

TOMORROWVOICES.ORG



2020-2021 annual report



V O I C E S O F T O M O R R O W

message from our founders

In the Somali desert, in scorching heat, the acacia tree draws life-giving water in through its deep roots. Because it is deeply rooted, the tree can give generously to nomadic people. The tree serves as a gathering place for villagers: a place for rest, healing, and celebration. Under the tree, the community gathers to find solutions to critical issues. A man carrying a heavy load sets down his burden after a long journey. Families watch their children play in its shade; elders enjoy the pleasure of a cup of tea. This tree is resilient. It has the amazing ability to survive, thrive, and give in the parched soil.

The acacia tree is a powerful symbol of immigrant and refugee resilience. Voices of Tomorrow (VOT) has been the acacia tree in our “village” through relentless challenges in 2020 and 2021. The pandemic has ravaged our community’s health, safety, and finances. The Black Lives Matter movement brought the systemic and institutional racism our community experiences to the forefront of American consciousness. Voices of Tomorrow provides the shade of safety and stability in a time of exhaustion and uncertainty.

Like the resilient acacia tree, we deepened our roots in this time of crisis, adapting, growing stronger, and serving our community in new ways through the pandemic. Our new programs are rooted in our deeply-held values. Everything we do centers our community, is child-focused, and promotes racial equity. Voices of Tomorrow moved quickly in 2020 and 2021 to offer emergency assistance and food. As we shifted to online learning, we equipped families to teach their children at home by meeting technology needs and distributing educational toys, books and activities. We launched a Health Services Department to respond to children and families grappling with anxiety, depression, and mental health concerns; and promote family stability and access to health care. We branched out into policy and advocacy to ensure public policies that affect us include our voices.

Please join us under the acacia tree as a place of healing, giving, and community gathering!

ZAMZAM MOHAMED

Co-Founder, Voices of Tomorrow

IFTIN HAGIMOHAMED

Co-Founder, Voices of Tomorrow



our team



“Helping today’s children for a better tomorrow.”

how we've changed

HELPING FAMILIES KEEP THEIR HOMES THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

East African immigrant and refugee families experience housing barriers that place them at high risk of homelessness. Voices of Tomorrow distributed over \$300,000 in rental assistance payments for families so they could stay stably housed.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS

Our staff checks in with families over the phone as often as weekly to hear how families are weathering the pandemic, and to learn about how we can help them with their basic needs. We visited families' homes to give away diapers, food, and formula when families had no income and store shelves were bare.

SUPPLYING TECHNOLOGY

When our Early Learning programs moved online in 2020, we overcame families' technology barriers to distance learning by distributing tablets, setting up a technology lending library, and connecting them with reliable internet.

HELPING FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS STAY OPEN

During the pandemic, East African family child care providers experienced devastating closures that threatened their financial ability to stay in business. We help child care providers throughout the state apply for Child Care Stabilization Grants so they can stay open and serve families. We conduct outreach and technical assistance in Somali, Oromo, Amharic, Swahili, and Arabic.

REDUCING BARRIERS TO HEALTH

Our new Health Services Department works hand-in-hand with our Early Learning programs to facilitate immunizations, well child visits, developmental screenings, and referrals for follow-up care and intervention. The Health Department serves children enrolled in our Early Learning programs including children served in Family Child Care settings.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SCREENINGS AND REFERRALS

Voices of Tomorrow has implemented processes to screen all enrolled children for social-emotional developmental delays using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE). The Health Services Department refers all children with indications of social-emotional concerns to appropriate follow-up mental health care.





