



A Year in Review

2020

Annual Impact Report



To our neighbors,

In 2020, thanks to the generous support of people from all over Wyoming, the Equality State Policy Center was able to help more citizens engage with their elected officials than ever before. We were able to work for policy changes that will bring our state into the twenty-first century and help our communities and neighbors thrive. With your support, we'll carry our vision for a more equitable Wyoming forward into 2021 and beyond.

There's a lot of work to be done, to be sure. Wyoming is facing an existential budget crisis and pressing challenges: maintaining our uniquely egalitarian school funding system, increasing access to healthcare, and investing in our local communities so future generations can thrive here. We've been working on this at the same time we've all been struggling with a devastating pandemic, job loss, and an economic downturn.

Yet even in this wildly challenging year, more Wyomingites stepped up and said: we can solve these problems. And it's these people—people like you—who are giving all of us at ESPC hope.

“And it's these people—people like you—who are giving all of us at ESPC hope.”

You volunteered your time to get out the vote. You dug into the tough issues facing our state by coming to our new People's Review: LIVE! series. You attended trainings to learn how to weigh in with elected officials—or, better yet, to become one yourself. You organized. You contacted legislators. You made your voice heard. And you gave whatever you could to support ESPC's mission.

This kind of civic engagement—this commitment to showing up for our neighbors and each other day after day—is what will get Wyoming through these tough times and on our way to a brighter, more equitable future. Thank you!



Chris Merrill
Executive Director



Ana Marchese
Civic Engagement
Coordinator



Jen Simon
Senior Policy Advisor



Stefani Farris
Development Writer

Who We Are

The Equality State Policy Center is a coalition of 30 organizations working to foster nonpartisan civic engagement and leadership development in Wyoming. The only coalition of its kind in the state, ESPC plays an invaluable role in protecting a healthy democracy and Wyoming's exceptional way of life.



Social Justice

American Civil Liberties Union, Wyoming
Juntos
Matthew Shepard Foundation
Wind River Native Advocacy Center
Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic
Violence and Sexual Assault
Wyoming Equality
Wyoming Interfaith Network
Wyoming Trial Lawyers Association

Conservation

Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance
Powder River Basin Resource Council
Sierra Club, Wyoming Chapter
The Wilderness Society
Wyoming Outdoor Council
Wyoming Wilderness Association

Labor

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen
Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way
Federated Fire Fighters of Wyoming
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Local #415
Operating Engineers, Local #800
Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, Wyoming
SMART Transportation Division of United Transportation Union
Southwest Wyoming Central Labor Council
United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters of America, Local #192
United Steelworkers Union, Local #13214
Utility Workers of America, Local #127
Wyoming Building and Construction Trades Council
Wyoming Education Association
Wyoming Public Employees Association
Wyoming State American Federation of Labor
and Congress of Industrial Organizations



Fair Elections



Transparent Government



Thriving Communities



*“ESPC is meeting a growing need in the Equality State for accurate, accessible information about how the democratic process works and how ordinary people can get involved to make their voices heard. Even in a year when we had to shift quickly to online trainings because of COVID-19, **we were able to provide resources to people across Wyoming.**”*

