTH RACE



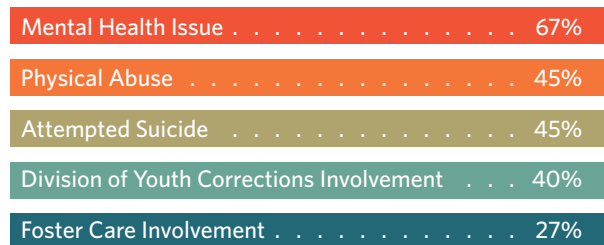
YOUTH GENDER



YOUTH SEXUAL ORIENTATION



SELF-REPORTED BARRIERS

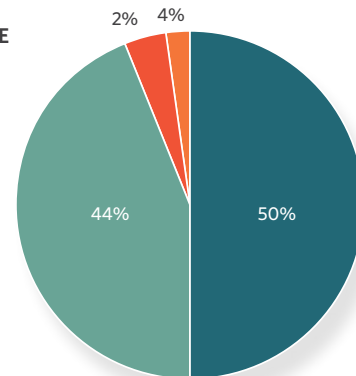


Urban Peak by the Numbers: Financials

REVENUE

■ Contributions & Special Events	\$ 3,765,288
■ Government Grants	\$ 3,335,481
■ Program & In-kind	\$ 272,696
■ Investments & Other	\$ 153,975
Total Support	\$ 7,527,440

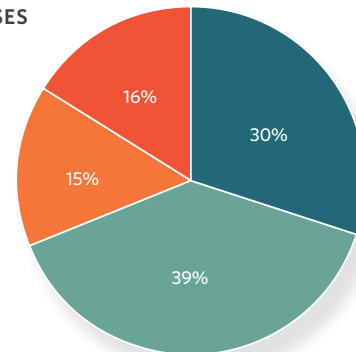
REVENUE



EXPENSES

■ Overnight Shelter	\$ 1,367,341
■ Housing Services	\$ 1,436,426
■ Peak Thrift, Education & Employment	\$ 544,810
■ Outreach & DIC	\$ 616,288
Total Program Services	\$ 3,964,865
General & Administrative	\$ 758,001
Fundraising	\$ 564,533
Total Supporting Services	\$ 1,322,534
Depreciation	\$ 241,265
Total Expenses	\$ 5,528,664

EXPENSES



NET ASSETS

Change in Net Assets before Depreciation	\$ 732,314
Depreciation	\$ (277,443)
Change in Net Assets	\$ 454,871
Net Assets beginning of year	\$ 5,309,815
Net Assets end of year	\$ 5,764,686

We are grateful to all of our donors

who give critical support to Urban Peak, regardless of the size of their donation. Below, we give special acknowledgment to those donors who were able to contribute \$250 or more in Fiscal Year 2020.

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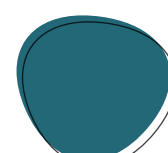
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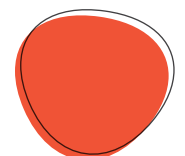
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