



# Webinar: Best Practices for Diversifying Funding for ECBO Sustainability

January 25, 2024, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

Transcript

## Introduction

**Hilary Binder-Aviles:** Good afternoon. Welcome to today's training. We'll be giving folks a minute to join. Again, if you're just joining us, welcome to today's webinar on Best Practices for Diversifying Funding. We're going to give it another minute. I'm seeing that participant list with more people joining. I think we'll just give it a few more seconds. I'm continuing to see the number climb up of folks who are joining us for this very informational webinar that we'll be having today.

**HA:** Okay, I think we're going to go ahead and get started. Welcome. Good afternoon or good morning, depending on where you are. Thank you so much for joining today's training on Best Practices for Diversifying Funding for ECBO, Ethnic Community-Based Organization, Sustainability. This training is presented to you by Switchboard, and Switchboard is a one-stop resource hub for refugee service providers in the United States. And we'll be sharing some more resources from Switchboard later in the hour.

## Zoom Orientation

**HA:** So now I would like to just do a little bit of housekeeping. This is a Zoom webinar, and the chat is disabled due to the large number of participants. However, we do have the Q&A on, and we're going to encourage you to put your questions in the Q&A, especially when we get to our panel discussion where we are then going to have time to take the questions from the audience.

**HA:** The webinar is being recorded, and this recording will be shared with you within 24 hours after today's webinar, which is one hour long. Also at the end, we're going to leave one minute for you to complete a very short feedback survey, and we'll do that at the end of the session. Okay, next slide please.

## Today's Speakers

**HA:** So now it's my pleasure to introduce our panel who will be with us for the hour. So I'm Hilary Binder-Aviles, and I'm a consultant with many years of experience working with ECBOs in capacity building, long-term partner of Switchboard, and many of the people in this room today. And I'm delighted to moderate today's panel.

**HA:** Our three guest speakers are Nao Kabashima... Nao is the Executive Director and a co-founder of the Karen Organization of San Diego, which is a Switchboard partner. Nao co-founded KOSD in 2009, so is bringing many years of experience working with the Karen community and community leaders to address the needs of refugees from Burma who are living in San Diego.



**HA:** We also have with us Yacouba Jacob Bogre, who is the Executive Director and also a co-founder of AALV, which is in Vermont. Jacob came from Burkina Faso, bringing his skills and including a master's degree in law to help found an organization that originally was founded to address the needs of the African community living in Vermont but then evolved to address the needs of all refugee communities in Vermont. And we'll be hearing more of that story today.

**HA:** Dante Dauz is our third panelist. And Dante is the Director of Community Engagement and Business Development of the Union of Pan Asian communities, otherwise known as UPAC. And he is born and raised in San Diego and brings over 20 years of being a community advocate in San Diego. Also has a background in law and a range of social services. And so together I think this panel brings a range in-depth of expertise and experience that they have clearly brought to the benefit of their respective organizations, and we'll be hearing a lot more from them today.

## Learning Objectives

**HA:** Okay, next slide. So our learning objectives: by the end of this session, you'll be able to, one, identify sources of funding beyond federal funding as well as key resources when pursuing new sources of funding. Number two, identify common challenges when pursuing diverse funding sources and name strategies to overcome them.

## Poll Questions

**HA:** Okay, so before we get started, we want to learn a little bit about you and see who is in this virtual room. So we have three Slido questions. You can either use the QR code and take a picture of that and that will bring up these questions on your phone. Or you can log into slido.com and put in that code that you see on the screen and answer the questions that way. So we'll give maybe a half a minute to see, and we can all see in real time as folks are filling out the questionnaire.

### Which best describes your organization or yourself?

**HA:** We can see who's in the room, and it keeps changing. Oh my goodness. Okay. We'll give it another couple seconds. Alright, well it's now looking like, oh my goodness. Okay. I think we do have a slight majority of folks representing ethnic community-based organizations. We have a good number of folks from resettlement agencies, state refugee offices, other service providers, and community members. Alright, so wonderful audience for this topic.

**HA:** Our second question,

### What are sources of funding you have not yet pursued but would like to?

**HA:** And for this, you can click all that apply. So, alright, here we go. I love this Slido tool. It's so interesting to see the responses and how they change. Alright.

**HA:** I think, not too surprisingly, the top areas seem to be staying consistent. Social enterprise, program service fees, individual donors, followed by grants, foundations, city grants. Alright. Well, I think you're in the right place because we are really going to focus in on some of these strategies that you haven't pursued yet but would like to. So this is wonderful. And now our last question, and I love this question:



Describe your experience with fundraising in one word.

**HA:** And we're going to get a word cloud here. So when you hear the term fundraising, you think about your experience with it. What's the first word that comes up for you?

**HA:** Okay. Alright. I had a feeling these were going to be some... Yeah, some of our challenges coming up here. That's for sure. Oh my goodness. Yeah. I'm trying to see here if there's anything... excited. Okay, good. We have one positive here. And I hope that as you look at this, you're also feeling a sense that you're not alone. I think this is real. Fundraising is a very challenging area for many, many reasons, and it does elicit these very strong feelings of challenges and difficulty and feeling overwhelmed. And so that's a big part of why we wanted to have this webinar on this topic, because there are strategies out there. There are resources for you. And so that's what we're hoping to bring to you today.