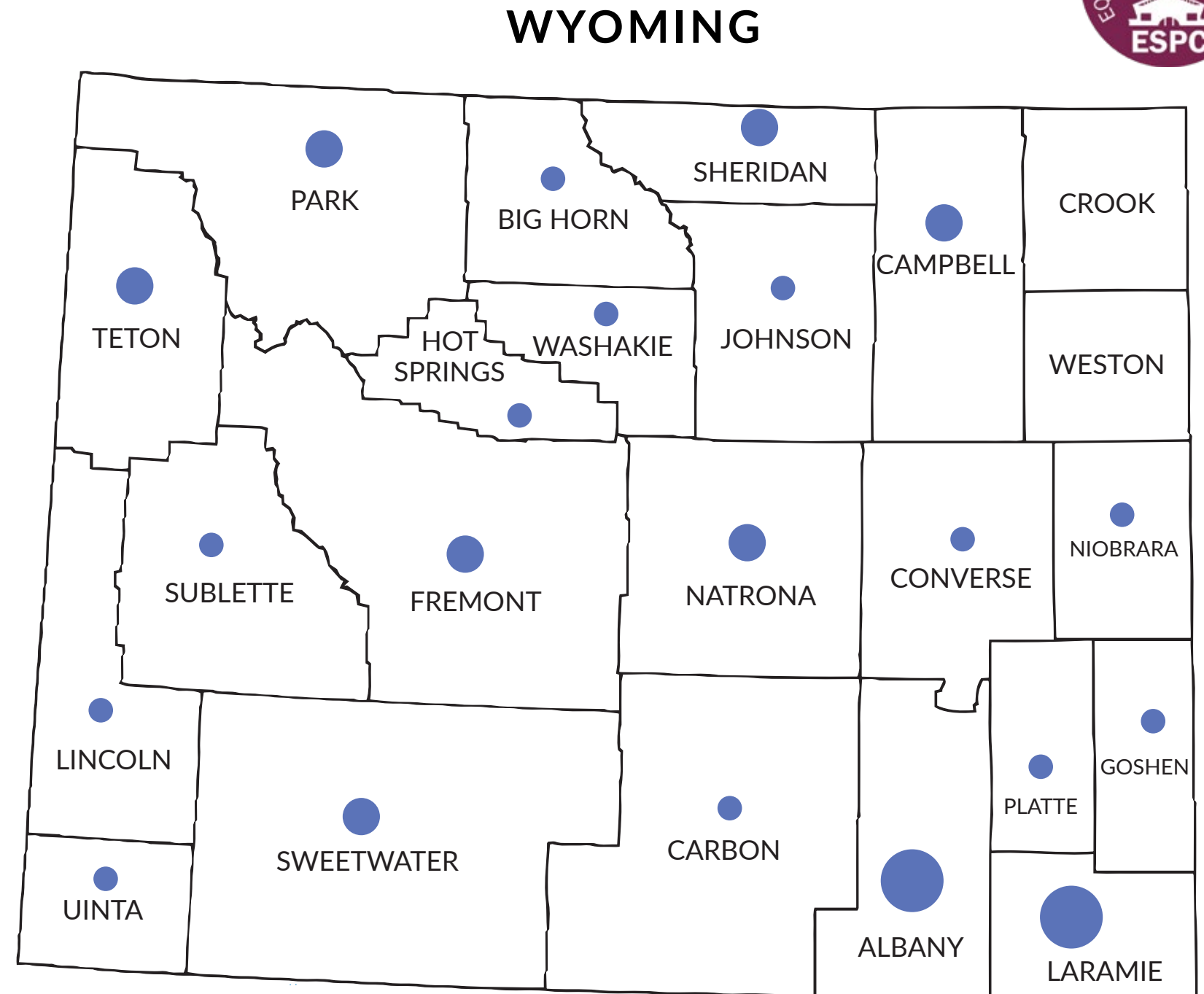
—Jenny DeSarro, Board Chair

Mission

The Equality State Policy Center’s mission is to improve the lives of all Wyoming’s people through transparent government, fair elections, and thriving communities.

Fostering the next generation of civic leaders in Wyoming—and beyond.

ESPC reached people in 47 Wyoming communities and 21 counties.
(We also reached people in 11 other states!)



Fast Facts



125

CITIZEN LOBBYISTS

Giving citizens the hands-on tools to be effective advocates



60

LEADERSHIP TRAINEES

Empowering emerging leaders from across the political spectrum



190

ENGAGED ATTENDEES

Leading conversations about pressing issues and advancing innovative policy solutions



"The People's Review: LIVE series provides an on-ramp for any Wyomingite looking to engage more deeply in the policies that impact their life. Each program is full of accessible, timely, and essential material. ESPC is setting the bar high when it comes to voter empowerment!"

—Amy Rathke, Community Organizer



Fair Elections

When COVID-19 threatened the ability of Wyoming voters to safely get to the polls, ESPC successfully urged the Secretary of State's office to send absentee ballot request forms to all registered Wyoming voters to make sure every voter who wanted to could safely cast a ballot in the primary and general elections. Throughout the year we worked with coalition members to provide resources and information to the voters of Wyoming. We also staffed a voter hotline, providing real-time support to Wyomingites about polling places, ballots, and voters' rights.

"My plight as an Indigenous woman serving in the state of Wyoming is to lead a path, then step aside and have the future generations do more than I did. . . . My push has always been to increase voter access and voter participation."

