



**OUTWARD BOUND**  
CALIFORNIA

**STAKEHOLDER REPORT**

APRIL 2021





**Outward Bound California (OBCA) is a resilient organization, thanks in no small part to stakeholders like you who believe in our mission and continue to push our organization forward.** We are so grateful for you. As a key stakeholder of our community, this report was created to provide you with an update on the status of OBCA with transparency and authenticity about the impact of 2020 and looking ahead to 2021 and beyond. Nearly all of our courses for 2021 are fully enrolled which is hugely exciting but first let's reflect on the incredible impact that global events had on our organization and how we were still able to end the year in a financial position that allows us to move forward together.

First, as many of you know, since 2008 we have partnered with organizations and schools throughout California to serve students and veterans with a key focus on increasing access to communities traditionally excluded from outdoor experiences and those that face barriers to success due to our deeply inequitable society. We have students and families that pay full price to go on course with us, and the majority, 2 out of every 3, receive scholarship support, free access to gear, and tailored programming to attend on their own or with a group from their school or youth-serving nonprofit. **Our ability to continue to offer these discounted or free programs relies on support from stakeholders like you.**

**Throughout 2020, our organization made many pivots and relied on the depth of talent and dedication of our team.** After shutting all programs down in mid-March, our program teams collaborated with Outward Bound schools throughout the nation to prepare extensive safety plans and protocols for staff and students to run programs with strict Covid-19-specific measures by the summer. With that same care and intention, the risk management team made the decision to cancel all expeditions for the summer, fall, and winter in the wake of surging COVID-19 cases and reduced access to testing.

The loss in revenue from course cancellations, estimated at over \$2 million, was a contributing factor in the decision to lay off numerous full-time staff members over several months. We made several difficult decisions but made sure to sustain our core team and critical programmatic resources through the pandemic, continue to provide pay and housing for field staff for one month after course cancellations and maintain subsidized staff housing in the Bay Area through the end of the year. Despite the challenges of nearly zero earned income in 2020 and an increased reliance on contributed revenue, we remained committed to our values and our people. **Through these difficult decisions, the OBCA Leadership Team reduced expenses by nearly as much as the revenue lost through canceled programming, the delta made up for by high performance on the fundraised revenue side.**

In the midst of losing some of our greatest assets, our staff, the Finance team secured a federal Payment Protection Plan forgivable loan. This was a pivotal moment that supported our remaining administrative staff as we planned a path forward **prioritizing support for current staff, financial viability of our organization, equity in decision making and a return to programming as soon as it was safe to do so.**

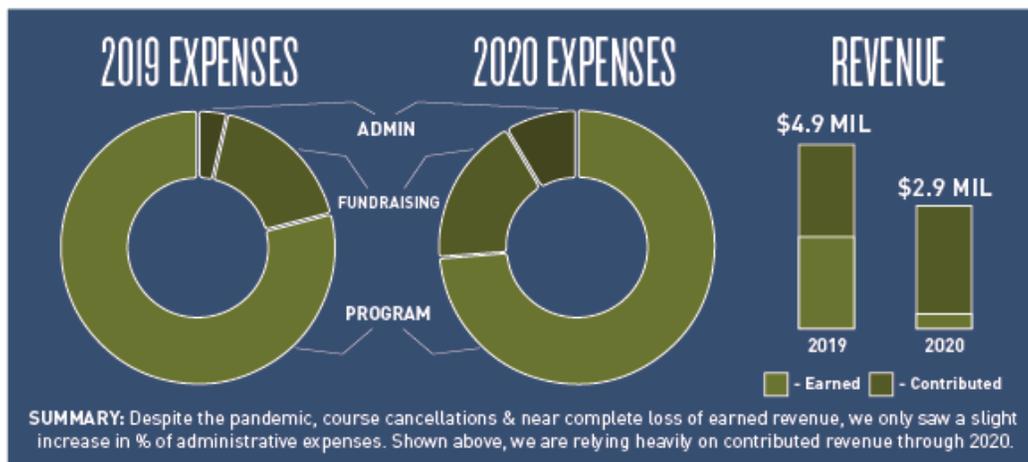
**It was during this difficult year that we achieved a nearly decade-long dream of building a Ropes Challenge Course in San Francisco.** Located in John McLaren Park and built in partnership with the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, this ropes course is within walking distance of dozens of schools and youth-serving agencies located in an under-resourced area of the city. Built as part of a community needs assessment of the South East corner of San Francisco and a historic park in need of activation and use - this course cements