**HA:** So, thank you for being honest and sharing. And I hope you're feeling less alone in your struggles. Okay. So we are going to just spend about 10 minutes, and I'm making sure that we are... that I keep myself on track here because I'm going to give a little bit of an overview of... Just as before we go to our panelists and me, we do kind of a case study of some unique strategies that our panelists have been very successful with. I'm just going to give kind of an overview of it just so that we're thinking about what are all the funding sources, the sources of resources for ethnic community-based organizations.

## 1. Funding Sources and Key Resources for ECBOs

### Main Sources of Funding for ECBOs

**HA:** So, next slide. Okay. So if we kind of categorize... and you can categorize them in different ways, but I like to think about these as the main sources of funding for ethnic community-based organizations. And each one comes with their own unique challenges and benefits.

**HA:** So obviously there are federal government grants. A benefit of these is that they're often very large. They can sustain you for a number of years, and it often fully funds a lot of an ECBO's work. The challenges... they come with a lot of requirements. They can be very hard to put the proposals together. They come with a lot of reporting requirements. So sometimes the barrier to entry, if you will, of a federal government grant can be very high.

**HA:** State and local government grants. Oftentimes the benefit of these is they can sometimes fill in gaps. There are so many different kinds of state and local funding related to youth and housing and health and education. They can help you fill in some gaps in your programs and services. A challenge, again, sometimes they can be hard to find, hard to navigate, and come with more requirements.

**HA:** Foundation grants. Some of the benefits of foundation grants is that they're actually quite flexible compared to public funds and government grants. They can give you a lot of general operating support and flexible funds. Challenges, again, can be how to find them, how to build relationships, how to sustain relationships with foundation funders.

**HA:** Individual donors. One of the benefits is individual donors are in some ways the most flexible kind of money that you can get. You actually have no reporting requirements to individuals, although you should have



some sort of annual reports so that you are sharing with them... good stewards, that you're being good stewards of their money and be accountable to them. A challenge with individual donors, though... it takes a long time to build up a base of individual donors. It's something that you have to build up slowly and be very consistent with those efforts.

**HA:** Corporate and local business sponsorship. So, one of the wonderful things about building relationships with corporates and local businesses... It's often an opportunity for in-kind resources, donations, or being able to get space or products that you can benefit from in kind, as well as things like event sponsorship. Challenges, again, where to find them, how to build the relationships. How do you get started?

**HA:** Special events. I think probably many of you in this room have tried special events. One of the benefits is they can be a wonderful way to increase visibility for your organization, to gain new friends. They often are just a way to really get your whole team involved and be very celebratory. A challenge is sometimes special events are... I often call them break-eveners more than fundraisers. Sometimes you end up spending more money than you actually get, but you get a lot of goodwill from a special event. And they take a lot of person power to pull them off.

**HA:** Revenue generation and social enterprise. We're going to hear more about this today. There are... And we're going to hear a lot about the benefits of these strategies as well as the challenges. So I'm going to move to our next slide.

### Tips for Getting Started: Government Grants

**HA:** So, alright, so I'm just going to go through a few again. I think one of the challenges with all of these is, how do we get started if we've never done this before? So just a few tips I'm going to go through. Tips for getting started with government grants. Ask your fellow ECBO leaders and other nonprofit leaders, research government agency websites, sign up for newsletters, reach out to government agencies and ask for an informational meeting. Again, it's ask for help to how to navigate these. If you've never done it before, people will be willing to help you.

### Tips for Getting Started: Foundation Grants

**HA:** Next slide. Okay. Foundation grants. Most foundations, most not all because there's many small family foundations that often actually don't have websites. They can be hard to find, but most foundations, they have websites. You can subscribe to their newsletters. You can research them to get a better understanding of their priorities. One thing I always do is I look at who are they funding and I see if I have any friends on the list of their current grantees, and I contact my friends and say, what has been your experience with this foundation? Can you introduce me to them?

**HA:** Ask your fellow leaders for advice. Staying successful for the long haul is about building relationships. An organization I work with now that is led by directly impacted people, it took them four tries and they just got a grant today from a foundation that they've been cultivating a relationship with for four years. Next slide. So, never give up.



### Tips for Getting Started: Individual Donors

**HA:** Tips for getting started with individual donors. One thing I've done with a lot of ECBOs is bring together your board, your volunteers, your staff. Map out your networks. Put paper on the wall, and start to think about who are all of our networks. Who would be interested in supporting our work and our community if they knew about us or if we ask them? Make the ask.

**HA:** There's so many ways to do that. Now, direct appeals, through letters, emails, social media, in person at events. What I always say, when you have an event, use it as a chance to... the term "pass the hat," right? Where you just ask for contributions right there on the spot. And again, maintaining regular communication with your donors. Share program updates, share good news, cultivate that base all the time. Next slide, please.

### Tips for Getting Started: Corporate and Local Businesses

**HA:** Alright, and then with corporate and local businesses, again, map out who's in your community. There's always local businesses, but there might be particular larger corporations that maybe they're headquartered or they have a branch office. Look at who's present in your community.

**HA:** Research their process for giving back to the community. I think, as probably many of you know, corporate social responsibility... there's a lot of emphasis on giving back to the community. There's different ways that corporations and the private sector does that. And you need to look at how a particular bank or a company does that in your community.