“VOT’s dual-language program helped my child speak Somali. It was indeed a special experience to see my child being connected to our cultural roots. Cheers to VOT’s dual language preschool!”

by the numbers

In 2021

412
families received COVID-19 basic needs and housing assistance

210
children enrolled in Early Learning preschool program

46
families with children aged birth-3 enrolled in home visiting program

768
estimated children benefitted from family support services

\$336,521
in emergency assistance distributed to families

1,500
family child care providers received technical assistance and support

627
children received Health Services and screenings for developmental concerns

55
children referred for comprehensive services based on screening results



policy & advocacy

Our East African immigrant and refugee families navigate complex, unfamiliar systems as they put down roots in the U.S. As they settle here, they encounter structural racism, xenophobia, and other harmful systemic issues that negatively impact employment, education, healthcare, and housing. Oppressive systems harm our children's healthy identity development as they internalize the ideology of inferiority. Racial equity is a core value, and racial equity work is a core-mission strategy to preserve immigrant and refugee children's identity.



To work toward racial equity, Voices of Tomorrow launched a new Policy & Advocacy Department in 2021. We have built relationships with Washington, King County, and Seattle policymakers for a decade and played an advisory role in policy implementation. The new department's structure gives VOT the capacity to be a leader at the table in early conversations with decision makers, as policies are being developed.

Our goal is to transform systems and design strength-based solutions that truly reflect us. The department will train East African immigrants and refugees in advocacy and civic engagement; bring community members together with lawmakers; and share community stories.

mental health



Mental health concerns are on the rise due to fear of the virus, hunger, housing insecurity, political unrest, and unemployment. Our community has disproportionately felt the brunt of the pandemic, with higher mortality and higher rates of COVID than King County averages. We are grieving the many family members we lost to COVID. In these uncertain times, the East African immigrant and refugee community relives past traumatic wartime and immigration experiences. At VOT, we see children who are experiencing traumatic events develop anxiety, panic attacks, depression, mood disorders, and other mental health conditions.

As our community struggles with trauma, we see stigma and taboos in East African communities regarding mental health concerns. The concept of mental health issues and trauma is new to families; there is no word in the Somali language for "trauma." To destigmatize mental health concerns, build awareness, and help families heal, Voices of Tomorrow began new initiatives in 2020 and 2021. We seek to normalize the experience of mental health concerns and increase families' access to mental health care.

MIND, BODY, & CULTURE

The Mind, Body, & Culture Program promotes maternal-infant mental health and age-appropriate social-emotional development with a trauma-informed lens. The program matches families who have a child aged birth to three with a home visitor that speaks their languages. We screen children for social-emotional concerns and address family trauma with an evidence-based curriculum. The home visitors link families to wraparound services including education, therapy, and opportunities for social connection.