—Representative Andi Clifford, House District 33



Transparent Government

Government transparency is the cornerstone of a functioning and durable democracy. As COVID-19 upended in-person meetings, we successfully urged the Wyoming Legislature to adopt key recommendations to foster greater transparency and public participation, including recording and broadcasting legislative meetings, noticing virtual meetings online, and allowing the public to provide both written and oral testimony. While there are still gaps we're working to see closed, the pandemic has created unexpected opportunities for engagement by more people than ever before.



“What do we value most about Wyoming? And what are we willing to sacrifice for it? Citizen legislators shouldn’t be asking these questions of themselves in a closed room. That’s not how democracy works. For our lawmakers to make the best decisions for the future of this state, they need to be hearing the answers from the people.”

—Chris Merrill, Executive Director



Thriving Communities

Throughout 2020, as Wyoming faced the double-whammy of severe public health and economic crises, ESPC led coalitions and key conversations around who we want to be as Wyomingites—and the policy solutions that will get us there.

Through the **Gender Lens Project**, we looked at how Wyoming's policies specifically impact women and girls. We also highlighted how having more women in elected office results in policy decisions that benefit everyone.

Through our work with **Healthy Wyoming**, we provided leadership to the growing statewide movement committed to extending healthcare to tens of thousands of uninsured Wyomingites.

We built grassroots momentum to address our broken **tax structure**—the root of so many of Wyoming's problems that continues to hold our state back, year after year.

And we provided leadership to the **Wyoming Coalition for a Healthy Retirement**, a grassroots group working to protect the security and dignity of retired firefighters, teachers, nurses, librarians, and public employees.