**HA:** And then for local businesses, reach out to them. Build a relationship with the manager, the branch manager, so that you can ask for contributions, in-kind contributions and event sponsorship, which is something that private sector likes to do because it's marketing for them and it's good PR for them. Okay, and moving on.

### Tips for Getting Started: Special Events

**HA:** Alright. So again, special events. They can take a lot of time and energy, as I'm sure many of you here on this call know. But if you haven't done them before, there's no one size fits all. You don't have to just do a gala dinner. You can do fun things, you can do walks, you can do cultural celebrations. There's so many different things you can do. And if you get your board, staff, and volunteers together, I'm sure they'll come up with many creative ideas. And start small—form a team of people that just love to organize events. Not everybody does, but a lot of people do, channel their energy into something.

**HA:** And again, remember that a lot of fundraising events start off more as what I like to call "friendraising." You're building new constituents, new future donors, but you might not raise money on the first event.

### Tips for Getting Started: Revenue Generation

**HA:** And I think, lastly, and again, we're going to hear a lot about this from our panel today of how they mapped out their assets to really identify how they could generate revenue. There's a lot of expertise sometimes you need to get this started. And there's also issues related to tax laws if you're going to be doing some revenue



generation. So I think for this strategy, you have to do a lot of homework, and we're going to hear how our panelists today did that.

### Partnerships Are Key to All Fundraising!

**HA:** Alright, then I guess the last thing, as you think about fundraising and you think about diversifying your funding sources, partnerships are just key to everything. And the more different kinds of partners and relationships that you build... Again, mapping out who's in my community. What are all the potential organizations, entities, institutions we can be building a relationship with? Nonprofits, colleges, universities, government, businesses, professional associations. And because all of those... the more relationships you have, the more doors will be open to you and the more support that you'll have.

## 2. Funding Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them: Case Studies and Panel Discussion

**HA:** So okay, and then just again, to ground us again in our word cloud, we had a lot of words related to the challenges. And so I just wanted to give... We're going to talk a lot about those challenges, but we're really also going to talk about the strategies to overcome them. So we're going to pull up our slide with our panel one more time just so we can remember who our panel is. Alright.

**HA:** Oh, I'm sorry. Are we going to pull up our panel or we're going... Oh, I'm so sorry. We are not going to pull up our panel yet. We are actually... I am going to turn it over and ask each one of our panel to introduce themselves. So now please introduce yourself and your organization.

### Karen Organization of San Diego (KOSD)

**Nao Kabashima:** Oh, thank you so much, Hilary, for giving us the opportunity. I'm really happy to be here with all you. Again, my name is Nao Kabashima. I am executive director of the Karen Organization of San Diego. And then our mission statement is on this first slide. I'm going to the next slide. Thank you.

### About KOSD

**NK:** We started this organization in 2009 to meet the urgent needs of refugees from Burma. They started to come to San Diego 2007, and we'd been seeing a lot of struggle from the community.

**NK:** And then we hosted many community meetings, and then we decided together as a community to start this organization. But the first two years, we didn't have any grant funding or paid staff or the office space until we got our first grant ever. And then that was a federal grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement as a Community Self-Help Program. And then we had about six years for that funding.

**NK:** And now we have 11 board members and then seven of them... so about 70% of our board members are refugees themselves, refugees from Burma, who are from different ethnicities. And then we have 16 staff members, 14 of them from the community. And we really feel blessed to be here as a community organization. Our door is still open. Our main programs [are] case management, community education, youth program, civic



engagement. We do everything we need for our community to grow. And everybody can have a successful life here. Next slide.

### Funding Highlights: KOSD

**NK:** I just wanted to go over some highlights around our funding. And you can see 2009 to 2011, there was no grant income. And then after seeing the word cloud from everybody, I can totally connect you. And then when I think about 2009, where we are, and even now, 2023, that grant funding, or fundraising was definitely too scary, challenging. But over the year I learned a lot, and we learned a lot from other members and then partners and then funders, and then that's the reason why we are still here. But after seeing many different leaders, I know that this is not common. Many ECBOs serving refugees and newcomers started without any funding. Just the individual donation from the funders or, there is no... We didn't have any knowledge around the nonprofit management or grant writing. We just started because there wasn't any other choice. We see a lot of struggle from our community members every single day. And then we know there are huge needs, and that was the only choice to start this organization. So we were able to operate, everything we did without any funding.

**NK:** In 2011, again, we started to get the funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. And this happened because of other leaders in San Diego. I learned from other leaders who are doing the same work. Where did they get funding? How did they get [that] funding? And then also those days, IRC, some refugee resettlement agencies... helped us. And then especially IRC San Diego leaders helped me go through the application process as well. And, but the first two years, we were 100% ORR funded because, as a small ECBO like us, it was so hard for us to navigate, just to manage in a federal funding. We didn't want to make a mistake.

**NK:** And then we didn't think about how to sustain after this ORR funding is gone. And definitely it's gone in 2017. And then after that we started to struggle, but we started to get a different funding source from the local governments, school district, many local and national foundations. And then also started to get some sub-awards or give sub-awards to the other ECBOs to grow together, sustain together, through the coalitions called San Diego Refugee Community Coalitions. And then now this is our funding. So 65% from private and then other governments. But as you can see, we struggle to find the service fee type of revenue. So I'm really excited to learn from other leaders here on this panel. I'm going to pass to Jacob now. Thank you, Jacob.

### Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV)

**Yacouba Jacob Bogre:** Thank you so much for having me. Our organization works primarily with refugees and immigrants who have chosen Vermont as their new home. And our mission is listed here, and it's to promote the equal opportunity, dignity, and self-sufficiency of refugee and immigrant individuals regardless of their background. We can move to the next slide, please.

### About AALV

**YB:** The organization started in 2000, but we did not have any full-time staff until 2006. And that was following the increase in new populations that were resettled in Vermont, mainly from Congo and Somalia and also Sudan. So we had to go through a lot of training and strategic planning. And one of the trainers we had at that time who supported us to pave the way to where we are today was Hilary through a previous organization. And today the organization expanded from the first group of Africans we are serving to encompass and serve all the refugee communities that are resettled in Vermont.



**YB:** And I can tell you that as of today, we have 20 full-time staff members, and the organization provides mainly case management, workforce development. And we do also run a vibrant youth program and couple with a behavioral health education and mental health support programs here at AALV. Over the past three years, we've also beefed up our legal service programming to help newcomers access legal services when they're trying to apply for the green card, citizenship, or petition for family members that are left behind. But with that, also the need to increase our source of funding became huge. And we have developed our interpreter program to bring some non-restricted funding so we can continue providing... fund different type of funding or services to our self community. In our sub, we have more than 20 languages.

### **Funding Highlights: AALV**

**YB:** So one of the things we ran into at an early stage was the lack of funding. So from private funding or state or federal funding sources, we realized that this was not enough to sustain the growth of our organization. And the first largest funding we got was from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. And we were also warned at that time that these are funding that would not continue year after year. So we need to look at the opportunities that could help us increase streamlines coming from the state, private donation, or other type of funding.

**YB:** So in 2022, the organization thought of increasing its revenue sources, and we beefed up our interpreter program, investing usually in trainings so we can recruit from the self communities, the resettled groups that are here, many of whom were professionals in their own country, coming with a huge background of language that was missing in the state. So we assess some of the interpreters; some of the clients train them in legal, mental health, and also social service setting so they can be a liaison between the clients who are accessing services and the larger area of the service providers that are here in the state.

**YB:** And over the past years, we were able to at least shift slightly our funding streamline from federal and state sources to now... at least 42% of our funding coming from our interpreter program. The state and federal grants represent 24%, and these are various agencies from the states, the federal level from the Department of Justice to the Department of Agriculture, because we do run also a farming program here at AALV.

**YB:** But for many years now, one thing we've noticed is universities, cities, and towns reaching out to us because they want to do studies in their communities. And that also takes a lot of our time. So we decided then to charge them and generate more income to support our services here at AALV. That has led us to at least recoup at least 20% of our funding sources for these type of services that we have been able to develop over the past years. And the rest of the funding comes from our pool of donors. And our regular fundraising activity will go at the end of the year or around Thanksgiving. Thank you. I will pass it to Dante.

### **Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC)**

**Dante Dauz:** Thank you. Thank you so much, Yacouba and everybody. It's a pleasure to be here. My name is Dante Dauz. I'm a director with UPAC, [which] stands for Union of Pan Asian Communities. The main part of our mission statement is to improve the general well-being and education of the Asian Pacific Islander and other ethnic communities of San Diego. Next slide, please.





## About UPAC

**DD:** We were founded in 1974. So we're in 2024, so we're going on 50 years this year. So it's a very big milestone for us. We were founded by leaders of Asian Pacific Islander communities, really through translation services and through these pioneering groups, as they hear the concerns of the population instead of just translating it, they were motivated to be more active and be able to support the community as opposed to just providing translation services.

**DD:** So 50 years later, or over the course of 50 years, we provide multicultural services to diverse refugee and immigrant populations in 30 different languages and dialects. UPAC's main programs are mental health, substance use and treatment. And I oversee gang prevention, community violence, community engagement, and business development. Next slide.

## Funding Highlights: UPAC

**DD:** So I'm really here to talk about our social enterprise programs. In 2017, we opened up an amazing facility and community hub called Neighborhood Enterprise Center that focuses on advancing diversity, building neighborhood unity, and developing youth leaders. And I'll explain a little bit about what that means later, but really, we opened this place out of necessity. We work with a lot of youth, and nobody was hiring our kids, even though these kids were putting real genuine efforts to grind it out and get employment, but they weren't even getting interviews. So UPAC, we put our heads together. While we continue to help them, let's be part of the solution. We opted to do different social enterprises. We focus on not only the actual business, but we provide training and employment for youth throughout San Diego, through our cafe, our catering company, and print shop.

**DD:** Our cafe and catering company focuses on the diversity of our community. It's very, very diverse and we want to highlight that. So we have food, we have Somali, Vietnamese, Cambodian. We have Korean dishes, we have Mexican, a little bit of everything. It's a direct reflection of our community, and that's another way in which we're able to advance embracing culture.