our presence in the Bay as a leader in inclusive and inspiring outdoor experiences for youth. With all programs paused, the Outreach team used this time to continue to build deep community partnerships with schools and organizations in the area, with partners booking multiple Ropes Course programs months in advance. We served our first students (safely!) in November of 2020. We continue to work diligently to provide equitable access to the outdoors for students from communities of color, those experiencing economic oppression, and those hard-hit by the recent social and public health crises. After a year of isolation and displacement, programs like ours are needed more than ever to build back students' confidence, voice, and sense of belonging. **The keys to access for us are free gear, scholarships if money is a barrier, high-quality educators that are culturally responsive, and proximity to where students live so that "outside" doesn't just mean far-off wilderness areas. The ropes course is a huge step towards that vision of accessibility.**

**Thanks to your support, 2020 also marks our highest fundraising year ever, raising \$1.47 million in a year when our earned revenue was cut by over 50%.** With this incredible engagement from you who saw the deep need that our programs could fill, we ended the year with a near break-even budget as indicated by our unaudited financials. Below is a year-over-year comparison of the revenue and expense percentages of 2019 and 2020.



As Quarter 1 of 2021 closes, we are pleased to report three areas of focus for the OBCA team. **First, there is a high demand for Outward Bound's outdoor education programs, both on the Ropes Course, as well as overnight expeditions.** With the promising developments in Covid-19 vaccines and distribution, expanding in-person gatherings for our students and staff is within the realm of safe possibility. Enrollment reports for the upcoming summer season show that all overnight expeditions are nearing full capacity, with an increase of enrolled students from California and neighboring states. Middle School and High School courses are enrolling at the highest rates we've seen in seven years! All middle school courses, ages 12-14, are fully enrolled with waitlists. Adult courses, ages 18 and up, are our lowest enrolling courses but are tracking equally to year over year enrollment from 2019. These courses are an area of focus for marketing teams as we approach summer. **Overall, it is clear that students and families want to be building community and learning together outside.**





**Second, our program and leadership teams continue to prioritize the safety of staff and students.** We are using the robust Program Resumption Plan created in 2020 alongside protocols from national and local health agencies to guide the process for resuming expedition programs in 2021. We are also taking into consideration the extensive wildfire damage sustained in 2020 to ensure our course locations are safe for students and staff. Our program and safety teams continue to face challenges in program planning as California's Covid-19 landscape continues to fluctuate. Some program resumption objectives include how to mitigate effects on programming in the event of virus exposure and identifying systems of support for the mental health of our field staff.

**Lastly, we are moving forward with clear priorities to support staff in making decisions independently.** 2019 represented the highest number of students served by OBCA, so the leadership team has created an agile plan to build those high student numbers back gradually and intentionally with more access through scholarships, community partnerships, and equitable staffing practices. Our biggest challenge in building back and serving students is our now smaller instructor pool. After a year without work many found other jobs, moved or left the industry. It takes incredible effort and time to find and train our field staff so we will have to build back slowly and invest more in their sustainability long term.

**The finance team has secured a second Payroll Protection Plan loan for 2021 with fewer restrictions.** These funds will allow us to focus on directly supporting our full-time staff with monetary awards in appreciation of their hard work and dedication, salary increases after 2020 pay freezes, and 401K contributions. This is just one way to honor and invest in our staff, many of whom weathered this storm together or have joined us during this pivotal time.

**As part of our effort to clarify the importance equity plays in our work and culture, we will be putting together equity-specific goals for 2021 with associated tactics and metrics.** This process will be led by OBCA's Director of Equity, BJ Allen, and the Equity Advisory Council (EAC), composed of board, field, and administrative staff members.

In conclusion, 2020 was an impactful period of pause and clarity for Outward Bound California. With the collective grief, hope, and challenges every individual and organization faced, we feel confident moving forward knowing that our programs are needed more than ever. We are a stable and impactful investment of time and resources for our stakeholders as we continue to prioritize equitable access to our programming through strategic planning and fundraising. **We are looking forward to a year filled with transformational programming, thoughtful donor engagement, and safe, outdoor experiences for students from California and beyond. We are honored and grateful to have you on this journey with us.**

