



Choosing Our Roots

Safely Housing Queer Youth

2021 Community Report

The mission of Choosing Our Roots is to ensure that all queer Alaskan youth and young adults have access to safe homes, supportive communities, and opportunities to thrive.

COR Values: Dignity & Respect · Empowerment · Cultural Relevancy · Community · Hope

Wow, friends! We have come a LONG way. Back in 2016, we were a small group gathered in my living room, knowing the statistics and the stories, knowing that queer youth homelessness was an urgent problem that needed our collective attention, but *not* knowing what to do. So we did that marvelous thing—we reached out to you, and together as a community, we brainstormed, planned, took one step after another, and took to heart the motto: “Proceed as if success is inevitable.”

Five years later, there are so many new stories... Young people who have grown confident and competent as leaders. Young people who share heartfelt gratitude for a chance to feel safe, to feel heard, to feel seen, to feel the embrace of community. Some of their stories are shared in this report. You made it all possible. You believed it could be done. You supported COR with money, time, compassion and dedication.

Looking ahead to the next five years, we see a building being purchased in Anchorage to provide more housing options, expansion into more rural areas in Alaska, increased advocacy across the state, and more success stories as young people connect with essential supports and resources. Will you be a part of that future? Can you volunteer, host, mentor, or become a sustaining donor?

The needs are here, now, all around us. Because of you, COR is prepared to meet those needs. When we come together, success is inevitable.

Chris Terry, Community Investor

**“Without Choosing Our Roots,
I don’t know where I’d be right now.”**

— Lela, Youth Participant



While living in a host home this year, Lela graduated from high school. Her goal is to go to college for music and social work. She says, “I’ve progressed a lot, and I’m pretty positive I’m going in a good direction.” We’re positive she is too!

Adrian was couchsurfing in the Valley. He entered the host home program as a trans teenager who had already experienced years of housing instability. In a COR host home, he built a strong relationship with his host family. In that supportive environment, Adrian was able to graduate high school, access gender affirming healthcare, and address his mental wellness needs as a survivor of trauma. Now he is working full time, paying rent in his own apartment, and attending college classes. Although he has left the host home program, he maintains an ongoing connection with his former hosts. Adrian and his hosts affirm that they have become one another's family and plan on staying in one another's lives – both for support and mentorship with practical needs, and because they genuinely care for one another. **Today, Adrian says that he is loving life.**

In 2021, COR has:



Housed 16 youth
in safe, supportive,
identity-affirming host homes



Provided case management to 68 youth
including ongoing intensive case
management for 36 youth, as they work
toward fulfillment of their personal goals



**Empowered 8 youth to move
into stable housing** after
participation in COR programs



Celebrated the personal accomplishments
of youth participants, including
8 who gained new employment

**"I love Choosing Our Roots because they help
the LGBTQ+ community find housing ...
They also help us to accomplish our dreams."
— Gaby, Youth Participant**



**Hosted 47 multigenerational
virtual events** for social support and
community building in a time of pandemic

- ◆ **Advocated for the needs of homeless LGBTQ+ youth** in local and statewide systems
- ◆ **Created opportunities** for youth leadership development
- ◆ **Compensated youth leaders** for their valuable time and wisdom shared
- ◆ **Conducted an unprecedented Community Needs and Readiness Assessment** focused on queer youth in the Matanuska Susitna and Kenai Peninsula Boroughs

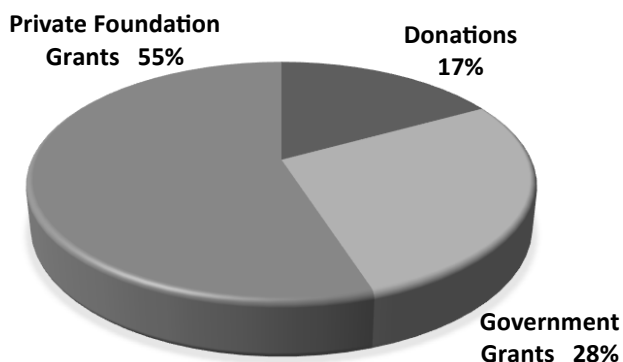
The **Financial Information** presented here reflects the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2021. Some grant funds were received at the end of the last fiscal year for projects that are underway in the current year, which is why FY21 shows a substantial net revenue. The budget for FY21 reflects significant growth in comparison to FY20, and we expect additional growth in FY22, as COR extends services to more young people throughout Alaska. This essential growth is only possible because of your generous support.