## Overcoming Common Challenges

**DD:** In addition to the social enterprise though... I'm going to talk about some of the challenges. It's great, but it comes with some risks and challenges. So we supplement that. We also converted our center to provide direct services, different social services. So this could be like a food distribution, rental assistance. We have a program in San Diego called, or in California, called CalFresh, which helps with food supplement programs. So we rely on that, also different outreach programs to kind of help supplement that. Next slide.

**DD:** And our model is successful. And we've collaborated with other partners. We have two foundations in here, and another organization to open up Timmy's Place, which is our pizzeria and cafe in downtown San Diego. And that one is geared more for homeless youth. With just the two social enterprises alone, we have potential to employ about 125 youth within the next year. Right now, we're currently at about 60, so we're about halfway there. And I'll get into it more in social enterprise. If you're thinking about it, it's like we're only limited by our customers. It's a business. The more people come get our pizza and our products and our food, then the more we could hire. And it's really as simple as that. Well, it's more complex than that, but in the most simple form to explain it, the more people that purchase our products, the more people we could hire.



**DD:** So the other thing about our program is it's youth driven. All of our youth run all of the operations because youth really are much more capable than us as adults sometimes, given the opportunity. When we give them that opportunity, these kids really shine because they come from the neighborhood and so they're more vested in the operations too, and that's a key component to the success of your social enterprise as well. So, thank you very much.

## Panel Discussion

**HA:** Great. Alright. So I am so excited to start asking you each more questions about your strategies and how you pursued them and how you overcame challenges. And just to sort of reflect back some of the common challenges, again, I heard from all of you and that we... I know those of you on this webinar have all experienced the lack of development staff for a small ECBO and the lack of experience. The knowledge of like, "How do you look for grants? How do you write the grants? What needs to be in them?" And the need for the executive directors and the founders and the board to all have a hand in helping with development. The difficulty finding private donors. Where do we start? How do we find them?

**HA:** This didn't come up as much for you all, but often the lack of cash reserves. So often government grants are reimbursable. And when you're small, that's a big challenge. And again, lack of experience and sometimes access to training on project design and proposal development, project management, and all the things that you need to... not only need for proposals, but you really need to have in place in order to then manage the money in the programs well.

**HA:** So now is the time that we get to speak with our panel, and I'll have four main questions that I'll be asking. And as I'm asking these questions, I again want to encourage folks participating in the webinar, listening in, to please share your questions in the Q&A. I'm going to ask each one of you about the specific strategies that you've really been able to pursue that have been unique to each one of you and how you did that. What partners were key to your success? What are the challenges you encountered? And how [did] you [overcome] them? And then we're going to close with just a word of advice.

## Q&A Panel

**HA:** Okay. So with that, I think we're going to get to take down the presentation so we can actually see all of our panelists and have a conversation with each other. So I'm going to start with you, Nao.

[You started fully dependent on funding from ORR, and now 65% of your funding comes from private foundations. How did you make that shift? How did you do that? Tell us more.](#)

**NK:** Yeah, thank you so much. So as I explained earlier, first two years we didn't have any funding and then first we got the ORR funding in 2011. First two years, I didn't think about anything about what's going to happen after losing the ORR [funding], but when I realized, we started to feel scared. "Oh, what [are we] going to do with this community and what [are] we going to do with this staff in our organizations?" And then I actually started to meet with many local funders. But one local funder that first ever funded us when we had only one funder, like ORR was [our] only grant [at] that time, our local foundation called Price Philanthropy, at that time called Price Charity. They started to fund us with a general operating funds. And then, now that I know how difficult [it is] to get a general operating funds as an ECBO, I'm really grateful for that foundation.



**NK:** And then since then, they've been supporting us more than 20, I mean 12 years now. But that first foundation relationship I [made] helped us a lot. They connect with new funders. They started to connect me with new partners, and then I started to work with other organizations funded by the Price and then other local foundations like California Edelman and others. And then so [it] started with one foundation that cared about us, cared about our organization, and also trusted us when we didn't have many other funders. So yeah, I just wanted to share that first. Thank you.

**HA:** Oh, thank you. I just love that, that first funder. You built the relationship and then they connected you because you built that trust with them. That is so inspiring to hear how you did that.

**HA:** I'm going to turn to you, Jacob. And something that you said in your introduction that you had different entities in the community that were asking you to do things for free, whether that was interpretation, translation, and finally you said, "Well, you know what? We need to charge them." Tell us more about that.

How did you get your budget from, again, being primarily dependent on ORR—not dependent on, but starting with ORR funding that allowed you to build that base, and now you are... the majority of your funding comes from earned income. How did you do that? Tell us that story.

**YB:** I think, like many other organizations, the biggest concern we've always had was to sustain our operations. And that would be difficult to do if you look at only one funding streamline. So knowing that in our resettlement community, we have professionals that are coming with various skills that are mostly underutilized. We thought of at least tapping into that one, train them as case managers, but we cannot hire and retain everyone. But also giving them some exposure... How would that happen? It's mainly utilizing... using the skills they have so we can promote them and also let the community know that the individuals you have chosen to resettle in this country are coming with such skills. They want to share what they know and they want to support and give back to the community that is resettling them.