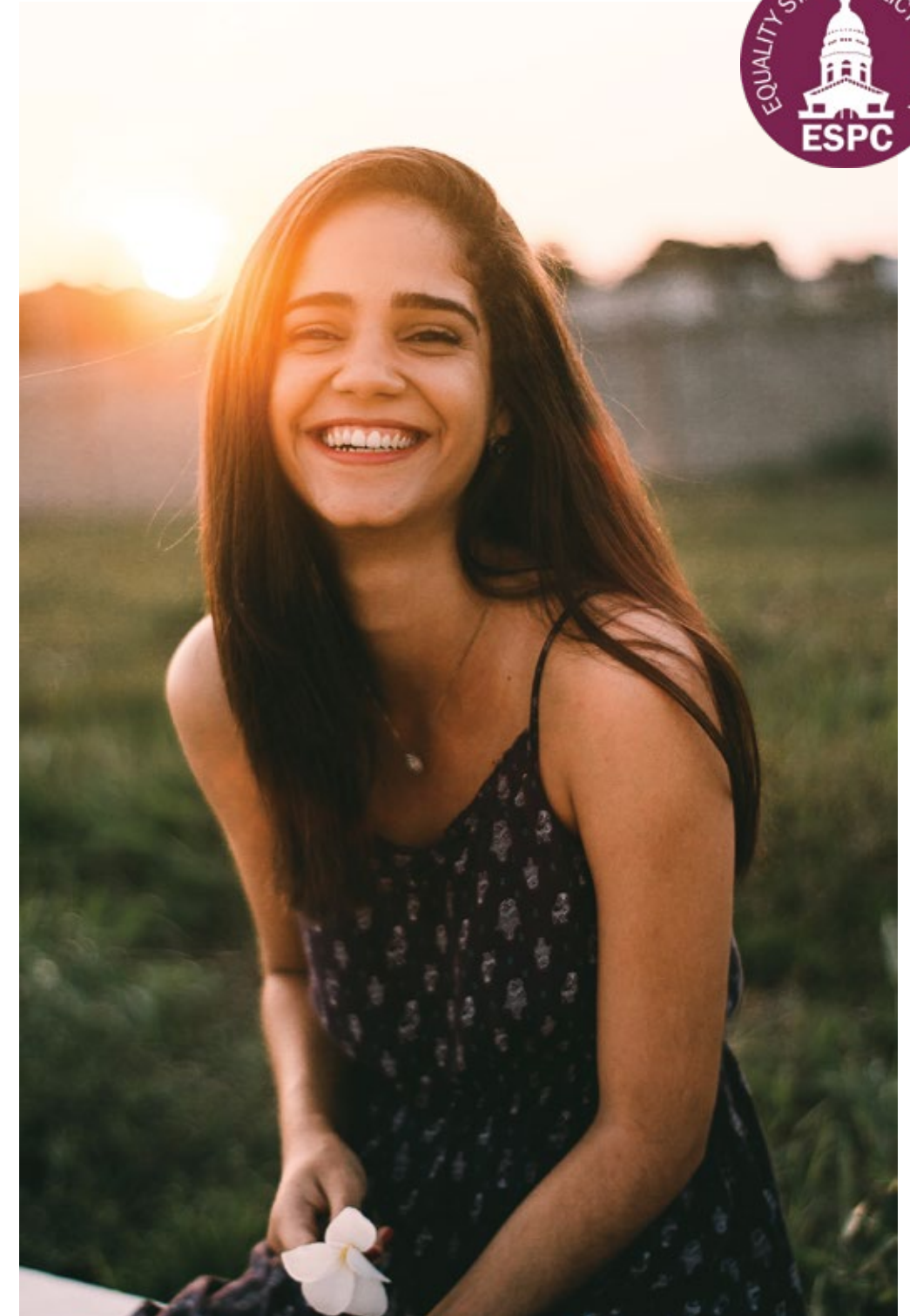
Gender Lens Project

From closing the gender wage gap to acknowledging women's essential impact on Wyoming's economy to repealing discriminatory taxes, ESPC is committed to advocating policies that result in a more equitable Equality State. We are proud to have elevated and amplified the conversation among Wyomingites around gender issues, and we look forward to continuing that work in the years to come.



"The Gender Lens Project is pushing the conversation about women's economic self-sufficiency and leadership to new levels in Wyoming. This work is critical to calling out gender inequality in the Equality State and normalizing the conversations around policy changes that could bring more equity to Wyoming women. Wyoming Women's Foundation was proud to support this work with a grant in 2020."