Thank you!

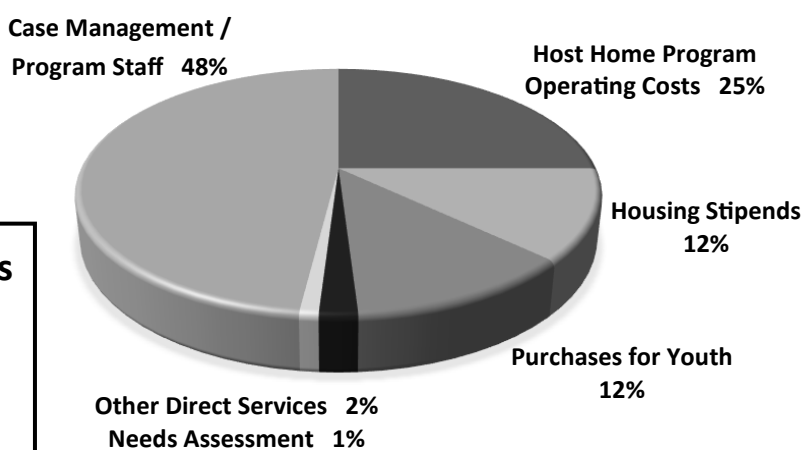
FY21 Total Revenue	\$608,580
FY21 Total Expenses	\$441,480
Net Revenue	\$167,100
FY22 Operating Budget	\$821,898
FY22 Capital Budget	\$500,000

Note: FY21 financial figures have not yet been audited and may be subject to change.

REVENUE



EXPENSES



“Being a part of Choosing Our Roots has been such a rewarding experience. Watching a youth blossom from shy, lonely, and lost into an adult who feels like they can navigate more of the world around them feels amazing. I am so grateful to continue to host and be involved with COR.”

— Sheri, Host

Peter and Raven are a young married couple who went through periods of homelessness, as well as extreme housing instability. Both of them felt isolated and unsafe in community. They had persistent trouble finding employment or safe housing, due in large part to their gender identities and disabilities. After connecting with COR, they

were able to receive supportive services that kept them safe while waiting to be matched with a host who could support both of them, as well as their beloved dog. Since entering a host home this summer, Peter has begun working full time. Raven is taking on volunteer roles where ze can serve others, while gaining leadership and advocacy skills. Both of them are accessing regular mental health supports. Feeling safe and affirmed in their identities, they report decreased suicidal ideation and increased stability. Peter says, "COR has helped me find community. Without it I wouldn't know all the cool people I do now. **Being hosted has also helped me find hope.** I am now working, and I don't have to worry about where I'm gonna sleep at night." They hope to become financially stable, to access the medical care they need to feel comfortable in their own bodies, and eventually to live independently. Meanwhile, they are grateful for a host who can share empathy and understanding based on common experiences, and who is providing the space they need to rest and feel secure during this time of transition. **Because of COR, they know that they are not alone and that they are loved.**

THANK YOU for Your Generous Support!

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* grant awards above \$5,000

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If you believe there has been an error or omission, please let us know: info@choosingourroots.org or 907-764-6233

THANK YOU for Your Generous Support!

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Everyone for whom being
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they do everyday

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**“Before COR, I felt alone.
Now I feel like I’m part of a community
that really cares about me.”
— COR Youth Participant**



COR youth, staff, and volunteers enjoyed Pride celebrations all over the state—including this one in Homer— and were able to take leadership roles in several of these life-affirming events.



Youth participants led a series of virtual arts events this spring, which fostered mental wellness through creativity and connection. As one young person said, “There is so little community right now that I have access to ... and this felt like a community.” The paintings shown here include self-affirmations, as young people see that they are calm and strong, genuine and kind, alive and resilient!

**“This organization
just makes me feel
so safe.”
— COR Youth Leader**

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