**YB:** So through our interpreter program, we've put in funding to train them first. It takes how to work as an interpreter, learn some of the basics if they didn't know some of them already, but the biggest part was to assess them so we can make sure that they're fluent in the native language and in English. And then from there, we'll provide the rest of the technical training because most of the agencies were coming and say, we cannot serve refugees. We don't know what to do. We don't know how to best meet their needs. We said, well, we do provide language assistance. Even though initially it was not a requirement, now it's a federal mandate that language assistant agencies be provided most of the services that people can access. So that's how we sold this idea to the providers here. So we have them trained, we invite you to come and share your concern with interpreters, and we do regular meetings with providers.

**YB:** So, two weeks from now we have our interpreter meeting where the hospital is coming to talk and hear some of the interpreters' concerns. We do have set agencies, the court, coming and talking about some of the concerns and listening to also the community concern through the interpreters that are working. So that's what helps us build this program from starting to trust community members and also developing the skills so they can provide something that is of quality and expanding that. So those who are working for us are also exposed to the work of life and also sharing their knowledge skills. So the state can also tap into these resources. But sometimes one of the biggest concerns we have is lack of diversity in most of the agencies that people don't look far. If you can work as an interpreter and you are able to sell your product and show how capable you are, at least you give some... You have a chance to be tapped into if there is any opening.



**YB:** And even for us also, we also start to look into that pool when we're also looking to hire, because these are folks we have put a lot of effort in training for, so we can place them in the community. And since agencies want to do better and serve this community, we say, well, we will bill you for the time we are putting to train them, but also for the resources they are bringing to you. If you want to do better, invest in them, but also pay for the time they're putting to serve you and help you access this community.

**HA:** So you've been able to not only build out a service that you can charge for and sustains your organization, [but] it's a service that's filling a gap in the community, a need. So you really have... And how you started with mapping the assets of our community, which I think brings us to Dante and building out your social enterprise model.

Tell us more about how you got [your social enterprise model] started. How did you do that?

**DD:** Yeah, so like I said, ours was driven more out of necessity for our youth. We work with about 200 youth a year. I don't like to put labels on kids, but we were working with a lot of probation youth, documented gang members, taggers. We work with a lot of just youth in the community, comprised of a lot of refugee youth as well, and just youth that otherwise just need to be a part of something fun in life. But the thing is, they weren't getting jobs, and all of us were that age before, that feeling of some responsibility, being able to provide income for yourself and your family. These kids weren't getting that, and it needs to be part of their lives if they really want to help shape them into adulthood, that sense of responsibility. Anyway, they weren't getting that opportunity. We were doing a lot of efforts to help them get jobs, but it still wasn't happening.

**DD:** So we said, you know what? Let's just open up our own place. And that's what we did. And with that comes a lot of behind the scenes. It's not easy. I mean it is a business, and we all know that there's risk associated with business. Coming from a nonprofit standpoint especially, you need to be fairly risk averse... unless you have all kinds of funders and foundations that could help get you through the rough patches. But UPAC opted to go for it, and we have our cafe and our catering company. And again, the other reason for this is to advance the profile of our City Heights community. Unfortunately, our community sometimes gets a bad rap out in the media or what other people say about it. And instead of just get frustrated by that, it fueled us to like, no, this is what the community is about. It's about family values and resiliency. And so that's the other purpose of why we've opened, to really showcase the diversity and the strength of our community.

**DD:** So we have a graphic design and print shop as well. So we do banners, stickers, we do murals. And then also in Timmy's Place—I said in our slides, that's our second—we have a mass production printer where we could probably do about a thousand shirts. So our lens is always, “How does this translate to jobs?” because that's our main purpose. But it doesn't mean that a margin can't be built in here to kind of help support your operational funds for your organization as well. But it requires a lot of planning, especially with the training with some of the youth that we have. We have to give a little extra care. We have a trauma-informed lens. We're a lot more patient. This is a first-time job. So from a private owner, they might not give them that patience level, but we do.

**DD:** But the reality is sometimes that extra time, well, we have to pay our staff too. So you also have to build into your pricing that it might take a little extra time to train a lot of these youth to where they are, but it's definitely worth it. We've developed quite a lot of youth leaders from our group, and we want to keep it going.

**HA:** Jacob and Dante, as you talk about fundraising strategy... but it's really investing in your community and it's building up those skills and showcasing those skills, and I love how you've been able to do that.



And from each one of you, I would like to hear a little bit more about some of your partners. You've mentioned some of the partners, the kinds of different entities you have relationships with now that this fundraising strategy is up and running. Going back to when you first got started, again, who were some of... Where did you reach out to for support in those early stages of building this strategy?

**HA:** Whoever would like to take that one first.

**YB:** Well, I can say that here at AALV, the first agency we reached out to present this idea was our state refugee coordinator office here in town because she had enough knowledge and had access to a lot of resources, not only throughout the state but also throughout the country. And one of the first things she helped us get was funding from our United Way, local United Way agency to at least provide some type of support. First, assessing our interpreters and funding also our first medical interpreter training that has at least given some confidence to the group. We started with about seven interpreters, but today we have 73 individual interpreters, and we can provide up to 27 languages. So that has taken some time to build, but we couldn't do it without at least the state refugee coordinator support because before she even trusted us, she pulled in many providers throughout the state to start an interpreter task force to see where the needs are and also what type of training we can provide to those who are willing to work as an interpreter. That has at least boosted some confidence at the state level that this is something that the state can do if they're willing to invest some time and resources to support what we're trying to serve.