—Bekah Smith, Executive Director, Wyoming Women's Foundation





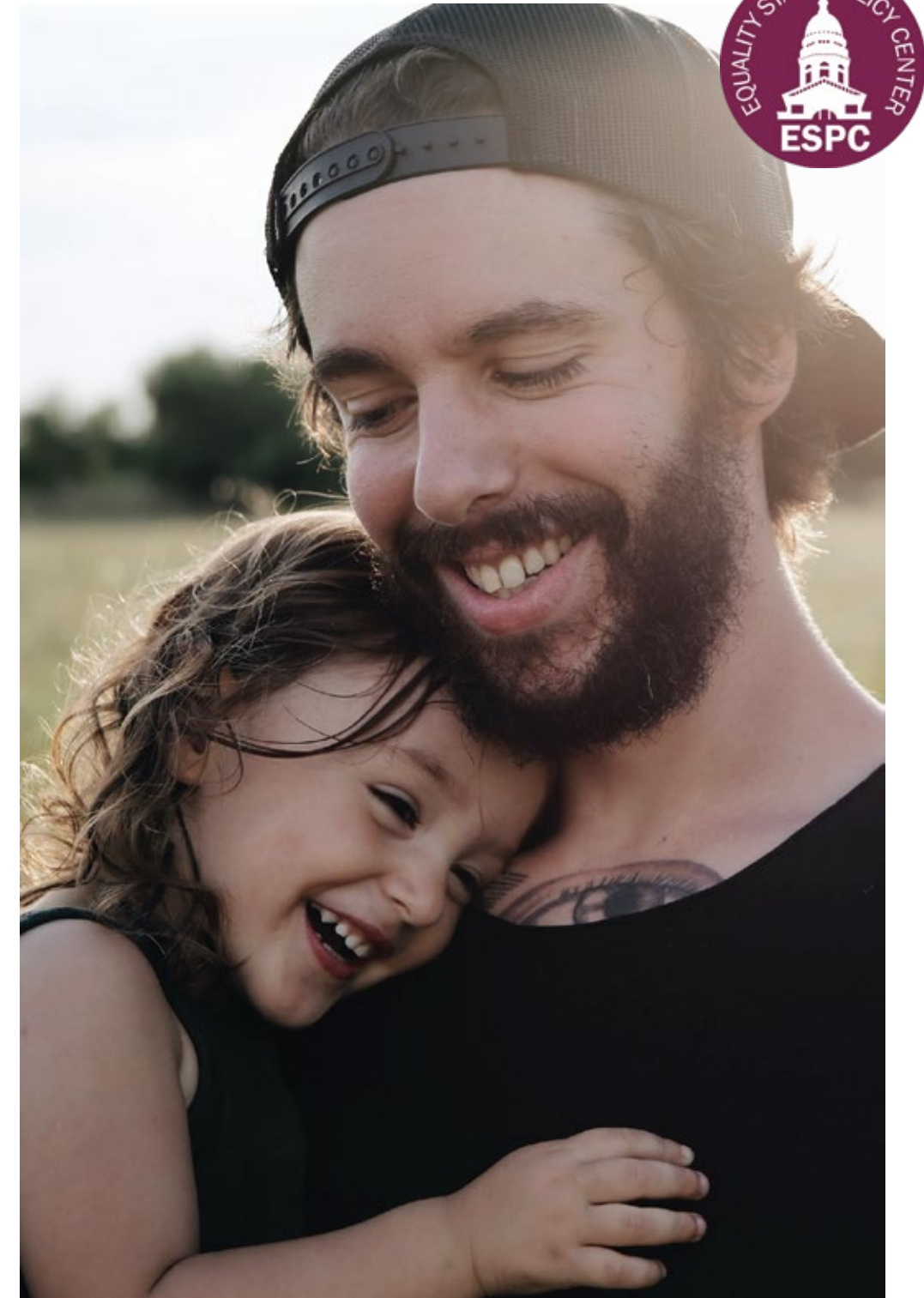
Healthy Wyoming

Healthy Wyoming is a grassroots coalition of healthcare workers, medical students, educators, and citizen advocates working to expand Medicaid health insurance coverage in Wyoming. In addition to the economic benefits to our state of expanding the Medicaid program, the move would also ensure that tens of thousands more of our friends and neighbors in Wyoming have access to quality, affordable health care—even in times of job insecurity and financial stress.



"I believe Medicaid expansion is a giant step in the right direction because it increases access to healthcare for so many people. It is important to me for my friends and neighbors to be able to get the care they need."

—Rida Fatima, WWAMI medical student
from Rock Springs, WY





Ensuring a Livable Retirement

Wyomingites deserve to retire with dignity. The Wyoming Coalition for a Healthy Retirement is a group of retired educators, firefighters, nurses, and other public servants working to preserve and protect the financial security of all retirees in the Wyoming Retirement System. These retired public servants have not had an inflation or cost-of-living adjustment in more than a decade—despite the increasing costs of healthcare, housing, and groceries. With ESPC’s help, WCHR is working to change that.



“There are thousands of retirees across the state of Wyoming who are suffering, who are starting to go into poverty, because they haven’t had any kind of inflation adjustment in over twelve years. They need an adjustment to keep up.”