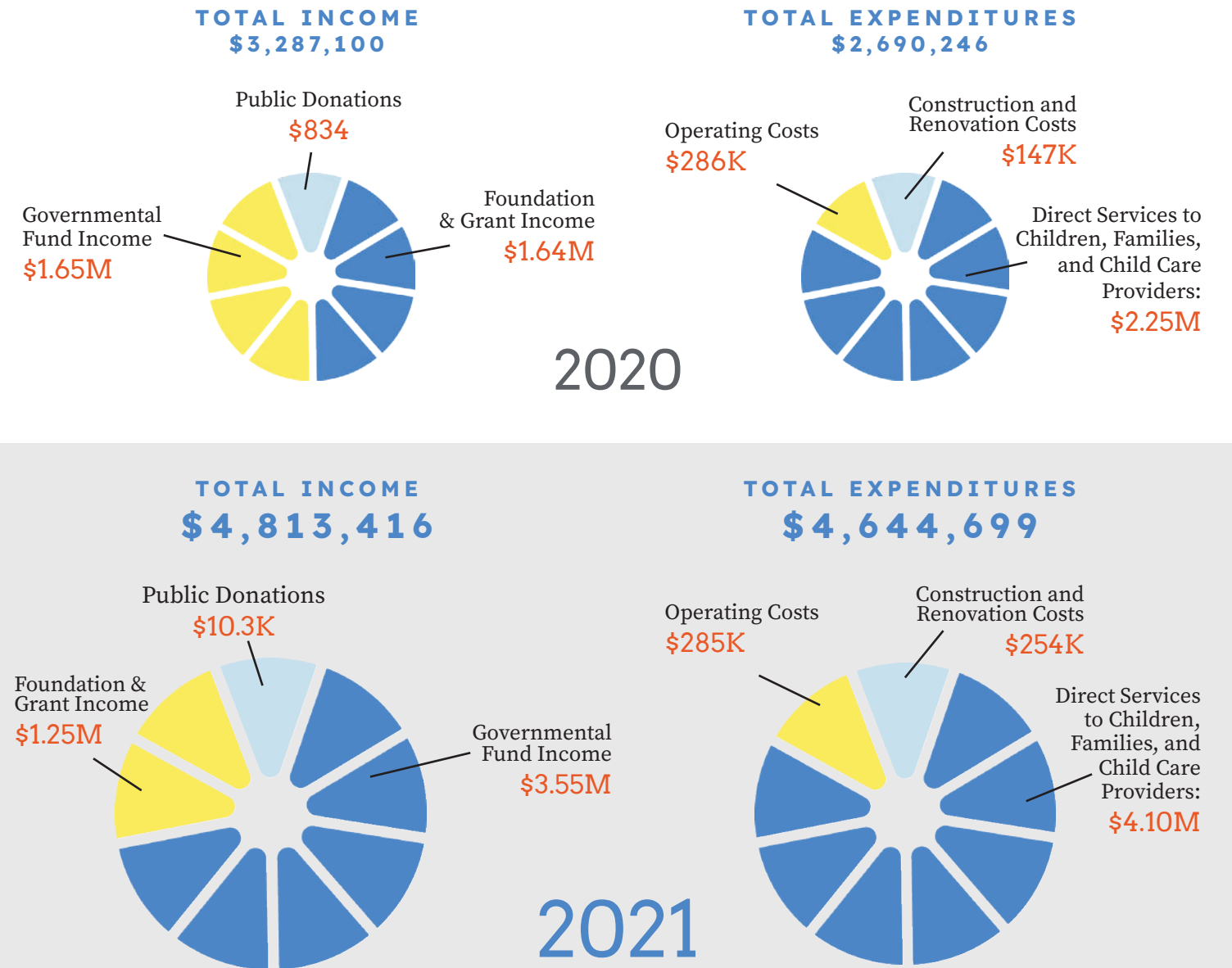
BECOMING A TRAUMA-FOCUSED ORGANIZATION

Over the past two years, Voices of Tomorrow has become a trauma-informed and trauma-focused organization. "Trauma-focused" speaks not just to knowledge about trauma, as the term "trauma-informed" does. As a trauma-focused organization, VOT weaves trauma knowledge, advocacy, and healing practices throughout all of our departments and services. Our children, staff, and families are learning culturally responsive techniques to heal from trauma and stress. We incorporate screening, care plans, and referrals to culturally responsive mental health care for children and families. The director of VOT's Health Services Department is a licensed mental health therapist with 30 years' experience who specializes in trauma.



“ I am a working mom and it was very difficult for me to find an early learning program that reflects my culture and values. I am glad I was able to find VOT.

financials



FUNDING PARTNERS Thank you to the funding and in-kind partners who support our mission!

- American Family Insurance Dreams Foundation
- City of Seattle
- Environmental Works
- Gates Foundation
- Highline School District
- King County Best Starts for Kids
- Looking Out Foundation
- Perigee Fund
- Safeco Foundation
- Seattle Foundation
- Stolte Family Foundation
- Tukwila School District
- United Way of King County
- Washington Department of Commerce
- Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families
- Other Private and Corporate Donors



voices of tomorrow

Voices of Tomorrow (VOT) is a community-based organization located in King County, Washington. We serve families and childcare providers in Washington's immigrant and refugee community, with a primary focus on the East African community. Our mission is to preserve immigrant and refugee children's identity through culturally responsive child-focused programs.

GET INVOLVED! FOLLOW US:



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