**HA:** Wonderful. Thank you. I'm so glad you mentioned the state refugee coordinator. I think that's something over the years have always encouraged ECBOs to build those relationships with your state refugee coordinator, so I'm glad to hear how that worked for you.

**HA:** Dante, how about you? In those early years, who'd you reach out to?

**DD:** Well UPAC as a whole, again, it's 50 years, so all the above, it had to be tapped into. Right now, I would say the majority of our funding comes from county grants, and that's because of our mental health and our substance use and addiction. The other though, we rely on foundations in smaller private grants, and I hate to say this because we rely on our funders, but really the reason we opened up our social enterprises is so that we don't have to rely so much on funders, that it's self-sustainable, I know that's an ambitious goal, but it's definitely attainable. I used to own businesses. I had restaurants in Hawaii actually, and I guess I started the first... Well, I had a social enterprise before I heard what the term was. I only hired people that needed a break, whether you are in recovery, mental illness, you're on probation or parole, and it worked.

**DD:** Not that I'm comparing apples and oranges and saying our kids are like that too, but otherwise, our staff need opportunities and that's what we provide. But yeah, it's new to us too. We're going on it very strong. But you do need a good plan. You could have the best heart or the best intentions in the world, but it is a business. So you need to have people that understand business and the way profitability works to actually be sustainable, and you have to have a good product. If you don't have a good product, well then you're not going to be able to sustain yourself. Nobody's going to rely on that. But then the mission plus the product, it really is attractive to a lot of funders too.

**DD:** So we find that we are on the radar a lot for private foundations and philanthropists because of what we do and the fact that we are trying to be sustainable as opposed to just trying to ask them for funding every



single year. I mean, we do it. We can't escape that. That's always going to be a function. However, our goal is sustainability.

**HA:** One quick follow-up question, and this was actually a question that was earlier in the Q&A:

Did you get a specific, any type... Did you get a grant when you were in the planning stages with the social enterprise? Did you get a grant to help you get that all set up? Or how did you, because I imagine that took a lot of planning.

**DD:** There's a lot of planning, so I don't want to take up all the time. But yeah, it started with the city grant that helped us with the infrastructure as far as constructing, and then that's when the private philanthropists came in to give us startup funding.

**HA:** Great, great. Thank you. That's very helpful to know that there are places you can look... that someone listening could look to get to get started.

**HA:** In the interest of time, I'm going to move to our next question and I'll start with you, Nao.

What were the biggest challenges in diversifying your funding to include more private foundations beyond ORR and other public money? What was your biggest challenge, and how did you overcome it?

**NK:** Yeah, thank you so much, Hilary. And then I think that's my answer connected to the questions number two too. But I actually... we definitely struggled to find new funders, and then how can we continue opening this door with more funders? And then when we do that, actually we started to work with many ECBO leaders and then that being partner with other ECBO leaders and then also partner with funders. Funders can be amazing partners and then connect to new funders. And then also other ECBO leaders connect me to their funders and introducing me to their funders because of our trusted relationship. And now that when I have any struggle to find about thinking about next, for example, next year's budget, I do have ECBO leaders I can call, even night, that when I'm really worried about, somebody can listen to me and then can share their strategies and then introduce me to the new funders and then make a new relationship.

**NK:** That's definitely something that I did, we did to overcome challenges. For example, we never really did that sub-grants type of funding before, but now that we are working as a coalition called San Diego Refugee Community Coalitions, that we are applying [for] funding together as a coalition. And then each, we have 13 members now, but each of us getting the sub-grants from the fiscal lead of one of the member organizations become fiscal lead, and then sometimes Karen Organization becomes a fiscal lead for the coalition and then get the bigger funding and then distributing to the smaller ECBOs. And then this started to work well. And then of course, there's many different ways, but I think our ECBO leaders, like the leaders in this panel as well, are our supporters. And then the strategy actually to overcome this challenge together.

**HA:** Beautiful. I love hearing [about] that trust and collaboration between leaders. That's so critical.

Jacob, how about you? What was your biggest challenge in really building out your fee-for-service interpreter service training revenue-generating program, and how did you overcome that challenge?



**YB:** The biggest challenge was to train, recruit, train and retain our interpreters because the service does not provide a 24-hour support to the interpreters. But sometimes you have maybe four or five hours per week. What can you do to make sure that you can still continue to have a pool of interpreters that can continue to support the work you're trying to do, has always been important. So we work hard, continue to recruit, to train, and also try to retain. So what we did is looking at those who are really savvy, those who have received a lot of [inaudible] in the community.

**YB:** Because sometimes it's also a matter of building trust within the community, retaining them as part-time employees to begin with. And some of them are now full-time with us because they can easily cap up to 35 to 40 hours every two weeks. So we don't want to lose these resources. So we've invested a lot of time in training them, but also making sure that we can have enough hours for them to continue to provide for their families and also be available when needed. But the biggest challenge is continually recruiting and training, because people always happen to move and things happen in life. They can stop working and you have to always have this pool where you can tap into and make sure that they're available at any given moment.