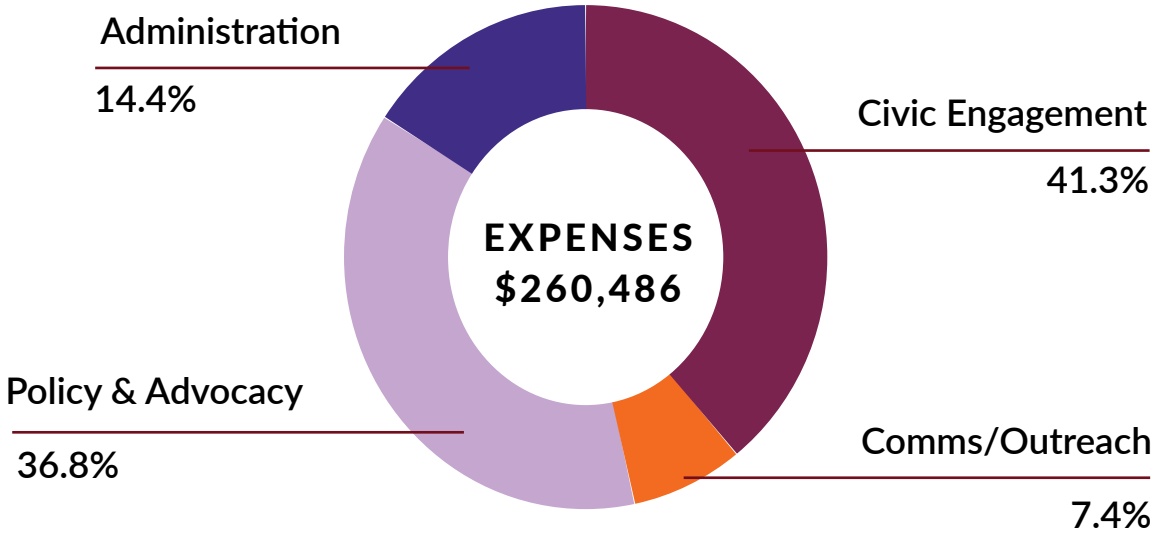
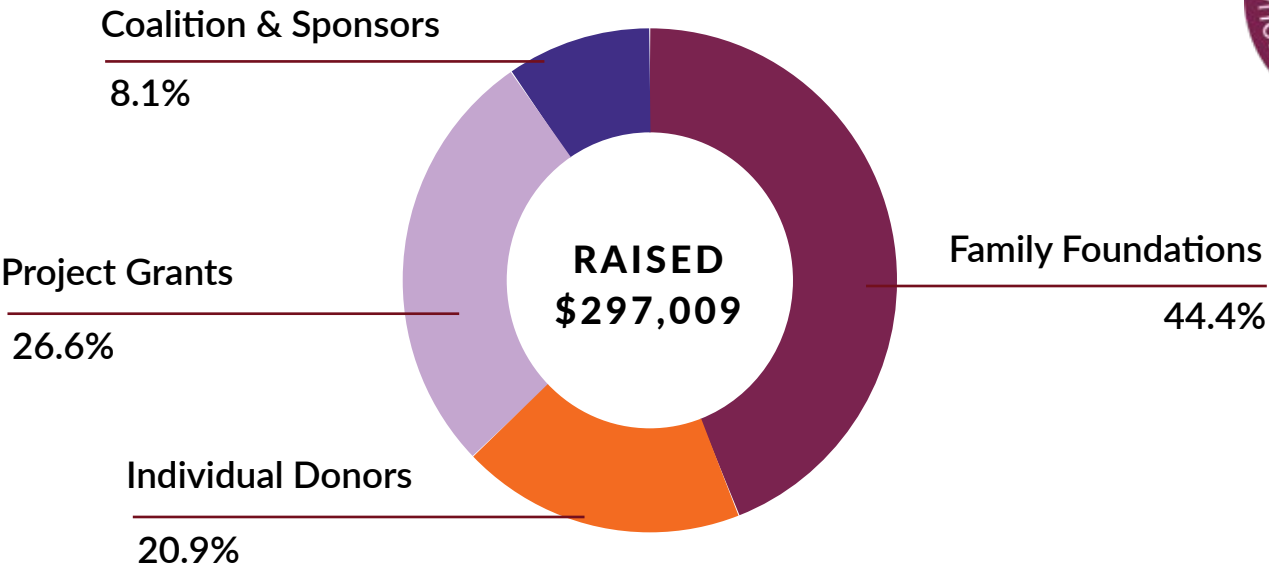
—Vicki Swenson, retired Wyoming educator





Financials

Whether it is leading conversations about modernizing Wyoming’s outdated tax structure, driving voter education efforts to facilitate full participation in our democracy, advocating more equitable policies, or helping more Wyomingites engage more often with the levers of power, ESPC’s work is only possible thanks to your support. We raise private dollars to fund our budget every year, and your generous support moves us toward the prospect of a bright future for everyone. **Thank you!**





Our Generous Supporters

Thank you to the **230 individual donors and organizations** who graciously supported our work and vision in 2020. We extend a special thank-you to the generous individuals and organizations listed below, who donated sustaining gifts of \$1,000 or greater in 2020.

Individuals

Anonymous
Beth Burrough and David Ramsay
Megan Hayes
Cynthia Hogan
Marcia Kunstel and Joe Albright
Anne Ladd
Gilman and Marge Ordway
Veronique Parke
Mike Shonsey and Kathy Jenkins
JoAnn Skeim-True
Edward Strader
Kevin Wilson

Organizations

Blue Ridge Fund of Wyoming
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen
Community Catalyst
Community Foundation of Jackson Hole
Edelweiss Women and Girls Support Fund
The Equipoise Fund
FairVote
Federated Fire Fighters of Wyoming
Matthew Shepard Foundation
National Public Pension Coalition
Sierra Club, Wyoming Chapter
SMART - Transportation Division
(formerly United Transportation Union)
Social Justice Fund Northwest
Soroptimist Int'l of Jackson Hole
George B. Storer Foundation
United Steelworkers
Wyoming Community Foundation
Wyoming Education Association
Wyoming Women's Foundation

To donate or share this opportunity with a friend, visit equalitystate.org.



Thank you!

www.equalitystate.org

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