**HA:** Yeah. Yeah. That makes sense.

**Dante, how about you? What was the biggest challenge that you faced in growing the social enterprise, and how'd you overcome it?**

**DD:** Well, it's a continuing one, which is obviously funding. It is a business. We have bills to pay. And so we rely on our sales. So again, and that's against the backdrop of we're training kids that otherwise this is their first job. So we're kind of not struggling on both sides, but there's two priority areas. We want to increase our sales. At the same time, we have to increase sales enough that's sufficient to hire and train youth. So to overcome that, there was a question in the Q&A that I answered as well. We do have to supplement or subsidize our business revenue with other things, and we happily do it. We have the infrastructure here. We provide direct services to the community through different support mechanisms, whether it's utility assistance, rental assistance, food distributions.

**DD:** So all these come with a budget that helps employ our kids, keep them on the premises, helps pay our rent. So it's not exclusively just business revenue. We have to rely on these other sources. Then, like I said, what we do here is very attractive to funders too. They see the mission, they see the impact we have on the kids, and we invite everybody to give a tour. That makes a big difference. I'm sure you guys all do it too. There's something about seeing something on paper versus walking in and getting the vibe of your youth or your staff or kind of seeing firsthand what's going on here. So we do rely on the private donations and philanthropic groups, not even just for general funds, but for specific things. Like, I need a blender right now, but the blender's \$1500.

**DD:** So I'll reach out to somebody and say, "Hey, can you at least just give us a... fund a blender for us?" And when we find that we could actually attach the donation request to an actual thing that will benefit, we found that we have more success that way too, as opposed to just asking for general funding. But I know we need general funding too. That's always an ongoing thing, but at the very least, if you feel like you can't maybe secure that, then maybe kind of transform that into an individual thing or an individual position. We found success that way too.

**HA:** Great. We had a question in the chat, and it's an interesting question and I might add onto it just a little bit. The question was about,



As you've grown and you've explored these new strategies and gotten new funding, how that's affected the cohesion of your teams, especially when you all started small? And I think I would add to that to say, how did you get your teams believing in this? I'm sure you had to get your teams behind these new strategies and supporting them. And so can you speak a little more to some of that aspect of how you built the team and kept it cohesive behind what you were trying to do?

**HA:** Nao, would you like to speak to that?

**NK:** Yeah, thank you so much for the questions. Yeah, we started very small. There was no staff, paid staff, and then started with two and three and then five. But now we have a 16 staff members. I think we have the best team ever, but always, I was saying that like when we were five and six and seven, we had a best team actually. And then we still have the same cohesion when we are small or when we are 16 of us because we believe that we are here for the community and then we are always listening to the community. So our vision and mission never get lost and then we never get lost. So I think that is definitely the key that we stick to, why we are here and then what our community needs. And then I think yeah, I don't know. That is a good answer, but that is what I believe.

**HA:** That's great. And how about you, Jacob? And I'll ask each of you, and just to keep it very short in our few remaining minutes, if you, just a short response to that question.

**YB:** I think understanding your community need is very important and also coming across individuals who are willing to sacrifice everything despite the limited resources you offer to support their fellows so they can all have a better life in this country. Sometimes I wonder when we started, we were three part-time staff, and people couldn't cope with that because the level of work was so huge. But over time we engaged in needs assessment to understand where the needs are so we can focus our effort on addressing the immediate needs of the community instead of trying to do everything at once.

**YB:** But developing partnerships, also that can take over if we don't have resources to pursue what we are trying to do. That led us to expand and explore partnerships with some of the state agencies or one of our largest partners here, the University of Vermont. So they can provide some technical assistance or also help us with fundraising because sometimes they subcontract with us in some of the grants, but we can also continue to have staff that are available to support the community and also share the resources with the broader service provider that...

**HA:** Great. Thank you. Dante, in 10 seconds, how did you get your team behind social enterprise?

**DD:** Well, you have to believe in your mission and inspire others. And I think that's what we all kind of do. If you don't have a good team chemistry, it's not going to work. So you want to make sure... and then also... you need to make sure that it is an actual team effort. That way everybody feels vested in it.

**HA:** Wonderful. Thank you for those closing words.





## Conclusion

### Reviewing Learning Objectives

**HA:** And to wrap up, we are just going to review our learning objectives. I believe that after this webinar, you're able to identify new sources of funding beyond federal funding and how you would go about pursuing those, and understand some of the challenges you might encounter and how you'd overcome them.

### Feedback Survey and Recommended Resources

**HA:** And lastly, we want to take the last minute for you to please scan this QR code. And it has five questions in our last minute to please before you leave the call give us your feedback. It's really important to us for improving our future training and technical assistance.

**HA:** And so as folks are doing the survey, I just want to, again, thank our panelists so much for sharing your wisdom, your expertise, and I know that it comes from your own work and experience, but also your teams that you've been able to develop and invest in and build their capacity to be successful in these strategies. So thank you so much.

**HA:** And I think with that, I believe we have one recommended resource on the Switchboard website. If you haven't been there, you should go. There's many, many resources. This one is Getting Started with Fundraising: Guidance for ECBOs.

### Stay Connected

**HA:** So again, I thank you so much. We invite you to stay connected through our social media platforms and hope you will attend future webinars. And it's been a pleasure to spend the past hour with you. Thank you so much, everyone.

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